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Hume on Calm Passions, Moral Sentiments, and the "Common Point of View"

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Abstract: I argue for a thorough reinterpretation of Hume's "common point of view" thesis, at least within his moral *Enquiry*. Hume is typically understood to argue that we correct for sympathetically produced variations in our moral sentiments, by undertaking an imaginative exercise. I argue that Hume cannot consistently claim this, because he argues that we automatically experience the same degree of the same moral sentiment towards all tokens of any one type of character trait. I then argue that, in his *Enquiry* at least, Hume only believes that we correct for variations in our non-moral sentiments. When he claims that we sometimes choose a "common point of view," he just means that we sometimes choose to verbally express our calm, moral sentiments, and no other passions, when we publicly evaluate people's characters.

1. Introduction

In both his *Treatise* and moral *Enquiry,* Hume argues that we would frequently disagree with one another when assessing other people's characters, were it not for the fact that, in relevant cases, we adopt a "common point of view" (T 3.3.1.30; EPM 9.6).[1] Adopting this viewpoint provides us with a "general unalterable standard, by which we may approve or disapprove of

characters and manners" (EPM 5.42; see also T 3.3.3.2). In the *Treatise*, Hume describes this as the process of fixing "on some *steady* and *general* points of view," in which we consistently "place" ourselves when assessing characters (T 3.3.1.15).

Hume first introduces this argument in Book 3 of his *Treatise*, in response to a potential objection to his thesis that all moral sentiments are caused via sympathy. Rachel Cohon calls this the "variability objection."[2] Our sympathies are variable, according to Hume, and we sympathize more with our countryfolk than with foreigners. The sentiment of moral approbation is caused by sympathetic pleasures. We would therefore expect those of us who are English to express greater "esteem" towards an English benefactor than towards any similar Chinese benefactor, given our stronger sympathies in the former case (T 3.3.1.14). Why, then, do we "give the same approbation to the same moral qualities in *China* as in *England*"? (T 3.3.1.14).

Despite much debate about its details, Hume's general argument is often understood, roughly, as follows: the sympathetic basis of our moral sentiments makes them variable in ways that our considered moral judgments are not. For example, we sympathize more with nearby people than with those further away, and so we experience stronger moral sentiments towards character traits that affect people around us than towards similar character traits in distant lands. However, common experience shows that we generally evaluate similar traits by using similar moral terms, regardless of such variations. We consistently call benevolent people "good" or "virtuous," for example, no matter where they are. Hume explains this seeming inconsistency by arguing that we recognize that our moral sentiments vary with our sympathies, so that we correct our moral judgments accordingly, by adopting a common point of view.

Our motive to correct for our sentiments in this way is often understood to be, as Annette Baier suggests, an awareness of the "biases to which we know felt sympathy to be subject," along with a desire to correct for these when moralizing.[3] Following the adoption of

the common point of view, our verbal evaluations of character traits may be understood as expressions of suitably corrected sentiments or of beliefs about "how we *would* feel" if our sentiments were not "influenced by our particular perspectives."[4]

Although the above is clearly a simplified and generalized account, something like it is endorsed by many scholars.[5] Call the core thesis the "Correction Thesis": that adopting the common point of view involves, roughly, disregarding immediate moral sentiments, which vary as our sympathies vary, in favor of more considered moral judgments, which do not vary in this way. I use the term "roughly" because some scholars claim that sentiments can only be truly *moral* ones after we have performed the relevant correction, and once we reflectively endorse them as such.[6] Nevertheless, all proponents of the Correction Thesis agree in reading Hume to argue that, if we did *not* adopt the common point of view in situations like the one discussed at T 3.3.1.14, then we would not feel similar moral sentiments towards distant character traits as towards nearer ones of the same general kinds. It is for this reason, they argue, that Hume thinks we must adopt the common point of view before we can sincerely express the same "esteem" for a benevolent character in a distant land as for a similarly benevolent character in our own country.

In this paper, I argue, against all such interpretations, that Hume understands *all* moral judgments as automatically and unreflectively produced sentiments. His account of the causes of moral sentiments entails that we will automatically experience a strong sentiment of moral approbation if we read about a benevolent character in China, just as we will if we encounter a similarly benevolent character in England, and via precisely the same kind of psychological processes. Given this, Hume cannot coherently claim that our moral sentiments vary as our sympathies vary, or that we correct our sentiments because of any such variations, or that we only experience moral sentiments after careful reflection.

Hume is often thought to claim that we correct our sentiments by undertaking a sympathetic exercise, such that we imagine the actual or typical effects of a person's character on her "narrow circle," sympathize with their responses, and thereby judge her character more accurately or impartially than we could do otherwise (T 3.3.3.2).[7] However, Jacqueline Taylor argues that, although the *Treatise* includes this claim, Hume does not endorse it in his later moral *Enquiry*.[8] I agree that Hume does not endorse any such claim in the *Enquiry*. I also agree with Taylor that Hume significantly improves on his *Treatise* account of moral judgment in the *Enquiry*, and that "the *Enquiry* places greater emphasis on moral language and shared conversation."[9] Unlike Taylor, however, I do not think that Hume also improves his account of the ways in which we come to share a "standard of value."[10] Neither do I think, as Don Garrett and Geoffrey Sayre-McCord do, that Hume's discussion of the "general inalterable standard" of morality is closely analogous to that of the "true standard" of taste by which a competent critic judges art (E-ST: 240).[11] I argue that, in his *Treatise*, Hume aims to demonstrate that the automatic, unreflective causes of our moral sentiments naturally provide us with a shared standard of moral value. He retains this theory of moral sentiment in his *Enquiry*, I argue, although he significantly improves his account of the common point of view.

I suggest that, when he first introduces the notion of a common point of view, Hume is responding to what I will call the "Uniformity Problem": that of explaining why our verbal assessments of character are less variable than most of our passions towards people's characters. The variability objection, as formulated in the *Treatise*, appears to ask only why our moral evaluations of characters are less variable than our sympathetic responses towards characters. Yet, this is just one aspect of a wider problem. Hume's theory of value entails that the good is, fundamentally, the pleasurable (T 2.1.1.4). He therefore needs to explain, not only why we experience similar moral approbation towards any two similarly benevolent characters, but also why we then consistently call both equally "good," regardless of any *non-moral*

pleasures or pains which we might feel when we contemplate them. Clearly, the Correction Thesis cannot help Hume address *this* aspect of the Uniformity Problem.

Nevertheless, at several points in Book 3 of his *Treatise*, Hume appears to argue for the Correction Thesis. He implies, although only once, that we correct "sentiments of disapprobation" (T 3.3.1.18). He claims—but again, just once—that we correct our "different sentiments of virtue" (T 3.3.1.21). However, I will argue that Hume cannot *coherently* endorse the Correction Thesis alongside his theory of the causes of moral sentiments, which he argues for within the same work.

