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Under Constraint: Chastity and Modesty in Hume

ANN LEVEY

In Book III of the *Treatise*¹ (T 570-573), Hume undertakes the task of demonstrating why the obligation of women to be chaste and modest is greater than the obligation of men. Women are required to be more chaste than men, and only women are required to be modest. Hume's task here could be described as demonstrating the emergence of a double standard of sexual conduct as a moral requirement. This section of the *Treatise* is of special interest not only because it is Hume's only discussion in the *Treatise* of a primarily female virtue, but also because it is his only example of how specific artificial virtues arise in a society—virtues, furthermore, that he claims are “still more conspicuous instances of the operation of those principles, which I have insisted on” (T 570). The principles he has in mind are those that relate moral approbation and disapprobation to the general interests of society.

This passage is also of interest because it has generated debate among feminist readers of Hume. His supporters have argued that Hume's discussion of chastity and modesty shows his awareness of the sexism of his time, while his detractors have argued that his moral framework provides the grounds for a justification of sexist discrimination.² While I do not make any claims about whether Hume's political theory is sexist, the presence of such a debate makes it especially appropriate to ask whether Hume's remarks on chastity and modesty are consistent with his general principles, a task I take to be a first step in deciding whether a Humean framework is morally troubling.

I argue that Hume is quite correct in thinking that chastity and modesty provide “conspicuous instances” of his general principles. After first giving a

brief outline of Hume's general theory of the artificial virtues, I shall show how chastity and modesty emerge as artificial virtues in Hume's system. In particular, I will be concerned to show that the emergence of chastity and modesty can be described in general Humean terms, and that they do indeed have the key features of an artificial virtue. My aim here is not to address those who think that chastity and modesty are natural virtues, but to address those who think that Hume is mistaken in thinking them to be virtues at all, as well as those who, like Annette Baier, think Hume is wrong in his claim that these are *typical* artificial virtues.³

I. Hume's General Theory

Moral judgements are for Hume certain sorts of impressions. The actions or character traits that count as moral are those that tend to produce a sentiment of moral approbation. Moral approbation, according to Hume, is caused by those character traits that promote behavior having a tendency towards the public good, and disapprobation is caused by those character traits that have the opposite tendency. Because Hume's account is a causal one, it is possible for character traits or actions which do not have a tendency towards the public good to produce moral approbation. As I read Hume, those character traits would nevertheless count as moral. The moral quality of an action or character resides in the sentiment of the judges, rather than in the objective facts about the object judged. This is Hume's sentimentalism. The uniformity of moral judgements is accounted for by the uniformity of the human mind—we naturally tend to approve of the agreeable and useful.

Hume distinguishes between the natural and the artificial virtues. There are two main differences between them. First, natural virtues, or the actions that they produce, are those that give rise to moral approbation when considered individually because those single acts are useful or agreeable, while actions arising from artificial virtues only produce moral approbation when considered in the context of a general practice of such actions, because a single act considered in isolation from the general practice of which it is a part need not be useful. Benevolence, for example, is a natural virtue, because even a single act of benevolence is useful to its recipient. Respect for private property is an artificial virtue; it may require, for example, that a poor woman return goods to a rich one, an act that is harmful to the poor woman and need not be beneficial to the rich woman. Such an act considered in itself will not give rise to sentiments of moral approbation. However, a general scheme of property rights is beneficial because it tends to reduce insecurity about possessions and hence tends to reduce social discord. Thus, artificial virtues depend on the existence of a convention, whereas natural virtues are virtuous when considered individually.

The second main distinction between the natural and the artificial virtues lies in the motive for acting virtuously. According to Hume, moral judgements are judgements of the motives from which actions are done. Some motives that elicit moral sentiments are natural motives. Benevolence or parental concern for one's offspring are natural motives which elicit moral approval. Such motives are motives that we naturally have, and they tend to produce actions that are useful or beneficial. In the case of artificial virtues, however, the motives that are the objects of moral approbation are not natural motives, but rather motives of duty, or of regard for justice. These motives are not natural, since their content depends on the existence of conventions. The origin of artificial virtues is self-interest, but this motive does not produce moral approbation. In the case of artificial virtues, the natural motive that gives rise to the convention is not the motive that elicits the moral approval; the latter is an artificial motive. Self-interest does not elicit moral approbation; although reflective self-interest will lead to the adoption of conventions, the immediate products of self-interest do not tend to be actions whose effects are useful or beneficial. Hence an artificial motive is required—one that is learned within the context of particular conventions.

