Hume as a Western Mādhyamika: The Case from Ethics*

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I. The Irrelevance of LaFlèche

I am not the only person to have argued (1990, 2011, 2015) that Hume is a kind of Western Mādhyamika. And indeed in my experience teaching Hume at Tibetan universities in India is that Tibetan scholars instantly recognize him as a *kind* of Mādhyamika, even if they are not sure that there is a ready-made *grub 'mtha* (doxographic) box within that camp into which to fit him. Most of the grounds for this classification are metaphysical, concerning Hume's accounts of causation, the nature of personal identity and his account of the construction of the idea of external objects, each of which is strongly redolent of the thought of Candrakīrti, although with hints of Bhāviveka as well.[1]

Gopnik has recently argued (2010) that this is no accident of history. She points out that Hume was resident at La Fleche Abbey at precisely the time that Ippolito Desideri was in residence following his remarkable sojourn in Tibet, and hypothesizes that Hume in fact borrowed all of his apparently Buddhist ideas from Buddhism as related to him by Desideri.[2] Were this true, it would be one of the more remarkable instances of direct borrowing of Buddhist ideas by an early modern philosopher, alongside that of Leibniz' virtual plagiarism of the *Huayan*

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[1] That is, there my Tibetan colleagues note that in certain respects—e.g. Hume's taking convention as a kind of explanatory bedrock, and his refusal to take it for granted that we always have concepts corresponding to our words—he appears to be a good thal 'gyur pa/Prāsaṅgika; but in other respects, e.g. his apparent willingness to accept some convention-independent phenomena for granted—such as impressions or events—he appears more like a rang gyud pa/Svatantrika.

[2] See Desideri (2010) for a detailed account of Desideri's time in Tibet and fascinating observations on Buddhism.

(*Avataṃsika) Sūtra* from rough translations sent to him by his Jesuit correspondents in China.[3]

Unfortunately, however, Gopnik's historical argument is at best tendentious. For one thing, every one of the Humean ideas that Gopnik urges is borrowed from Tibet is also present in very much the form that Hume develops it in the Western skeptical tradition, developed at length by Sextus Empiricus and reported by Bayle. We know that Hume read Bayle and Sextus with care, and so there is no reason to think that he would not simply have borrowed the arguments he advances from them. So the Tibetan hypothesis is not necessary in order to explain the phenomenon.

For another thing, Hume, as we know, was a merciless critic of the Christian church, and particularly of Catholicism, and was more than willing to bite the hand that fed him. If he had discovered at LaFlèche that ideas he was advancing were endorsed by Buddhists—those condemned as pagan heretics by the church—he would surely have reveled in the opportunity to elevate pagan learning over Catholic doctrine. That he does not suggests strongly that he was not in fact aware of the affinities of his own ideas to those of Buddhism.

Nonetheless, as McEvilly (2002) and Beckwith (2015) have each persuasively argued, there is *something* to Gopnik's claim of influence. It is just that the links in this chain are older than she imagines. There is good (but again, not demonstrative) reason, including the testimony of Diogenes Laertius, to believe that there was interaction—perhaps mediated by Alexander's campaigns, perhaps by the Persian court, perhaps in Greek Bactria—between classical Greek and Indian Buddhist philosophers. Indeed, as Beckwith argues, classical skepticism may be an Indian import to Greece. Hume sits firmly in the Western skeptical tradition and borrows not only a general Pyrrhonian outlook, but many specific Pyrrhonian dialectical tropes. So there is good reason to believe that the confluence between Humean and Buddhist insights is not accidental, even if not mediated by Desideri's time in Tibet and Hume's sojourn in LaFlèche.

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[3] See Liu (1982) for more on this affinity.

