



GÁBOR BOROS

On Hume's Theory of Passions

ABSTRACT: The paper's main task is to show how much Hume's philosophy of passions is indebted to and continues the tradition of the philosophy of affects of the 17th century, in spite of the obvious fact that he departed from the main philosophical project of the 17th century, the tripartite unity of mathematics, metaphysics, and mechanical physics. A restructuring of Hume's order of passions and its comparison to the order followed by Descartes will show up a special „cognitivist” character of Hume's thinking on emotion, even if the special experimental framework of Hume's theory of passions prevents him from theorizing about the free will's distinguished role in our lives or about the will's grounding in the concept of a providentially active biblical God.

KEY WORDS: Hume • cognitivism • Descartes • pride • generosity • love • sympathy

I pretend not to have here exhausted this subject. It is sufficient for my purpose, if I have made it appear, that, in the production and conduct of the passions, there is a certain regular mechanism, which is susceptible of as accurate a disquisition, as the laws of motion, optics, hydrostatics, or any part of natural philosophy¹.

These seem to be Hume's last published words on the passions, the last sentences of his *Dissertation on Passion*, which is his only work devoted entirely to the investigation of the passions. However, in what follows I do not intend to focus on this work. One of my reasons for this decision is that although Hume somewhat rearranges here the order of the presentation of the passions, he does not change substantially the ideas expressed in the *Treatise of Human Nature* which represents the earliest stage of his career, so much so that he even borrows a considerable number of passages from the earlier work. Why then set out this paper precisely with this quotation of the work whose text has a clearly repetitional character? My main reason for this choice is that we can discern in it quite well Hume's intention to provide philosophy with the same scientific status as those sciences were traditionally given he enumerated in the quotation as exemplary sciences.

¹ D. Hume, *The Philosophical Works of David Hume*, ed. by T.H. Green and T.H. Grose, London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1898. Vol. II. pp. 139–166., p. 166.

That means, he acknowledges the possibility of there being some disciplines of strictly scientific character, even if this strictly scientific character is not to be acquired or demonstrated systematically by working out strong metaphysical foundations in the same manner the canonical 17th century philosophers used to do. Evidently, he rejects all claims to the possibility of finding such foundations. The means he experiments with to achieve that end is what he claims to be his “Logics”. This idiosyncratic logic consists in at least three factors that play, all three, equally important roles: first, we have Hume’s teaching on the human faculties – i.e., most of all, his distinction between reason, whose use is strictly limited to the domain of the theoretical knowledge, and imagination, which is connected to the praxis-side of thinking; second, there is the well-known reduction of the – principally faint – ideas to the – principally vivid – impressions, and the elaboration of a web of complex relations between these two cognitive faculties; and, third, Hume developed important methodological considerations on the precise character of scientific investigations: he accentuates the importance of the experiments – which were, of course, interpreted differently both from the usual praxis of today natural sciences, and their theories trying to clarify the ideal way experiments are to be conducted and made use of². The main moral of the opening quotation for me is, therefore, that Hume’s teaching on the passions must also be embedded in this framework, and all the more so, as the analysis of the passions is given an important role within the investigation of the human nature as a whole. For, according to Hume, human beings cannot become motivated to action solely by reason.

If we assume that the *Abstract of A Treatise of Human Nature*, written by Hume himself accurately represents the opinions of Hume, the author of that *Treatise*, then we can start with a double point of departure: on the one hand, the logics developed in the first two books is a coherently closed unit, whereas on the other hand “[t]he author [...] has laid the foundation of the other parts in his account of the passions”³.

Now, what are these “other parts” whose foundation has been laid in the theory of the passions? Here they are: “morals and criticism” that “regard our tastes and sentiments; and “politics” that considers “men as united in society, and dependent on each other”. As a consequence of their distinguished significance and their foundational role the *Treatise* investigates the passions at fairly great length separately and in their own right, whereas the

² Cf.: A. Koyré, *Études d’Histoire de la pensée scientifique*, Paris 1975.