Hume's *Treatise* does not appear to offer any plausible solution to the Uniformity Problem. It is noticeable, however, that at several points where he seems to be arguing for the Correction Thesis, Hume discusses only variations in our violent, *non-moral* sentiments, like "love and kindness" or "affection and admiration" (T 3.3.1.16). Perhaps, in these passages at least, he intends to argue only that we correct for the presence of *these* sentiments when we adopt the common point of view.

I remain unsure whether Hume intended to endorse the Correction Thesis when he wrote his *Treatise*, and I will not pursue this question here. Instead, I will argue that we should look to his moral *Enquiry* to find his most coherent account of the common point of view. In section 2, I will argue that Hume's *Treatise* account of the causes of our moral sentiments entails that they *cannot* vary in accordance with variations in our sympathy. In section 3, I will argue that Hume retains this account in his moral *Enquiry*. I will then argue that he does not endorse the Correction Thesis in that work. Instead, he argues that, whenever we evaluate motives and characters, we habitually correct for the presence of our variable, *non-moral* sentiments, by expressing only our moral sentiments. In the *Enquiry*, to adopt the common point of view *just is* to express only our automatically produced moral sentiments whenever

we evaluate people's characters.[12] This involves no correction of moral sentiment, and no imaginative exercise.

2. Moral Judgment in the *Treatise*

For Hume, moral judgments are primarily of character traits or motives, rather than of actions (T 3.2.1.2). Virtuous traits are those, like benevolence or wit, which are "useful or agreeable to ourselves or others" (EPM 9.3). I agree with those scholars, such as Stephen Darwall and Philip Reed, who claim that Hume distinguishes agreeable from useful traits only by the different ways in which they cause *non-moral* pleasures.[13] Hume argues that we approve of both kinds of traits in the same way: roughly, via our sympathies with the non-moral pleasures that they cause. Approbation is a passion or sentiment, as is disapprobation, but we very easily mistake these sentiments for reasoned beliefs (T 2.3.3.8). This is largely because they are "calm" passions which, unlike paradigmatic "violent" passions, lack obvious emotional feeling (T 2.1.1.3). Together, they constitute our "sense of beauty and deformity in action": our moral taste (T 2.1.1.3).

Hume introduces the notion of the common point of view in T 3.3.1, just after his discussion of the artificial virtues, such as justice. During this discussion, Hume argues that, although some just motives are harmful to all concerned, such as the honest desire to repay a loan to a "miser, or a seditious bigot," we strongly approve of even these motives, because the general system of justice is highly beneficial (T 3.2.2.22).

Elsewhere, I argue that Hume cites our approval of these rare, harmful motives of justice as his primary evidence that we habitually experience approbation towards any token motive of any type that generally causes happiness.[14] Here, I begin by arguing for a very similar conclusion: that Hume argues for a thesis which I call "Generality":

GENERALITY: All ideas of typically beneficial or pleasing character traits automatically cause approbation, all ideas of typically harmful or displeasing character traits automatically cause disapprobation, and the strength of any moral sentiment is dependent only on the degree of happiness or unhappiness with which the type of trait is generally associated.

According to Generality, the moral sentiments are *uniform*:

UNIFORMITY: Any kind of evaluative or psychological response is uniform if, and only if, it is such as to occur in the same way towards all token character traits of any one type, regardless of how the responder is related to the person whose trait it is, or is affected by the particular effects of the token trait.

For example, *any* idea of a just motive, no matter our beliefs about it, will habitually produce a strong, calm, sentiment of approbation.

Note that Hume cannot consistently endorse Generality *and* the Correction Thesis. According to Generality, moral sentiments are uniform. According to the Correction Thesis, they vary with our sympathies. We will now consider Hume's arguments for Generality, which rely on theories that he develops throughout the *Treatise*.

2.1. General Rules and Delicate Sympathy

Hume does not initially explain why we approve of all just motives: he postpones this question until the "*third* part" of Book 3 (T 3.2.2.23). His explanation, I believe, centers on his response to what Cohon calls the "'virtue in rags' objection."[15] Like the variability objection, this is a potential objection to Hume's thesis that all moral sentiments are caused via sympathy. We approve of people who want to help others even where we know that they cannot help anyone,

as where they are isolated in a "dungeon or desart" (T 3.3.1.19). In such cases, there can be no beneficiaries with whom we may sympathize, so why do we approve?

Hume answers that we approve because sympathy is readily influenced by custom or habit: "*General rules* create a species of probability, which sometimes influences the judgment, and always the imagination" (T 3.3.1.20). As Michael Gill argues, the relevant kind of "general rules" is that which Hume discusses at T 1.3.13.8.[16] It is no easy matter to understand what, precisely, Hume means by "general rules" here; not least because the same term has very different meanings at other points in the *Treatise*.[17] Nevertheless, as Donald Ainslie and Ryan Hickerson observe, general rules (of the relevant kind) clearly involve *unreflective*, *automatic* associations of ideas.[18] Hume describes these as follows:

> Our judgments concerning cause and effect are deriv'd from habit and experience; and when we have been accustom'd to see one object united to another, our imagination passes from the first to the second, by a natural transition, which precedes reflection, and which cannot be prevented by it. (T 1.3.13.8)

Hume provides the example of a man suspended at a great height in a "cage of iron" (T 1.3.13.10). This man's sensory impressions of being high up are strongly associated with the idea of falling. Therefore, custom or habit will ensure that he will *automatically* form a lively idea of falling, before he can reflect on his situation or on his prior experiences. This lively idea of falling is thus produced via causal reasoning, as Hume understands it: "all reasonings are nothing but the effects of custom; and custom has no influence, but by inlivening the imagination, and giving us a strong conception of any object" (T 1.3.13.11). Indeed, the idea conforms to Hume's conception of a causal *belief*: it is a lively idea connected, via customary association, to a present impression (T 1.3.7.5). However, the man in the cage is unlikely to

claim to *believe* that he will fall. His experiences show that iron can support a person's weight, so that he will simultaneously experience another process of causal reasoning, which will produce the lively idea of his remaining safely within the cage. He will reflectively endorse only the latter lively idea: he will "ascribe" this idea to his "judgment," and the lively idea of falling to his "imagination" (T 1.3.13.11).

The man in the cage will, presumably, claim that he "judges" or "believes" that he is safe, and that he "vividly imagines" falling. Nevertheless, the vividly imagined idea will persist within his imagination—it "cannot be prevented" by reflection—and it will very likely cause sufficient fear to motivate him to leave the cage. I call such motivationally effective lively ideas, wherever they are not reflectively endorsed beliefs, "quasi-beliefs."[19]

In T 3.3.1, Hume combines his theory of general rules with those of sympathy and moral sentiment. According to Hume, whenever we sympathize with anyone's passion or sentiment, "a lively idea is converted into an impression" (T 2.1.11.7). In Book 2, he distinguishes two general ways in which this may occur. The simplest way is via "limited" sympathy, which occurs only when we form beliefs about a nearby person's pains or pleasures, as felt in "the present moment" (T 2.2.9.13). For example, if I see someone who is showing signs of happiness, then my idea of her happiness may become so lively that I will not only believe that she is happy; I will *feel* happy.

