

Viorel ȚUȚUI

“Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University of Iași (Romania)

## **A Critical Analysis of David Hume’s Theory of Justice as an Artificial Virtue<sup>1</sup>**

**Abstract:** The main objective of this article is to present and to analyze David Hume’s theory of justice as an artificial virtue. I will argue that he developed his moral view as a reaction to the dominant conception, defended by previous prominent thinkers, and especially by Cartesian and Post Cartesian philosophers, who believed that reason is the main faculty of the human mind, a faculty that governs over the passions and guarantees the possibility of an autonomous moral life. Hence, he stated that the role of rationality is only a minor one and that our passions and emotions play the central role. Moreover, he provided a different description of our will and its freedom and offered a more complex explanation regarding the foundations of morality. According to this account, morality originates from the natural feelings of approval or disapproval towards the character of others, but it gradually evolves to a superior and artificial level associated with our social life within large political communities. That is why, he will affirm that, while some virtues are natural, other virtues, like justice, are artificial and cannot exist outside the environment which is specific to our social life. In the final section of the paper, I will try to demonstrate that, although Hume’s theory is more sophisticated than the views of his predecessors and represents a more realistic description of human morality and its evolution, it faces serious difficulties when it comes to explaining the normative dimension of our moral life.

**Keywords:** David Hume, justice, artificial virtue, free will, foundations of morality

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