Given Hume's account of the artificial virtues, to show that chastity and modesty are typical artificial virtues requires showing two things: (i) that chastity and modesty must rely on the existence of a convention for their general usefulness, and (ii) that the motive which produces moral approbation is separate from the motive of self-interest that explains the convention.

II. Chastity and Modesty

Hume introduces the section on chastity and modesty in the *Treatise* as a kind of test case for his general system. He has argued that an account based on general social interest is adequate to explain not only a large number of the traits that get counted as virtuous, but also our moral approbation of these traits. If he can show that something as central to feminine virtue as chastity and modesty can be accounted for by his general system, then it counts as a powerful confirmation of his theory.

According to Hume, the need for a double standard of sexual conduct arises from a "trivial and anatomical observation" (T 571). Because the "principle of generation" goes from the man to the woman, a woman can be sure that the children she bears are her own, while her mate cannot be sure that they are his. Hume adds to his anatomical observation, a psychological observation about child rearing:

in order to induce the men to impose on themselves this restraint, and undergo cheerfully all the fatigues and expences, to which it subjects them, they must believe, that the children are their own, and

that their natural instinct is not directed to a wrong object, when they give a loose to love and tenderness. (T 570)

These two claims, combined with Hume's belief that the long period of maturation in the human young requires that they have the care of both parents, lay the groundwork for a Humean justification of a double standard of sexual conduct. If children are to be raised by both parents, then it is necessary to have chastity in women in order to give men that assurance of paternity that they require, but it is not equally necessary to have chastity in men.

Here, Hume is not obviously right. Suppose that we grant his claims that there is no natural motivation to care for children that are not one's own and that children cannot be adequately cared for by a single adult. Since part of Hume's general position is that natural motivations can be redirected in accord with useful social conventions, his psychological observation cannot be an immediate obstacle to conventions other than the convention of female chastity and modesty. And while children may require the care of more than a single adult, it does not follow that they require the care of two natural parents. A convention requiring the care of children by maternal kin, for instance, solves the problem nicely and does not require a convention of female chastity. So it is worth noting right at the start that Hume begins by assuming something like a nuclear-style patriarchal family as the appropriate unit for raising children, since without some such assumption the care of children by their fathers is not to the point. This is, however, a legitimate assumption for Hume to make; he need not show that chastity and modesty will be virtues under any conceivable circumstances, but only that they are obvious conventions in the context of certain patterns of child-rearing. Any story we tell about how chastity and modesty arise as artificial virtues will have to appeal to the presence of other conventions within which chastity and modesty make sense. Chastity and modesty are virtues for women, when they are, because they are necessary for the maintenance of a society organized around a certain kind of family structure, and we would expect them, on a Humean account, to arise in tandem with those social structures.⁴ The plasticity of a Humean framework leaves open the possibility of alternative family structures. Hume discusses some of these alternatives in his essay "Of Polygamy and Divorces,"⁵ where he discusses at least one arrangement that would not provide for paternal care of children. But, given that his aim in the *Treatise* is to show that his theory can account for chastity and modesty's being virtues, he can take the social structures in which they arise as given.

Chastity is generally defined as "refraining from unlawful sexual activity." Hence, what is required by the virtue of chastity depends on what constitutes the boundaries of lawful sexual activity. Hume uses the term "chastity" in two different ways. He sometimes uses "chastity" to mean conjugal fidelity⁶ and

elsewhere uses "chastity" to mean abstention from all sexual activity outside of marriage. Conjugal fidelity obligates both men and women alike, and this for both natural and artificial reasons. Fidelity occurs in a list of natural virtues of benevolence (T 603) and since marriage is, according to Hume, a blend of lust and affection, we might expect that the latter tie will include fidelity, both sexual and otherwise. Where marriage contracts include vows of sexual fidelity, as they do in the context of Hume's discussion, each partner in a marriage is equally obligated to conjugal fidelity on the basis of these vows. As Hume's aim in the *Treatise* is to explain the broader notion of chastity, however, his account cannot simply be a reduction to the artificial virtue of promise keeping; the requirement to be chaste and modest obligates all women alike, regardless of what promises they may happen to have made,⁷ and the obligation of women to conjugal fidelity is stronger than the obligation of men.