Hume contrasts limited sympathy with "extensive sympathy" (T 2.2.9.14). Hume's Book 2 discussions of extensive sympathy mainly concern cases where we form beliefs about a person's life, beyond that which is immediately present to us (T 2.2.9.14). If we see a child in poverty, then we may feel a violent pain via limited sympathy. We may also form beliefs about her unseen family, or about her future hardships, and we will then feel further sympathetic pains, via extensive sympathy. In such cases, we may have to engage in careful,

reflective reasoning to form the relevant beliefs. Nevertheless, as Anik Waldow stresses, the central processes involved in sympathy itself are all automatic, "involuntary" ones.[20]

In T 3.3.1, Hume introduces a different kind of extensive sympathy: "Wherever an object has a tendency to produce pleasure in the possessor, or in other words, is the proper *cause* of pleasure, it is sure to please the spectator, by a delicate sympathy with the possessor" (T 3.3.1.8). For example, we will feel pleasure at seeing a comfortable house, via delicate sympathy, even if we know "that no-one will ever dwell in it" (T 3.3.1.20). In fact, despite Hume's initial focus on property, he believes that delicate sympathy will cause sympathetic pleasure towards *any* token object of any type which is generally associated with causing pleasure, such as a "happy climate" (T 3.3.1.20).

At T 3.3.1.20, Hume turns to delicate sympathy to explain our approval of virtue in rags. He argues that, wherever we encounter a character trait of a type which we associate with causing pleasure, "the imagination passes easily from the cause to the effect, without considering that there are still some circumstances wanting to render the cause a compleat one." This kind of process—of general rules—will ensure that *any* idea of a trait which is "fitted to be beneficial to society" will produce a quasi-believed idea of pleasure. Given the context, we should understand a trait which is "fitted to be beneficial to society" as a token trait of a type which is *generally* seen to cause pleasure to its possessor or to those around her. Any such trait has, in Hume's terms, a *tendency* to produce pleasure, so that it will please us via delicate sympathy. We will then experience approbation, because the moral sentiments, like all "sentiments of beauty" —or sentiments of taste—are "mov'd by degrees of liveliness and strength, which are inferior to *belief*, and independent of the real existence of their objects." In cases of virtue in rags, at least, approbation is caused by our sympathetic responses to *quasi-believed* ideas of pleasure.

Hume thus argues that we approve of virtue in rags because approbation may be caused via the automatic, involuntary processes of general rules and delicate sympathy. Our next question is whether he believes that approbation is caused in *all* cases via such processes. I will now argue for a positive answer to this question, via a consideration of his arguments concerning calm passions and taste.

2.2. The Causes of Calm Passions

Louis Loeb argues that a "calm" passion is one that forms a settled and stable element within one's psychology, whereas violent passions are "volatile."[21] I do not think this is what Hume ever *means* by "calmness" or "violence." He describes calm passions as those which "produce little emotion in the mind, and are more known by their effects than by the immediate feeling or sensation" (T 2.3.3.8; see also T 2.1.1.3). Violent passions present to us as agitated, intensely felt, or in some other way mentally disturbing. As Páll Árdal argues, calm passions just are those passions which do not present to us in this way.[22] Nevertheless, I think Loeb is correct to read Hume as arguing that calm passions are less volatile than violent ones. Calm passions are consistently experienced in similar ways towards similar kinds of objects, as violent passions are not. To see why, we must consider their causes.

Jane McIntyre notes several factors that Hume claims can increase the violence of a passion: "proximity, especially in space or in the near future"; "uncertainty, opposition"; "novelty"; and "particularity."[23] However, McIntyre does not mention that, of these, only particularity—as opposed to "generality"—is treated to a new section: "*Of the effects of custom*" (T 2.3.5).

Hume begins this section by claiming that custom "has two *original* effects upon the mind" (T 2.3.5.1). The first of these is to bestow a "*facility* in the performance of any action or the conception of any object" (T 2.3.5.1). To conceive of an object is to form an idea of it.

Hume argues that we can form ideas of familiar things more easily than we can of unfamiliar things. To understand his meaning, we must consider his theory of general ideas.

In Book 1, Hume argues that "all general ideas are nothing but particular ones, annexed to a certain term, which gives them a more extensive signification, and makes them recall upon occasion other individuals, which are similar to them" (T 1.1.7.1). General or abstract ideas are the same mental items as particular ideas, but given a different function. We may "turn our view" to one idea in several ways, and so vary its function (T 1.1.7.18).

Hume seeks to explain the formation of abstract ideas by arguing that we often notice a "resemblance" between ideas, so that we come to apply the same name to them and thereby categorize them together (T 1.1.7.7). Garrett calls the groups in which ideas are so categorized "revival sets."[24] If I infer that you desire to help someone, for example, then I will implicitly observe the similarity between my idea of your desire and my ideas of those desires called "generosity." My idea of your desire will then join my revival set of generosity, and take on the name "generosity."

I can, of course, use the term "generosity" to refer generally to desires of this type. When I do this, one of the particular ideas from the revival set will come to mind and, somehow, represent all other ideas in that set, so that it will function as my general idea of generosity. However, Hume also allows that we can turn our view to an idea in ways that make it neither fully general nor simply particular. My idea of your generosity can function not only as the idea of your particular motive or as the general idea of generosity, but also as the idea of your motive just *insofar as it is a token of generosity*.

Following Hume, I will use the term "general notion" to refer to any idea of an object, where the idea is viewed such that the object is considered merely as a token of some general type. Hume uses this term only occasionally: most notably, in discussions at T 2.3.6.2 and T

2.3.6.4, which we will soon consider, and during discussions of the common point of view at T 3.3.3.2 and EPM 5.42. We will consider these in section 3.

To return to T 2.3.5.1, I take Hume to be saying that, just as custom makes us more skillful at performing certain actions, so it makes us more skillful at forming general notions. Where an idea resembles others that we have frequently experienced, it will join the relevant revival set, and be named accordingly, without our having to apply any conscious effort.

The second of custom's effects on the mind is to produce a "*tendency or inclination*" to perform familiar actions or conceptions (T 2.3.5.1). Presumably Hume means that, whenever we encounter a familiar object, we will be very likely to form a general notion of it. We are very likely to habitually categorize someone's motive as a "generous" one, for example, without requiring any conscious reflection to do so. We would be unlikely to so easily categorize a token of a less common motive type, such as asceticism.

In the following section, Hume claims that "[w]herever our ideas of good or evil acquire a new vivacity, the passions become more violent; and keep pace with the imagination in all its variations" (T 2.3.6.1). Of course, if I *believe* in a future pleasure, then I will feel more a violent joy than if I simply imagine it. This does not, however, seem to be Hume's point. He argues instead that general notions are too "obscure" to "influence . . . the imagination" as more particular ideas would (T 2.3.6.2). If we form a "particular and determinate idea" of some future pleasure, then we will feel a more violent joy than if the pleasure were conceived merely "under the general notion of pleasure" (T 2.3.6.2).