II. Metaphysics and Ethics in Hume and Madhyamaka

I am not interested here in exploring further the metaphysical affinities between Hume and Madhyamaka philosophers such as Nāgārjuna, Āryadeva or Candrakīrti. But it is worth thinking for a moment about the connection between metaphysics and ethics, both in Hume's philosophy and in the Indian Madhyamaka tradition. The homologies are striking and they set the stage for further reflection. In each case we find that the account of the status of the self and of the role of convention (or custom) in constituting both our social phenomenology and ontology is fundamental to developing ethical theory. Let us take the Madhyamaka case first. Both Āryadeva and Śāntideva take the emptiness of the self and the failure to find any substantial referent for 'I' ethically significant.

Āryadeva argues that the emptiness of the self renders all self-grasping irrational, and hence egoism irrational. On the other hand, in chapter VI of *Catuḥṣataka (Four Hundred Stanzas),* he takes the fact that persons exist conventionally to be a good reason to care about sentient beings. The fact that we do not exist ultimately hence defuses egoism; the fact that we do exist conventionally grounds the possibility of care. (Cowherds 2015)

Śāntideva takes a similar route, but goes further along it. In chapter 8 of *Bodhicāryāvatāra* (90-103), he argues that the absence of any self means that suffering, *per se,* is the object of care, and hence there can be no question of the ontology of selves grounding ethics. Instead, he argues, we construct sentient beings and perceive them as loci of suffering or happiness only through the force of mundane convention. Seen through the lens of convention there is compelling reason to relieve suffering and so to posit sentient beings as its bearer; seen from the ultimate point of view, there is no rational basis for preferring self , or one's own happiness or relief from suffering over others, or theirs. Śāntideva argues that it follows that universal concern is the only rational moral response. (*Ibid.)*

So, whether we think of conventional existence as the *absence* of any ultimate reality to self or others, or as the *positive reality* of the mundane world as a locus for moral action, Indian Mādhyamikas take convention to structure the way we experience the world morally and the way we respond to the world we experience. The union of emptiness and conventional reality, and the emptiness, but conventional reality of suffering and of sentient beings together ground the bodhisattva's ethics of *karuṇā* or care, and its universal scope.

Hume agrees that metaphysics grounds ethics. Despite the remarkable convergence between Humean and Mādhyamika accounts of the self, however, and despite remarkable convergences in their respective approaches to ethics, Hume's account of the role of metaphysical ideas in ethical thought is different. Hume urges that we begin with natural sympathy, a biological response of care for those close to us. But natural sympathy, like gravity, Hume believes, obeys an inverse square law. In order to extend that sympathy into a sense of justice—that is, to universalize concern—serious moral education and the cultivation of the moral imagination is necessary. (*Treatise II:I:VII; III:II:1; III:III:I)*[4]

III. Moral Perception in Hume and Madhyamaka

Moreover, for both Hume and the Mādhyamikas, ethical training is directed at the reform of moral *perception* through the recruitment of the *moral imagination.* (Cowherds, 2015, Garfield 2012a, 2012b, 2015) Once again, let us begin in India. The bodhisattva comes to *see* herself as empty of intrinsic reality; comes to *see* other sentient beings as empty, interdependent loci of suffering, and responds ethically to those perceptions. This transformation is accomplished through meditation on emptiness, meditation devoted to the cultivation of awareness of others, and meditation directed specifically at the development of *muditā* (sympathetic joy), *metta* (beneficence) and *karuṇā*

[4] One must be careful not to oversell this disanalogy, however. Śāntideva devotes chapter 8 of *Bodhicāryāvatāra (How to Lead an Awakened Life)* to meditation precisely because he believes that it is important to repeatedly visualize the consequences of vice and virtue, and the interrelatedness of sentient beings, in order to counteract egoism by cultivating care. So Hume and Śāntideva agree about the need for cultivation, and indeed about the role of the imagination in that cultivation. They disagree about the nature of that cultivation, with Hume taking that process to be social, and Śāntideva taking it to be contemplative.

