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Hume's *Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals* and *The Whole Duty of Man*

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Abstract: I examine, in this paper, the contents of one of the most famous religious texts of the early modern period, *The Whole Duty of Man*, and I show that Hume's *Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Man* is an attempt to re-appropriate and replace the Anglican devotional with his own moral philosophy. Hume would reject the devotional's general methodology, its claims about the foundation of morality, and its list of duties. However, a careful reading of *The Whole Duty of Man* reveals that Hume shares its author's evaluation of pride and humility, and its insistence on utility and pleasure. Hume, I argue, would not think of this book as mortifying or monkish. Given the popularity of *The Whole Duty of Man* and Hume's desire to push religion back into the closet together with his passion for literary fame we have good reasons to conclude that Hume was more envious than critical, and that the EPM was his own re-mastered version of what could be called "The Whole Merit of Man."

Keywords: David Hume, Richard Allestree, theology, morality, religion, duty, pride

David Hume was familiar with several religious texts of his time. He recounts reading, among such works, one that was published in 1659, but written earlier, presumably by an Anglican clergyman, Richard Allestree.¹ This text was called *The Practice of Christian Graces. Or The Whole Duty of Man Laid Down in a Plain and Familiar Way for the Use of All, but especially the Meanest Reader: Divided into XVII chapters, one whereof being read every lord's day*, and often referred to as simply "The Whole Duty of Man."

In his famous death bed interview of Hume of 1776, James Boswell writes that Hume told him he used to read *The Whole Duty of Man* and had found it to be strange work (Boswell 1971, 11). Hume also mentions *The Whole Duty of Man* in a footnote to the *Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*, where he describes it as enclosing the kind of list of virtues which Cicero would have found limited and narrow (EPM App. 4.11, n72).² And

¹ Allestree was chased out of England during the Interregnum of 1647- 48, but later rewarded and reinstalled as Charles II's chaplain after the King's restoration (of the 1660's).

² All references to the *Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*, EPM, are to the Oxford Philosophical Texts edition, 1998.

several scholars have recently argued that Hume wrote his first book, the *Treatise*, with, among several goals, the aim to criticize and reject the conclusions and principles found in *the Whole Duty of Man*.³

The aim of this paper is to show that Hume still targets *The Whole Duty of Man* in his later *Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*,⁴ but for different reasons, and in a more nuanced fashion. Hume now rejects its overall methodology and the list of virtues and vices to which it leads, and seeks to offer an account which he believes is more faithful to observation. Nevertheless, we will discover that even though Hume targets central aspects of *The Whole Duty of Man* he also endorses some of the devotional's main ideas, and he mimics its aim to offer an account that is laid down in an accessible manner, and, especially, that is as popular as the Anglican devotional.

1. The Whole Duty of Man and the Treatise

Views differ, among Hume scholars, about which religious group he seeks to discredit in his *Treatise*. Anders Kraal, for instance (Kraal 2013), argues that Hume's focus in the *Treatise* is

Neither Scottish Calvinism nor, as Russell holds, "Christian Theology" in a generic sense but, rather, the theological system of the most formidable ecclesiastical power in Britain in Hume's day: the Anglican Church (Kraal 2013, 171-172).⁵

According to Kraal, Hume of the *Treatise* seeks to discredit Anglican theology as found in *The Whole Duty of Man*, and he targets its emphasis on libertarian free will, and its more Arminian understanding of God as a hidden power, whose will fails to be constantly conjoined with obedience (Kraal 2013, 180-187).

³ See especially Anders Kraal (2013) and Alison McIntyre (2014), whose views I briefly present in the next section.

⁴ Hume published the *Treatise* in 1738, and the *Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals* in 1751.

⁵ See Russell 2008, 290. The authors Kraal also has in mind are, for example, Norman Kemp Smith, M.A. Stewart, Terence Penelhum, and Jennifer Herdt, who hold that Hume, in the *Treatise*, rejects Scottish Presbyterianism or Scottish Evangelical Calvinism (Kemp-Smith 1935, 8-10; Stewart 2001, 22; Penelhum 2008, 324; Herdt 1997, 217).

In a similar vein, Alison McIntyre argues that criticism of the project of *The Whole Duty of Man* may not be Hume's only goal in the *Treatise*, but, she writes, "he is alert to the ways in which his account provides reason to doubt the efficacy of the calls to repentance and mortifying reflections to be found in *The Whole Duty of Man* and other, similar works of traditional Christian piety" (McIntyre 2014, 162). Hume, she writes, targets *The Whole duty of Man* when he seeks to undermine views he attributes to 'the vulgar systems of ethicks'" (McIntyre 2014, 143). She does not think Hume attacks Anglicanism *rather than* Presbyterianism, but she does hold that the Anglican theology of *The Whole Duty of Man* is one of Hume's primary target.

