



Pettigrove, G. (2022) Cheerfulness. In: Pettigrove, G. and Swanton, C. (eds.) *Neglected Virtues*. Routledge: London, pp. 138-160. ISBN 9780429435201 (doi: [10.4324/9780429435201-7](https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429435201-7))

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Deposited on 27 January 2022

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## Cheerfulness

Glen Pettigrove

A grand old house sits abandoned in the middle of town, an overgrown garden obscuring it from the view of passers-by. While your average, convention-bound adult might not even notice, it is the kind of place that is irresistible for those of a certain age and temperament. So it is unsurprising to see a young woman climb the fence one rainy night, intent on exploring. Initially, Sally Sparrow is engrossed, wandering room to room, satisfying her curiosity. But before long she begins to feel uneasy, as if she were being watched. Cutting her tour short, she decides to finish in the light of day.

When she returns the following morning, she brings her friend, Kathy Nightingale, with her. As they enter the house, Kathy asks, “What did you come here for, anyway?”

“I love old things,” Sally answers. “They make me feel sad.”

Far from clearing things up, the response leaves Kathy more puzzled than before. “What’s good about sad?” she asks.

“It’s happy for deep people,” Sally replies.<sup>1</sup>

Thus begins the Dr Who episode entitled “Blink”. The words screenwriter Steven Moffat put in Sally Sparrow’s mouth may strike the listener as exaggerated or pretentious, and they are clearly meant to amuse, but they are not meant to be absurd. She represents, at the very least, a familiar personality type who associates depth with sadness and earnestly embraces both. It is a type well-represented among philosophers, who collectively take themselves to define the class of “deep people”. Martin Heidegger famously argues that authentic being is being-toward-death: if one is to live authentically, one must be mindful of the certainty of one’s death and must live in a way that neither avoids nor ignores this truth but faces it unflinchingly. Jean-Paul Sartre contends that human freedom faces the constant threats of both oppression from without and self-deception from within, so someone who would live authentically must be on the lookout for the ever-present temptation to betray one’s true nature by living in “bad faith”. While neither perspective requires one to prefer sadness over joy, each invites the suspicion that the cheerful person is living in an inauthentic way.

For other philosophers, it is anger, rather than sadness, that is the enlightened response to the human condition, given widespread injustice.<sup>2</sup> This, too, suggests that the emotional life of the deep person who is tuned in to what the world is really like will tend to be darker than their superficial peers. As Catherine Bennett put it in a column for the *Guardian*,

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<sup>1</sup> *Doctor Who*, Series 3, Episode 11, written by Steven Moffat and directed by Hettie MacDonald, BBC, 9 June 2007.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Lisa Tessman, *Burdened Virtues* (New York: Oxford University Press 2005) 107-131; Macalester Bell, “Anger, Virtue, and Oppression,” *Feminist Ethics and Social and Political Philosophy: Theorizing the Non-Ideal*, Lisa Tessman, ed. (New York: Springer 2009) 165-183; and Amia Srinivasan, “The Aptness of Anger,” *The Journal of Political Philosophy* 26 (2018): 123-144.

“Who but an idiot – or a Trump – could remain entirely cheerful, upon hearing, for instance, about Ivanka’s ambitions in the field of climate change, or that the word “bollocks” has a prominent place in our foreign secretary’s [i.e., Boris Johnson’s] diplomatic repertoire? What kind of person keeps intact their positive thinking in the face of the BBC’s relentless, if mysterious, exaltation of its pet demagogue, Nigel Farage?”<sup>3</sup>

Or, in the words of the *Dhammapada*, “How can there be laughter, how can there be pleasure, when the whole world is burning?”<sup>4</sup> Current events or the general human condition call for sadness or outrage or some other serious response, one might think, not cheerfulness.

Read against this backdrop, David Hume’s discussion of character traits in the *Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals* is surprising. There Hume sings the praises of cheerfulness, placing it in the ranks of the virtues – alongside honesty, modesty, generosity, industry, and courage. In fact, he goes a step further, contending that cheerfulness is one of the ends the other virtues serve. “[V]irtue ... declares, that her sole purpose is, to make her votaries and all mankind, during every instant of their existence, if possible, cheerful and happy.”<sup>5</sup>

For people like Sparrow, Bennett, or the average philosopher, Hume’s enthusiasm for cheerfulness will seem misplaced. It would have struck many of Hume’s contemporaries as odd, too. In the *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, John Calvin contended,

“Then only do we rightly advance by the discipline of the cross, when we learn that this life, judged in itself, is troubled, turbulent, unhappy in countless ways, and in no respect clearly happy; that all those things which are judged to be its goods are uncertain, fleeting, vain, and vitiated by many intermingled evils. From this, at the same time, we conclude that in this life we are to seek and hope for nothing but struggle ... For this we must believe: that the mind is never seriously aroused to desire and ponder the life to come unless it be previously imbued with contempt for the present life.”<sup>6</sup>

Since a significant number of Scottish Presbyterians would have taken Calvin’s word for gospel in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Hume’s neighbours would also have found his enthusiasm for cheerfulness puzzling.

However, Hume was not alone in his admiration of the cheerful. Although cheerfulness has been ignored by 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century ethicists, it was a common entry in 18<sup>th</sup> century catalogues of virtue. It is lauded by Joseph Addison, Joseph Butler, Francis Hutcheson, Adam Smith, and numerous others. This chapter will argue that we, too, should list it among the virtues. Section 1 will explain what cheerfulness is. Since not all examples of cheerfulness are virtuous, section 2 will look at what distinguishes praiseworthy instances

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<sup>3</sup> Catherine Bennett, “So Optimists Are Healthier. And More Deluded, Perhaps?” *The Guardian*, 11 December 2016.

<sup>4</sup> *The Dhammapada*, Juan Mascaro, trans. (New York: Penguin 1973) verse 146.

<sup>5</sup> David Hume, *Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals* [1751], Tom Beauchamp, ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1998) section 9, paragraph 15 (hereafter cited as EPM 9.15).

<sup>6</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* [1536], Ford Lewis Battles, trans. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press 1960) book 3, chapter 9, page 713.

of the kind. Section 3 will consider reasons why one might wish to exclude the cheerful from the ranks of the virtuous and will respond to those objections. And section 4 will look at what cheerfulness can teach us about the nature of virtue more generally.