(care). The first leads one to see others' achievements and happiness as sources of one's own; the second leads one to take others' well-being as one's own ends; the third leads one to take others' suffering as one's own motivation for action. The consequence is the transformation of one's experience of the world from that conditioned by egocentricity and egoism to one permeated by a sense of interconnection with and concern for others.

It is important to note that in these Mahāyāna practices, the principal vehicle for reforming perception, for eliminating the superimposition of self-grasping, and of positing intrinsic identity, of seeing oneself as the unique subjective center of an objective universe, is the imagination. We *imagine* that all sentient beings are our mothers; we *imagine* ourselves and other as corpses, as collections of parts and even particles, as propelled by our *kleśas, etc.* (Garfield 2010/2011)[5]

Hume also recruits the moral imagination in the transformation of moral perception. He argues that when we develop a sense of justice, we extend natural sympathy to others by imagining them to be like us, by focusing on that we share with them. This imaginative reconception of others leads us in turn to see them as objects of sympathy, and so to respond morally to others. It is hard to overstate how unusual Hume's approach to ethics is in the Western tradition, grounding moral sensibility in the imagination and perception. The affinity to Madhyamaka ethical theory as set out by Śāntideva and his commentators Prajñākaramati and Kamalaśīla, who ties moral development even more explicitly to imaginative meditative practice, is striking.[6]

IV. The Cultivation of Passions in Hume and Madhyamaka

A second analogy between Hume's approach to ethics and that of Mādhyamikas such as Candrakīrti and Śāntideva is their shared commitment to the view that the cultivation of the passions is central to ethical development. Note that this is a very particular way of understanding the process of ethical maturation and the

[5] Of course this is not unique to Mahāyāna ethical cultivation. We also see the imagination at work in tantra.

[6] See Prajñākaramati's *Pañjika* to the *Bodhicāryāvatāra* (Oldmeadow 1994) and Kamalaśīla's *Bhavanākrama (Stages of Meditation)* (Sharma 1997).

subject matter of ethics. While in the West the view that the cultivation of the passions is ethically important is not original with Hume—we find anticipations in Aristotle and especially in Stoic and Epicurean ethical theory—it is in Hume's work that we find the most comprehensive and sophisticated account of ethics as *principally* a discipline of affective cultivation.

For Kant, ethical development involves the subordination of the will to reason and the elimination of the passions as springs of action. For Mill and the consequentialists, as well, moral maturity involves a disposition to rational calculation of the consequences of actions. And while Aristotle, Epicurus, Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius would all agree that ethical cultivation involves the transformation and shaping of the emotions, each of them also sees the development of knowledge, and such capacities as moral strength as central to that enterprise.

Hume, on the other hand, urges that morality begins with our natural sentiments, our affections for those close to us, and develops by extending those sentiments to encompass others. Once again, it is the imagination, and not reason, that is the engine for this extension, as we learn to see those more distant from us as akin to those more proximal. Although reason plays an important role in this transformation, that role is instrumental, not constitutive. Reason is useful in transforming the tendencies of our passions, but it that affective transformation in which moral development consists. The imaginative exercises that Śāntideva urges on us (imagining other sentient beings as our mothers; imagining the suffering of others, imagining our own death, etc) are exactly the kinds of exercises we can imagine a Humean parent employing in raising and socializing her children.

In *Enquiry V,* Hume remarks that these moral sentiments must be originally natural, both in order for the raw material for moral development to be present and for the very practice of regarding such motives as benevolence as good, and motives such as malice as morally bad. For, he argues, to take an affective response as morally salutary is just for us to take it as a source of natural

pleasure on contemplation; to take a response as morally vicious is to recoil from it. If these antecedent individual and collective tendencies were not generally present, morality could never get off the ground. Moreover, he points out (p. 47) someone who has the opposite view of moral sentiments is not so much deficient in understanding as *inhuman.* But of course to get from natural sympathy to a universal sense of justice takes work, and that is the work of reason. But even to value that work requires antecedently that we see it as worthwhile.