³ D. Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, Oxford 1978, (ed. Nidditch), p. 646. In the following “*Treatise*” will refer to this edition.

Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals weaves into the texture of the entire treatise the foundational analyses of some principal passions without according to them a separate chapter.

For the sake of simplicity, let me recapitulate the basic definitions concerning the passions and their theory also on the basis of the *Abstract*. Like Leibniz, who uses in an extremely general sense the term perception, Hume too gives this expression a very broad meaning in order that he can rely on it in his polemics against Locke's concept of the idea which he thinks to be illicitly broad, in fact all-comprising; his definition of the perception is resumed in the *Abstract* as follows: „Our author [...] calls a perception whatever can be present to the mind, whether we employ our senses, or are actuated with passion, or exercise our thought and reflection”⁴.

However strange it may sound, it is nevertheless true that on the basis of this very definition and the further ones Hume can well be called a cognitivist philosopher of emotions, for he evidently subsumes under one and the same category both the passions and the basic elements of all knowledge, the vivid impressions and the faint ideas. And what is even more important in this respect, this one and the same category, i.e. the perception is already in itself traditionally a term belonging to the distinguished group of those expressions that serve for the reconstruction of the knowledge in a broad sense of the term. In the next step the passions become subsumed under the impression, one of the two subcategories of the perception.

When we feel a passion or emotion of any kind, or have the images of external objects conveyed by our senses; the perception of the mind is what he [viz. the author of the *Treatise*, Hume himself – GB] calls an impression, which is a word that he employs in a new sense. When we reflect on a passion or an object which is not present, this perception is an idea. Impressions, therefore, are our lively and strong perceptions; ideas are the fainter and weaker⁵.

Let me point out an interesting stylistic feature of this formulation: what happens in these three consecutive sentences is that the term “passion” gradually disappears from the text that describes the complex division of the “perceptions”, i.e. the term “passion” becomes gradually dissolved in the cognitive terms of the “impression” and “idea”.

Given the Humean reductionist view of the ideas it is certainly interesting to see the *Abstract* attributing another essential feature to the passions,

⁴ *Treatise*, p. 647.

⁵ *Ibidem*.

a feature we would hardly expect in a treatise on the passions. Hume takes up the issue of the innateness in this respect, in a way that is far from being identical with either the original view of Descartes or the critical stance to that view applied by Locke. Hume's suggestion is that we had better convert the assumption of there being some "things" or "ideas" that are "innate" in us into the assumption of those things' having arisen immediately from nature. If we do so, then our passions will, surprisingly have to be regarded as innate, in the sense of their having their origins in nature.

For it is evident our stronger perceptions or impressions are innate, and that natural affection, love of virtue, resentment, and all the other passions, arise immediately from nature. [...] all our passions are a kind of natural instincts, derived from nothing but the original constitution of the human mind⁶.

Here we come across again a curious feature of Hume's thought: it may sound surprising, but at this point Hume seems to stand nearer to Descartes with his stoic-like, cognition-oriented interpretation of the passions than to Hobbes, Spinoza, or Leibniz, as they accentuate the category of *c o n a t u s* or *e n d e a v o u r*, a category that cannot be reduced to the perception or any other cognitive terms – which is not to maintain that their respective *c o n a t u s*-based theories of emotion are all the same. And another caveat seems to be appropriate here: the special sort of cognitivism I have attributed to Hume because a kind of cognition plays an important role in his theory of passions does in no way mean that it is the Cartesian innate reason that plays this essential role in that theory. Undoubtedly Hume – as I have already referred to this almost trivial fact – confines the reason to the theoretical sphere.

Despite this double caveat the comparison between Hume and Descartes seems to be strange at first sight. But let us remember how often and try to understand why Hume makes use of the expression "my system" so often, for example when he speaks about those experiences that seemingly contradict "my system", "this system", or else, precisely, support it. The claim to being systematic is made as much by Hume as by Descartes and the other 17th century mechanical philosophers, although Hume tries to establish the systematic character of his philosophy in a considerably different manner. To probe deeper and at the same time to focus more on the special systematicity of the theory of passion, let us make a thought-experiment, let us pose the question if the Humean system of the passions, which – in

⁶ *Treatise*, p. 648.

contradistinction to Descartes – has not been constructed by using reason's mathematic-mechanical analyses can compared to the Cartesian system, at least regarding their respective basic structures.