Hume notes at the end of the section on chastity and modesty that the obligations of the male sex to be chaste "bear nearly the same proportion to the obligations of women, as the obligations of the laws of nations do to those of the law of nature" (T 573). Hume refers here to the previous section of the *Treatise* in which he argues that the obligations of princes have the same extent but not the same force as the obligations of private citizens (T 568). Society is more willing to overlook transgressions in the cases of princes, because the fulfillment of their obligations is not as necessary to the maintenance of society. The explanation is similar for chastity and modesty; chastity in women is more necessary than chastity in men for the maintenance of society. Thus, while there is no difference in the scope of the obligation, we think women more immoral than we think men are for their transgressions of these rules of sexual conduct. In the case of chastity, the greater obligation does lead in turn to a greater scope of obligations; the companion virtue of modesty, which arises as part of a mechanism to enforce female chastity, is strictly a female virtue.⁸

Hume's argument depends on the claim that conjugal infidelity in men may have a tendency to hurt particular persons, such as their wives and mistresses, but conjugal infidelity in women (or as we shall see, even the mere possibility of it) will tend to hurt society as a whole because men will be less inclined to look after children. Given Hume's "trivial and anatomical" observation, if children are to be raised by their fathers, then there had best be some means of identifying those fathers. The convention of having children reared by natural parents will work only in the presence of having some way of making the identification. Without some method of identifying fathers, the abandonment of children by males will lead to a disruption of normal social institutions, including presumably such things as the education of children into appropriate roles and the inheritance of property. The convention of female chastity functions as a way of ensuring that fathers can

be reliably identified, and hence as a way of regulating the care of children. The reasons underlying chastity thus are not to do with the control of women.

Typically, conventions are maintained by a combination of legal sanction and inculcation of the appropriate virtuous motives, both of which serve to give more immediate reasons for conforming to a convention than do considerations of its long term advantages. Though reflection tells us that artificial virtues are grounded in our self-interest, as Hume notes, "all creatures, especially those of the female sex, are apt to overlook remote motives in favour of present temptation" (T 571). Hence, we need the more immediate reasons that are provided by the threat of legal sanction and by instilling in people a regard for virtue. Conjugal fidelity, however, poses a problem because it cannot be readily enforced by legal means. The private nature of sexual transgressions makes it difficult to acquire the appropriate legal proof (T 571). If conjugal fidelity is to have any force as a virtue in women, there must be a means of enforcing it. Hume suggests that society must fall back on the threat of a bad reputation, a punishment which can be imposed on the basis of the merest conjecture.

There are two immediate implications of this need to use a bad reputation as a means of enforcing chastity in women. The first is that sexual transgressions must be widely regarded as being particularly immoral, since the sentence must be both frequent and severe to be effective. The problem is heightened in Hume's view because he regards women as especially subject to temptation, and the pleasures of infidelity as especially tempting (T 571). According to Hume, the degree of shame attached to infidelity in women must thus be greater than that which arises from regard to its injustice (T 571). Here we have a part of the explanation as to why the obligation of women to be chaste is stronger than the obligation in men. The second implication, which Hume does not discuss, is that the bad reputation must attach to women on the basis of some publicly observable acts. Thus chastity gets linked to "that exterior modesty which we require in the expressions and dress, and behaviour of the fair sex" (T 570). The bad reputation will then get attached to the immodest behavior.