## **I. Cheerfulness**

What, then, is cheerfulness? Some virtues, like justice or generosity, are most readily identified through the actions performed by those who possess them. Those who are just give others their due. The generous meet others' needs. The honest tell the truth. If we seek to understand the full nature of these virtues it is common to move from the outside in. We begin with people we have observed performing paradigmatically just or generous or honest actions and then begin to inquire about their inner life and the emotions, reasons, desires, and dispositions that characteristically accompany or explain such actions.

Other virtues are less tied to actions of a particular type and are more readily identified in terms of the inner states of those who exemplify them. The courageous master their fear, the temperate their desire. That is not to say certain kinds of behaviour or contexts of action might not readily come to mind when we consider the courageous or the temperate. Battles hold pride of place in many discussions of courage as soldiers jump on grenades to save their platoons. Parties feature in discussions of temperance as revellers refrain from refilling their glasses. Even so, fear and desire play a more pronounced role in the characterisation of courage and temperance than the emotions of the just or generous do in the portrayal of their respective virtues.

As one would expect, given its name, cheerfulness is more like courage than generosity, in this regard. If the possessor of the trait is full of cheer, then the emotion of cheer would seem a good place to start one's enquiry into the nature of cheerfulness. In 18<sup>th</sup> century texts "cheer" is used interchangeably with "mirth", "gaiety", "joviality", "jollity", "joy", "delight", "gladness", and "happiness". It is exemplified in the merry spirits of the person enjoying amusing company at a party. But it can also be seen in the solitary walker delighting in the blooming, buzzing beauty of a spring day. What ties these outwardly different moments together is a light-hearted appreciation of everyday goods. This appreciation characteristically expresses itself in smiles, laughter, and pleasant conversation.

In addition to picking out an emotional state, "cheerful" is also used to designate a mood. Emotions and moods are closely related, nevertheless theorists commonly distinguish them from one another by way of their objects. An emotion has an intentional object: There is something it is about. One is amused at the joke or anxious about the exam. A mood often feels much like an emotion but lacks a clear object.<sup>7</sup> The person in an anxious mood feels uneasy without knowing why. Her anxiety does not revolve around a specifiable object, but rather sets the stage for the more focused emotions she might experience. In the case of the person in a cheerful mood, there is not a particular state-of-affairs that is the focus of her boosted her spirits. She is simply in a good mood, prepared to appreciate whatever comes her way.

While cheerful emotions and moods offer a good place to start thinking about cheerfulness, the cases in which we are especially interested are those in which "cheerful" picks out neither an emotion nor a mood but a disposition. After all, a single affective episode – be it an emotion or a mood – does not a virtue make. Even a sourpuss can

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<sup>7</sup> Peter Goldie, *The Emotions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2000) 143.

occasionally be in a good mood. The quality Hutcheson, Hume, Addison, Butler, and Smith have in view when they praise cheerfulness is something steadier than fleeting emotions or passing moods. They mean to pick out a disposition or trait of character.

What does a cheerful disposition involve? To begin with, it involves an inclination to feel the emotions and be in the mood we have been discussing. It also involves a tendency to attend to things in the way people in such a mood do. They attend to features of their environment appreciatively.

This characterisation of the disposition takes us some way toward understanding the virtue of cheerfulness. But it is not yet sufficient since, as just noted, nearly everyone is inclined to feel merry once-in-a-while. Similarly, everyone tends to notice and appreciate good qualities from time to time. What distinguishes the person with a cheerful disposition from those who lack it? One possibility is that someone with a cheerful disposition experiences cheerful emotions or moods more often than the average person. Something in this neighbourhood sounds plausible; however, additional qualifications will be needed to account for the influence circumstances can have on how often one feels cheerful. Adam might feel cheerful more often than the average person, even though he lacks a cheerful disposition, because his circumstances are objectively better or more suited to joviality than average. Beth, on the other hand, might feel cheerful less often than the average person, even though she has a cheerful disposition, because her circumstances are considerably worse than average. To neutralise such circumstantial influences, then, we could introduce a *ceteris paribus* clause. When their circumstances are equal, we would expect the person with a cheerful disposition to experience cheerful emotions or moods more often than the average person.

However, it is not clear this addition will do the trick, either. Including a *ceteris paribus* clause will enable us to distinguish Beth's disposition from Adam's if both are placed in contexts like Beth's. It will also enable us to distinguish between them in average circumstances. But, if both are placed in a situation like Adam's, the *ceteris paribus* clause may be less reliable. Adam's circumstances might be so pleasant that almost anyone who was placed in them would feel cheerful most of the time. I say "might be" because it is an empirical question. Given the way in which the privileged grow accustomed to pleasant features of their environment and come to take them for granted, it is unlikely that circumstances alone would lead Adam to feel as cheerful as someone with the virtue of cheerfulness who found herself in the same situation. But we should not rule out such a possibility by definition.

It might be better, then, to characterise the person with a cheerful disposition as someone who is inclined to feel cheerful even in situations where most people would not. This formulation would enable us to distinguish between Adam and Beth. For, *ex hypothesi*, if Adam and Beth were both placed in difficult circumstances – or even in average ones – Beth would be inclined to feel cheerful when Adam did not. The formulation also nicely captures a case like the following.

One evening Matt meets his friend, Allan, at their favourite restaurant. After dinner they walk back to Matt's house to carry on the conversation. But when they open the door, they find water covering the hardwood floor of the kitchen and dining room. Had the leak been at Allan's, the pleasant mood of the evening would have been over, because Allan would have spent the rest of the night worrying about the damage the

leak might have done to the floorboards. Fortunately, it is not. Although Matt is initially thrown off stride, his equilibrium is quickly restored. A brief search reveals the source of the puddle, which is a leaking hot water heater. Fifteen minutes later, the valve to the heater has been closed, the floor has been mopped, a bucket has been strategically placed, and arrangements have been made for a plumber to stop by in the morning. Having done everything he could to address the problem, Matt is ready to joke about the situation. And his good humour puts Allan at ease. Drinks are poured and, in no time, they are chatting and laughing once more.

Matt's disposition enables him to continue to feel cheerful under conditions Allan would not, were their roles reversed. What is more, it enables Matt's companion to feel cheerful in circumstances that might otherwise have dampened his spirits.