Moreover, the important role Hume assigns to reason in this process has an important parallel in Buddhist literature. Hume famously argues that "reason always is, and must be, a slave to the passions," and it might therefore be thought that on a Humean account reason can provide no guidance at all in moral development. But this would be wrong. As Hume makes clear, reason has an important, although *indirect* role here. It is reason that tells us that the cultivation of the passions in the service of the extension of natural sympathy into justice and benevolence is a good thing. That is why we bother to do it. As Hume remarks, it makes civilization, commerce and a truly human life possible. While reason may not be the spring of action, it is a guide to policy.[7]

Things aren't much different on the Madhyamaka side. Once again, Śāntideva aims to cultivate our passions and our ways of seeing. When I encounter someone I might plausibly take to be an enemy, I should see a friend; when someone harms me, I should receive that harm as a benefit, as a chance to practice patience. These reactions are cultivated ways of perceiving, cultivated emotional response. My own actions in return are driven by these perceptions and affective responses. The affective side, for Śāntideva, holds the reins in the chariot of action, just as it does for Hume.

[7] We might also note that there is a parallel in the Humean and Madhyamaka accounts of the role of reason in action selection itself. In each case, *what* we desire or reject is determined by the moral passions. Reason (*upāya,* or practical wisdom) enters the picture to determine the means by which we can achieve those ends. This is the point of the "slave of the passions" remark.

Nonetheless, Śāntideva *argues* that we ought to adopt these attitudes, and convinces us using *reason* that we ought to cultivate our perception and affective responses in this way. (Cowherds 2015) Moreover, in *Bodhicāryāvatāra* (particularly in chapter VI) he offers us a multitude of arguments to use in meditation and in action to restrain ourselves from overhasty responses to insult and to lead us to act with beneficence. So, while reason may not in the end hold the reins, the charioteer is certainly trained by, and makes use of reason.

V. Taking the Conventional Seriously in Hume and Madhyamaka

There is one final homology between the Humean and the Madhyamaka ethical traditions, and it may be the most important of all, lying at the foundation of all of those just scouted. Hume, like any good Mādhyamika, establishes ethical truth at the conventional level of discourse, and regards ethical practice as dependent entirely on human conventions. Justice and benevolence, he argues, are artificial virtues, instituted by conventions, cultivated by social conventions and have no basis outside of those conventions.[8] Hume argues that while we have natural motives to pursue our narrow self-interest, and even that of those immediately near to us, but no natural motive to justice in general. He concludes the astute discussion in *Treatise III:II:I* as follows:

> From all this it follows, that we have naturally no real or universal motive for observing the laws of equity, but the very equity and merit of that observance; and as no action can be equitable or meritorious, where it cannot arise from some separate motive, there is here an evident sophistry and reasoning in a circle. Unless, therefore, we will allow, that nature has establish'd a sophistry, and render'd it necessary and unavoidable, we must allow, that the sense of justice and injustice is not deriv'd from nature, but arises artificially, tho' necessarily from education, and human conventions. (*Treatise* 483)

[8] This, as I argue in 2012a and 2014, is a major difference between a Humean or Buddhist and a Kantian approach to ethics. For Kant, ethics is grounded in a transcendental realm, and in the reality and freedom of a unified self—a transcendental ego and ethical agent. For Hume and his Mādhyamika forebears, ethics is grounded in an understanding of the emptiness of the person, of the absence of such a self, and in the conventional reality of persons and suffering.