A general notion of pleasure is, of course, a particular idea, functioning *as* a general notion. Any idea in my revival set of pleasure can "serve equally in the representation," and so function as my general notion of a future pleasure (T 2.3.6.2). Importantly, it will function as nothing *more* than the general notion of pleasure. If it is an idea of a pleasant smell, for example, then I will not assume that the future pleasure will also be a smell (T 1.1.7.8). Given

this, I will have less to believe *about* any future pleasure if I have a general notion of it than if I have a more detailed, particular idea in mind. Say I was told that I will soon have a delicious meal, which I only now discover will be a pizza. Even if I think that pizza is no more delicious than the meal that I was expecting, I will only now have any detailed, vivid ideas of the *kinds* of pleasurable tastes to come. Hume's point seems to be that, as any idea of a pleasant or painful object becomes more particular, we will have more to believe *about* the object, so that the idea will "acquire a new vivacity" and thereby cause a more violent passion.

Hume's discussion of this is all very brief. Fortunately, he provides an example. He discusses a case from democratic Athens, in which the people were offered a vote on a proposed action, about which they were told only two things. They were told that it would benefit them all greatly in some way, and that it would be in some way unjust. They voted against the proposal which, Hume observes, may seem strange to many, because "the advantage was immediate to the *Athenians*" (T 2.3.6.4). However, he believes that he can explain their decision:

> [Because the potential benefit] was known only under the general notion of advantage, without being conceiv'd by any particular idea, it must have had a less considerable influence on their imaginations, and have been a less violent temptation, than if they had been acquainted with all its circumstances. (T 2.3.6.4)

The moral seems clear: general notions cannot cause violent passions. If the Athenians had formed an idea of some particular potential advantage, then they would have felt a violent desire for it, which would have required considerable "strength of mind" to overcome (T 2.3.3.10). However, they had only the general notion of advantage, which produced only a calm desire.

Recall that passions may be made violent by proximity, by uncertainty or opposition, or by novelty. Hume also claims that passions will be violent if they are caused by ideas of objects which are: similar to ones which we recently enjoyed (T 2.3.6.5); relevant to our way of life (T 2.3.6.6); described with great eloquence (T 2.3.6.7); or described by someone with whom we sympathize (T 2.3.6.8). All these factors are likely to increase the extent to which we will either want to, or be able to, form detailed, particular ideas of the relevant objects.

In contrast, the features that make a passion calm, as listed by McIntyre, include "distance, especially in past time," "security," and "familiarity."[25] Hume seems to suggest that, wherever some object is long past, securely ours, or very familiar, we pay no close attention to it, so that we do not consider its particular features. We might think of something like a familiar painting that has long been in the hall, which we think of merely *as* that painting in the hall. Similarly, ideas of objects which are distant in space or long past will typically be general notions. We rarely have anything to form an idea *of* when we contemplate such objects, other than that which we generally associate with objects of the relevant types. This is presumably why the "same good, when near, will cause a violent passion, which, when remote, produces only a calm one" (T 2.3.4.1).

To summarize the key point: only particular ideas cause violent passions. Wherever we turn our view to an idea such that it functions more generally, as with a general notion or an abstract idea, the idea will cause only a calm passion.

2.3. The Sentiments of Moral Taste

In Book 3, Hume employs his account of calm and violent passions to argue, albeit briefly and indirectly, that moral judgments are in *all* cases caused via general rules and delicate sympathy. At T 3.3.1.23, just after his discussion of virtue in rags, Hume uses an example of non-moral

taste to argue that the calm sentiments of "taste," unlike the violent "passions" of the "heart," are caused *only* by relatively general ideas:

> When a building seems clumsy and tottering to the eye, it is ugly and disagreeable; tho' we be fully assur'd of the solidity of the workmanship. 'Tis a kind of fear, which causes this sentiment of disapprobation; but the passion is not the same with that which we feel, when oblig'd to stand under a wall, that we really think tottering and insecure. The *seeming tendencies* of objects affect the mind: And the emotions they excite are of a like species with those, which proceed from the *real consequences* of objects, but their feeling is different. (T 3.3.1.23)

We would, of course, be violently frightened if we were to *believe* that a wall will fall on us. Given Hume's discussion of the man in the iron cage, we can also assume that standing beneath a safe but *very* insecure-seeming wall would cause a violent fear. Hume presumably thinks that, wherever we are in a situation which appears very dangerous, we will form a detailed, particular idea of the deadly consequences that we associate with such situations. And, as we saw in section 2.2, particular ideas may cause violent passions.

Here, however, Hume considers our response to a wall which merely looks "clumsy and tottering." We *will* form a quasi-believed idea of its collapsing (this is the "seeming tendency" of any such wall), but it will be nothing like the detailed, particular idea that would occur if the wall were to seem highly insecure. Presumably, we will merely form a general notion of the wall collapsing. This idea will cause only a calm fear, which will feel so unlike its violent counterpart that there will be no risk of our confusing the one for the other: "The imagination adheres to the *general* views of things, and distinguishes betwixt the feelings they produce, and those which arise from our particular and momentary situation" (T 3.3.1.23). A

calm fear merely influences our taste: it will cause (or, perhaps, *be*) a sentiment of aesthetic disapprobation. Such sentiments are typically less motivationally powerful than our violent passions. We might feel that a wall is "beautiful" and yet feel strongly motivated only by a violent desire to destroy it (T 3.3.1.23). Nevertheless, Hume allows that calm desires can sometimes be motivationally "strong," and so overcome more violent passions (T 2.3.4.1).

Although Hume does not explicitly draw the parallel with our sentiments of moral taste, we may do so on his behalf. According to Hume, approbation is a calm form of love: it is "nothing but a fainter and more imperceptible love" (T 3.3.5.1). Admittedly, as Åsa Carlson argues, Hume also *appears* to distinguish the two passions by claiming that we love "persons," whereas we approve of "characters, character traits, and motives."[26] For example, he argues that, wherever we appear to approve of any action, "the ultimate object of our praise and approbation is the motive" behind it (T 3.2.1.2). This certainly seems to suggest that we morally evaluate motives, rather than actions *or* persons. Yet, throughout this same section, Hume repeatedly mentions moral sentiments that *are* directed towards people: we "blame a person" for not performing some action (T 3.2.1.3); where we find that someone has a virtuous motive, we feel "esteem for him" (T 3.2.1.3); we "blame a father for neglecting his child" (T 3.2.1.5). It seems that approbation of a trait is, *ipso facto*, approbation of that trait's possessor.

Given this, I think that Hume *does* understand approbation as a calm kind of love: one which "arises from the general survey or view of any action or quality of the mind" (T 3.3.5.1, emphasis removed). I suggest this means that approbation is that kind of love which occurs just where we mentally *categorize* a trait (of some generally useful or agreeable kind), such that we form a general notion of it. We saw, in section 2.1, that any character trait which is categorized as "benevolence" will cause a calm passion of approbation, via general rules and delicate sympathy. However, if we turn our view to an idea of a benevolent desire such that we consider it as someone's *particular* desire, then we will very likely experience a violent passion of the

same general kind as approbation. This passion—of love—is not apt to be treated as a *moral* sentiment. Our passions of love and hatred vary considerably, according to variations in our sympathies with other people, our beliefs about the effects of their desires, and so on. Only calm passions are consistent enough—*general* enough—to be treated as sentiments of taste.