More specifically, McIntyre argues that Hume, in the *Treatise*, "contests the view that pride is always a sinful response to a survey of oneself and humility is always a virtuous one" (McIntyre 2014, 153). She argues that Hume's account of pride as a positive passion in the *Treatise* is to be understood as a direct rejection of the devotional's understanding of pride as an important sin. Indeed, as she points out, Hume does explain, in words recounted by Boswell, that as a young boy he had looked over the list of vices of *The Whole Duty of Man*—a list that includes pride. Hume continues by repeating that he had found it hard, or even impossible, not to feel pride when excelling. Throughout his life, and up until his death, Hume therefore considers pride as a positive (and unavoidable) reaction to objects related to oneself that give rise to pleasure, and not as the sinful attitude of *The Whole Duty of Man*.

The focus of authors such as McIntyre and Kraal is Hume's *Treatise*, and we might hence wonder whether they think *The Whole Duty of Man* remains one of Hume's targets in his later writings. Kraal thinks it does not, and he writes: "I think that quite different stories need to be told as regards Hume's aims in these later works, but I shall not attempt to tell those stories here" (Kraal 2013, 174). McIntyre is less clear, but she seems to think Hume's

understanding of pride and humility does not change in later works, and hence that Hume's criticism of *The Whole Duty of Man* remains unaffected (McIntyre 2014, 159-160).

I will argue that *The Whole Duty of Man* remains one of the main targets of Hume's later EPM, but for reasons that differ from those related to the *Treatise*'s rejection of this devotional. Although he still holds that pride in its noble form is a virtue, he spends little time defending this point, and he does not focus on issues such as freedom and power any more. Hume now seeks to offer what he considers to be an accurate method for providing an account of morality and of the catalogue of all the virtues. However, Hume also adopts some important ideas from the devotional and also its aim of reaching a large audience and to lay out the *whole* duty of man.

As a short disclaimer, let me point out that I do not mean to imply that Hume reacts to the theology typical of the Anglican *Whole Duty of Man* rather than to Calvinist theology. As a matter of fact, I think Hume rejects central aspects of Calvinist doctrine as found, for instance, in the *Westminster Confession of Faith*.⁶ My aim in this paper, however, is to focus only on the Anglican *The Whole Duty of Man*, and to reveal Hume's subtle and ambivalent response to this devotional.

2. The EPM and the rejection of central claims of *The Whole Duty of Man*

The purpose of *The Whole Duty of Man* is clear from the first lines of its *Preface*. Richard Allestree writes that this book is to be a short and plain direction to the very meanest reader, to behave themselves in this world, that they may be happy for ever in the next. The human soul, this author continues, with its three parts—the understanding, the will, and the affections—is disordered. The understanding is in darkness, the will is crooked, and desires are misdirected towards the pleasures of sin (Preface 11). The cause of this sickness of the

⁶ I argue in another paper (Kroecker forthcoming) that Hume especially rejects the *Westminster*'s pessimistic view of human nature.

soul can be traced back to the first man, Adam, through whom the full knowledge of our duty and the power of performing it has been lost (Preface 12-13). Jesus, Allestree continues, has come to redeem our souls and to liberate us from the punishment due to our sin; he also provides the help required to repent, to change, and to offer us the keys to the kingdom of heaven. Now, Allestree points out, it is important that we be careful not to forfeit our part in this kingdom (Preface 22). The benefits purchased to us by Christ, which the author will list throughout his manual, belong to us only if we obey the whole will of God (Partition I.1). The point of this guidebook is hence to show us, the meanest reader, this whole will of God, and to sum up, as plainly as possible, what is now the duty of every Christian (Partition I.2). The book develops in 17 partitions, in which the author describes the duties we owe to God (partitions I to V), those we owe to ourselves (partitions VI to IX) and those we owe to others (partitions X to XVII).⁷

In contrast with Allestree's purpose, Hume makes no mention of God's will and of our playing a part in his kingdom. His objective is to show that "personal merit consists altogether in the possession of mental qualities, useful or agreeable to the person himself or to others," (EPM 9.1) and in order to reach this objective he writes that he will adopt the experimental method of study which starts with observation and then draws out more general principles from what is observed. His aim is to collect, as a result of observation, the various qualities which are the objects of our affection or hatred, and to consider what these qualities have in common. This methodology is a clear line of departure from the method of *The Whole Duty of Man*, which constantly appeals to Scripture to offer a basis for some duty, or evidence that some obligation is a duty. That some duty is a command of God or is commanded by the Apostles is a reason for performing the duty, according to Allestree (see,