Identifying a cheerful disposition in terms of "an inclination to feel cheer even in situations most people would not" is preferable to identifying it in terms of the mere frequency with which the person feels emotions of good cheer. But both ways of identifying the cheerful have a feature it would be nice to avoid. Each defines a cheerful disposition comparatively, building in a reference to "most other people" or "the average person". By so doing, they define away the possibility that the disposition might be common. There is a lively debate regarding whether virtues are rare, either contingently (because most people fall short of their high standards) or necessarily (because virtues are excellences and "excellence" is defined in contrast to "ordinary" and only applies to a small percentage of cases).<sup>8</sup> But as we shall see, a cheerful disposition need not always be a virtue, so the reasons that might make rarity a desirable feature of the virtuous disposition will not apply to the disposition, *simpliciter*. It would be better, then, if the account of the disposition did not entail its rarity.

A third way to characterise the person with a cheerful disposition is as someone who is inclined to feel cheer even in challenging situations. This way of describing it retains the advantages of the second formulation but avoids its commitment to the trait's rarity. Something may be challenging without being rare. Learning to read Chinese, for example, is challenging, but that does not prevent millions of people from mastering it. Furthermore, once they have mastered it, they will no longer find it challenging, but that in no way undermines the claim that learning to read Chinese is challenging.

## II. The Virtue of Cheerfulness

There is now enough detail in our account of cheerfulness for it to pick out a trait of character. Cheerfulness is a disposition to feel cheer (gladness, delight, mirth, etc.) even in challenging circumstances. However, the trait thus described is not yet a virtue. The child may be inclined to feel cheer in difficult situations simply because she fails to recognise or appreciate the evils of the world. The happy drunk may keep up his spirits in tough times by using alcohol to avoid the problems he faces. The class clown's mirth need not be due to an inability or unwillingness to see the world as it truly is; nevertheless, her light-hearted behaviour may be just as out of place as that of the naïf and the drunk. She laughs at times when her attention should be otherwise directed and encourages her classmates to do the same. Finally, the tendency of Voltaire's Doctor Pangloss to feel cheer even in tragic circumstances is made possible by his endorsement of an ideology that trivialises the

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<sup>8</sup> See Nafsika Athanassoulis, "A Response to Harman: Virtue Ethics and Character Traits," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 100 (2000): 215-221; Rachana Kamtekar, "Situationism and Virtue Ethics on the Content of Our Character," *Ethics* 114 (2004): 458-491; and Christian Miller, *Character and Moral Psychology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2014) 202-213.

suffering of those around him. Regardless of how we define virtue, a disposition to buoyant spirits that is explained by avoidance, trivialisation, or a lack of appreciation for life's troubles or our fellow travellers' miseries looks like a defect rather than an excellence of character.

Why, then, should we think cheerfulness in some form might be a virtue in some people? And what distinguishes virtuous versions from less praiseworthy ones? To answer these questions, it will be useful to say a bit more about virtue, so let us turn our attention back to Hume. There are a variety of ways in which Hume picks out virtues. His most frequent practice is to identify them through an observer's feelings of approval. In the second *Enquiry*, for example, he offers the following characterisation. "It is the nature, and, indeed, the definition of virtue, that it is a quality of the mind agreeable to or approved of by every one, who considers or contemplates it."<sup>9</sup> Earlier, in the *Treatise*, he offered a similar account, except that he appealed not to what is approved by everyone but only to what is approved by those who look at it from what he calls the "common point of view," which one does by sympathising with people who are (or might be) affected by the trait.<sup>10</sup> These descriptions enable us to identify traits that are virtues, but they don't tell us what it is about them that elicits our approval. Hume suggests that, if we look carefully at the traits of which we approve, we will notice they share certain properties: they tend to be useful or agreeable to oneself or to others.<sup>11</sup>

On Hume's account, then, virtues are qualities of mind or character that we approve, on reflection, and that tend to be useful or agreeable to their possessor or those whose lives she touches. Some virtues, like industry or prudence, stand out for being useful to ourselves.<sup>12</sup> Without them, we would be much worse off. Others, such as beneficence or courage, are admired on account of their usefulness to those around us.<sup>13</sup> Without them, our communities would be worse off. Still other virtues, like modesty, may well be useful, but what we notice most about them is the fact that they are immediately agreeable to others. Modest people are pleasanter company than those who are quick to talk about themselves and their accomplishments, who have an inflated sense of their own worth, or who lack a sense of propriety or shame.<sup>14</sup>

Finally, there are traits that "are valued for the immediate pleasure, which they communicate to the person possessed of them" (EPM 7.29). The trait Hume puts forward to exemplify the last category is cheerfulness and it is not hard to see why. Few experiences are more immediately agreeable to a person than feeling upbeat. So – other things being equal – being disposed to feel this way frequently, even in contexts that might dampen others' spirits, would also be immediately agreeable.

Rosalind Hursthouse has objected to Hume's account of virtue, arguing that "the four grounds of pleasure are bound to yield many inconsistent or inconclusive results."<sup>15</sup> Self-indulgence, for example, can be disagreeable to others but quite agreeable to the person

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<sup>9</sup> Hume, EPM, 8, f.n. 1.

<sup>10</sup> David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature* [1739-40], David Fate Norton and Mary J. Norton, eds (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2000) book 3, part 3, section 1, paragraph 30 and book 3, part 3, section 3, paragraph 9 (hereafter cited as *Treatise* 3.3.1.30 and 3.3.3.9).

<sup>11</sup> See, for example, Hume, EPM 8, f.n. 1 and *Treatise* 3.3.1.9ff.

<sup>12</sup> Hume, *Treatise* 3.3.4.5 and 7.

<sup>13</sup> Hume, EPM 2.6.

<sup>14</sup> Hume, EPM 8.8-10.

<sup>15</sup> Rosalind Hursthouse, "Virtue Ethics and Human Nature," *Hume Studies* 25.1-2 (1999) 71.

herself. This would suggest self-indulgence is both a virtue (because agreeable to oneself) and a vice (because disagreeable to others). To take another example, both courage and cowardice could, at times, be useful to their possessors and to others. This would suggest, contrary to common wisdom, that both courage and its opposite are virtues.

However, Hursthouse's objection need not worry us, either as a complaint about Hume's account of virtue, in general, or as an objection to cheerfulness, in particular. Regarding the general point, as noted above, neither being useful nor being agreeable is sufficient for a quality of mind or character to count as a virtue, on Hume's account. It must also be approved by those who contemplate it (from the common point of view). And it is clear that cowardice and self-indulgence will not meet this condition.

Regarding cheerfulness, Hume's case in support of it is not based exclusively on it being agreeable to its possessor. In fact, most of Hume's discussion of the merits of cheerfulness focuses on how agreeable the cheerful are to those around them.