My answer is, of course, yes and no at the same time. No, if we think of the missing distinctions in Descartes' theory between the direct and indirect or the violent and calm passions. And similarly for Hume, one can argue for the negative answer reminding us of the fact that he does not distinguish in formal way primary passions from all the others that would have to be deduced from the primary ones. Nevertheless, I think we can argue for a positive answer and draw some interesting parallels between the two thinkers if we just toy with the idea of a sort of restructuring of Hume's texts.

To begin with, it is undisputed that in Hume there are no primary passions formally designated as such. But it is equally true that one can easily isolate also formally those passions that are marked clearly enough in the course of the development of the theory. Pride and humility, love and hate are evidently primary passions in the sense of their having a number of other passions linked to them by Hume. The manifold causes of pride and humility produce sufficiently many subspecies within these passions to legitimize our speaking of sorts of "primary" and "secondary" passions. But also the interesting Humean thesis, according to which the same passions are triggered in the animals as well, „making a just allowance for our superior knowledge and understanding”⁷, involves some separation within the main passion. Benevolence and anger always appear together with the main passion-pair love and hate (II/II/VI), giving rise to some of their subspecies like respect and contempt, compassion and malice, as well as to the passions of that broad spectrum that extends within love from the basic feeling toward all our acquaintances through the love toward the relatives to the passion of sexual love and – again another end of the spectrum – perhaps even to the love mediated and triggered by some knowledge (the “love of truth”), tacitly acknowledged even by Hume⁸. This broad spectrum of love would certainly merit a separate analysis.

As for Descartes, his primary passions are the two singles wonder and desire, and the two passion-pairs: joy and sadness, love and hate.

⁷ *Treatise*, p. 326, II/I/XII.

⁸ This broad spectrum of love in Hume is again much more similar to the theory of Descartes than it would seem at first sight. Concerning Descartes' concept of love cf. D. Kambouchner, *Cartesian Subjectivity and Love* [in:] G. Boros, H. De Dijn, M. Moors (eds), *The Concept of Love in 17th and 18th Century Philosophy*, 23–42, the *Introduction* to the volume, and also G. Boros: *The Passions* [in:] C. Wilson, D. Clarke (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy in Early Modern Europe*, Oxford 2011, pp. 182–200, esp. 196–199.

Before comparing the two sets of primary passions let us have a look at the order of passions in Hume's *Treatise*. This original order is in a sense strange enough, and perhaps this was the reason that motivated Hume to enumerate them in the opposite direction in the *Dissertation on the Passions*: there he treats first the direct passions followed by the indirect ones, as we, upon our "Humean" intuition would also expect: for, according to Hume, the finite human minds find it somehow more convenient to follow the chronological order when thinking on some series of events, starting with the present and proceeding to the future than what we do when representing some past event proceeding from the present, i.e. from the later chronological layer back to the past⁹.

However, if we take the passions in the same order Hume follows in the *Treatise*, and turn them around, the first passion will be almost exactly the same as in Descartes' system: curiosity – the love of truth. This Humean passion has a structure very similar to that of Descartes' wonder.

But methinks we have been not a little inattentive to run over so many different parts of the human mind, and examine so many passions, without taking once into the consideration that love of truth, which was the first source of all our enquiries¹⁰.

So curiosity has been given a sort of priority, and this sense of priority is precisely the sense in which Descartes interprets the priority of wonder, and probably also the reason that lets him insist at the same time on the status of wonder as a passion – a claim far from being a matter of course, because it seems to be contrary not only to our intuition but also to Descartes' understanding of the passion as primarily a bodily phenomenon – as Descartes himself allows. However, the function of wonder within his philosophy of passions seems to be so important as to let Descartes invent something similar to Hume's concept of a calm passion: the bodily movement is not missing in wonder; it takes place in the brain, which is precisely the reason why we do not perceive it when we wonder at something. And what is this important function? Descartes suggests, it is wonder that in general moves us first in order to have the desire to understand a given thing. Consequently, only the ignorant do not wonder at anything, and – the other way around – wonder must be assumed to initiate the philosopher's quest for knowledge – even if the superstitious' extreme position must not be accepted either, when credu-

⁹ Cf. *Treatise*, p. II/III/VII–VIII.