But of course Hume mitigates this conclusion almost immediately, in a justly famous passage:

> To avoid giving offence, I must here observe, that when I deny justice to be a natural *natural* only as oppos'd to *artificial.* In another sense of the word; as no principle of the human mind is more natural than a sense of virtue; so no virtue is more natural than justice. Mankind is an inventive species; and where an invention is obvious and absolutely necessary, it may as properly be said to be natural as any thing that proceeds from first principles, without the intervention of thought or reflexion. Tho' the rules of justice be *artificial,* they are not *arbitrary.* (484)

And this is how it has to be for Mādhyamikas as well. After all, persons have only conventional existence, actions have only conventional existence, as do their effects. Ethical cultivation is about cultivating our ability to engage with each other, and to proceed on the path to awakening. It is a matter for those of us in a conventional world, and ethical truth can only be conventional truth. As Āryadeva puts it in *Catuḥśataka VI:*

> 8. Whatever concerns the everyday world
> Is said to involve engagement.
> Whatever concerns the ultimate
> Is said to involve relinquishment.
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> 9. When you say "since everything is nonexistent,
> what's the use?"
> You have become afraid.
> But if actions existed [ultimately],
> This dharma could not engender
> abandonment.[9]

And to engage in the world ethically requires, both Āryadeva and Śāntideva emphasise, the understanding of selflessness in very much the sense of Hume, bu also the cultivation of sentiments such as benevolence and justice. Just as Hume argues that the rejection of justice would be unnatural and irrational, Śāntideva,

[9] Translations my own from the sDe dge edition.

in Chapter VIII of *Bodhicāryāvatāra* argues that egoism would be fundamentally irrational:[10]

90 First, one should earnestly meditate
On the similarity of self and others:
Everyone, subject to similar happiness and suffering,
Should be protected by me like myself

91 Just as the body, having many parts, divided into hands etc.
Should be protected as one.
The world, though divided, is undivided
With respect to the nature of suffering and happiness.

92 Even if my own suffering
Does not hurt others' bodies,
That suffering is still mine and is hard to bear
Because of self-love.

93 Just so, even though
I do not experience
The suffering of another myself, it is still his;
His suffering is hard to bear because of self-love.

94 The suffering of others should be eliminated by me,
Because it is suffering like my own suffering.
I should help others
Because they are sentient beings, as I am a sentient being.

95 When the happiness of myself and others
Are pleasing in the same way,
Then what is so special about me
That I merely strive for my own happiness?

96 When the fear and suffering of myself and others
Are not pleasing in the same way
Then what is so special about me
That I defend myself, but not others?

[10] Translation from Cowherds 2015, pp. 59-60. See pp 68-74 for the detailed reading of this passage as an argument for the irrationality of egoism.

97 If they are not defended
Because their suffering does not hurt me,
So why defend against the suffering of a future body
That does not hurt me?

98 It is vain fantasy
To think "that is me then."
Only another died
From which only another is born.

99 If it is thought that only the suffering which is his
Should be protected,
When a pain in the foot does not belong to the hand,
Why should it protect that?

100 Even though it is wrong,
This happens because of self-construction [ahaṃkāra]."
But that which is wrong, whether one's own or others',
Should be avoided as far as possible.

101 A continuum and collection,
Just like such things as a series or an army, are unreal.
The one for whom there is suffering does not exist.
Therefore to whom will that suffering belong?

102 Since all ownerless sufferings are
Without distinction,
They should be alleviated just because of being
suffering,
What restriction can be made in that case?

103 Why should suffering be alleviated?"
Because it is undisputed by everyone that
If it is to be alleviated, all of it is to be alleviated.
After all, I am just like everyone else.

So there is another deep affinity between Hume's approach to ethics and that of the Indian Mādhyamika ethicists: While neither Hume nor Śāntideva takes reason to provide original ethical motives, and while each takes ethical cultivation to be a cultivation of the passions, each takes that cultivation itself to be rational, and a refusal to do so to be fundamentally irrational. That is, while each analyzes *being morally good* affectively, each answers the question "why be good?" by arguing that it is the only rational option for human beings.