Fortunately, according to Hume, violent and calm passions of the same general kind "may often be contrary, without destroying each other" (T 3.3.1.23). This allows that we will experience approbation towards even a hated "enemy" if we believe that she has a benevolent desire (T 3.1.2.4). Similarly, any tottering wall will cause a calm fear, such that we will deem it ugly, whether we are violently frightened of it, personally unaffected by it, or hoping that it will collapse (T 3.3.1.23).

Wherever we approve of *any* benevolent desire, therefore, the process by which our approbation occurs is activated purely by our turning our view to our idea of the desire such that it functions as a general notion of benevolence. Therefore, the *same* kind of approbation, of the same motivational strength, must occur towards anyone whom we believe to have a benevolent desire. We will "in effect feel" that any such desire, or any possessor of any such desire (at least insofar as they *are* the possessor of such a desire), is virtuous (T 3.1.2.3).

Of course, there is much more to say about Hume's understanding of taste and of the relationship between approbation and love. What matters here is that he presents a complex and sophisticated argument for Generality. This allows him to explain why we approve of distant characters with useful or agreeable traits: it resolves the core worry pressed by the variability objection. Generality allows Hume to explain cases of virtue in rags. It also allows Hume to explain why we consistently approve of *all* token desires to be honest or just. Indeed, it is unclear that Hume *can* explain this without appealing to Generality, or something very like it.[27] By endorsing Generality, Hume can achieve all this, without requiring any additions or

caveats to his theory of moral judgment. In each case, his explanation is that we automatically experience approbation towards anyone with a motive of any generally pleasing type.

Furthermore, this explanation is reasonably consistent with common experience. Clearly, we *do* approve of anyone whom we take to be benevolent, no matter their circumstances. Many people approve, unquestioningly, of all dutifully honest actions. In contrast, as William Davie argues, common experience reveals nothing like the correction of initial moral sentiments that is suggested by the Correction Thesis.[28]

However, Generality cannot fully resolve the Uniformity Problem. It cannot explain why we call a benevolent person towards whom we feel no violent love or gratitude *as good as* a similarly benevolent person for whom we do feel these affections. Moreover, Generality cannot be rendered consistent with the Correction Thesis. Given Generality, if I contemplate distant benevolent motives, or even benevolent motives that lead to painful consequences for me personally, then I will automatically experience strong approbation. No correction of moral sentiment is required, or even possible, in the kind of case that Hume discusses at T 3.3.1.14. However, I will now argue that, in the *Enquiry*, Hume provides a solution to the Uniformity Problem which *is* consistent with Generality.

3. Moral Judgment in the *Enquiry*

Hume's primary aim in the *Enquiry* is to apply the "experimental method" to morality (EPM 1.10). Throughout this work, he appeals to experience to show that people typically approve of useful or agreeable character traits. He provides no clear, explicit argument for Generality. However, there are several good reasons to think that he still endorses it. For one thing, he consistently claims that we approve or disapprove of traits, not when we *believe* they will benefit or harm others, but when they have a *tendency* to benefit or harm others.[29] Even usefulness—an important "source of moral sentiment"—is defined as a "tendency to a certain

end" (EPM 5.17). Recall that, in the *Treatise*, Hume argued that any character traits with a *tendency* to produce pleasure will cause approbation, via delicate sympathy.

As Remy Debes argues, the *Enquiry* discussion of justice closely follows that in the *Treatise*.[30] Hume also presents several familiar arguments concerning non-moral taste which, given the topic of the *Enquiry*, are surely intended to be relevant to moral taste. For example, he argues that "personal beauty arises very much from ideas of utility," but that we will consider useful physical features ugly if they are tokens of *generally* harmful types, because our "imagination" is easily influenced by the "associations of ideas" involved in "*[g]eneral rules*" (EPM 4.7).

Soon after this, Hume argues that utility matters to us, not for self-interested reasons (EPM 5.5–5.17), but because of our sympathies with others (EPM 5.18–5.40). I broadly agree with Kate Abramson, Remy Debes, and Rico Vitz that Hume consistently, but tacitly, endorses his *Treatise* account of sympathy.[31] Abramson argues that the *Enquiry* term "principle of humanity" is shorthand for "extensive sympathy" (T 3.3.1.23, emphasis removed), where this is understood as a reflective, "imaginative process."[32] I believe it refers instead to *delicate* sympathy, as caused via general rules. Hume claims that the "principles of humanity and sympathy" ensure that we will respond positively to traits with a "tendency to public good," by causing "sentiments" which provide a "general approbation of characters and manners" (EPM 5.45). These "principles" play the same role that delicate sympathy played within the *Treatise*.

Hume still claims that "delicate" sympathy responds to habitually produced ideas of pleasure or pain, as where it causes us to find any "unharmonious composition" of writing "harsh and disagreeable" (EPM 5.37). He clearly sees a close analogy between the psychological processes which cause any such aesthetic judgment and the processes, including "associations of ideas," by which a "judgment concerning the character and conduct of men"

arises from a consideration of "the tendencies of their actions, and the happiness or misery which thence arises to society" (EPM 5.38).

We dislike reading unharmonious writing because we "imagine, that a person recites it to us, and suffers from the pronunciation of these jarring sounds" (EPM 5.37; see also T 3.3.1.22). We associate such writing with the discomfort that occurs whenever someone attempts to read it aloud, so that we will form an idea of such discomfort and feel a sympathetic pain, even as we read silently to ourselves. This pain will cause (or possibly be) a sentiment of aesthetic disapprobation.

Compare this process to that described in the final paragraph before the *Enquiry's* conclusion. Hume is discussing the immediately agreeable virtues, like wit. He notes that we approve of *all* such traits, even when possessed by someone entirely unknown to us, because the "idea, which we form of their effect on his acquaintance, has an agreeable influence on our imagination, and gives us the sentiment of approbation" (EPM 8.15). This appears to be a brief summary of the process by which general rules and delicate sympathy cause approbation. Moreover, Hume claims that "this principle enters into all the judgments, which we form concerning manners and characters" (EPM 8.15).

It therefore seems highly plausible that Hume retains his *Treatise* account of the causes of moral sentiments, and so endorses Generality. We will see further evidence for this when we consider the *Enquiry* account of the common point of view. First, however, we must understand the context in which the common point of view is introduced.

3.1. The Uniformity Problem in the Enquiry

If Hume endorses Generality, then he cannot coherently argue for the Correction Thesis. There is, I think, only one place where he appears to do so. Hume asks why, when we compare a nearby, benevolent statesman to a similarly benevolent one in a distant country, we "own the

merit to be equally great" in both cases, despite feeling a "more passionate regard" towards our countryman (EPM 5.41). He answers that the "judgment here corrects the inequalities of our internal emotions and perceptions; in like manner, as it preserves us from error, in the several variations of images, presented to our external senses" (EPM 5.41). We correct for our "lively sentiments of love and approbation," and so "retain a general standard of vice and virtue, founded chiefly on a general usefulness" (EPM 5.42n25.1). How should we understand this argument?