Although Hume regards threat of a bad reputation as a very strong motive to fidelity, he does not consider it sufficient, especially considering the strong temptation he thinks women have to conjugal infidelity. It is necessary to back up the punishment of a bad reputation by inculcating in women a

preceding backwardness or dread, which may prevent their first approaches, and may give the female sex a repugnance to all expressions, and postures, and liberties, that have an immediate relation to that enjoyment. (T 572)

The link between exterior modesty and chastity is apparently found in these attitudes. Typically, for Hume, we suppose a correlation between an unobservable motive, the object of our moral approbation or disapprobation, and publicly observable behavior: we take the motive to be the cause of the behavior. In the case of chastity, however, the behavior is typically unobserved. Hence something must take place as the outward sign of the virtuous motive, and what takes its place must be appropriately connected to chastity. Modesty in dress and behavior is a public display of repugnance towards the erotic, and so has the right kind of relation both to chastity and to the virtuous motive. As the outward sign of a tendency towards chastity, modesty becomes a virtue in its own right because of the moral approbation that it elicits as the publicly available sign of a regard for chastity.

This need to inculcate in women a repugnance towards anything sexual in order to compensate for the absence of legal enforcement also means that chastity must be extended beyond its original purpose to include abstention from non-marital sex among those women who are past their child-bearing years. Internal modesty must overcome a perfectly natural temptation and, given the strength of the temptation, it must be incompatible with any easy enjoyment of sexual pleasure. The extension of chastity to cover a woman's lifetime is thus a natural result of the inculcation of modesty. In his discussion of why chastity and modesty are extended to women beyond child-bearing years, Hume suggests in the *Treatise* that this extension of the rule is due to the association of ideas (T 572). He means here the association of ideas in the minds of men—as he puts it, “batchelors, however debauch'd, cannot chuse but be shock'd with any instance of lewdness or impudence in women” (T 572). But it would be much more to the point to note that women who have the appropriate attitudes will not suddenly cease to have them at menopause. In order for internalized modesty to provide the requisite assurance of chastity, it must be so deeply ingrained that we can count on most women not being able to overcome it; men must be able to regard appropriately modest women as safe from the temptations to sexual pleasure. Hume's explanation in the second *Enquiry* addresses this point more directly. The old would set a bad example for the young and “women, continually foreseeing that a certain time would bring them the liberty of indulgence, would naturally advance that period, and think more lightly of this whole duty, so requisite to society” (EPM 167). He might have added that men, seeing that women can cease to be modest and chaste, might well worry that their wives can too easily abandon virtue for the temptations of sexual pleasure. If chastity and modesty do not cover a woman's lifetime, they cease to have an intimate connection with her attitudes towards her sexuality.⁹

The account that Hume gives of how the conventions of female chastity and modesty might arise is not atypical. It is a general feature of Hume's theory that threat of a bad reputation and the inculcation of proper attitudes

serve directly to motivate observance of artificial virtues (T 500-501). What is perhaps atypical is the lack of evidence for unchaste behaviour and hence the need to attach disapprobation beyond what justice calls for, and the need to attach a bad reputation on the basis of publicly observable behaviour (modesty) different from the desired behaviour (chastity). But even here, given the private nature of sexual transgression, Hume's account seems entirely in line with his general approach. In the absence of a judicial system providing public declarations of guilt and innocence on such issues as honesty, we should expect to find some publicly observable behaviour serving as the determinant of a person's character. A woman's reputation for chastity based on her public display of modest behaviour is akin to Abe Lincoln's reputation for honesty based on his return of a penny. Probity in small but easily observed dealings marks one as an honest man and becomes the hallmark of virtue.

III. Why Chastity and Modesty are Artificial Virtues

Once we understand how conventions of female chastity and modesty arise, we can see why they require consistency throughout a population; i.e., their usefulness depends on the existence of a convention. I will treat chastity and modesty separately, and argue that each requires consistency throughout a population in order to be useful.

The point of chastity is its role in a general convention of child-rearing, which requires that children be born within the confines of monogamous marriages. Thus its point is to ensure that children are appropriately raised; the conventions of chastity and modesty are thus generally useful in promoting social stability and the regular descent of property. But only a widespread convention of chastity will serve to achieve the goal. Single instances of chastity, though they may benefit particular individuals, need not generally promote the good. A single chaste woman will at best provide her own husband with assurance of paternity, and at best will ensure that her own children are properly raised. If the point of chastity were only to provide men with a feeling of security, then single instances would indeed accomplish that purpose when men have the requisite assurances. But the security of men is, in turn, only instrumentally valuable, and there is no reason to think Hume takes it to be, in itself, of more importance than women's sexual freedom. Were we to balance the security of an individual man against the constraints imposed on an individual woman, it is not credible to suppose that our sympathies must be with the man. The case is surely much like one of Hume's main examples of an artificial virtue not being useful in the single instance. He notes that a judge must sometimes take money from a poor man and return it to a rich man. If we considered this case in isolation, it would not produce moral approbation because, while the rich man no doubt benefits