Whoever has passed an evening with serious melancholy people, and has observed how suddenly the conversation was animated, and what sprightliness diffused itself over the countenance, discourse, and behaviour of every one, on the accession of a good-humoured, lively companion; such a one will easily allow that cheerfulness carries great merit with it, and naturally conciliates the good-will of mankind. No quality, indeed, more readily communicates itself to all around ....<sup>16</sup>

The cheer of the cheerful is contagious. Hume's preferred explanation of emotional contagion appeals to our sympathetic capacity. Sympathy makes it possible for more-or-less any emotion to be communicated from one person to another.<sup>17</sup> In the case of the cheerful, because the passion conveyed to the person who attends to the cheerful is a pleasant one, she finds herself not only catching his good cheer, but also feeling good about him.<sup>18</sup>

Whether or not one is satisfied with Hume's account of why cheerfulness is agreeable, two things are clear. First, cheerfulness spreads to others. Second, as long as it is not predicated on or indifferent to someone else's suffering, we find it agreeable. The upshot for our argument is that what we appreciate about the trait of cheerfulness is not just that it is pleasant for the cheerful person herself, but also that it is agreeable to those whose company she keeps. Since the examples Hursthouse marches out as objections to Hume are built around traits that are agreeable to one party but disagreeable to another, they do not get a purchase on cheerfulness in this respect either.

In contrast to Hume, Hursthouse contends, "the virtues are (by and large) useful *and* agreeable to their possessor *and* to others."<sup>19</sup> Does cheerfulness meet this more demanding condition? I have been arguing that cheerfulness can be agreeable to self and other. Is it also

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<sup>16</sup> Hume, EPM 7.1. See also, Hume, *Treatise* 2.1.11.2 and Francis Hutcheson, *An Inquiry into the Original of Our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue* [1725] (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund 2004) 134 and 168-9.

<sup>17</sup> "When any affection is infus'd by sympathy, it is at first known only by its effects, and by those external signs in the countenance and conversation, which convey an idea of it. This idea is presently converted into an impression, and acquires such a degree of force and vivacity, as to become the very passion itself, and produce an equal emotion, as any original affection" (*Treatise* 2.1.11.3).

<sup>18</sup> Hume, EPM 7.2.

<sup>19</sup> Hursthouse, 70.



useful?<sup>20</sup> To see the utility of cheerfulness, it will be helpful to introduce an observation made by Philippa Foot. She notes that virtues “are corrective, each one standing at a point at which there is some temptation to be resisted or deficiency of motivation to be made good.”<sup>21</sup> What temptations or deficiencies might cheerfulness help overcome? Spend ten minutes around the water cooler in almost any place of employment and the answer will become clear. If you are short on time, two minutes on Twitter will yield the same result. What one encounters in either location are people complaining about the world around them. Robin Kowalski’s research suggests, “In almost every conversation, at least one person will complain about something, and commonly several people will gripe.”<sup>22</sup> While complaining is not without its redeeming qualities, it also focuses our attention on negative features of our environment and invites others to share this focus. In so doing, it both expresses and reinforces a common tendency to dwell upon the sources of dissatisfaction in our lives. Dissatisfaction is not all bad, insofar as it can motivate us to change things for the better. But no matter how hard we work to improve ourselves and our environment, and no matter how successful we are in those endeavours, the world being what it is, there will always be grounds for dissatisfaction. And constant dissatisfaction is neither useful nor agreeable to anyone. Nor is it conducive to flourishing. We need a safeguard, then, against the constant temptation to be dissatisfied. Cheerfulness, usefully, provides such a safeguard.

Cheerfulness involves both emotional and behavioural resilience to the bad. This is one of the things Adam Smith most admires about it.

“His behaviour is genteel and agreeable who can maintain his cheerfulness amidst a number of frivolous disasters, but he appears to be more than moral who can support in the same manner the most dreadful calamities. We feel what an immense effort is

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<sup>20</sup> One might think that, at least on Hume’s account, it is not, for he writes, “From this influence of cheerfulness, both to communicate itself and to engage approbation, we may perceive that there is another set of mental qualities, which, without any utility or any tendency to farther good, either of the community or of the possessor, diffuse a satisfaction on the beholders, and procure friendship and regard” (Hume, EPM 7.2). One way to read this passage would take it to say that the mental qualities Hume is discussing – including cheerfulness – lack utility. However, a better reading is available. This reading takes Hume to be saying there are qualities whose virtue we recognise even without considering their utility. Which of these readings should we prefer? Given other things Hume says, the second is the better interpretation. The first thing that speaks in favour of this reading can be seen when he restates his point in the final paragraph of the section: “These are some instances of the several species of merit, that are valued for the immediate pleasure which they communicate to the person possessed of them. No views of utility or of future beneficial consequences enter into this sentiment of approbation; yet is it of a kind similar to that other sentiment, which arises from views of a public or private utility” (Hume, EPM 7.29). The conclusion he draws from his discussion of cheerfulness, dignity, tranquillity, and taste is simply that there is a kind of merit that is distinguished by its agreeableness. Such a claim is consistent with it being the case that the members of this kind also possess other grounds for admiration. The point is that we don’t need to look at their utility to recognise their merit. The second thing that recommends this reading is that he returns to courage and benevolence in the midst of his discussion of the merit of being immediately agreeable, pointing out that traits which stand out for their utility can also be immediately agreeable (Hume, EPM 7.11 and 19). Indeed, we often carry on admiring those who display these traits even when they lack utility, because their merit is not wholly dependent on their utility. Read in light of the rest of section 7 of the Enquiry, then, it is clear that Hume is not claiming cheerfulness lacks utility, but rather that there are two distinct kinds of merit, one of which involves being useful and the other of which involves being immediately agreeable. What jumps out at us about cheerfulness is its agreeableness, but that is consistent with it also being useful.

<sup>21</sup> Philippa Foot, *Virtues and Vices* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2002) 8.

<sup>22</sup> Robin Kowalski, “Whining, Gripping, and Complaining,” *Journal of Clinical Psychology* 58.9 (2002) 1024.

requisite to silence those violent emotions which naturally agitate and distract those in his situation. We are amazed to find he can command himself so entirely.”<sup>23</sup>

How does cheerfulness equip one with such resilience? Smith’s description makes it look as though it is simply a matter of self-control. And self-control may at times be an important aid both to the development and the maintenance of cheerfulness. However, cheerfulness involves more than just self-control. It also involves habits of attention. The cheerful person dwells on different things than the despondent.

