
An Evaluation of Hume's Moral and Political Philosophy

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Abstract

One fundamental problem or shortcomings with Hume's moral and political theory is that it is too conservatism; it has not been able to grasp the present complexities of modern society. His robust theoretical re-construction of politics presupposes the epistemic understanding of human character trait. He as an empiricist is also known as a "political epistemologist". The themes in his political philosophy include moral approbation, disapprobation, morality, emotion, law, order, economy, security, property right, the political state, human freedom, social justice, passion and impression. He argues that the need for moral approbation, disapprobation or moral evaluation of human conducts or character trait is fundamental to understanding human character and society. This paper adopts the method of analysis in grounding his conservative political philosophy. This paper, therefore, concludes that his political philosophy has a conservative stance. His political state reflects the promotion of human happiness, freedom, public good, security, private property, social and physical security in an ideal democratic state.

Keywords: Conservatism, Political Epistemology, Normative, Moral Psychology, Politics

1.1 Introduction

One fundamental problem or shortcomings with Hume's moral and political theory is that it is too conservatism; it has not been able to grasp the present complexities of our modern society. This paper attempts to make explicit the implicit epistemic dimension of Hume's moral and political philosophy. With vivid elucidation and expository simplicity, this paper attempts a critique of His moral and political philosophy. His robust theoretical re-construction of politics presupposed the understanding of human character trait. Hume as an empiricist is also known as a "political epistemologist". His political philosophy is as a result of his conception of an ideal state. His political philosophy has a conservative stance. Conservatism has been described as a negative assumption. Conservatism is a political ideology that holds on to the status quo or tradition. The themes of anti-revolution, social justice, law and ethics in his socio-political philosophy presupposed his conception of moral approbation or disapprobation. The key concepts in His political philosophy include moral approbation, morality, emotion, law, order, economy, security, property right, the political state, human freedom, social justice, and anti-revolution. His political thought still has a contemporary significance. His political thought is similar to the political economy of Adam Smith. He frowns at the proclivity of political tyranny in any democratic state. Hume's political

philosophy presupposed the normative assumption of the political state. His political philosophy is realistic, pragmatic, epistemological, anti-revolutionary and ethical. His political philosophy is hinged on the normative possibilities of ethics and politics. His theoretical reconstruction is based on political economy and moral psychology. According to the Humean perspective, politics is based on keeping mutual promises and trust. His “political epistemology” reflects his moral psychology. His conception of mutual promises and trust is an illuminating indication of a beneficial scheme of social cooperation.

His idea of social contract rests on human convention. The establishment of government brings about human convention. Finally, politics, in general, represents the conception of the human good. He is referred to as an empiricist, moralist, political realist, pragmatist and metaphysician. He was not only known for his theory of knowledge. He has a robust work on ethics and politics as well. Various philosophers had great influences on his political philosophy. These include Rousseau, Locke, Spinoza, Descartes and Hobbes. His political philosophy is pragmatic and realistic. He argues that in an ideal state there ought to be public good or happiness, security, equality, moral approbation, charity, modesty and the need for socio-political order. He argues for the need to guarantee moral evaluation in order to understand human character. The problem in this theoretical discourse is that the issue of morality as the basis of social order is an alluring idea which anchors on the need to curb the excesses of human nature but the excesses of human nature cannot be totally eradicated because human nature is a thorny philosophical problem. Morality is the principle concerning right and wrong or good and bad in human behaviour. In our present contemporary world, standards of morality seem to be dropping. According to Skorupski, morality is a subsystem of deliberation about what we ought to do. Morality is a functional term like *turner*.¹ However, it bases its judgement on the rational nature of man and his final destiny which makes his actions morally right or wrong. The direction we face in the elevator, the way we walk, the way we talk, what we wear, the volume we speak in, the way we greet people, and pretty much everything else that we do in our waking hours are manifestations of our values, but whether or not these count as items of morality is a difficult question. Not all of these norms count as morals.² However, much in our lives are governed by norms and values. The British moralists such as Hume claimed that moral norms are based on approbation or disapprobation. It simply means what society approves of and disapproves as good or evil, or as good or bad. An action is right if it is generally accepted by society. We would see approbations or unalloyed approval towards those who do it, and an action is wrong if under idealized conditions, we feel disapprobation. Idealized conditions include things like full knowledge and freedom from being bias. The terms “approbation” and “disapprobation” are a bit antiquated, although, they can be judiciously treated as umbrella terms for two classes of moral emotions: emotions of moral praise, and emotions of moral blame. Emotions of praise include gratitude, esteem, approval and rightness. Emotions of blame include other-directed-emotions such as disapproval, anger, contempt, disgust, resentment, wrongness and indignation as well as self-directed emotions, such as self-guilt and blame.