⁷ This tripartite division between duties we owe to self, to others and to God is found in many early modern writings, in line, it seems with the writings of the famous natural law theorist, Samuel Pufendorf (1632-94).

among many passages, Partition XIII. 16; XIV. 17; VX. 7). He also points out that we need the help of God, of Christ, and the Holy Spirit in order to perform our duty and obey the whole will of God. The first standard of reference of *The Whole Duty of Man* is revelation, and the book is an attempt to show us how to live in a way that pleases God (VI.15). Hume, on the other hand, starts not with revelation and suppositions about God's will, but with the simple observable fact that we approve of some qualities and disapprove of others.

Another general aspect of *The Whole Duty of Man* which Hume would reject is its repeated appeal to teleological explanations. That human beings are created for some purpose or end, and that human desires, inclinations, pastimes and institutions all serve some end designed by God is simply assumed by the author of *The Whole Duty of Man*. The end of drinking, for instance, is to preserve our life and our health, and hence we are under the duty to drink anything and only in quantities which will serve that end. The author speaks in this way of the ends of sleep, of marriage, of eating, of apparel, of truth speaking, etc. Hume, in the EPM, also speaks of ends such as the well-being of mankind and the existence of society. However, these ends are not such in virtue of God's will, but simply because humans all have intrinsic desires for them (EPM App. 1.5). Therefore, instead of appealing to design or to the end of nature as a whole, he presents the observable fact that humans desire pleasing objects non-instrumentally.

Furthermore, and contrary to several passages from the Anglican devotional, Hume writes that virtue is motivating regardless of considerations of rewards or punishments we may reap in an afterlife. Virtue, Hume writes, "is desirable on its own account, without fee or reward, merely for the immediate satisfaction which it conveys..." (EPM App. 1.20). And utility pleases because everything which "contributes to the happiness of society, recommends itself directly to our approbation and good-will" (EPM 5.17). There is hence absolutely no need, according to Hume, to think about possible future rewards or

punishments in an afterlife in order to be moved by virtue, as the author of *The Whole Duty of Man* insists. According to the author of that devotional, afterlife rewards and punishments motivate us away from some sin, and to some duty (see for example Partition VIII. 22). The need for such external sources of motivation stands in direct opposition to Hume's account of moral motivation.

Hume's EPM as a whole stands as an objection to the general points above, but Hume is also more explicit about another aspect of the devotional which he rejects in his last published book on morals. He considers its list of virtues to be too narrow, as the section in which Hume refers to the devotional makes clear. In in this section, Appendix 4 of the EPM, Hume argues that involuntary character traits, sometimes called "natural talents" give rise to esteem and love, and hence are no different in kind from social virtues. Virtues, Hume shows, are not limited to voluntary traits rather than involuntary ones, nor to the moral rather than the intellectual traits. Contrary to the account of *The Whole Duty of Man*, Hume reminds the reader that wit, as well as other natural endowments such as humor, good sense and genius beget esteem and regard and excite love and affection, and hence it is by no means folly to be proud of the goods of nature (EPM 8.1-7; App. 4.6).

Cicero and the ancient moralists, according to Hume, provide the best models of this truth as they "made no material distinction among the different species of mental endowments and defects, but treated all alike under the appellation of virtues and vices" (EPM Appx. 4. 11). In the footnote to this section already mentioned in the introduction to this paper, Hume adds:

I suppose, if Cicero were now alive, it would be found difficult to fetter his moral sentiments by narrow systems; or persuade him, that no qualities were to be admitted as virtues, or acknowledged to be a part of personal merit, but what were recommended by *The Whole Duty of Man*. (EPM Appx. 4. 11. Ft 72)

According to Hume, then, Cicero would not restrict his catalogue of virtues to those that are recommended by *The Whole Duty of Man*. And from this section we know that those that

fetter moral sentiments to narrow systems, such as the system of the devotional, are those that limit the virtues to voluntary traits. The reason these systems fail to include non-voluntary and natural traits, according to Hume, is that they fail to observe that we all approve of these endowments, sometimes even more than of so called “moral” (voluntary) virtues (EPM Appx. 4. 4-6). Hume writes that he would, for his own happiness and self-enjoyment, choose a humane and friendly heart, but, still:

I would rather pass with the world for one endowed with extensive genius and intrepid courage, and should thence expect stronger instances of general applause and admiration. (EPM Appx. 4. 5)

Hence he thinks we enjoy persons with esteemable natural or non-voluntary traits perhaps even more than persons that lack such traits. Furthermore, approval and disapproval of what is useful and agreeable to ourselves and others—including both voluntary and non-voluntary traits—is a natural sentiment which might be resisted in theory but which will most likely reveal itself in practice (EPM 9). *The Whole Duty of Man*, for Hume, is therefore precisely the kind of system that would fail to include those many traits humans tend to esteem. Indeed, the author of *The Whole Duty of Man* points out that it is foolishness to be proud of those character traits which we gave “not to ourselves” (Partition VI. 9).

