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Christine M. Korsgaard

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CHRISTINE M. KORSGAARD

Part I. A Problem in Hume's Moral Theory

1.1. The General Point of View

According to Hume, moral judgments are based on sentiments of approval and disapproval that we feel when we contemplate a person's character from what Hume calls "a general point of view" (T 581–582).¹ Taking up the general point of view regulates our sentiments about a person in two ways. First, we view the person not through the eyes of our own interests, but instead through the eyes of our sympathy with the person herself and her friends, family, neighbors, and colleagues (T 582 ff.; T 602). We assess her in terms of the effects of her character on those with whom she usually associates, the people Hume calls her "narrow circle" (T 602). So, to use one of Hume's own examples, we approve of our enemy's courage, though it has deleterious effects on ourselves, because its effect on our enemy and her own fellow citizens is a useful one (E2 216). Second, we judge her characteristics according to the usual effects of characteristics of that kind, rather than according to their actual effects in this or that case. As Hume puts it, we judge according to "general rules" (T 585).

These two regulating devices bring objectivity, in one sense of an over-worked term, to our moral judgments. Judging in sympathy with a person's narrow circle and according to general rules, we are able to reach agreement about her character. We all approve and disapprove of the same characteristics,

Christine M. Korsgaard is Arthur Kingsley Porter Professor of Philosophy in the Department of Philosophy, 208 Emerson Hall, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA 02138 USA. e-mail: korsgaard@fas.harvard.edu.

and as a result we come to share an ideal of good character. Our concepts of the virtues and vices in this way arise from the general point of view.

But Hume's account gives rise to a difficulty. Moral concepts and judgments are based on our moral sentiments, and our moral sentiments arise when we contemplate a person from the general point of view. The general point of view is a specially constructed perspective, or standpoint, from which we consider a person's character. But why do we contemplate a person from this special perspective in the first place? As I will put it, why do we take up the general point of view?

This question may be taken as a request either for an explanation or for a justification (or of course both), so let me clarify the sense in which I mean it. At one extreme, we might ask only for a psychological explanation of the fact in question: How does it come about that we take up the general point of view, and judge people's characters from it? What psychological forces impel us to do that? At the other extreme, we might ask the question with a fully normative aim, a philosopher's question. That is, we might ask not only how it comes about that we take up the general point of view, but also whether the judgments we make from it are authentically normative and if so why. Ought I really to approve those whom I am inclined to approve from the general point of view, or perhaps even try to be like them myself? What binds me to do that? Somewhere between these two extremes is what we might call a question of moral anthropology: that is, an explanatory question, but one that seeks an explanation why people *take* the ideas of virtue and vice to be normative. There is room for dispute about whether Hume intends to answer the fully normative question.² But I think there is no doubt that his explanatory aims extend to the question of moral anthropology. So I will put my point this way: Hume owes us an explanation *at least of why we take up the general point of view, and of why we are inclined to think that the judgments we make from it are normative.*

One answer that springs immediately to mind is a moral realist answer: we take up the general point of view in order to discover what moral virtues a person has, because that is the perspective from which (for some reason) his virtues can be seen. A slightly more sophisticated answer is that we take up the general point of view in order to make moral judgments.³ But, as I am going to argue in more detail, neither of these answers will work. In Hume's theory, moral judgments are a *product* of the general point of view, and moral virtues and vices are, in turn, a product of moral judgments. As Hume himself says:

Take any action allow'd to be vicious: Wilful murder, for instance. Examine it in all lights, and see if you can find that matter of fact, or real existence, which you call *vice*. In which-ever way you take it, you find only certain passions, motives, volitions and thoughts. There is no other matter of fact in the case. The vice entirely escapes you, as

long as you consider the object. You can never find it, till you turn your reflexion into your own breast, and find a sentiment of disapprobation, which arises in you, towards this action. Here is a matter of fact; but 'tis the object of feeling, not of reason. It lies in yourself, not in the object. (T 468–469)

We deem, say, cowardice a vice *because* we disapprove of it, and that disapproval is a sentiment we experience when we view the character from the general point of view. So our employment of moral ideas results from our occupation of the general point of view. And this means that we cannot appeal to moral ideas in order to explain why we take up the general point of view in the first place. A creature who never viewed things from the general point of view would make no moral judgments, and for such a creature, there would be no virtues and vices. We cannot intelligibly say that such a creature would take up the general point of view *in order* to bring morality, of which he has no prior conception, into existence.