Joseph Addison notes how these two – self-control and habits of attention – might work together. He writes, “Every one ought to fence against the temper of his climate or constitution.” That is the element of self-control. Virtuous cheerfulness is something that must be cultivated. On what is control being exercised? It is exercised on one’s attention, which should be directed to “those considerations which may give him a serenity of mind, and enable him to bear up cheerfully against those little evils and misfortunes which are common to human nature, and which by a right improvement of them, will produce a satiety of joy and an uninterrupted happiness.”<sup>24</sup>

An example will help. Take a person who has been instructed to work from home during a pandemic. It would be all too easy to focus on the negatives and to spend one’s time grumbling and complaining ... about not being able to go out with friends, about the challenges of focusing on work when family members are wandering in and out of the room talking, about trying to divide one’s time between caring for one’s children and doing one’s job, about the tedium of needlessly long, back-to-back meetings by video link, about the unavailability of one’s preferred items at the grocery store, about the way political leaders are handling the public health crisis, et cetera. If we add the issues that might surface when one comes down with the virus oneself, the list of complaints could extend for several more pages. And that assumes one is among those fortunate enough to recover. What is distinctive about the virtuously cheerful is that they focus their attention elsewhere. They revel in the flowers that bloom in the spring, the leaves returning to the trees, and the unexpected stretch of fine weather. They think about the additional time they get to spend with their children. They appreciate their shortened commute. They notice how happy the pets are to have everyone home. They celebrate the progress made on vaccine research. They welcome the reduction in greenhouse gas emissions brought on by lockdown. They are pleased to see politicians – at least in some places – giving priority to the needs of society’s most vulnerable. They attend to everyday goods, mundane enjoyments, and simple pleasures. Those goods are still present, but in the midst of hardship most of us overlook them. The cheerful, by contrast, are quick to notice and appreciate them because they have a practiced habit of looking for everyday goods and giving them their attention.

Hume’s account of virtue – in conjunction with Addison’s and Smith’s observations on the cheerful – helps us distinguish between virtuous instances of cheerfulness and the instances with which the section began.<sup>25</sup> The happy drunk’s cheerfulness may be agreeable

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<sup>23</sup> Adam Smith, *Theory of Moral Sentiments* [1759], D.D. Raphael and A.L. Macfie, eds (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund 1984) Liii.1.13.

<sup>24</sup> Joseph Addison, *Maxims, Observations, and Reflections, Moral, Political, and Divine* (London: E. Curly 1719) 103-4.

<sup>25</sup> One might also wonder how cheerfulness is distinguished from other traits that it resembles in one or more respects, such as optimism, contentment, and tranquillity. Since each of these traits is at least as complex as cheerfulness, I can only touch on them briefly. Like cheerfulness, contentment and optimism both stand in

to him now, but we know it is coming at an expense that will eventually lead to regret. Consequently, the person who is aware of this economy will not judge the happy drunk's cheerfulness to be useful. Its tragic disutility may keep it from being agreeable, as well. The class clown's cheerfulness expresses itself at inopportune times and in disruptive ways, undercutting its usefulness. Dr Pangloss's pleasant spirits, rooted as they are in an indifference to the suffering of others, are immediately disagreeable. Virtuous cheerfulness, by contrast, is useful and agreeable, meets with others' approval, and can help one bear up even in trying times.

### III. Are You Serious?

Section 1 spelled out what the trait of cheerfulness consists in: The cheerful person is disposed to appreciate everyday goods in a light-hearted way even in challenging circumstances and to express that appreciation in thought, word, and deed. Section 2 offered reasons for thinking cheerfulness can be a virtue: Upon reflection, we approve of the cheerfulness of at least some people, finding it both immediately agreeable and useful to the cheerful person herself and those with whom she interacts. Why, then, has cheerfulness not been universally embraced and widely lauded as a virtue? This section will address one reason people may be hesitant to include cheerfulness among the virtues: It displays a lack of either understanding or seriousness. The next section will address another reason: It is out of step with an influential theory of virtue.

Hume is alert to the first sort of reason. "Men are ... afraid of passing for good-natur'd; lest that shou'd be taken for want of understanding."<sup>26</sup> In response to the previous section, many of you will have been thinking, "It all seems a bit shallow. I am meant to be paying attention to flowers in the midst of a global pandemic that the leaders of the United States, the United Kingdom, Brazil, and other countries have handled so badly that hundreds of thousands of people have died and hundreds of thousands more have been plunged into financial ruin? Rather than being troubled by the death of yet another innocent, unarmed person of colour at the hands of the police in the United States, I should be enjoying the nice

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contrast with discontent, pessimism, and cynicism. Nevertheless, there are important differences between cheerfulness and familiar kinds of contentment and optimism. The contented, Cheshire Calhoun suggests, are able to appreciate even imperfect goods because they recognise, "Things could have been worse" (*Doing Valuable Time* [Oxford: Oxford University Press 2018] 150). The attitudes of the optimistic are guided by the expectation that things will get better. Both involve i) counter-factual and ii) comparative thinking. In each respect, contentment and optimism (so understood) differ from cheerfulness. The pleasant spirits of the cheerful need not compare the good they are appreciating to any other state of affairs, nor need they think about how differently things might have turned out (or might yet turn out). The cheerful can be entirely taken up with appreciating the good of the moment.

This is not to deny that contentment, optimism, and cheerfulness might overlap. It could be the case that the good to which a cheerful person attends on some occasion is the observation that things are improving, the expectation that they will improve, or the recognition that they could have been worse. But those thoughts are not baked into the chemistry of cheerfulness.

Similarly, cheerfulness and tranquillity can overlap. For example, when Śāntideva says, "Whatever happens, I shall not disrupt my cheerfulness," he might just as easily have said, "my tranquillity." And, indeed, he does that very thing a few verses later (*A Guide to the Bodhisattva Way of Life*, Vesna and Alan Wallace, trans [Ithaca: Snow Lion 1997] chapter vi, verses 9 and 19). Like cheerfulness, tranquillity stands in contrast to sadness, discouragement, and unhappiness. The tranquil or serene individual is calm and emotionally unmoved even in conditions that would normally depress people. The point of difference is that the tranquil are also unmoved in conditions that would normally excite people, whereas the cheerful are ready to enjoy goods wholeheartedly and without reserve. The explanation for the apparent serenity of the cheerful is not that they are unmoved, *simpliciter*. Rather, it is that even in challenging circumstances they are able to attend to and resonate with the good.