from such a transaction, the balance of good is less than if the poor man were to retain the money. The case is similar for chastity. Indeed, outside the consideration of the children, little weight would seem to attach to a man's feeling for security over and above that natural love and affection which binds both partners equally to the marriage bed. Nor can we appeal to the raising of children to show that chastity must always be useful in the single instance, since experience tells us that even the best show of conjugal fidelity will not always ensure that a man is willing to raise his children. The fact that merit continues to be attached to chastity in such cases shows that our approbation does not depend on its usefulness in the single case. The universal approbation attached to chastity, like the universal approbation attached to respect for property, is only explicable with reference to the general convention. Our moral approbation is aroused in individual instances by the chaste woman because we recognize the role that her chaste behaviour plays in promoting the general social good. Only if we believe that the point of chastity is male assurance will we be tempted to regard it as useful in every single instance.

Showing the conventional nature of chastity is sufficient to show the conventional nature of the combined virtues of chastity and modesty, since modesty is the outward sign of chastity and hence depends on the same convention as chastity.¹⁰ But, there are additional epistemological reasons why we might think that modesty on its own requires consistency throughout a population.¹¹ For chastity and modesty to play their role in the orderly production and maintenance of children, it is not sufficient that a man's wife actually be faithful. Men will participate in child-rearing within the traditional family structure only when they have assurance that their children are their own. Hence men require not merely chastity from their wives, but assurance of chastity. But, as the above discussion makes clear, the actual fact of chastity will not provide such an assurance, given the private nature of sexual transgressions. External modesty is the public sign of chaste behaviour. But, its functioning as a public sign must presuppose a context of regular behavior. There is no *a priori* connection between a set of manners and mode of dress, and chastity. A man who had the only modest wife would have no reason to connect that modesty with the desired chaste behaviour, and so would lack the requisite assurance. It is the general functioning of a convention in which chastity and modesty are connected that provides the regularity that allows us to take modesty as a sign of chastity. The beneficial effects of modesty, namely male assurance, arise from the existence of the general practice, not from the acts considered in isolation.

The threat of a bad reputation as the sanction for unchaste and immodest behavior also seems to require the existence of a convention. Bad reputations only work when those who are branded with the reputation can be isolated from the reputable group and denied its benefits. Those tactics will only work when the disreputable group is relatively small. Where the practice of modesty

is widespread, it will have a tendency to sustain itself; modest women are likely to disapprove of transgressions in others, and the more widely disapproval is found, the more effective the threat of a bad reputation in producing modest behavior.

Chastity and modesty do have, then, one of the identifying characteristics of an artificial virtue—the beneficial effect of the behavior depends on the existence of a general practice. Annette Baier, however, has suggested that the double standard for chastity implies that consistency of chaste behaviour is not required throughout a population, since Hume must assume that there will be a class of women who are immodest and unchaste with whom men can have illicit sex. The existence of such a class of women, Baier argues, will not only not diminish the point of fidelity for virtuous women, but will aid them in their attempts to be faithful by directing men's illicit sexual impulses elsewhere.¹² That the double standard implies the existence of such a class of women is worth noting, and Hume should probably worry about what to say of men who are complicitous in the unchaste behaviour of such women. But, the existence of such a class of women does not show that consistency is not required throughout a population. To say that consistency is required is to say only that the behavior which elicits our moral approbation is only useful when considered in the context of a general convention that makes such behavior widespread. There is no indication that, in general, conventions will be universally observed. The convention of chastity and modesty may be useful despite the existence of some women who are immodest and unchaste, just as the convention of property is useful despite the existence of some people who are thieves. Nor does the existence of chastity and modesty in itself require such a class of women. Chastity and modesty are virtues because they elicit our moral approbation, because we perceive the public usefulness of such a convention. The convention is useful whether or not there exists a class of women who are not chaste and modest. It is the double standard, rather than the female virtues, that requires such a class of women, and the lesser obligation of men does not affect whether chastity and modesty are themselves conventional. The existence of a double standard, however, may affect whether we describe the virtues of chastity and modesty as typical, and I return later to the question of gender asymmetry.