If to "own" someone's merit to be great is to express one's esteem for them, and if to feel a "passionate regard" is to feel violent, non-moral pleasures, then Hume is addressing the Uniformity Problem: that of explaining why our verbal evaluations of characters are uniform, despite our many variable, violent passions towards them. I will now argue that—despite two misleading claims—Hume does not respond to this problem by arguing for the Correction Thesis.

Hume's first misleading claim is that we correct for sentiments of "love and approbation" when we compare nearby and distant virtues. In this sentence, Hume is clearly arguing that we correct only for variations in our "lively," or violent, passions. The sentence itself is in a footnote to a passage which is obviously derived from the *Treatise.* There, Hume argues that, although we cannot easily change the passions of the "heart," we learn to ignore these in our public "discourse," and to rely instead on "sentiments, which arise from the general interests of the community" (EPM 5.42, see also T 3.3.3.2). Recall that, in the *Treatise*, Hume carefully distinguished the violent passions of the heart from the calm sentiments of taste, including moral taste (T 3.3.1.23). Therefore, Hume is presumably *not* arguing that we correct our sentiments of moral approbation.

At EPM 5.41, Hume is addressing the fact, as he sees it, that our "fluctuating situations" frequently conflict with our desires to "think" and "talk steadily." Consider that, as we

approach a distant mountain, our visual impressions of it will become increasingly larger. However, we will call the mountain "large" throughout, because we have learned to rely on our unchanging belief that it *is* large. The point of this analogy appears to be that we correct for the effects of a variable form of perception by relying instead on a more consistent form of perception. In the visual case, we ignore our varying visual impressions when we describe the mountain, and rely instead on an unchanging belief about its size. In the case of publicly evaluating characters, Hume appears to be suggesting, we ignore our variable, violent sentiments and rely instead on uniform, calm sentiments: approbation and disapprobation.

Admittedly, Hume here makes another misleading claim: that this kind of correction is achieved by the "judgment," or—in other words—by reasoning. Yet, we have a very good reason not to take him literally here. This is because Hume clearly understands the kind of correction under discussion as one that requires strength of mind. On any interpretation, Hume believes that we are psychologically disposed to feel more violent pleasures of *some* kind towards nearby benefactors than towards distant ones, and that we correct for these passions. He understands strength of mind as the refusal to be influenced by our violent passions, in cases where they conflict with our calm passions (T 2.3.3.10). And, not long after EPM 5.41, Hume argues that the kind of "decisions" that we make when we demonstrate strength of mind are "really the result of our calm passions and propensities," although they are "said, by a natural abuse of terms, to be the determinations of pure *reason* and reflection" (EPM 6.15).

Certainly, then, Hume's language is unfortunately imprecise. This is presumably because, at this stage in the *Enquiry*, he is refusing to address any questions about the relation between reason and moral judgment (EPM 1.10). Perhaps this is why Hume addresses a case of *non-moral* strength of mind to argue that what we call the "determinations" of reason are, in fact, sentiments. However this may be, the parallel with the moral case is clear. Hume argues that objects which "approach nearer to us" will "catch the heart or imagination," and so cause

more violent passions than any similar but distant objects (EPM 6.15). In both moral and non-moral cases, we show strength of mind by ignoring such passions, in favor of what Hume calls "general preferences and distinctions" (EPM 5.42) or "general resolutions" (EPM 6.15): *calm* passions. I will now argue that Hume understands the adoption of the common point of view as the decision to verbally *express* just our calm, moral sentiments when we publicly evaluate someone's character.

3.2. The Common Point of View in the Enquiry

When we contemplate characters, our violent, non-moral sentiments vary considerably. Hume doubts that we could hold "intelligible" conversations about people's characters if we were to rely on violent, variable passions when we discussed them (EPM 5.42). However, our verbal evaluations of characters clearly *do* allow for intelligible conversations. Hume treats the observable uniformity of our verbal moral evaluations as evidence that we have similarly uniform sentiments: "The notion of morals, implies some sentiment common to all mankind, which recommends the same object to general approbation, and makes every man, or most men, agree in the same opinion or decision concerning it" (EPM 9.5). In other words, moral practice can only occur as it does if there is *some* sentiment which makes us all feel the same way about the same character traits.

Hume is vehemently opposed to any suggestion that the relevant sentiment might be or involve a desire for one's own well-being, and so much of his rhetoric is aimed at denying that moral judgments are motivated "by any regards to self-interest" (EPM 5.45). However, he also cannot allow that they are motivated by any regards to the particular interests of particular others. This is because the relevant sentiment must be such as to "render the actions and conduct, even of the persons the most remote, an object of applause or censure, according as they agree or disagree with that rule of right which is established" (EPM 9.5). No matter our

distance from any character, Hume thinks we will generally agree in our publicly expressed evaluations of it. Typically, however, we feel stronger pains or pleasures towards distant objects than towards nearer ones. Such pains or pleasures cause "many strong sentiments of desire and aversion, affection and hatred; but these neither are felt so much in common, nor are so comprehensive, as to be the foundation of any general system and established theory of blame or approbation" (EPM 9.5).

It is not, therefore, only the selfish passions which are ill-suited to play the role of moral sentiments. Hume is seeking a kind of passion which is precisely as uniform as our verbal moral evaluations, and most passions fail to meet this requirement. Righteous anger, for example, is not a selfish passion, but neither is it, strictly speaking, a *moral* sentiment. We feel more righteous anger wherever we feel a stronger sympathy with any victim of cruelty, whereas we feel an equally strong, calm disapprobation towards any cruel act. We will, Hume argues, feel a more violent "indignation" towards an act of historical "barbarity" if we read about it in a well-written history than if we merely read about the relevant facts (EPM 5.34). Nevertheless, the facts alone would "convince us of the cruel depravity" of the historical villain in question: we will call them "wicked," whether or not we feel violently angry. This is because our "human nature" is such that, as soon as we conceive of a trait as coming under the general notion of "barbarity," we will "unavoidably feel" a "sentiment of disapprobation" (EPM App 1.16). The sentiment responsible for our uniform verbal evaluations can *only* be "the sentiment of humanity": that sentiment caused via the *principle* of humanity (EPM 9.5).

This "principle" is, I have suggested, delicate sympathy, as caused via general rules. However, Hume claims that the "general unalterable standard, by which we may approve or disapprove of characters and manners" ultimately relies on certain "general notions," which influence our taste, but not the violent passions of our hearts (EPM 5.42). He presumably means by "general notions" just what he meant in the *Treatise*, since he is here repeating a claim from

T 3.3.3.2. Although he does not specify what the relevant general notions *are*, they must surely be general notions of the character traits under evaluation. Hume still believes that, whenever we conceive of certain token character traits under certain general notions, we will *automatically* experience approbation or disapprobation, via general rules and delicate sympathy.