<sup>26</sup> Hume, *Treatise* 3.3.4.1

weather? Instead of weeping at the untimely death of a friend, I should be appreciating the fine coffee served at his funeral? And rather than being shocked and angered to hear the President of the United States stirring up an angry mob and sending them to Capitol Hill to overturn the results of an election he lost, I should instead be attending to the goldfinches flitting about the hedges on my afternoon walk and finding amusement in their sociable chittering?" To describe such a person as wanting understanding seems to be putting it mildly. They seem to be ignoring big and important issues and focusing on small, trivial ones.

If cheerfulness boiled down to being absorbed by pleasant, insignificant matters and overlooking or failing to understand unpleasant, important ones, then we should, indeed, be afraid of passing for cheerful. However, there are several assumptions standing behind the concerns of the previous paragraph that should be challenged. First, nothing in the account of section 2 is meant to suggest the cheerful person always feels cheerful. A friend's funeral is a time for grieving and that is exactly what we would expect the virtuous to be doing in such a situation. However, even there we may recognise a difference between the cheerful soul and other funeral-goers. When I was a child, my father pastored a church in rural Michigan. Consequently, my sister and I, as pastor's kids, attended more funerals than most children our age. In our community, funerals were frequently followed by a dinner to which all were invited. These events gave people an opportunity to process their loss together. A standard feature of the conversations shared around the table were stories about the deceased. People recounted fond memories of the person the occasion honoured and often these memories were amusing. After the solemnity and tears of the funeral, the dinner gave people a chance to smile – and even laugh – again. There were people in the community you could count on to turn the conversation into this track. At a certain point they would share a memory of a silly game they played with the departed as a child, or a scrape the two of them got into as teens, or an amusing habit they had, or a funny thing they once said. This joyful memory encouraged others to think of similar moments they had spent with the friend to whom they were saying goodbye. The cheerful souls who pointed the conversation in this direction were not indifferent to grief, be it their own or others', nor did they ignore the loss everyone was feeling. Rather, the happy memories they shared fit the occasion and sweetened the experience of grieving.

Nevertheless, not all funerals are suited to cheer. There is a difference between the funeral of a beloved aunt who dies peacefully in her sleep at 92 and that of an 11-year-old hit by a truck while riding her bicycle or of a 46-year-old father who dies when a white police officer kneels on his brown neck for nearly eight minutes, ignoring pleas that he cannot breathe. Sometimes grief cannot be sweetened. In such moments, cheerfulness is not the principal trait that is operative in the virtuous. At such times, the virtuous weep with those who weep, protest with those who protest, and march with those who march.

Second, the preceding objection assumes that our attention should always (or nearly always) be focused on big and important issues, rather than smaller, less important ones. Admittedly, there are many occasions where it would be foolish to focus on small goods when big problems loom. This is what children do through want of understanding. Grown-ups are meant to have learned better. But we need to take care lest we overstate the point. Stopping between the tracks to pick a flower when a train is bearing down on you is one thing. Being pleased that the day scheduled for the protest march has dawned bright and clear is quite another. In one case, one's appreciation of a minor good puts one in the way of a great harm. In the other, it does nothing to detract from one's awareness of a great wrong

that has been done or impede one's attempts to prevent future wrongs of the same type. It may be tempting to think serious matters demand if not *every* thought, then *most* of the thoughts of conscientious adults. But this temptation should be resisted. Not even compassion or justice demand our constant attention. If they did, then the virtuous would be the most miserable of people, since we are never short of victims of injustice (on whose behalf we might be angry) or of tragedy (with whose plight we might sympathise). "The poor you will always have with you," says Jesus.<sup>27</sup> But while we should not become complacent about that fact, neither should it prevent us from appreciating time with those we love, the companionship of friends, the wisdom of those who have taught us better ways of being human, the beauty of gratitude, the sweet fragrance of perfume, or any of the many other goods we might encounter in our daily travels.

The argument of the preceding paragraph has two limitations. First, while it should persuade those considering the matter for the first time – as well as Aristotelians and others whose account of the virtues take them to be either constituents of or conducive to happiness – the reader most likely to take issue with cheerfulness will complain that I have begged the question. Rather than seeing the prospective misery of the virtuous as a reason to reject the assumption that our minds should be so absorbed with the problems of the world that there would not be space for virtuous cheerfulness, my opponent might well embrace the conclusion that the virtuous should be miserable. Second, even for those who are persuaded by the argument, the conclusion it recommends is quite modest. All it establishes is that the virtuous are not obliged to focus so constantly on important tragedies and injustices that cheerfulness is excluded from the virtuous life. It leaves open the question of how often and under what circumstances it should be manifested. For all I have said, its display might be infrequent. Such a conclusion would fall well short of the scope Hume, Addison, and Smith attributed to it. Smith, for example, contends that "in all the ordinary situations of human life, a well-disposed mind may be equally calm, equally cheerful, and equally contented."<sup>28</sup> And, as we saw above, he thinks the virtue of cheerfulness can be displayed even in catastrophic circumstances. Can more be said that might appeal to the entrenched critic and that might extend the reach of cheerfulness even to serious situations?

To see how we might strengthen the case for frequently expressed cheerfulness, it will be helpful to fix our attention on a particular example. Consider hospital staff who care for those in critical condition. They are confronted daily by the risk and reality of death. And when they engage with patients and their family members, their behaviour reflects the significance of these facts. However, behind closed doors, when in the presence of other medical staff, they laugh and joke with one another just like people who work in settings that are much less serious. Their sense of humour may strike the uninitiated as macabre. But what is most striking is the fact that they find things to laugh about even in such a trying setting. Nevertheless, their doing so is not frivolous. Nor is it a sign that they fail to appreciate the value of those in their care or the seriousness of the risks posed to their patients' lives.

How does this example advance our discussion? The most obvious thing it does is show that cheerful behaviour need not indicate a lack of seriousness or an unawareness of the comparative significance of the profoundly sad and the trivially amusing. Unless one is prepared to say that good humour in doctors and nurses is necessarily objectionable, it will be

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<sup>27</sup> Matthew 26:11.