1. 2 Hume's Moral and Political Philosophy

He is not only known as an empiricist but he is also an ethicist and a political pragmatist or political realist. His contemporary political philosophy is not only pragmatic and realistic but it is actually aimed at socio-political order, equality of opportunities, public happiness and

social security. His most important contribution to philosophy was his theory of knowledge (epistemology and ethics). He also commands an important position in the history of ethics.³ He wants us to share our basic passion, as well as our ability to learn from experience, with the higher animals. 'Passions' with the exception of a few instinctive appetites, are 'impressions of reflection' reactions to pleasure or displeasure to some perception of our situation.⁴ He argues that moral evaluation is always the evaluation of character or principles in the mind and temper.⁵ His conception of moral evaluation is invariably ethical sensitivity. His ethical sensitivity in his moral evaluation is moral psychology. His moral psychology bears a striking similarity or resemblance to Spinoza's and Rousseau's conception of passion, emotion and reason.⁶ He certainly shows agreement with Spinoza's deterministic version of ethics and psychology. He regards virtues as that moral judgement which is primarily a judgment about human character traits; a recognition of 'virtue' and 'vices'. He argues that our account of motivation, memories, beliefs and imaginations could lead to our intentions; 'the determinations of our will'.⁷ His moral and political philosophy talks about human deliberate actions and choices. As long as we are at liberty and do not forget or change our actions because passions are impressions, they are active psychological causes and sufficient to cause action.⁸ He argues that we are governed by our 'impression of reflections'. He holds that we as humans are often governed by our memory, our beliefs system, our reason, our moral values, our passion, and our reflection.⁹ His theoretical account of the passions which motivate us makes them intrinsically reflective and thought-informed.¹⁰ Accordingly, Baier argues that:

Hume holds that the evaluation of our passions becomes very important. Hume calls artificial, or convention-dependent virtues as that consist in conformity to some beneficial social scheme of cooperation, such as a particular form of government. In Hume's catalogue of virtues, he distinguishes the natural virtues from what in the Treatise he calls 'artificial' or convention-dependent virtue. The artificial or convention-dependent virtues include 'justice' (taken to include respect for traditional property rights and fidelity to promises).¹¹

Furthermore, he believes in the duties of the sovereign states to keep treaties, to respect each diplomats and even their protection. He admonishes that each sovereign states ought to respect each other's territorial boundaries. He advises that peoples in each sovereign states should conform to 'the law of nation-states'. In this regards, His moral theory and political theory is predicated on international relations and justice. His theoretical construct is anchored on myriad of moral virtues or what he calls artificial virtues. According to Baier, Hume argues that:

All the artificial virtues will be expected to take different specific forms in different societies and historical conditions. Hume includes among the natural virtues compassion, generosity, gratitude, friendship, fidelity, charity, beneficence, clemency, equity, prudence, temperance, frugality, industry, courage, ambition, due pride, due modesty, due self-assertiveness, good sense, wit and humour, perseverance, patience, parental devotion, good nature, cleanliness, articulateness to poetry and decorum.¹²

Baier, however, posits that he develops various theoretical discourses such as metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, politics, and economics. From the truly beneficent person, the hungry may indeed 'receive food', the naked clothing, but mainly because from such a person they will