¹⁰ *Treatise*, II/III/X, italics added. *Treatise*, p. 448.

lity and the superstitious awe push us first to this object, then to another, a third and so to the infinity¹¹.

As for the other single passion, desire, Hume – although he basically mentions this passion among the direct passions and he links it to the aversion as its passion-pair, and with this he make us think to Hobbes rather than to Descartes – there is an important passage, in which he links desire – now called “appetite” – to the concept of passion in general. This desire/appetite is now taken in a very broad sense indeed, without any counterpart, and so one can see in it something parallel to Descartes:

What we commonly understand by p a s s i o n is a violent and sensible emotion of mind, when any good or evil is presented, or any object, which, by the original formation of our faculties, is fitted to excite an appetite¹².

Returning to the main issue of restructuring Hume's order of passions and comparing it to the order in Descartes it is more than evident that the strong accentuation of the passion-pair love and hate both in Hume and Descartes correspond to each other. Not so evident is, however, the interpretation of the role of pride and humility in their respective systems, for these passions seem clearly to be missing from the primary passions of Descartes. Nevertheless, it is not at all difficult to find their equivalents in Descartes, whose place in the system is at least as prominent as that of the departure points, the primary passions: what I have in mind is generosity (*générosité*) as well as its counterpart described in several ways, as weakness of spirit, or abjection. Generosity is a passion and a virtue at the same time originating from wonder, love and joy¹³. Its main component is, however that the generous infallibly knows what renders the human self-esteem legitimate. And this is of great importance in our present investigation, because this component of generosity can be absolutely transposed in a Humean form: this is the knowledge of what we can be proud of. The passion-virtue of gen-

¹¹ Concerning Descartes' concept of wonder cf. G. Boros, *Wonder in the Age of the Saeculum: Spinoza*, [in:] M. F. Deckard, P. Losonczi (eds), *Philosophy Begins in Wonder*, Eugene 2010, pp. 175–187, esp. 175–178.

¹² *Treatise*, p. 437, II/III/VIII. In parentheses: it is this general concept of desire that accounts for the unexpected stressing of the will in Part III of the second book, among the direct passions, although the will in itself is not a passion, after all. This feature is structurally similar to Locke's treatment, since it is precisely Locke who introduces *uneasiness* as desire in a general sense in the context of the analysis of the will in Book 2, Chapter 21 of his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*.

¹³ For the Cartesian concept of generosity cf. the third part of Descartes' *The Passions of the Soul*, esp. art. 153 sqq.

erosity is in Descartes the crowning, the “final fruit” not only of his ethics as a theory of passions but also that of his whole philosophy, interpreted as an organic whole according to his famous metaphor of the tree: the final basis of our just self-esteem is free will together with the steadfast, resolutely good use we make of it on the basis of the good functioning of our sound reason.

At this point, however, the Descartes-Hume connection comes to an end in an illuminative way. To be sure, Hume deals at great length with all those things that can, to his mind account for our being proud; he even offers a general rule to this effect: „Any thing that gives a pleasant sensation, and is related to self, excites the passion of pride, which is also agreeable, and has self for its object”¹⁴.

He also gives lists of those things that are examples of the general rule. „[T]he view either of our virtue, beauty, riches, or power”¹⁵ – perhaps this is the first enumeration of the excellent properties that trigger pride. Somewhat later, however, it becomes clear that the cause of the pride and humility is not necessarily to be sought for only „in our mind and body, that is self”, but also

[...] there are many other objects, which produce these affections, and that the primary one is, in some measure, obscur'd and lost by the multiplicity of foreign and extrinsic. We found a vanity upon houses, gardens, equipages, as well as upon personal merit and accomplishments¹⁶.