Therefore, the main problem Hume finds with the devotional is that it starts with revelation, acceptable only to Christians, and not with the method of observation that can be acceptable to all, and develops an account that is too narrow. Careful observation of the reactions of all human beings reveals, according to Hume, that we all approve of both some non-voluntary and voluntary traits and hence leads to a more inclusive list of virtues.

Now, so much can be said about aspects of *The Whole Duty of Man* which Hume would clearly reject. But, as we will now notice, he also approves of central aspects of the devotional, and the picture we have just extracted from *The Whole Duty of Man* is easily nuanced.

3. The EPM and *The Whole Duty of Man*: A more nuanced comparison

Alison McIntyre describes *The Whole Duty of Man* as “a book filled with mortifying reflections,” and that Hume especially rejects its positive view of humility and negative view of pride (McIntyre 2014, 162). It might thus be tempting to think that Hume targets the devotional, not only for the general points mentioned above, but also because it is mortifying in its promoting of ‘virtues’ that are unnatural and, according to Hume, “monkish.” In a well-known passage of the EPM Hume writes that he condemns the morality that religion has promoted. Superstition and false religion encourages difficult and austere duties, and praises “celibacy, fasting, penance, mortification, self-denial, humility, silence, solitude, and the whole train of monkish virtues” (EPM 9.2). These false virtues, Hume continues,

stupefy the understanding and harden the heart, obscure the fancy and sour the temper. We justly, therefore, transfer them to the opposite column, and place them in the catalogue of vices... (EPM 9.2)

Corrupted religion, for Hume, has encouraged these false, monkish, virtues. The question is whether these false virtues are commended by *The Whole Duty of Man*, and hence whether Hume targets this devotional in his rejection of monkish virtues.

A few of these so-called virtues are mentioned in *The Whole Duty of Man*, but certainly not all of them, and overall, I believe that Hume would not characterize this devotional as mortifying. One *monkish virtue* that is mentioned in the devotional is humility. Humility—a sense of our own meanness, and lowly submission before God’s excellence (Partition II, 1) and before God’s will (Partition II, 2)—is important for Allestree because it makes repentance possible. To obey God, he writes, we must get a sense of God’s greatness and recognize that we are poor worms of the earth (Partition II.3). He points out that all our work is full of pollution and infirmity; compared to God our righteousness is like filthy rags (Partition II. 4). Humility, the recognition of our condition, is the first step towards confession, for Allestree, and then to forgiveness and change. In the sections on the duty we

owe to ourselves, Allestree adds that humility holds a primary place because it is useful to obtain all other virtues (Partition VI. 2). There are two sorts of humility we owe ourselves, this author writes: “first having a mean and low opinion of ourselves, and second being content that others should have so of us. The first of these is contrary to pride, the other to vain glory” (Partition VI. 3). Pride, he continues, is the greatest of all sins and is the root of all vice. And it is a huge folly, he writes, to be proud of the goods of nature such as beauty, strength, wit, and the like (Partition VI. 9). Hence, the duty to humility commended in *The Whole Duty of Man* certainly seems to be among the monkish virtues Hume rejects, and therefore seems to indicate that Hume has this book in mind when he rejects the monkish virtues.

In reality, however, the meaning of humility and pride in the following sections of *The Whole Duty of Man* does not sound very monkish. Humility, Allestree writes later in the book, is a close attendant to love, and naturally flows from it (Partition XVI). It is the kind of attitude whereby we turn to the other and see and value the gifts of others which pride had made us neglect. Pride, the author now writes, means thinking too highly of ourselves, and being blind to the other. In another passage, the author of *The whole Duty of Man* describes pride as haughtiness and arrogance (Partition XIII. 19). He also points out that

This is the common guilt of all *proud* and *haughty* persons, who are so busie in admiring themselves, that they over look all that is valuable in others, and so think they owe not so much as common civility to other men, whilst they set up themselves as *Nebuchadnezzar* did his Image to be worshipped of all. (Partition XIII.19)

For Allestree humility is mostly an attitude of openness to the other, and pride is mostly an attitude of arrogance. Under such an understanding of humility and pride, and contrary to what Hume defends in the *Treatise*, Hume would in fact agree that humility is more of a virtue and that pride is more of a vice.