also receive 'skill and industry'. Hume's later essays on economics develop this theme (the theme of even distribution of economic resources). His list of virtues is a self-conscious rejection of a Puritan morality and to some extent of Christian morality.¹³ Moreover, it has been argued that His ethics are avowedly hedonist.¹⁴ He denounces celibacy, fasting, penance, mortification, self-denial, humility, silence, solitude, and the whole train of monkish virtues as he finds, neither agreeable nor useful; for him, they stupify the understanding and harden the heart, obscure the fancy and sour the temper.¹⁵ In his essay, he frowns at theft, ingratitude, lying, malice and oppression. In his essay, he claims that the obligation of justice solely rests on mutual promise or beneficial scheme of social cooperation. He agrees with the social contractarians that the origins of justice lay in some sort of reasonable agreement. He rejects the label 'contractarian' and he certainly would not agree with those who try to make all of morality, not only justice, rests on a hypothetical self-interested agreement.¹⁶ His political thought also rests on the protection of property right. But he argues that we will usually see well enough what is wrong with disrespect for property rights when we are the victims of it. We see such disrespect as a 'vice' and feel disapprobation.¹⁷ He argues that our approbation and disapprobation are what makes the approved trait virtues and the disapproved ones vices.¹⁸ Baier, succinctly observes that moral approbation is a pleasure taken in every human character trait; He wants all of us to be capable of becoming 'competent moral judges'.¹⁹ In his Treatise, government authority is a social 'artifice' added to those of private property rights, mutual promises, and marriage.²⁰ For it to exist, there must be a felt need that it satisfies some 'convention' creating the right to govern, and bestowing it on some persons or some groups of persons.²¹

Nevertheless, Baier posits that Hume claims that the need for government arises when other 'artifices' such as promise and contract have enabled some people to accumulate so much property (wealth) that they cannot adequately guard it against marauders and to acquire it in ways suspected to be fraudulence, so that others resent their possession of wealth.²² He proclaims that security should be provided for the just against the unjust in society. Accordingly, Baier, succinctly observes that what becomes needed is some security for the just against exploitation by the unjust.²³ The security of governmental authority is not only for the just against the unjust, but for the just impulses in any person against any temptation to injustice and inequality.²⁴ He follows Hobbes in the conception of a universal human weakness to see the attractions of the universal principle of the good.²⁵ He argues that the avoidance of injustice is characterized by good character and reputation of persons in ensuring social order or socio-political order. He pointed out the decrees of equity, to punish transgressors, to correct fraud and violence, and to oblige men, however, reluctant, to consult their own real and permanent interest. He becomes more of a prophet for a limited government.²⁶ He admonishes the state to provide some levels of protection against 'political tyranny'. To avoid political tyranny, powers must be balanced against each other and the main tasks of politics as a science are to find the best such social balance, to design institutions that work well even when bad people are holding offices, and to provide for orderly transitions of powers.²⁷ His conception of limited government rests on the need for a socio-political order. He argues that the party system, the different roles of electorate, of the legislature, of monarch or other executive, of the judiciary, of the press, all should contribute to the overall goal of providing an ongoing government that really does serve the real general interests of the peoples. He emphasized that

there is some inevitable arbitrariness in the process of the selection of government.²⁸ Baier, however, observes that what our interest in government dictates is that the transitions from one government to the next must be smooth and non-violent and this paramount interest means that laws dictating how the next government is to be selected are in place. In his essay, he continues his Treatise or discussion of the dangerousness and impracticality of being determined to aspire to the utmost perfection in government.²⁹ He argues that consent or original contract can get government started, but once any of the 'original contractors' (subjects or sovereign) dies, or new subjects are born, it is wildly impracticable and dangerous to demand renewed contracts.³⁰ His essay aimed at a form of civil polity or a political state that is ideal. His political philosophy frowns at the dangers of violence, social disorderliness and political tyranny in government. Baier, however, argues that:

*Hume has no quarrel with those who believe that 'the consent of the people' is the best and most sacred of any claim to authority just as he has no quarrel with those who believe that equality would be the ideal distribution of property. In both cases, it is the means of trying to sustain the ideal state that pose the problems and the dangers. Hume's political philosophy is realistic and pragmatic in character. Sympathetic though he is with the ideals of equality and government by consent, he sees the dangers of violence, disorder and tyranny very vividly, and sees them to be the usual costs of aspiring to perfection in government.*³¹

He holds that perfection is the basis of governmental authority but there is no ideal or perfection in every human affair. Human beings are fallable beings. His normative basis of governmental authority is directed at 'a regular and equitable plan of liberty.'³² He argues that man is a social being. According to Hume, man is a sociable, no less than a reasonable being.³³ He holds that the politician may acquire greater foresight and stability in the subdividing and balancing of power.³⁴ From the Humean standpoint, political society was a voluntary human creation.³⁵ He is of the view that constructing some convincing account of how moral dispositions emerged from more primitive psychological traits, such as sympathy.³⁶ His political philosophy is premised on the need for commerce or industry and economic liberalization. For Monk, Hume is to explain how the progress of commerce, by encouraging rational patterns of thought, wider social interactions and refined appetites, led to the decline of irrational 'enthusiasm' – party politics or religious-and encouraged the emergence of a polite or civil society supportive of liberal and moderate politics.³⁷ He describes modern, commercial monarchies as supportive of a new kind of a private liberty resting on structural features rather than on individual qualities.³⁸ His programme for a more complacent politics involved the deployment of skeptical and consequentialist arguments to displace opinions derived from metaphysical notions of rights in favour of sober understandings of interest. As observed by Monk, Rousseau fundamentally challenged the growing accommodation of inherited political languages to commercial modernity so evident in the writings of Hume, Montesquieu, and Smith, and later 'Publius' and the philosophes'.³⁹ His moral and political theory presupposes the need for civil society.