That is, despite all the dealings with various causes of our feeling pride, the free will is not something that Hume would ever distinguish as the just cause of pride. Hume – just like Locke before – refuses to submerge into the deep waters of metaphysics, as it were, and one cannot even dream of his regarding as the final cause of our being proud the free will, which has its foundation in the roots of the Cartesian metaphysical tree, and what is even more, Descartes thinks, precisely, having our free will is our property that makes us understand the Biblical saying that man has been created as the proper image of God.

This difference is illuminative, because it sheds light on how far philosophy has got with Hume from that philosophical project I call the philosophy’s long 17th century, whose programmatic main goal was to connect the mathematical-metaphysical concept of the *u n i t y* with the imagery

¹⁴ *Treatise*, p. 288, II/I/V.

¹⁵ *Treatise*, p. 297, II/I/VII.

¹⁶ *Treatise*, p. 303, II/I/IX.

that was created in the mechanical physics, letting people think of the staff of the infinite universe as either infinitely divisible or even actually divided. Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz were the main promoters of this project, whereas Hume abandoned it spectacularly. Ironically, he could even praise Leibniz for what he himself accomplished, namely for replacing the “logic” of reason that both discovers the necessary laws of nature and develops the indifferent free will into a steadfast benevolence by the “logic” of probabilities based on the imagination and the violin-like “long-sounding” of the passions.

The celebrated *Monsieur Leibnitz* has observed it to be a defect in the common systems of logic, that they are very copious when they explain the operations of the understanding in the forming of demonstrations, but are too concise when they treat of probabilities, and those other measures of evidence on which life and action intirely depend, and which are our guides even in most of our philosophical speculations¹⁷.

Hume neither acknowledges nor continue the program of those thinkers of the preceding era, who strove to explore the cognitive-metaphysical deep structures of their egos in order to find there the true idea of God and that of the other egos structurally identical to their own. Instead, his program was rather an analysis of historically determined types of personality – the rich, the poor, etc. – an analysis that is descriptive and in a sense normative at the same time – p a c e all his official difficulties with the usage of “is” and “ought” and his reproaches to all those who blurred their boundaries. The area, where these types of personality seek to establish and anchor their egos is not at all the deep structures provided by a theology-based metaphysics but rather the matrix of their social relations that they regarded their inalienable property, although not metaphysically but historically determined. Consequently, if Hume can be connected to some philosophers from the past in this respect, they will not be those who preceded him i m m e d i a t e l y. It is much more convenient and fruitful to connect him to Montaigne through the French moralists of the 17th century like La Rochefoucauld, then to try to rediscover in his ideas the methods and programmatic goals of his immediate predecessors – even if the formal structure of their respective theories of passions can be compared, as I have shown. Hume the gentleman and Montaigne the *honnête homme* excel in and prefer the same types of occupations, like having manors, gardens, equipages, dogs and horses, or, in general being men of societies rather than solitary metaphysicians. They both preferred in their writings the moral-pedagogical application of the semi-archetypal

¹⁷ *Treatise*, p. 646 sq, *Abstract*.

exemplary lives described in their readings of ancient historical writers to the theologically-metaphysically based avoidance of all these occupations *qua* as many forms of the *divertissement* that Pascal disliked so much.

As it is well-known, Hume himself went a bit even further than Montaigne in decidedly embracing the above sorts of *divertissement*: he created a special type of method based precisely on the *divertissements* in order to be able to solve the difficulty stemming from his double conviction of the absolute impossibility of applying the mathematical-metaphysical method in moral philosophy on the one hand, and, on the other, that neither the experimental method of the natural sciences can claim to be the appropriate means for moral investigations.