Chastity and modesty do, then, have the first of the features which identify an artificial virtue. The second identifying feature is that the natural motive which explains the behavior is self-interest and the virtuous motive which elicits moral approbation is itself artificial.

Chastity and modesty are clearly in the immediate self-interest of women. Immodest women will be unmarriageable; men want to marry women they can trust not to make cuckolds out of them, and modesty provides the basis for that trust. Provided that women have no other attractive options for supporting themselves and their children, marriageability easily accounts for

why individual women will find it rational to be modest, and why they will teach their daughters to be modest. But although this explanation can account for why individual women conform to the convention, it does not explain the existence of the convention in the first place. Hume's self-described task in the section on chastity and modesty is to explain these virtues in terms of the general interests of society, and that will require explaining why it is in the self-interest of everyone that there be such a convention. But that explanation has already been given; it is in the interests of all that there be some orderly means of securing the conditions for the raising of children.

IV. Alternative Conventions

It is clear that there must be some mechanism for raising children, and clear that if Hume is right about children needing the care of more than one parent, that mechanism will need to appeal to something more than natural maternal concern. So there must be some convention for the raising of children. But, there are clearly a variety of solutions to the problems posed by Hume's "trivial anatomical observation," and it might be argued that chastity and modesty are not, after all, supported by a Humean system since it will not pick out that convention as preferred. Strict conjugal fidelity on the part of both sexes would seem to provide the requisite assurance of paternity. Also, alternative arrangements for child care would eliminate the need for such assurance; men might care for wives' children, children might be cared for by their maternal family, the care of children might be a public matter, etc. When faced with this array, the choice of chastity and modesty may well seem like an arbitrary and unnatural contrivance, given the degree to which women's natures must be altered to achieve the virtues. Since one of these alternative arrangements would eliminate the need for women to suppress their sexuality, we may be inclined to think that one of these arrangements other than the convention of chastity and modesty is in the general social interest.

Alternative forms of child care, however, are not really to the point. Hume is not claiming that under *any* conditions chastity and modesty will come to be perceived as virtues for women, any more than he claims that only private ownership of a specific form will meet the need for a convention determining the distribution of external goods. So it is fair enough for Hume to build his account of chastity and modesty upon certain views of society and the family. The need for chastity and modesty arises within the context of private property, patrilineal descent of property and a patriarchal society. That other forms of child care are possible does not show chastity and modesty to be arbitrary, and hence does not undermine the claim that these are in the general social interest.

Even within the context of a patriarchal and patrilineal society, Hume's asymmetrical solution is not the only one. The relevant convention could be

one of fidelity to the marriage bed on the part of both sexes, with the corresponding bad reputation and attitudes of modesty for both sexes. Hume is right that, given the background conditions, society has a greater interest in chastity for women, but it does not follow that men's virtues can have no role to play in maintaining the female virtues. The convention of modesty plays an instrumental role in ensuring that women are indeed chaste. But other solutions could well involve inculcating the right attitudes into men. We could develop an interest in the chastity and modesty of men as instrumental virtues, just as we do with women.

We might well ask, then, why not chastity for men too, as a way of ensuring conjugal fidelity in women? Increased chastity in men would reduce the need for modesty in women; we could get the same level of assurance without the level of hardship that modesty imposes on women. One answer is that the problems posed for men and for women by the need for conjugal fidelity in women are structurally different. For men, the problem of assuring paternity via a convention of male chastity has the structure of a prisoner's dilemma.¹³ Even if an individual man is willing to be chaste, his being chaste does not solve the paternity problem for him, as his wife's chastity does. What he must be sure of is that other men are chaste. Each man has a direct interest in others being chaste and no direct interest in being chaste himself; he is best off defecting from an agreement on chastity, since he has nothing to lose. In the absence of external penalties, men have no incentive to be chaste. And, as the earlier discussion indicates, the lack of available evidence makes imposing external penalties problematic.