1.3 A Philosophical Examination of Hume's Political Philosophy

Hume's political philosophy is robust, innovative, striking, thought-provoking, logically coherent and brilliant. It is worth noting that his essay presupposes political legitimacy.

He was not only known for his theory of knowledge viz a viz his epistemological illumination

of human sense experiences. His synthetic philosophy is worth emulating. At least, he has a perfect blend of epistemology, ethics, psychology and politics. His ethical proclivity reveals the need for moral psychologism and moral evaluation of human character. His political philosophy envisages the protection of civil society, persons and property. He vehemently argues for the security of the democratic state. His liberal philosophy is characterized by economic liberalization. His ethical theory is aimed at the need for socio-political order and the normative framework for the various arms or tiers of government: the executive, the legislature, the judiciary and the press as the fourth estate of the realm. His ethical and political philosophy is anchored on the social coordination, radical transformation and the beneficial scheme of social cooperation. He was eighteenth century Scottish philosopher who is often described as the first conservative political theorist; certainly he is the first major thinker to offer a philosophical defense of conservatism.⁴⁰ He derives his political theory from his epistemology (what we can know) and practical philosophy (how we should behave, or what motivates us to act in certain ways).⁴¹ For Hoffman and Graham:

His contemporary significance cum relevance to political philosophy might appear not to be obvious; it is logically necessary to unravel a number of his philosophical claims; human understanding must be drawn from experience. All the materials of thinking or perceptions are derived from either from sensations or from reflections. When we use the terms cause and freedom, Hume believes we must break it down to simple sensations or 'impressions'.⁴²

Nevertheless, for him, simple impressions must be connected together or associated. He argues that we need to connect, or associate with ideas. He talks about three principles of association: resemblance, contiguity and causation. We attribute causes to events on the basis of experience, and more specifically, habit. Beliefs are built on habits. His moral philosophy is concerned with his political significance of beneficial scheme of social cooperation. He argues that morality is concerned with action.⁴³ Morality emphasizes on whether an act is right or wrong, good or bad. His emphasis on experience is applied to moral action.⁴⁴ His moral philosophy is based on moral sentiment. For Hoffman and Graham, a sentiment is a pre-rational feeling towards somebody or something. People are always moved to act in ways beneficial to other people. The absence of genuine moral sentiments made people distrustful of one another and rendered society unstable.⁴⁵ Moreover, just like Hobbes, he claims that we are all better off under a state especially a state that guarantees the protection of private property.⁴⁶ His political philosophy, though, conservative has some elements of democratic liberalism or democratic socialism. He advocates for a suspension of self-interest and the need for individualism. According to Hume, social contract is a fiction or figment of human imagination. He rejects the position of the liberal tradition. His implication of society is reflected in political legitimacy. For Hoffman and Graham, political legitimacy arises from the habit of obedience to power. He argues for the protection of the individuals' interests and engendering moral sentiments conducive to social order.⁴⁷ In addition, the rules of justice are the product of artifice and contrivance, and are intended to protect private property. He talks about a conversation or intercourse of sentiments.⁴⁸ His moral and political theory is built on the principle of collectivism and social order. His moral and political theory reflects the normative context of a country's socio-political and economic stability.