Moral philosophy has, indeed, this peculiar disadvantage, which is not found in natural, that in collecting its experiments, it cannot make them purposely, with premeditation, and after such a manner as to satisfy itself concerning every particular difficulty which may arise. When I am at a loss to know the effects of one body upon another in any situation, I need only put them in that situation, and observe what results from it. But should I endeavor to clear up after the same manner any doubt in moral philosophy, by placing myself in the same case with that which I consider, 'tis evident this reflection and premeditation would so disturb the operation of my natural principles, as must render it impossible to form any just conclusion from the phenomenon. We must, therefore, glean up our experiments in this science from a cautious observation of human life, and take them as they appear in the common course of the world, by men's behavior in company, in affairs, and in their pleasures. Where experiments of this kind are judiciously collected and compared, we may hope to establish on them a science which will not be inferior in certainty, and will be much superior in utility, to any other of human comprehension¹⁸.

Let me add to all this that for Hume the studying and writing history are as much parts of the gathering of experiences as his being involved in social life, and already this feature of his thinking alone suffices to distinguish him from the thinkers of the philosophy's long 17th century, even if Spinoza sometimes quotes Roman playwrights while Leibniz often refers to contemporary novels. Hume, who collects social life experiences, is to be seen rather in the vein of Locke writing "On other relations" in Ch. 28, Book

¹⁸ *Treatise*, p. XIX, *Introduction*; emphasis added.

2 of his *Essay*, where he looks for a second publicity of the coffee houses and the clubs. Locke follows attentively the value judgments that are formed in those places, regards them as real moral laws, and even defines the expression “virtue” in the light of these laws – giving cause for Leibniz’ becoming so upset, because of his exceptional incomprehension. And it seems also evident that the application of pleasure and pain as the only criteria of the moral evaluation owes much to Locke’s “Christian hedonism”, even if the figure of the Christian God whom Locke lets create and maintain on an elementary level the adequacy between man and its world, both concerning the simple ideas and the elementary passions and drives, in Hume fades away and reappears as the rather cryptic figure of “nature”. The figure of “nature” in Hume is cryptic, because this “nature” is almost as much responsible for the functioning of the passions as in Descartes’ *Passions of the Soul*, both in the earlier *Treatise*, and in the later *Enquiry*. To be sure, it must be stressed again: the first part of the Cartesian-Spinozean expression *Dieu ou la nature – Deus sive natura* is missing in Hume’s text. It is a question worth being posed, even if it cannot be answered in this paper if this is a perfectly legitimate move on the part of Hume, in view of the almost metaphysical functions also his “nature” has to fulfill.

At the same time we should have a closer look at the philosophical significance of history, which is the counterpart of nature even if it appears only in the form of secular history, the providential history fading away. For, on the one hand, the historical examples in Hume’s texts offer an interesting counterpoint to the tendency of the main thinkers of the preceding century, which consists in their striving to overcome the historicity of the human beings – taken as an obstacle in more than one sense, and in this way to arrive at a certain essential, ahistorical core of the human individual. This core domain was thought to be independent from any historical circumstances, and it was to be connected to the idea of a special type of societal community. This community was conceived as at least partly to be established newly, whereas it was far from being quite clear if they thought it existing in or rather somehow above the existing state and society.

If we keep this in mind, we will be especially sensitive to the considerably different way Hume wanted to get beyond historicity: his historical examples, references are used to disclose those human properties within the really existing human societies that are taken to be without further investigations the appearances of a constant human nature existing independently of all history. The most telling example of this is, in my view, section V of the second part of the second book that is entitled in a way that says a lot: „Of our Esteem for the Rich and Powerful”. This section

sets off with the following sentence: „Nothing has a greater tendency to give us an esteem for any person than his power and riches; or a contempt, than his poverty and meanness [...]”¹⁹

To be sure, one can interpret this statement from different perspectives. But the set of these possible interpretations includes certainly the one, according to which if one were rich and powerful, one would have to long for a Humean society, whereas if one lived in poverty or were to chose from behind the “veil of the ignorance”, then one would have inevitably to prefer the community of the Cartesian or Spinozean generous.