Hume allows that we may fail to approve of certain useful or agreeable traits if we have not yet come to associate the relevant trait kinds with causing happiness. For example, people in "uncultivated nations" approve of courage more than "beneficence, justice, and the social virtues," because they "have not, as yet, had full experience of the advantages" of the latter virtues (EPM 7.15). However, Hume generally assumes, not only that each individual's moral sentiments will remain uniform over time, but also that different people will typically associate the same kinds of traits with the same kinds of pleasures or pains, so that the moral sentiments operate highly consistently between people: "Whatever conduct gains my approbation, by touching my humanity, procures also the applause of all mankind, by affecting the same principle in them" (EPM 9.8).[33] It is our *shared* propensity to automatically experience approbation and disapprobation towards just the same kinds of character traits and motives which provides our general, unalterable standard by which to judge of characters and actions.

Admittedly, Hume acknowledges that reason is required to "pave the way" for moral sentiments (EPM 1.9). I agree with Taylor that Hume argues in this work, as he did not in the *Treatise*, that moralizing can and should involve careful reflection and deliberation.[34] Nevertheless, *reason* is only relevant to moral judgment insofar as it allows us to form beliefs about relevant non-moral facts (EPM App 1.11). Furthermore, Hume stresses, we employ such reasoning primarily when we contemplate questions of "justice," such that we use it to "instruct us in the tendency of qualities and actions, and point out their beneficial consequences to society and to their possessor" (EPM App 1.2). Hume seems to mean by this that we can

employ causal reasoning to determine which kinds of motives or actions generally "procure happiness and security, by preserving order in society," so that we can decide which to categorize as "just" (EPM 3.8).

This kind of reasoning may lead us to alter our beliefs about the kinds of actions which are properly termed "just," and so it may cause a general change in our moral judgments of relevant actions. For example, if we believe that allowing people to enjoy luxurious goods can cause only "faction, sedition, civil wars, and the total loss of liberty," then we will consider it just to enforce high taxes on luxuries (EPM 2.21). We will, therefore, approve of a politician who legislates for such taxes. However, if we then come to believe that any increase in luxury tends to *improve* a society, then we will change "our *moral* as well as *political* sentiments, and represent, as laudable or innocent, what had formerly been regarded as pernicious and blameable" (EPM 2.21). We will now consider the enforcement of high taxes on luxuries to be *unjust*, and we will therefore automatically disapprove of any politician who argues for such an enforcement, due to our strong, habitual association between the ideas of injustice and unhappiness.

The only kind of reasoning, reflection, or conscious deliberation which Hume could consistently allow us to engage in when we contemplate *particular* moral cases would, I think, be that concerning the most appropriate general term to apply to a particular character trait or action. For example, we might use reason to determine whether a person's motive was one of "revenge, or fear, or interest," or something more "innocent," and our conclusion in this case will determine the strength of any "sentiment of blame" that we might then experience (EPM App 1.12).

We can briefly consider how such reasoning might work, consistently with Hume's theory. Perhaps I am wondering how to evaluate a colleague, who refuses to ever spend any money on social activities. I might initially think that he is prudent. I associate prudence with

happiness, and so I cannot help but approve; prudence is one of many traits whose "very names force an avowal of their merit" (EPM 6.21). Perhaps, however, I discuss my colleague's character with you, and you observe that he not only refuses to spend money in this way, but that he also shows very little interest in other people. If I am persuaded, then I might come to conceive of his trait under the general notion of selfishness, instead of prudence. I will then be psychologically compelled to disapprove. Clearly, in this case, reflection, reasoning, and deliberation have all influenced my moral judgment. However, once I *have* settled on the most appropriate general term to apply to my colleague's character trait, Hume's theory entails that I will morally evaluate him entirely automatically (if at all). Moreover, Hume believes, if you and I agree on the most appropriate general term, then we are *very* likely to agree in our moral evaluation of my colleague's character.

It is the very uniformity of the calm sentiments of approbation and disapprobation, such that we all experience them in the same way towards all tokens of the same action and character types, which gives them their elevated status as *moral* sentiments. If we all consider only our calm, uniform sentiments, Hume argues, then we will all consistently and predictably approve of character traits that tend to be socially beneficial, and disapprove of ones that tend to be socially disruptive. He argues that this is so useful and pleasing to us that we have developed a kind of language—*moral* language—by which to express just these sentiments: "General language . . . being formed for general use, must be moulded on some more general views [than those of our private interests], and must affix the epithets of praise or blame, in conformity to sentiments, which arise from the general interests of the community" (EPM 5.42).

Although moral sentiments are passions, no less than the violent passions which are caused by our beliefs about the "real accidental consequences" of actions and characters, the language in which we express them is very different (EPM 5.41n24.1). I may be pleased by any action that satisfies my "vanity" or "ambition," but this pleasure will "not [have] a proper

direction" for me to treat it as a *moral* evaluation (EPM 9.5). Anyone with whom I am conversing will be unlikely to feel similarly pleased by the action, unless they happen to be similarly benefitted by it. However, the same action may also cause me to feel approbation, via humanity. If so, then I *will* expect my interlocutor to share this sentiment, and I will give it the status of a moral judgment:

> [The] affection of humanity may not generally be esteemed so strong as vanity or ambition, yet, being common to all men, it can alone be the foundation of morals, or of any general system of blame or praise. One man's ambition is not another's ambition; nor will the same event or object satisfy both: But the humanity of one man is the humanity of every one; and the same object touches this passion in all human creatures. (EPM 9.6)

Of course, we *can* express violent sentiments when we evaluate people's characters, but not via moral language:

> When a man denominates another his *enemy*, his *rival*, his *antagonist*, his *adversary*, he is understood to speak the language of self-love, and to express sentiments, peculiar to himself, and arising from his particular circumstances and situation. But when he bestows on any man the epithets of *vicious* or *odious* or *depraved*, he then speaks another language, and expresses sentiments, in which, he expects, all his audience are to concur with him. (EPM 9.6)

We choose whether or not to evaluate people in moral terms. If we choose to use non-moral language, then we will be understood to express only our violent, variable, and non-moral sentiments. In contrast, Hume claims, anyone who chooses to use moral language to express only their uniform sentiments has, in virtue of so doing, "chosen [the] common point of view, and . . . touched the principle of humanity, in which every man, in some degree,

concurs" (EPM 9.6). In other words, they have chosen to express only those sentiments, produced via general rules and delicate sympathy, which occur to the same degree and in the same way to anyone who contemplates the same character traits. This account of the common point of view clearly allows Hume to resolve the Uniformity Problem, and it does so without any mention of, or any requirement for, the Correction Thesis.

Conclusion

The common point of view plays a key role in Hume's theory of moral judgments. In his *Treatise*, Hume's seemingly confused treatment of the variability objection, and thus of the nature or role of the common point of view, may cause him to endorse the Correction Thesis, despite its incompatibility with Generality. However, in the moral *Enquiry*, Hume answers the Uniformity Problem, while remaining consistent with Generality. We should, perhaps, charitably understand his *Treatise* arguments concerning of the common point of view as representing an initial attempt to achieve this same goal.