1.4 Evaluation

This theoretical discourse tends to add credence to his political theory; it brings to the fore the relevance of moral evaluation and moral approbation or disapprobation of human character in civil society. One fundamental merits with his political theory is that it presupposes human development, socio-political advancement, progress and stability. This theoretical framework contributes to knowledge by indicating or emphasizing on the fact that his moral and politico-epistemological grounding can guarantee a concerted efforts for ensuring human flourishing through the mainstreaming the need for good governance. His work is the hypostaziation of the sociological paradigm shift from political instability to economic liberalization of human society. It represents sociological functionalism and the need for the public good. He is concerned with the even distribution of economic resources. He is anti-revolutionary. He frowns at social inequalities and the excessive possession of wealth or private property. One of the demerits of His moral and political theory is that he has not been able to address the hydra-headed issues of socio-political and economic inequality. He is simply sympathetic with the ideals of human inequality. He is not only an epistemologist but a political moralist. He has been referred as “a prophet of limited government”. He brings to the fore that law and order are pre-requisites elements for social justice; social justice is quintessentially needed for human progress, political order, social harmony or the beneficial scheme of social cooperation. His moral philosophy reflects the systematic analysis of social order, moral cogency, educable sensibility, public good and good governance. His political theory is connected to his anthropological, ethical and epistemic grounding of world historical order. His robust theoretical construction of conservative politics is the critical understanding of human character. Moral approbation simply means what society approves or disapproves as right and wrong. His political thought has a conservative stance. Although, he was skeptical about the liberal tradition, his theoretical construct is geared towards some liberal dimension. His political thought reflects the principle of social order and “political ordering”. His theoretical discourse is “political epistemology”.⁴⁹ Political epistemology simply means “knowing what is right and wrong” in any political setting. His conception of politics reflects the normative possibility of ideal social order, respect for human dignity and property right. His political theory is grounded in his conception of moral approbation. He advocates the need for moral evaluation in order to understand the problem of human nature, normative society and human character. Human character is hinged on morality as an evaluative system of deliberate human choices and actions. Moral principle is concerned with right and wrong. His ethical and politico-epistemological philosophy is aimed at the normative possibility of socio-political order, equality of opportunities, human rights and socio-physical security. The concept of security has many variants such as energy security, food security, job security, environmental security, correctional security, physical security, social security, economic security and national security. The word “security” from the Humean tradition is an all-embracing, all-inclusive or multi-dimensional concept.

Furthermore, he takes the issue of security very serious as one of the fundamental duties of any democratic state in his theory of social contract. His original social contract is based on human convention. Human convention is the reasonable agreement of all individual members in a society. His rational and epistemological account of human motive, impression, passion and emotion talked about human deliberate choices and actions. His concepts of passion,

impression, motive, virtue, emotion, love and sufficient cause of human action has a metaphysical and psychological consequences. He distinguishes between convention-dependent and natural virtues but this distinction remains very unclear. His social contract theory is in consonance with the Hobbesian, Lockean, Rousseauian, Kantian and Rawlsian social contract theories. He rejects the label “social contractarian” because the classical social contractarians were a-historical in their theoretical constructs and socio-political thinking. His theory of social contract is defined by some sort of reasonable human agreement or human convention. The theory of the social contract posits that ethics precedes politics. It is germane to assert that “politics is parasitical to ethics”. His political thought rests on the protection of rights, life and property. His conservative philosophy is against any form of violence. Violence is anti-human and it could lead to death and human suffering. For Hume, no form of violence in whatever guise should be tolerated by any civil polity or democratic state. He is anti-revolutionary. His normative account of a political state rests on the greater theoretical insight of human life, progress, liberty and equality. He admonishes man to be a sociable and a reasonable being devoid of any act of cruelty or brute force. His political template or theoretical reconstruction or discourse is premised on the need for commerce and industry. His account of economic liberalization is in consonance with Adam Smith's political economy. He frowns at the bankruptcy of the political state. He believes that the fundamental functions of a democratic state is not only the protection of the just from the unjust but to guard against the temptation of cruelty, injustice, fraudulence, inequality and violence or any form of man's inhumanity to man. He is against the exploitation of man by man just like Marx. His conservative political stance rests on the normative possibility of a limited system of government. Government originates from convention. His essay of the original contract aims at the motivation or normative condition for democratic or civil society. His rational account of politics and civil society frowns at the dangers of violence in any political state. In addition, Adam Smith and David Hume assumed the political state to be devoid of any form of aggression or precariousness and social in-balance in order to guarantee the general happiness of all individuals the state. He is a political moralist, realist, epistemologist and conservative. Conservatives are sometimes realists and they accept the gradual process of change in human society. His conservative political philosophy and contractual grounding is “a case of epistemic political realism”.⁵⁰ His account of “epistemic political realism” is a normative outcome of democratic citizenship or reasonable agreement of rational persons.