This is not the only reason why this section of Hume’s *Treatise* attracts our special attention: Hume links to this argument in an illuminating way one of the most basic principles of his whole theory, the sympathy. Even if it is far from being an original thesis, it can nevertheless be of some use to point out that the Humean sympathy is in principle not the sympathy of the interindividual relations that appears – or fails to appear – in a rather contingent way, but a transposition of emotions that appears and influences our thought and behavior with the efficiency of a natural law. Consequently, it is not at all surprising that its scope extends to the whole living nature:

The best method of reconciling us to this opinion is to take a general survey of the universe, and observe the force of sympathy thro’ the whole animal creation, and the easy communication of sentiments from one thinking being to another²⁰.

This idea of a universal sympathy is, to be sure, not Hume’s original invention. It comes down to the 18th century by way of such 17th-century thinkers like Spinoza, who integrated it in his reason- and intellect-based system in a very special way²¹. But the main source of the idea is certainly to be sought in the magical-hermetic thought of the renaissance. Howsoever, according to Hume

No quality of human nature is more remarkable, both in itself and in its consequences, than that propensity we have to sympathize with others, and to receive by communication their inclinations and sentiments, however different from, or even contrary to our own²².

¹⁹ *Treatise*, p. 357, II/II/V.


²⁰ *Treatise*, p. 362 sq, II/II/V.

²¹ Cf. his *Ethics* Book III, esp. Prop. 15 sqq.

²² *Treatise*, p. 316, II/I/XI.

This principle seems for Hume to be extremely efficient and promising concerning the possibility of “scientific” explanation of phenomena that cannot or not sufficiently be explained otherwise. Even the love of esteem, love of fame, of which the Lockean version I have just referred to, becomes explained not in political terms – like in Locke’s *Essay* –, in terms of the small free space of the newly carved out public sphere created in a struggle against the absolute power, but much more in terms of precisely this magical-metaphysical sympathy.

Our reputation, our character, our name are considerations of vast weight and importance; and even the other causes of pride; virtue, beauty, and riches; have little influence, when not seconded by the opinions and sentiments of others. In order to account for this phenomenon, ‘twill be necessary to take some compass, and first explain the nature of sympathy²³.

Finally, we have to come to a conclusion of this investigation. In fact, the above analyses concerning Hume’s theory of passions disclose not a thinker prone to skepticism. The opposite seems to be the case. Hume emphasizes, in the context of the theory of passions, three main components: the cognitive-perceptive character of all the passions; the concept of the “self” when systematizing the theory from those “indirect” passions on that have “self” as their basic components – pride and humility – finally the principle of sympathy that works almost with the efficiency of the necessary natural laws. These are the components of a system not so much contrary to the systems of thinkers of the previous century, but rather built on considerably different foundations: not on a slightly “dogmatic” cognitive metaphysics but on science naturalized. The result is a sort of the philosophy of the “Newton of the morals”, the one that Kant was to prophecy some fifty years later²⁴, not surmising that his prophecy had already been fulfilled. 

GÁBOR BOROS – jest profesorem filozofii na Uniwersytecie Lorand Eötvös w Budapeszcie. Zajmuje się filozofią wczesnej nowoczesności oraz filozofią emocji, tłumaczył na węgierski dzieła Kartezjusza, Spinozy i Leibniza.

²³ *Treatise*, p. 316, II/I/XI.

²⁴ I am referring to his *Idea for a Universal History from a Cosmopolitan Point of View (Idee zu einer allgemeinen Geschichte in weltbürgerlicher Absicht)*: “We wish to see if we can succeed in finding a clue to such a history; we leave it to Nature to produce the man capable of composing it. Thus Nature produced Kepler, who subjected, in an unexpected way, the eccentric paths of the planets to definite laws; and she produced Newton, who explained these laws by a universal natural cause”. (L. W. Beck’s translation in: http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Idea_for_a_Universal_History_from_a_Cosmopolitan_Point_of_View).

GÁBOR BOROS

GÁBOR BOROS – Professor of Philosophy at Lorand Eötvös University, Budapest. He has published widely in several languages on his main areas of research, which are philosophy of the early modernity, and philosophies of emotion. He also translated into Hungarian works of Descartes, Spinoza, and Leibniz, edited several conference-proceedings, and other scholarly volumes.