VI. What it is to be a Mādhyamika Ethicist

What is distinctive about Madhyamaka ethics? We might say that it is the installation of *karuṇā*, or *care,* as the central ethical virtue, and of engaged *bodhicitta*[11] as the central mode of ethical being. Here is a way to make that explicit. The fundamental ethical stance for a Madhyamaka is one of *care* for others, and one in which we find ourselves connected directly to the wellbeing and the suffering of others in perception and immediate affective response. It is to *see* the world through the eyes of a bodhisattva; to *respond* to it with the heart of a bodhisattva; and to *act* in it with the commitment of a bodhisattva. And it is to cultivate that stance because on reflection it is the most reasonable one to adopt.

This account centers our interconnections, our joint membership in human and animal communities and the plasticity of our perceptual and affective responses to one another. It is also to take a world in which we engage for one another's benefit as a better world than one in which we engage egoistically, not simply because the world is happier that way, but because the nature of human reality demands that as a rational response to our shared humanity. This is Śāntideva's insight, and it is Hume's. Annette Baier (1987) once remarked that Hume is the ideal feminist philosopher precisely on the grounds that he fronts our social relations, the important of childrearing in moral development and the centrality of affect in ethics. He is also the ideal Buddhist philosopher, not merely as a metaphysician, but also as an ethicist.

VII. The Passions and the Self

I conclude with what might be the deepest connection of all between Hume and the Buddhist tradition, the remarkable insight that our sense of self is not the *cause* of our passions, but is rather their *effect.* This is a profound idea and is not immediately apparent. There is good reason on the Buddhist side even to doubt

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[11] As I argue in 2010/2011, Śāntideva distinguishes in the first chapter of *Bodhicāryāvatāra* between *aspirational* and *engaged* bodhicitta on the basis of whether or not the agent has cultivated a perception of phenomena as empty of intrinsic reality and so a spontaneous attitude of care towards others issuing from a decentering of the self.

it. After all, the primal confusion that lies at the root of *samsāra* is often represented as the cause of attraction and aversion, and hence of the other *kleśas*, or dysfunctional cognitive states. But this is overhasty. For one thing, it is worth noting that even on the *Bhāvacakra*—the Buddhist representation of the wheel of life—the three are represented at the hub of the image as *mutually reinforcing.* The point of that remarkable graphic map of human moral psychology (which I discuss at greater length in 2010/2011) is that moral immaturity is due to the mutually reinforcing effects of these primary *kleśas*, and the resultant incessant cycling through maladaptive emotional states grounded in an egocentric view of our place in the moral universe.

And when we turn to Śāntideva's exposition of this view in *Bodhicāryāvatāra,* especially in the first three chapters of that text, we see passions such as fear and anger as giving rise to the sense of ego, not necessarily arising from it. Fear of death causes us to posit something permanent, a self, which taken to be continuous in life, and perhaps even surviving death, a self that then becomes the anchor of egoism at the center of each of our respective universes. An emotion of anger arises; we justify it by positing a self that has been offended. This is what Śāntideva has in mind when he says, in chapter VI, on patience and anger

24. Nobody becomes angry having formed
The intention to become angry;
Nor does anger simply occur having formed
The intention for it to occur.

Here, rGyal tshab comments, "…Moreover, it is explained that it (anger) is the condition first of the arising of the self, and then of the arising of the dysfunctional states." (1999, p.188)

25. All vicious and evil deeds
Of whatever kind
Arise from circumstances and conditions.
Nothing exists independently.

26. Nor does the collection of conditions form
The intention, "I shall come into being."
Nor does that which produces it do so
Having formed the intention, "I will produce."

> 27. Neither the so-called fundamental substance one might posit,
> Nor the self one might imagine to exist
> Comes into existence having formed the intention,
> "Now I will will come into existence."

rGyal tshab explains (pp, 189-190) that this means that it makes no sense to think that the self comes into existence by itself or from antecedent conditions, since it itself is non-existent. Instead, the idea that there is a self is what requires explanation, and the explanation of that is not the intention to posit the self, but rather the egocentric affective states themselves. The illusion of self, after all, like any illusion, requires explanation, and when we press hard in Buddhist philosophy, that explanation lies, as rGyl tshab's teacher Tsongkhapa (2006) emphasizes, not in bad philosophy, but in an innate tendency to reify, and that tendency is called into action not by reason, but by affect.