But this response shows that the question I am raising here is not just about an unresolved technical detail in Hume's account of moral judgment, a step missing from his general explanation. Asking why we take up the general point of view amounts to asking why, according to Hume, human beings operate with moral concepts and so are moral animals. The use of moral concepts is the result of a quite particular way of viewing people. Why do we view people in this particular way?

In the rest of part I, I will explain this problem in more detail. In particular, I will explain how it is related to another question about Hume's theory, namely why there is (or why we should think that there is—but I will not continue to add this qualification) a normative standard for love. In part II, I will examine, and reject, Hume's explicit answer to the question why we take up the general point of view. Finally, in part III, I will argue that Hume's theory of love contains the resources for a more interesting and plausible solution to the problem.

1.2. *Hume's Theory of Love*

The problem I have just described can be put in different terms, namely, as a problem about why there should be a normative standard for love. Before I can explain why this is so, we need to have a sketch of Hume's theory of love before us. Hume thinks of love as a passion, indeed, a simple impression or unanalyzable feeling (T 329). He tells us that just as the object of pride or humility is always the self, so the object of love or hate is always another. It is not terribly clear what could be meant by saying that a simple unanalyzable feeling has an object, but Hume seems to think that the object is an idea on which one's attention is focused when one is in the grip of the passion. In

explaining what he means by saying that self is the object of pride and humility, Hume remarks: "Here [that is, on the self] the view always fixes when we are actuated by either of these passions" (T 277). A little later, he says: "Pride and humility, being once rais'd, immediately turn our attention to ourself, and regard that as their ultimate and final object" (T 278); and again, "Here at last, the view always rests, when we are actuated by either of these passions" (T 286). The order suggested here seems counterintuitive—we might suppose that a person has to be attending to the idea of herself *before* pride can be aroused. Hume rather surprisingly compares the way pride evokes the idea of self to the way hunger produces the idea of food (T 287). However that may be, the fact that love takes another for its object is what Hume calls an "original" feature of this passion. By "original," Hume means a feature that admits of no further explanation (T 280, T 286). Pride just does fix our attention on ourselves; love just does fix our attention on another.

Hume points out that the causes of pride and love must be different from their objects, since humility and hate, respectively, have the same objects, self and other. If the bare thought of yourself aroused pride just because you were its object, it would arouse humility for the same reason, and you would always feel both of these passions at the same time (T 277–278; T 330). The causes of love and pride are therefore different from their objects—they are, in fact, pleasant things that are associated with their objects. In the same way, the causes of hate and humility are unpleasant things that are associated with their objects. The mechanism by which love is produced is the notoriously obscure "double relation of impressions and ideas." Suppose that you have beautiful hair and I perceive this. The idea of your beautiful hair and the idea of you are related. Using Hume's own list of relations, we can specify this relation as contiguity because the hair is on your head, or as causality because you grew it, say. In contemplating your beautiful hair, I feel pleasure, and all pleasant impressions are related by resemblance. Now Hume thinks of the passions themselves as impressions, which are either pleasant, painful, or mixed. Love is a pleasant impression, and so it is natural for my mind to move from the pleasure of contemplating your hair to the resembling pleasure of love. Since I move naturally from the idea of your beautiful hair to the idea of you, and naturally from the pleasantness of that idea to love, whose object is another, I fix the love on you (T 285–290; T 330–332). In this way, any pleasant thing associated with another person can cause you to love him.

However obscure Hume's account may be, its basic message is clear. Hume thinks that love is essentially pleasure in the thought of a person, caused by something pleasant about him. There are of course a number of objections we might make to this view, even apart from worries about how exactly the psychological mechanism is supposed to work. I sketch two of these, which concern the ontology of love, below. The third, which is important to my account, will get a section of its own.

First, we may object that love surely has something to do with caring about a person's welfare, and that the idea of taking pleasure in the thought of a person does not include or necessarily imply this important element of love. Hume is aware of this objection and he has a rather astonishing reply to it. He understands the objection to amount to the claim that love *just is* the desire of another's happiness, and so he thinks that it is amply defeated by the fact that we can sometimes find the two apart (T 367). Benevolence toward the beloved is indeed always associated with love when we happen to *think* about the beloved's happiness, Hume asserts, but we do not always do that. The connection between benevolence and love is therefore an original and so inexplicable causal connection, not essential to the passion of love (T 368). Nature might have made us so that love was always accompanied by malice, or so that it had no motivational tendencies at all. As it happens, love and benevolence go together in us. However odd this may sound, Hume's views make it necessary: if love is an unanalyzable feeling, the only way that it can be connected either to its object or to its characteristic motives is causally.