Moreover, apart from the theoretical affinity between Adam Smith and David Hume, Kant's conservative political philosophy is similar to that of His theoretical reconstruction. He believes in the individual autonomy and the sovereignty of the democratic state. His philosophy of property right and social justice reflects reason itself. His theory of the social contract reflects the universalization of reason and the internationalization of law and justice. His theoretical insight on limited government is cosmopolitan and international in outlook. His political theory is predicated on moral principles; and the normative justification of property right. His political theory is the normative outcome of civil society. He is greatly indebted to Rousseau's political thought in terms of the normative possibility of the general will and the general happiness of all rational persons in the political community. He argues for the prohibition of violence and the absolute preservation of the state's sovereignty. His political constructs (social contract) is quite an illuminating, striking, interesting and

imperative. His philosophy is hinged on the limits of human reason, freedom; and the limits of deliberate human choices and actions. He believes in the communalistic regulation of property right.

Broadly speaking, the state should deem it necessary for providing effective social coordination by ensuring utility maximizing principles. According to the Humean templates, the state is a moral agent that is deeply rooted in the collective responsibility of all individual members in civil society. The state as a moral agent is enforced to impose sanctions to erring individuals in society. The legitimate function of the state is to impose moral sanctions upon individuals in pursuit of maintaining or sustaining the public peace, life and order. For Goodin, the state as a moral agent requires coordinated social actions; the state is the only collective agent capable of providing social coordination.⁵¹ For Hume, the public life is characterized by “coordinated social actions”.⁵² He just like Machiavelli rejects Christian morality. He believes that Christian morality or the virtue of fasting hardens the heart of the individual. His ethics is hedonism. Finally, government originates from human convention and society is simply “a voluntary human creation”.⁵³ He asserts that there is a universal approbation or blame which follows their observance or transgression. There is a convincing proof, that all men have an implicit notion of the foundation of those moral rules concerning natural and civil justice, and are sensible, that they arise merely from human conventions and from the collective interest, which we have in preservation of peace and order.⁵⁴ He began to think about and write his theoretical discourses on the normative basis that his early interest in the problems of moral philosophy was deeply personal as well as academic and literary.⁵⁵ His political philosophy elicits that society existed for the mutual satisfaction of needs by persons whose capacities supplement one another.⁵⁶ His moral and political theory reveals that society is a large complex of human relationships; a system of social interaction.⁵⁷ His theoretical construct reveals social justice. For Asekhauno, justice implies giving or receiving each person or group of persons his or their due; being fair to others.⁵⁸ His moral and political theory reflects that in civil society, man needs only desire and reason; the political life is a combination of desire and reason.⁵⁹ His moral and political theory was aimed at addressing human nature. For Lawhead, the problem is that human nature, the source of all our cognitive powers, is inadequately understood.⁶⁰ His moral and political philosophy demonstrates the democracy of everyday life. According to Rosen, everyday life testifies to the fact that human activity is intentional or purposive.⁶¹ His moral and political theory is predicated on the existential imperative of social relations. For Mackenzie, social relations functioning in many areas of life.⁶² His philosophy reveals the need for “rational sociology” and the shared assumption that rationality and feelings are mutually exclusive. If we are not rational, it is because something has distorted or hampered our natural reason; humans are essentially rational.⁶³ His philosophy gave forceful support to a government that would take positive steps to improve the lives of the people through policy framework that promotes the public good of all; government must take responsibility for the material well-being of its citizens.⁶⁴ His moral and political theory demonstrates that morality requires society.⁶⁵ His theoretical construct presupposes the normative context of democratic entitlement.⁶⁶ His fundamental philosophical core demonstrates the normative possibility of human deliberate actions. For Odimegwu, the morality of an action has three moments, namely: purpose and responsibility, intention and welfare, good and conscience.⁶⁷ His ideal of civil society requires moral conscience and moral responsibility. He is concerned about the