If pride is understood as haughtiness, the EPM reveals that Hume regards such an attitude as a defect rather than a virtue. Regardless of how Hume understands pride in the *Treatise*, it is interesting to notice that Hume does not speak of pride so much in the EPM, and that when he does he tends to annex it with adjectives such as “noble,” as quoted above, or “generous” (EPM 7.4; 7.10). Noble pride, Hume writes in the EPM, is a healthy, and not overblown, notion of our own value (EPM 7.10). Hume makes sure to qualify the kind of pride that we approve of: it is the kind of noble pride which he calls a “generous spirit”, and it is “well-founded and decently disguised” (EPM 8.10). Vanity, conversely, or the intemperate display of our advantages, and an open demand of praise, is a fault, Hume writes:

A small bias toward modesty, even in the internal sentiment, is favourably regarded, especially in young people; and a strong bias is required in the outward behaviour: But this excludes not a noble pride and spirit, which may openly display itself in its full extent, when one lies under calumny or oppression of any kind... In short, a generous spirit and self-value, well-founded, decently disguised, and courageously supported under distress and calumny, is a great excellency... The vicious excess of the former virtue, namely insolence or haughtiness, is immediately disagreeable to others...” (EPM 8.10)

Hume therefore agrees with Allestree that pride as arrogance or insolence is a failure of character.

Furthermore, in Appendix 4 Hume uses the term ‘pride’ (without the qualifications of ‘noble’ or ‘generous’) as a synonym for ‘self-conceit,’ which is also a trait we do *not* esteem according to him (EPM App. 4.4). We might therefore speculate that he adds the qualifications ‘noble’ and ‘generous’ in front of ‘pride’ in the EPM because he agrees with Allestree that one kind of pride (self-conceit or arrogance) is a fault, or perhaps because he wishes to be more inclusive and less critical of his religious readers than he was at the time of the *Treatise*. A more careful reading of the devotional, therefore, reveals that Hume’s views in the EPM are not completely contrary to the devotional’s manner of describing pride and humility.

Other duties from *The Whole Duty of Man* that Hume might more clearly qualify as *monkish* are the ‘duties’ of fasting and the duties related, for instance, to baptism and to the Lord’s table. Fasting, Allestree writes, is properly annexed to repentance and is a sign of humility. It shows our concernment, and by fasting, he writes, “we inflict somewhat of punishment on ourselves” (Partition V. 34). So perhaps fasting is related to what Hume calls “penance” which he also considers to be a monkish virtue. It is very plausible, moreover, that Hume would reject much of the sections of *The Whole Duty of Man* concerning the duties we owe to God. The duties of baptism and of respect at the Lord’s table, for instance, are not the kind of duties or virtues Hume would consider to be those that all human beings approve of either immediately or because of their utility. To be fair, however, Hume simply does not mention these kinds of more religious types of duties found in *The Whole Duty of Man*. Moreover, Hume’s so-called *monkish virtues* of celibacy, silence, and solitude are missing from Allestree’s book, and this author would also reject such virtues as false duties.

Furthermore, the way the author of *The Whole Duty of Man* defines “meekness” also offers reason to doubt that Hume would really include it in the list of monkish virtues. A careful look at its meaning reveals a picture that is not as mortifying as might be assumed.⁸ Meekness, for Allestree, is “A calmness and quietness of spirit, contrary to the rages, and impatiences of anger” (Partition VI. 16). It is like courtesy of behavior, which we owe to all. It is a kind of patience and gentleness towards all, even towards our enemy (XIII.20). The contrary of meekness, he points out, is anger and rage, which makes a man unfit to be a friend or companion (XI.21). It is difficult to think there is anything here with which Hume would disagree, especially given Hume’s high opinion of politeness and courtesy. The

⁸ In reality Hume does not list meekness among the traits that are monkish in the EPM, but one might suppose Hume would reject it as a kind of humility and low sense of one’s own value.

conclusion to draw is that in the EPM Hume does not have *The Whole Duty of Man* in mind when he criticizes monkish traits and points out that they are falsely considered to be duties.⁹