<sup>28</sup> Smith, TMS, III.3.31.

hard to maintain that serious scenes always require sombre spirits. Another thing our example does is draw attention to the mental health benefits of cheerfulness. If we spend all our time focusing on what is wrong with the world, we will have trouble bearing up under the weight for the long haul. The presence of a cheerful colleague whose good humour is shared with their co-workers is often the very thing that enables critical care staff to continue doing their jobs well day after day without being overwhelmed by the constancy of death and loss. Even in tragic circumstances, then, cheerfulness can be useful and agreeable. To the question how often and under what circumstances it should be manifested, the hospital example answers, “Quite often and even under adverse circumstances.”

#### IV. What Cheerfulness Can Teach Us About Virtue

Another reason cheerfulness has been ignored by contemporary virtue theorists is that it is out of step with an influential strand of virtue theory. This strand is built around the thought that part of what is distinctive about the virtuous agent is that she ‘sees’ the world accurately and she does so because virtues are forms of sensitivity.<sup>29</sup> When it comes to identifying *what* she sees and *how* she sees, there are a number of different positions on offer. One answer to the “how” question is that she sees through emotion. And what her emotions see are value properties.<sup>30</sup> Different emotions are paired with different properties: fear with danger, amusement with funniness, pride with personal achievement and social recognition, and the like. Since emotions are the way in which she sees these value properties, and since she sees the world accurately, we can expect the virtuous agent to feel amusement in the presence of the funny, pride when she has achieved something difficult and that achievement has been recognised by others, and so on. Another answer to the “what” and “how” questions proposes that the virtuous agent is sensitive to requirements that reason or practical wisdom reveal.<sup>31</sup> Cheerfulness, as we shall see, is out of step with each of these views, which makes it unsurprising that contemporary virtue theory has neglected it.

Let us begin with the latter approach. John McDowell sets out to argue that “virtue, in general, is” a reliable “ability to recognize requirements which situations impose on one’s behaviour.”<sup>32</sup> To make a case for this conclusion, he begins by looking at the virtue of kindness, observes qualities it has, suggests other virtues have the same qualities, and extrapolates from there to the abovementioned conclusion. What does he notice about kindness? Not being kind is not an option for a good person. And the kind person’s “reliably kind behaviour is not the outcome of a blind, non-rational habit or instinct,” as if they just happened to treat others kindly without knowing they were doing so. It makes sense, then, to think of kindness as a kind of sensitivity and to suggest that what it is sensitive to are requirements.<sup>33</sup> McDowell invites the reader to think the same is true of each virtue. And if we turn our attention to a virtue like justice, it seems entirely plausible. If anything, it makes even more sense to think of justice in terms of being sensitive to requirements than it does to think of kindness in this way. The alternative – namely, failing to give others their due – is

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<sup>29</sup> See, for example, Iris Murdoch, “The Sublime and the Beautiful Revisited” [1959], *Existentialists and Mystics*, Peter Conradi, ed. (New York: Penguin 1999) 284; John McDowell, “Virtue and Reason” [1979], *Mind, Value, and Reality* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press 1998) 51-3; Bridget Clarke, “Virtue as a Sensitivity,” *The Oxford Handbook of Virtue*, Nancy Snow, ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2018) 35-56.

<sup>30</sup> “[E]motions are perceptions of values” (Bruce Maxwell and Christine Tappolet, “Rethinking Cognitive Mediation: Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy and the Perceptual Theory of Emotion.” *Philosophy, Psychiatry, and Psychology* 19.1 (2012) 6).

<sup>31</sup> This is McDowell’s position.

<sup>32</sup> McDowell, 53.

<sup>33</sup> McDowell, 51.

not an option for a virtuous person. A virtue, then, McDowell concludes, is “a reliable sensitivity to a certain sort of requirement which situations impose on behaviour.”<sup>34</sup>

However, if we turn our attention to cheerfulness, McDowell’s account looks less attractive. Even if one grants that cheerfulness is (or involves) a kind of sensitivity, it seems implausible to think of that sensitivity in terms of requirements. Cheerfulness is not a quality that every virtuous person is required to possess. And even those who are virtuously cheerful are not required to feel and act cheerfully on every occasion on which such feelings and actions would be admirable. That is not to say there are not requirements that bear on the cheerful. We spoke of some such requirements above. If expressing good cheer would sadden or offend her companion, then the cheerful will feel the requirement not to do so. We could also speak of a requirement not to be cheered by another’s undeserved misfortune. But these requirements map, at most, the perimeter of cheerfulness. They pick out where virtuous cheerfulness stops. They do not capture what cheerfulness is about. Cheerfulness does not consist in a sensitivity to such requirements. If it makes sense to think of cheerfulness as a form of sensitivity, what it is sensitive to will need to be something else.

These observations need not pose any challenge to McDowell’s claim that the virtuous have a reliable ability to recognise the requirements that situations impose upon behaviour. But they do raise questions about how central sensitivity to requirements should be in a complete account of what virtuous agents are like. And they give us reason to reject a view that would attempt to explain each virtue as a form of sensitivity to requirements.

The approach that explains virtues in terms of sensitivity to value is a more promising alternative.<sup>35</sup> We have already defined cheerfulness in terms of the light-hearted appreciation of everyday goods. And the appreciation of goodness is central to the case 18<sup>th</sup> century writers often make on behalf of the virtue of cheerfulness. For example, Adam Smith points out,

“[W]e can scarce express too much satisfaction in all the little occurrences of common life, in the company with which we spent the evening last night, in the entertainment that was set before us, in what was said and what was done, in all the little incidents of the present conversation, and in all those frivolous nothings which fill up the void of human life. Nothing is more graceful than habitual cheerfulness, which is always founded upon a peculiar relish for all the little pleasures which common occurrences afford.”<sup>36</sup>

In a similar spirit, Addison sums up his case for being cheerful by observing, “[T]he whole universe is a kind of theatre, filled with objects that either raise in us pleasure, amusement, or admiration.”<sup>37</sup>

Nevertheless, this view also runs into difficulties. If the virtue of cheerfulness were defined merely in terms of the sensitivity to value, then we should expect negative as well as positive value to weigh into the mix. And since the universe is also filled with objects that raise in us displeasure, sadness, and disapproval, we have no reason to think a sensitivity to

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<sup>34</sup> McDowell, 51. More recently, Roger Crisp has been singing McDowell’s chorus in “A Third Method of Ethics?” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 90.2 (2015) 266.

<sup>35</sup> See, for example, Thomas Hurka, *Virtue, Vice, and Value* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2001).

<sup>36</sup> Smith, TMS, I.ii.5.2.