nature of man and how to make him a societal creature and a social Being. Theories and concepts about society are the theories and concepts about man and vice versa.⁶⁸ His moral and political theory is sociological and anthropological. From the Humean perspective, government originates from human convention. Convention creates the right to govern and bestowing on some persons or group of persons the right to govern. In governmental affairs, he argues that all of us as humans are capable of becoming competent moral judges.⁶⁹ He follows Hobbes in the conception of a universal human reason and to see the attractions of the good in normative society. He strongly wants the state to ensure the maximum protection or security of private property and persons. Security means the protection of life and property against any internal or external aggression. He claims that security is not only for the just against the unjust, but for the just impulses in any person against temptation of hindering the freedom of others or the freedom of the political state, inequality and injustice. His political theory has theoretical affinity with J.S Mill. His moral implication of liberal tradition is anchored on the principle of political legitimacy. Political legitimacy arises from “the habit of obedience to power”.⁷⁰ The Humean perspectives demonstrate that man is governed by the voice of reason or conscience. His moral and political theory demonstrates moral conscience. His moral and political theory reflects strict standard of ethical conduct, possible ethical judgement and it reveals a policy direction that is geared towards promoting collective social good or common good of all.⁷¹ His moral and political theory is aimed at the common good of the society. For Asouzu, the common good offers us a clear platform to show concretely our commitment to the joy of Being as the ultimate transcendent foundation of meaning in our actions.⁷² For Aristotle, in his “*Nicomachean Ethics*” posited that every art and every investigation, and likewise every practical pursuit or undertaking, seems to aim at some good: hence it has been well said that the good is that at which all things aim.⁷³ His moral and political theory is not mono-directional but mutual relational matrix that is deeply rooted in the principle of social order and social balance and social justice. He is regarded as an ethical and political realist. The epistemic dimension of politics in his moral and political philosophy is apt and logically necessary for our contemporary times where men are their own drivers and masters of themselves. He does not just develop his theoretical discourse on epistemology but in other areas of philosophical studies namely ethics, politics, sociology, anthropology, metaphysics, economics and moral psychology. His political programmes include economic liberalization, protection of persons and private property. His conservative stance talks about the beneficial scheme of social cooperation. He believes in the power of the sovereign states and their duties in keeping treaties and to respect each other's territorial boundaries. His views on keeping treaties among countries revealed the internationalization of justice, law and world order. His idea of epistemology brings to the fore his idea of politics. Hume argues that all humans are often governed by memories, beliefs system, passion, sympathy, impression and reflection. His theoretical account of passion motivates us to make rational decisions that are reflective, altruistic, illuminating and thought-provoking. His moral psychology has some theoretical affinity with Kant's anti-revolution, Rousseau's and Spinoza's account of reason and emotion. He argues that moral judgments are primarily judgement about human character traits. In his essay, he claimed that the obligation of justice solely rests on mutual promises and the beneficial scheme of social cooperation. His beneficial scheme of social cooperation is the normative assumption of compromise-readiness. His essay frowns at theft, ingratitude,

fraudulence, lying, malice, and oppression. In his Treatise, government is part and parcel of a social 'artifice' which is added to those of property, promise and marriage. His idea of politics is grounded in limited government and the sovereignty of the democratic state.

1.5 Concluding Reflections

Hume's political theory has utilitarian principle. It reflects the public happiness of all. His template has a great moral lesson for Nigeria as a country. Nigeria as a country can learn a lot from his moral and political theory which could serve as litmus test for us to be law abiding citizens and we ought to be orderly in our social relationships with other Nigerian citizen. His philosophy presupposes democratic citizenship. The myriad of atrocities in Nigeria such as religious bigotry, rape, ritual killings, corruption, Islamic fundamentalism, political assassination, lawlessness, social disorderliness, economic bankruptcy, or economic instability, national indebtedness, terrorism and terror, kidnapping, ethno-religious crises, and farmers/herdsmen clashes could only be resolved if we strictly adopt his moral and political theory whereby political obligation and moral answerability is guaranteed. His theory requires the need for moral responsibility and social order. The Nigerian society should out rightly condemn what is bad and approve what is good irrespective of one's ethnic affiliation. One fundamental challenge facing the Nigerian state is that certain atrocities are committed based on ethnic sentiments. Nigeria can draw a great inspiration from this Humean paradigm of moral approbation and disapprobation. His theory is grounded in economic paradigm and a socio-political and economic holism; the belief that the world operates in such a perspective from a part to a whole based on the social, political, and economic indices of human association and social cooperation. His theoretical construct reveals socio-generic-epistemic grounding of politics as a norm-governed activity. His work is the hypostaziation of the sociological paradigm shift from political instability to economic liberalization of human society. It represents sociological functionalism, economic liberalization, cosmopolitanism and political development.. His moral and political theory is predicated on political ethics that is geared towards preventing violence. His work is anti-revolutionary in outlook. Finally, Hume and Kant could be referred to as anti-revolutionaries and conservatives.

Endnotes

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