Moreover, it is misguided to think Hume would denounce the religious person who actually lives according to the duties described in *The Whole Duty of Man*. In the EPM, as well as in the *Dialogues* and the *Natural History of Religion*, the religious fanatic Hume criticizes would fail to live up to Hume's virtues, but also to the duties listed in *The Whole Duty of Man*. Hume deplores the hypocrisy of the kind of person who is a religious leader in words, but not in deeds. What Hume fears is the religious person who is at the same time enflamed by political zeal. He writes in a letter of 1748 that religious Whigs are worse than religious Tories because "dissimulation, hypocrisy, calumny, selfishness are, generally speaking, the true and legitimate offspring's of this kind of zeal" (*A True Account*, 33-34; also quoted in Harris 2015, 236). In the *History of England* Hume also frequently paints the picture of so-called religious persons who fail to be virtuous. The problem, for Hume, is not the religious person as such, but rather this person's political zeal and use of religious objects and creeds as political means.

Another aspect of *The Whole Duty of Man* which Hume would approve of is this book's emphasis on action and virtue instead of on sterile faith. Hume would have approved of *The Whole Duty of Man*'s emphasis on works and on the imitation of Christ (XVII.17) rather than on bare faith. As James Harris notes, Hume would be suspicious of a kind of religion which puts too much emphasis on faith rather than on works (Harris 2015, 293-294). If this is correct, then Hume would have approved of the focus of *The Whole Duty of Man*.

The critical stance of *The Whole Duty of Man* towards enthusiasm is an element which Hume would welcome as well. For the author of *The Whole Duty of Man*, order and

⁹ This is a point I also make in my forthcoming paper, "Hume on Religion in the *Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*" (Kroeker forthcoming).

establishment are important. God, the author writes, “has established an order in the church for the admitting of men to this Office” of minister and

they that shall take it upon them without that authority, resist that ordinance, and are but of the number of those thieves and robbers, as our Saviour speaks... And whosoever countenances them, or followes them, partakes with them in their guilt. (XIV. 8)

The author therefore admonishes those free enthusiasts who act independently outside of the church order. It is unlikely Hume thinks of the church and its ministers as established by God, but still Hume prefers the order of some state church run by official ministers than the “hair-brained enthusiast” who “will scarcely ever be admitted, when alive, into intimacy and society, except by those who are as delirious and dismal as himself” (EPM 147). The two authors, therefore, share the same attitude towards enthusiast leaders, even if they differ in their reasons for criticizing them.

Finally, contrary to what authors write when they speak of *The Whole Duty of Man* as presenting a bleak picture of human nature and an austere view of morality with an emphasis on mortification and self-denial, one must acknowledge the many passages of this book that emphasize happiness and pleasure as the end of duty. Allestree emphasizes repeatedly that the practice of many duties is in fact pleasant. If you pray, for instance, you will realize that the duty of prayer is very pleasant. He adds that “God is the fountain of happiness, and at his right hand there are pleasures evermore” (V. 17). In another passage he argues that contentedness is an important duty we owe to ourselves because it is impossible to be happy without it (VII.1). He even deplores those who deny themselves sleep, food, and recreation, because they deny themselves what is necessary for their well-being (IX.12).

Furthermore, despite the passages in which Allestree exhorts us to be virtuous in order to reap future blessings, he also points out that following the several duties leads to health and soundness of mind (X.6), and following them serves the better ordering of the world (XIII.15). The author also points out that when our whole conduct is in line with duty,

uneasiness gives way to joy, to companionship and to peace with other human beings (XVI.). Allestree hence holds that virtue leads to happiness not only in the next life, but also in this life. He concludes his manual, in Partition XVII, by reminding us that “there is in the practice of Christian duties a great deal of present pleasure” (XVII.20) and “All that remains for me farther to add, is earnestly to intreat and beseech the Reader, that without delay, he puts himself into this so *pleasant*, so *gainful* a course...” (XVII. 22). “A pleasant and gainful course”—this sounds very much like Hume’s “agreeable and useful” traits which are those, for Hume, that we approve and that form the basis of morality. Hume hence shares *The Whole Duty of Man*’s endeavor to present virtue and duty as pleasant, and as leading to happiness and well-being. Hume, similarly, wishes to argue that his own account shows the agreeableness and utility of virtue, and to present virtue in her genuine and most pleasing charm.

4. Conclusion: Hume’s re-appropriation of the project of *The Whole Duty of Man*

By the time Hume composes his EPM, therefore, his criticism of *The Whole Duty of Man* is nuanced and double-sided. It is mistaken to think that Hume would reject this manual because of it is filled with mortifying reflections. Moreover, Hume together with the author of the devotional think of utility and pleasure as important ends of virtuous traits and actions. Both authors conclude their manuals with the claim that the virtues and duties they list lead to happiness—which is a striking coincidence between both works.