NOTES

[1] References to the *Treatise* are to David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature,* ed. David Fate Norton and Mary J. Norton (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), hereafter cited in the text as "T" followed by Book, part, section, and paragraph numbers. References to the second *Enquiry* are to David Hume, *An Enquiry concerning the*

Principles of Morals, ed. T. L. Beauchamp (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006), hereafter cited in the text as "EPM" followed by section and paragraph number. References to "Of the Standard of Taste" are to David Hume, "Of the Standard of Taste," in *Essays, Moral, Political and Literary*, revised edition, ed. Eugene F. Miller (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1987), 226–49, hereafter cited in the text as "E-ST" followed by page number. All emphasis in quotations is original.

[2] Rachel Cohon, *Hume's Morality: Feeling and Fabrication* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 131.

[3] Annette Baier, *A Progress of Sentiments: Reflections on Hume's* Treatise (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), 181.

[4] Elizabeth S. Radcliffe, "Hume on Motivating Sentiments, the General Point of View, and the Inculcation of 'Morality'," *Hume Studies* 20 (1994): 37–58, 43.

[5] Proponents of this general view include, but are not limited to: Páll S. Árdal, *Passion and Value in Hume's* Treatise (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1966); Baier, *Progress of Sentiments*; John Bricke, *Mind and Morality: An Examination of Hume's Moral Psychology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996); Charlotte Brown, "From Spectator to Agent: Hume's Theory of Moral Obligation," *Hume Studies* 20 (1994): 19–36; Cohon, *Hume's Morality*; Don Garrett, *Cognition and Commitment in Hume's Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); *Hume* (Oxon: Routledge, 2015); Michael B. Gill, *The British Moralists on Human Nature and the Birth of Secular Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Thomas K. Hearn, "General Rules and the Moral Sentiments in Hume's *Treatise*," *The Review of Metaphysics* 30 (1976): 57–72; Christine Korsgaard, "The General Point of View: Love and Moral Approval in Hume's Ethics," *Hume Studies* 25 (1999): 3–42; Radcliffe, "Hume on Motivating Sentiments"; Geoffrey Sayre-McCord, "On Why Hume's General Point of View Isn't Ideal – and Shouldn't Be," *Social Philosophy and Policy* 11 (1994): 202–28; Barry Stroud, *Hume* (Oxon: Routledge, 1977).

[6] For example, Kate Abramson argues that only those sentiments that we experience after performing a sympathetic "imaginative exercise" are moral sentiments ("Correcting *Our* Sentiments about Hume's Moral Point of View," *The Southern Journal of Philosophy* 37, no. 3 (1999): 333–61, 342).

[7] E.g., Cohon, *Hume's Morality*, 140–41; Garrett, *Cognition and Commitment*, 194–95; Gill, *The British Moralists*, 253–54.

[8] Jacqueline Taylor, "Hume on the Standard of Virtue," *The Journal of Ethics* 6 (2002): 43–62.

[9] Jacqueline Taylor, *Reflecting Subjects: Passion, Sympathy, and Society in Hume's Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 123.

[10] *Reflecting Subjects*, 122.

[11] Garrett, *Hume*, 120–21; Sayre-McCord, "Why Hume's General Point of View Isn't Ideal."

[12] Given this, Hume's is an *emotivist* theory: one by which the verbal expression of any moral judgment is of an emotion or sentiment. Elsewhere, I argue for this same claim by arguing that Hume denies that moral beliefs are psychologically possible. See my "Hume's Emotivist Theory of Moral Judgements," *The European Journal of Philosophy* 28, no. 4 (2020): 1058–72.

[13] Stephen Darwall, "Hume and the Invention of Utilitarianism," in *Hume and Hume's Connexions*, ed. M. A. Stewart and John P. Wright (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1994), 58–82; Philip A. Reed, "Hume on Sympathy and Agreeable Qualities," *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 24, no. 6 (2016): 1136–56.

[14] See my "Justice and the Tendency towards Good: The Role of Custom in Hume's Theory of Moral Motivation," *Hume Studies* 43 (2017): 117–37.

[15] *Hume's Morality*, 131.

[16] *The British Moralists*, 221–23.

[17] For some useful, but conflicting, interpretations of general rules, see: Thomas K. Hearn, "'General Rules' in Hume's *Treatise*," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 8, no. 4 (1970): 405–22; Louis Loeb, *Stability and Justification in Hume's* Treatise (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); Jack Lyons, "General Rules and the Justification of Probable Belief in Hume's *Treatise*," *Hume Studies* 27 (2001): 247–78; Marie Martin, "The Rational Warrant for Hume's General Rules," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 31, no. 2 (1993): 245–57. Here, I do not endorse any one detailed interpretation.

[18] Donald C. Ainslie, *Hume's True Scepticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 32; Ryan Hickerson, "What the Wise Ought Believe: A Voluntarist Interpretation of Hume's General Rules," *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 21 (2013): 1133–53, 1147.

[19] "Justice and the Tendency," 132.

[20] Anik Waldow, "The Language of Sympathy: Hume on Communication," *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 28, no. 2 (2020): 296–317, 301.

[21] *Stability and Justification*, 4–6.

[22] *Passion and Value*, 94–95.

[23] Jane L. McIntyre, "Hume's Passions: Direct and Indirect," *Hume Studies* 26 (2000): 77–86, 83.

[24] *Cognition and Commitment*, 104.

[25] "Hume's Passions," 83.

[26] Åsa Carlson, "The Moral Sentiments in Hume's *Treatise*: A Classificatory Problem," *Hume Studies* 40 (2014): 73–94, 74; see also Baier, *Progress of Sentiments*, 134–35.

[27] For an argument for this, see my "Justice and the Tendency."

[28] William Davie, "Hume's General Point of View," *Hume Studies* 24 (1998): 275–94.

[29] E.g., EPM 2.22; EPM 3.8; EPM 3.24; EPM 3.40; EPM 5.4; EPM 5.16; EPM 5.39; EPM 5.45; EPM 5.46; EPM 7.19; EPM 9.6; EPM 9.7; EPM 9.8. Elsewhere, I provide a similar survey of Hume's use of the word "tendency" in Book 3 of the *Treatise*. See my "Justice and the Tendency," 127.

[30] Remy Debes, "Humanity, Sympathy and the Puzzle of Hume's Second *Enquiry*," *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 15 (2007): 27–57.

[31] Kate Abramson, "Sympathy and the Project of Hume's Second *Enquiry*," *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 83, no. 1 (2001): 45–80; Debes, "Humanity and Sympathy"; Rico Vitz, "Sympathy and Benevolence in Hume's Moral Psychology," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 42, no. 3 (2004): 261–75.

[32] "Sympathy and the Project," 55. On my interpretation, the kind of extensive sympathy which Hume discusses at T 3.3.1.23 *just is* delicate sympathy.

[33] Hume allows that some people approve of useless or harmful kinds of traits, but only where they have been corrupted by "superstition and false religion" (EPM 9.3).

[34] "Hume on the Standard of Virtue"; *Reflecting Subjects.*

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