<sup>37</sup> Addison, 103

value would take the form of cheerfulness. One of the distinctive marks of the cheerful is that their emotions appear, to a certain extent, independent of qualities of the circumstances in which they find themselves. As Addison elsewhere observes, the cheerful are “neither blown up in prosperity, nor broken with adversity.”<sup>38</sup> They are not easily swayed by the gusts of fortune that so readily decide the course of their less cheerful peers. In particular, the cheerful appear to be less sensitive to negative value than the rest of us: “The man who is possessed of this excellent frame of mind ... comes with a relish to all those goods which nature has provided for him, tastes all the pleasures of the creation which are poured about him, and does not feel the full weight of those accidental evils which may befall him.”<sup>39</sup> If this is right, then the value of the objects, actions, agents, and situations around the cheerful does not determine their attitudes in the way we would expect it to if cheerfulness were a type of sensitivity to value.

At this point the defender of sensitivity theory might reach for the break. Wait a minute, they might urge. You have moved too quickly from “the cheerful appear less sensitive to negative value than the rest of us” to “cheerfulness is not a type of sensitivity to value.” The latter does not follow from the former. What distinguishes the cheerful, they might contend, is not that they fail to see the bad. What distinguishes them is that they do not let the bad prevent them from seeing the good. Insofar as the cheerful strike many of us as insensitive it is because we are *too* sensitive to certain kinds of value and not sensitive enough to others. We are too sensitive to negative qualities and not sensitive enough to positive ones. We are too absorbed with thwarted desires and not alert enough to satisfied ones. We are too sensitive to bad things that have happened to us and not sensitive enough to good things happening to others. We are too sensitive to remembered wrongs and not sensitive enough to present goods. We are too sensitive to current disappointments and not sensitive enough to their transience, forgetting that they too shall pass. By contrast, one might argue, the virtuously cheerful have an accurate sense of the value of things (in each moment). On such a construal, the virtuously cheerful do not pose a challenge to accounts of virtue that take it to be a kind of sensitivity. Rather, they serve to vindicate it.

While there is much to like about the view expressed in the preceding paragraph, as an account of virtuous cheerfulness it still strikes me as lacking. It presents a quality that is altogether too passive. A sensitivity is reactive. It responds to whatever happens to be within its perceptual range. The cheerful agent is more proactive than this. They go looking for things to appreciate. They create opportunities to appreciate – for themselves and for others. And this, too, is part of their cheerfulness. The cheerful are not only sensitive; they are also attentive. Their cheerfulness is not only a matter of what they see; it is also a matter of where they look and what they dwell on. This active dimension is missing from accounts of virtue that take it to be a kind of sensitivity.

Another thing missing from the sensitivity model of virtue concerns what is done with what is seen. We can see this in the case of cheerfulness by thinking about qualities that stand in contrast with it. The opposite of the cheerful is not only the despondent; it is also the complainer. The complainer not only sees the bad and dwells on it, but he invites others to do so as well. And in so doing he shares his discontent. By contrast, the cheerful not only sees the good and appreciatively dwells on it; she also shares that appreciation with others by inviting them to dwell on it with her. Speaking of the beneficent, Hume writes, “Like the

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<sup>38</sup> Addison, 15-16.

<sup>39</sup> Addison, 94.



sun, an inferior minister of providence he cheers, invigorates, and sustains the surrounding world.”<sup>40</sup> The cheerful are similar in this regard. They help others recognise and celebrate the good and bear up under the bad.

There is one respect, however, in which the cheerful may differ from the beneficent. As we noted at the outset, some virtues are closely tied to a particular form of activity. It is through seeing that form of activity that we come to recognise the qualities of mind of those that characteristically engage in it. Beneficence is a virtue of this sort. There is a particular type of action, namely, helping others, that is distinctive of the beneficent. And those who are beneficent aim to perform actions of this type. Cheerfulness, we observed, is not one of the virtues we understand from the outside in. It is one whose defining concepts are more internal. This is not only because we come to understand it via the sentiment of cheer. It is also because there is not a single characteristic type of action that is distinctive of the cheerful. Cheerfulness is often less about *what* one does and more about the spirit in which one does *whatever* one is doing. One can give cheerfully, receive cheerfully, plant cheerfully, harvest cheerfully, listen cheerfully, speak cheerfully, work cheerfully, and play cheerfully. The list could go on. Cheerfulness, then, is what we might call a virtue of spirit, in contrast with beneficence, which we might call a virtue of action. And this spirit will make almost any virtuous activity better.

## V. Conclusion

Cheerfulness is the ultimate feel-good virtue. It is immediately agreeable to the cheerful person. But it is also agreeable to their companions, as well as being useful both to self and other. It is little wonder, then, that Hume was such a fan. And as should be clear from the preceding discussion, we can expect virtue theorists of other stripes to embrace it as well. Eudaimonists, in particular, should welcome it to the fold. It may not be welcomed by all virtue theorists. Proponents of sensitivity theories, for instance, will be forced to rethink their approach. But so much the worse for those theories.

The most obvious objections to cheerfulness are aimed at features virtuous forms do not share with their problematic counterparts. The cheerful person need not pretend things are better than they are. She does not expect everyone to put on a happy face. She is not selling the power of positive thinking or pushing toxic positivity. She does not require everyone to be – or even try to be – cheerful.

The virtuously cheerful person is simply ready to appreciate the everyday goods her day might hold. She is on the look-out for such goods. And when she notices them, she gives them her attention. She spends less time complaining about what has not turned out the way she hoped and more time dwelling on things that have gone well (or better than might have been expected). Furthermore, she is disposed to share her appreciation and amusement with others at times and in ways that might enable her companions to enjoy them with her. We could all do with a few more people like that in our lives.

Of course, our news outlets feed us a much steadier diet of tragic than of joyous news. If we wish to cultivate cheerfulness, those of us who are, by temperament, absorbed by the sad will have our work cut out for us. We will have to be intentional about it. We cannot

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<sup>40</sup> Hume, EPM 2.6.

expect the good to be the subject of many feature stories. We shall have to go looking for it. But that seems an effort worth making.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Previous versions of this paper were presented at the University of Waikato, the University of Glasgow, and Mercy College. I am grateful to the audience on each occasion for their thoughtful feedback. Special thanks go to J. Adam Carter, Ben Colburn, Emma Gordon, Katharine Jenkins, Christoph Kelp, Mona Simion, Christine Swanton, and Christopher Willard-Kyle for reading and commenting on a draft of the paper.

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