The two authors, moreover, share the devotional’s project: to describe the *whole* duty of man, and to present it in a plain and familiar way for the use of all, especially the meanest reader. It is therefore no wonder that the two important aspects of the devotional that Hume rejects are the fact that it starts with revelation rather than observation, and that its list is wrongly limited to the voluntary traits only. Such points, I will now show, lead to confusions, according to Hume, about the whole duty of man and about the scope of an accurate moral

theory. I will also conclude by bringing to light a final aim which Hume shares with Allestree's book, which is to reach a large audience and be as influential as the religious text.

In the EPM, Hume's insistence on what he views to be the correct method, the experimental method of observation, leads him to conclude that morality is grounded in human nature—in human affections—and observation, he writes, shows that humans approve of all qualities that are useful and agreeable to oneself and to others. Relying on this method, we have noticed, will bring to light the broad scope of the catalogue of virtues, since it includes many qualities that are non-voluntary as well as voluntary. When Hume rejects the method and scope of *The Whole Duty of Man*, therefore, he brings to light a confusion he would find in this devotional. The confusion, according to Hume, is found in the author's attempt to describe the whole duty of man while using a Christian method, and ending with a religious and limited list of virtues.

What Hume seems to reject is Allestree's attempt to offer a universal and philosophical account of morality at the same time as a religious account. The author of *The Whole Duty of Man* often points out that he is writing to Christians only, and not to everyone (Partition I.8). But in many passages the author seems to say that all humans have a basic knowledge of the gospel (Partition VI.21), and hence that all should follow his advice. The author, moreover, often writes as though Christian duties are really universal duties, to which all human beings are bound. And he also often appeals to nature and he writes that acting contrary to duty is not only un-Christian but also inhumane (Partition XVI). The author at times insinuates that the morality he is describing is in fact grounded in human nature as well as in Revelation (Partition XII.8). This is the type of confusion that Hume would certainly seek to abolish. Morality, true morality, is for Hume grounded only in human nature, and its core is universal because common to all human beings. Hume writes in his conclusion that "the notion of morals implies some sentiment common to all mankind, which recommends

the same object to general approbation and makes every man, or most men, agree in the same opinion or decision concerning it” (EPM 9.5).

The Whole Duty of Man’s understanding of ends as serving a purpose designed by God and its account of future rewards and punishments also reveals the kind of foundation Hume rejects in the EPM. Only particular religious groups would accept that ends are to be understood as divine purposes, and only some of these groups would think that morality motivates because of after-life rewards and punishments. It is important for Hume, on the other hand, to offer an account of morality which is based in facts that all human beings would recognize. The account of the EPM, then, is Hume’s way of reaching an account of morality that all human beings would recognize and accept. Hume, in fact, points out that in practice all human beings tend to approve of what is agreeable or useful either to themselves or to others (EPM 9). And he insists that we start with feelings that are common to all human beings: feelings of approval and disapproval (EPM 1). He writes, as we have seen, that the ancients, not the Christians, are to be taken as examples of accounts and of catalogues of virtues that are more reflective of what all human beings approve.¹⁰ Hence, his main criticism of *The Whole Duty of Man* is that it fails to reach its aim of describing the whole duty of human beings, and his aim in the EPM is to offer an account of morality that is truly reflective of what *all* would approve or disapprove.

Hume, therefore, is especially critical of the fact that, according to him, *The Whole Duty of Man* fails to be reflective of the sentiments of all human beings, and that since its method is not universal and accurate enough, it fails to describe the *whole* duty of man. The EPM, on the other hand, relying on what Hume considers to be a more trustworthy method, opens up the way for understanding the whole duty of man, offering a list that is non-

¹⁰ In a letter to Hutcheson Hume writes that “upon the whole” he took his catalogue of virtues “from Cicero’s Offices, not from *The Whole Duty of Man*” (Letters of David Hume, ed. Greig, Vol. I, 34; also quoted in Harris 2015, 136).

exhaustive and which is much more inclusive than the Anglican list, and one which can clearly be acceptable to all human beings.

Furthermore, Hume deplores the success of religious texts, and his wish and objective with the EPM is to reach an audience that is as large if not larger than the audience of the religious text. Ultimately, Hume rejects a Christian basis for morality, or any basis that excludes part of humanity, but his way of writing mimics not only Allestree's aim of describing all of morality—morality reflective of all human beings—but also the aim of being acceptable to the meanest reader.