The incentive structure for women is different. While it is true that for any individual woman, she is best off if the convention exists and she does not have to follow it herself, women risk something that men do not. They run a risk in being found out, and in doing so, they risk their status as wives and the paternity of their children. Given the appropriate background structures, chastity and modesty in women is the solution to a prisoner's dilemma for men.

V. Conclusion

This latter feature does seem to make chastity and modesty atypical. The typical pattern is that conventions arise on the basis of self-interest on the part of those who will be obligated by the convention. But here we have virtues for one group arising, at least in part, on the basis of the self-interest of another group. Women do have an interest in being chaste given the social conditions, but the strength of the virtues depends on men's lack of interest in being chaste themselves, and their ability to get women to take up the burden. If chastity and modesty for women are obvious artifices, the perspective from which they are obvious is that of male self-interest. Men don't need to be

chaste and modest themselves if they can get women to do it for them. Where there is no self-interest, there is no convention. Men don't need to worry about being chaste and modest themselves because it is not in their self-interest to do so. But they do need to support the convention of chastity and modesty for women because it is in their interest that such a convention be maintained.

Chastity and modesty are atypical virtues because the self-interest that explains the existence of the convention is, at least in part, the interest of those who do not bear the burden of the virtuous behaviour. But then that atypical feature detracts in no way from the features that make them artificial virtues. They are thoroughly typical both in being based on a non-natural motive and in that the moral approbation attached to them arises from the recognition of the practice as generally beneficial to society. Despite their atypical features, Hume was right in declaring that we would find in them "still more conspicuous instances of the principles that [he has] insisted on" (T 570).

NOTES

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1 David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, edited by L. A. Selby-Bigge, 2nd ed. revised by P. H. Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978). Abbreviated hereafter as T.

2 His supporters include Steven Burns, "The Humean Female," *Dialogue* 15 (1976): 415-424, who appeals to Humean irony to argue that Hume was ahead of his time in recognizing that chastity in women is harmful to its possessors; and Annette Baier, "Good Men's Women; Hume on Chastity and Trust," *Hume Studies* 5.1 (1979): 1-19, who finds Hume's discussion "remarkable for its...exposure of the double standard." His detractors include Louise Marcil Lacoste, "The Consistency of Hume's Position on Women," *Dialogue* 15 (1976): 425-440, who takes Hume's moral epistemology to provide philosophical underpinnings for justifying discrimination and so finds a Humean framework morally troubling.

3 Baier, 11-12.

4 I owe this way of thinking about chastity to Holly Thomas, who in a commentary on an earlier version of this paper pointed out to me that I could not regard chastity as a byproduct of the social importance of conjugal fidelity, but rather must regard female chastity as being manifested in monogamous

marriages.

5 David Hume, *Essays: Moral, Political, and Literary*, in *The Philosophical Works of David Hume*, 4 volumes, edited by T. H. Green and T. H. Grose (London: 1882, reprinted Aalen: Scientia Verlag, 1964), IV 233. Hume discusses the ancient Britons, who were claimed to take "an equal number of wives in common; and whatever children were born, were reputed to belong to all of them, and were accordingly provided for by the whole community."

6 David Hume, *Enquiries Concerning Human Understanding and Concerning the Principles of Morals*, edited by L. A. Selby-Bigge, 3rd ed. revised by P. H. Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon, 1975), 207. Hereafter abbreviated as EPM.

7 Baier, 11, makes this claim.

8 Not only is modesty not a virtue for men, but Hume regards the promise of sexual vigour in men as a cause of female love and esteem (T 614-615).

9 Hume is not entirely consistent about female attitudes towards sex, given his later discussion of the approbation women have for men who display the promise of sexual vigour, *ibid.*

10 Holly Thomas pointed this out to me.

11 John Immerwahr in "David Hume, Sexism and Sociobiology," *Southern Journal of Philosophy* 21 (1988), 362f argues that Hume takes conjugal fidelity to be obvious and that his main aim is to show that modesty can be accounted for as an artificial virtue.

12 Baier, 13.

13 David Schmditz pointed out to me that compliance with the chastity rule has a prisoner's dilemma structure for men, but not for women.

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