Hume agrees, and pushes even deeper into the matter than do most Buddhist philosophers. In the *Treatise,* considering the relation of the passions to the self, he writes:

> 'Tis evident that pride and humility, tho' directly contrary, have the same OBJECT. This object is self, or that succession of related ideas and impressions of which we have in intimate memory and consciousness. (277)

…

> But tho' that connected succession of perceptions, which we call *self,* be always the object of these two passions, 'tis impossible that it be their CAUSE, or sufficient alone to excite them. (277-278)

That is, even though the content of the passions are always *directed towards* the self, they are not brought about *by* the self. And one reason for that, on a Humean view, as on a Buddhist view, is simply that while intentional contents can be non-existent (and the self as an intentional content must be),[12] only that which exists

[12] Though this is not the place to go into this, there is a further nice affinity here: for, just as rGyal tshab claims (190) that the very idea of a self "makes no sense" and that the self "is incoherent, like the horns of a rabbit," Hume, of course, argues that we have no idea

can be causally efficacious, and the self, according to Hume, and according to his Buddhist forebears, does not exist. Hume emphasizes the creative power of the passions to bring about this illusion:

> We must therefore make a distinction betwixt the cause and the object of these passions; betwixt that idea that excites them, and that to which they direct their view, when excited. Pride and humility, being once rais'd, immediately turn our attention to ourself, and regard that as their ultimate and final object, but there is something farther that is requisite in order to raise them: Something, which is peculiar to one of the passions… (278)

It is when the passions arise that we are tempted to posit this object for them, an object that we then take to be the center of our world. This, Hume observes, in a reprise of the idea that to posit a self is an act of reflex primal confusion, is always a confusion of object with cause. The causes of the passions, he observes, in complete agreement with Śāntideva, lie without:

> To begin with the causes of pride and humility; we may observe, that their most obvious and remarkable property is the vast variety of *subjects* on which they may be plac'd. Every valuable quality of the mind, whether of the imagination, judgment, memory or disposition; wit, good sense, learning, courage, justice, integrity; all these are the causes of pride; and their opposites of humility. Nor are these passions confin'd to the mind, but extend their view to the body likewise. A man may be proud of his beauty, strength, agility, good mien, address in dancing, riding, fencing…But this is not all. The passions looking farther, comprehend whatever objects are in the least ally'd or related to us. Our country, family, children, relations, riches, gardens, houses, horses, dogs, cloaths; any of these may become a cause either of pride or of humility. (278-279)

And like Śāntideva and Tsongkhapa, Hume thinks that it is part of our biological (or what we might call in Sanskrit our *karmic)* inheritance that we respond to these causes by positing the self. Here is Hume on primal, innate *ahaṃkāra:*

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of a self in the first place. So, according to both Hume and rGyal tshab, this is an instance where the intentional content of our passions is not only non-existent, but *impossible.* And each explain this possibility through a nominalist understanding of conception and intentionality.

> That we may comprehend this the better, we must suppose, that nature has given to the organs of the human mind, a certain disposition fitted to produce a peculiar impression or emotion, which we call *pride:* To this idea, she as assigned a certain idea, *viz.,* that of *self,* which it never fails to produce. (287)

It is one thing to see Hume as a Buddhist metaphysician. That view has become commonplace. It is still more interesting, I think, to see him as a Buddhist ethicist. But the deepest affinity of all, I conclude, is in the way that Hume and the most sophisticated Buddhist moral psychologists see the imagination and the passions working together to join these two domains of our lives. As Hume himself puts it:

> 'Tis remarkable, that the imagination and affections have a close union together, and that nothing, which affects the former, can be entirely indifferent to the latter. (424)

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