This conclusion follows from how Hume concludes the final Appendix of the EPM. He writes here, through the mouth of the main character of “A Dialogue” that religion, in ancient times, had very little influence on common life. He points out that “In those ages, it was the business of philosophy alone to regulate men's ordinary behavior and deportment” (EPM *A Dialogue* 53). Now, Hume laments

philosophy has lost the allurements of novelty, it has not such extensive influence; but seems to confine itself mostly to speculations in the closet; in the same manner, as the ancient religion was limited to sacrifices in the temple. Its place is now supplied by the modern religion, *which inspects our whole conduct*, and prescribes an universal rule to our actions, to our words, to our very thoughts and inclinations; a rule so much the more austere, as it is guarded by infinite, though distant, rewards and punishments... (EPM *A Dialogue* 53)

When Hume writes of a modern religion that “inspects our whole conduct,” one cannot help noticing the parallel with the aspiration and title of *The Whole Duty of Man*. And Hume's point here is that the problem with *The Whole Duty of Man*, as well as with other influential religious works, is that it wrongly tries to be universal, and also that it is extremely popular. The problem is that such a religious work makes misguided claims about the whole conduct of man, but also that it presents itself as an authority in matters of morality, and that it has pushed philosophy into the closet.

Hume regrets the popularity of *The Whole Duty of Man*, and what he really endeavors to do is to present his own, re-appropriated, unconfused, truly universal version of it—a version that would be accepted by everyone. Undeniably, the Anglican devotional was among the most important religious texts of the 18th century, and it held a place in the private libraries of most readers of Hume’s days. That Hume would be envious of the devotional’s popularity may be gathered from his passion for success. In his short biography of his life, *My Own Life*, Hume presents himself as being extremely attentive to how well his works were received and to how widely they were read. He describes the *Treatise* as “unfortunate” and as falling “dead-born from the press” (MOL, XXVIII). These descriptions seem exaggerated today, but, still, they reveal Hume’s careful attention to the reception of his book. He later speaks of his “mortification” in discovering that his “performance” in writing the *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* “was entirely overlooked and neglected” (MOL XXIX). But then shares his delight in the gradual increase in sales and that “new editions were demanded” (Ibid.). Hume’s reputation and renown seem, according to himself at least, to grow after the publishing of the EPM, and hence, he writes, “these symptoms of a rising reputation gave me encouragement” (MOL XXX).

Hume also describes his discouragement and disappointment by the early reception of the first volume of the *History of England* (MOL XXX). In light of the fact that “what was still more mortifying, the book seemed to sink into oblivion,” Hume writes: I “was, I confess, discouraged” (MOL XXX-XXXI). But, again, the sale of the volumes of the *History of England* began to rise, and Hume shares his joy in his rising reputation. He admits, towards the end of his biography, that “literary fame” is “my ruling passion” (MOL XXXIII). Hume, therefore, reveals a strong standing desire for a large audience.

Hume's ruling passion for literary fame is also a passion that is exposed in some of his letters. Hume writes, for example, in a 1755 letter to William Strahan that the public has misunderstood some of his views. But, he writes,

All this we must bear with Patience. The public is the most capricious mistress we can court; and we authors, who write for fame, must not be repulsed by some rigors, which are always temporary, when they are unjust. (L 110, p. 222).

Even though Hume is referring to the first volume of his *History of England* here, his standing desire for fame and recognition cannot be missed (see also, for example, L 120, p. 235).

We may conclude, therefore, that Hume consistently sought to be successful and widely read. This is true about all of his works, but the style of the EPM, he notices, is more focused and more accessible to a wider public. Hume's project with his EPM, and this is perhaps why he found it to be his best work (MOL XXX),¹¹ is to offer his own universal account of the whole conduct of man, and he is hoping his book will be accepted and read by all and will push religion back into the closet and place philosophy—his philosophy—back into the spot light. Hume does not target *The Whole Duty of Man* as a book of superstition, enthusiasm, or mortification. On the contrary, Hume agrees with many claims of this book, including the importance of happiness and pleasure. Hume rejects *The Whole Duty of Man*'s method and list of virtues, but he shares the aim of describing the whole merit of duty of man, and the aim of reaching a large audience. In the end, therefore, Hume's EPM is his own corrected, secularized, and re-appropriated version of *The Whole Duty of Man*, and in fact, instead of calling it *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals* he could have given it the following title: "The Whole Merit of Man laid down in plain and familiar way for the use of all, but especially the meanest reader."

¹¹ Hume writes that his *Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals* is "of all my writings, historical, philosophical, or literary, incomparably the best" (MOL XXX).

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