Second, we may protest, along with Aristotle and Kant, that love is not a passion or not merely a passion but rather something like a state of character or a condition of the will; or even that it essentially involves some sort of relationship with the beloved.⁴ For Hume, love is just another experience. Pursuing this objection would take us too far afield, so I mention it only to say that I think that it is right, and lay it aside.

1.3. *The Grounds of Love*

A third objection, and the one most important for my purposes here, concerns Hume's attitude towards what I will call the "grounds" of love.⁵ In ordinary language, we may speak of loving someone "for" something, or of loving someone "because" of something. You might say that you love someone *for* his intelligence and sweetness, say, or that you love him *because* he is funny and brave. The idea of a ground of love appears to be subject to a normative standard: we use the phrases "you only love me for" and "you only love me because of" followed by, say, "my beauty," "my strength," or even something external like "my money" as a criticism or complaint about the character of someone's love. Significantly, people demand to be loved "for themselves," as opposed to something that they take to be incidental about themselves, with the suggestion that the best sort of love is that which is for the person himself. This idea is linked to the question which of the more specific grounds of love are appropriate or best. Those grounds that are most intimately or intrinsically connected to the person are supposed to be better, and the love based on them more authentic or superior. People sometimes complain about being loved only for their bodies, but usually only as a kind of joke about being loved only for their minds, and never about being loved only for their souls.⁶

I am using the term “grounds” here not to avoid but rather to emphasize the obscurity of the *because* of love, which seems to fall somewhere in between the *because* of practical reason and the *because* of simple causality. The grounds of love do seem to have something in common with practical reasons. As I have just been saying, they are unlike mere causes, and like practical reasons, in that they can (sometimes) be right or wrong, or at least better and worse. And they tend, if not exactly to justify love, at least to make it intelligible in a way that goes beyond the intelligibility of mere successful mechanistic explanation. The grounds of love might be cited in an answer to the question, “Why do you love him?” where the questioner wants more than just an explanation of how your love came about. She wants to understand, as we say, *what you see in* your beloved. Yet the grounds of love do not quite seem to be practical reasons, and indeed seem to operate more like causes. To the extent that love is a passion, we do not decide to love on the basis of its grounds, for we do not *decide* to love at all. And, more obscurely, the kind of grounds that make love intelligible in the sense that they specify what we “see in” someone (“He’s so funny, and kind, a great lover”) seem to compete for the same space (because —) with two other kinds of grounds: first, grounds that make the love intelligible without specifying anything one “sees in” the beloved (“He’s my brother”) and, second, grounds that do not make love intelligible at all (“I always fall for these husky irresponsible types”). My point here is that citing the first of those things (what one “sees in” a person) looks almost like giving a reason, while citing the third (one’s “type”) seems hardly more than mentioning a cause of which one happens to be aware.⁷ Perhaps somewhere along this continuum we have shaded away from grounds to mere causes. For all of these reasons, the notion we are dealing with is an obscure one, in need of more philosophical attention.⁸

The two questions I want to raise here are whether Hume intends his idea of a cause of love to occupy roughly the same space as that of a ground of love, and whether it can adequately do so. I think the answer to the first question must be yes. For one thing, if Hume wants his account to capture the idea of a ground of love at all, his only resource, given his theory, is to understand it in terms of causality. If love is a simple unanalyzable feeling, then the only way for it to be related to a person’s attributes is causally, just as the only way for it to be connected to its object or to its characteristic motives is causally. For another, the fact that the cause is supposed to be something *pleasant* about the person suggests that Hume is looking for something that makes the love intelligible, for what it is we “see in” the person we love. Of course, I have already suggested that not every ground of love specifies what we see in the beloved; family relationships are an example of a ground that does not. Interestingly, Hume takes notice of the fact that we nearly always love our relations and everyday acquaintances, whether or not there is anything especially pleasant about them, as an apparent difficulty for his theory. He resolves it by

arguing that familiarity is itself a source of pleasure (T 353). Human beings need company, since sympathetic connection is necessary to arouse and enliven the human mind, and familiarity increases sympathy. Since you are familiar with the passions and sentiments of your acquaintance, your own passions and sentiments are more readily aroused by them, and this makes you find their company stimulating and therefore pleasant. Thus Hume wants to show us how even one of the apparently more “merely causal” occasions of love, family relationship, does nevertheless make the love intelligible. This suggests that Hume’s notion of a cause of love is meant to coincide with what I have been calling a “ground” of love.

Whether it can do so adequately, of course, is another question. For as I have already mentioned, the idea of a ground of love, although it does seem causal, also seems subject to a normative standard. At least for some kinds of love, some grounds are better than others. And if the cause of love is merely anything that makes you take pleasure in the thought of a person, how can the idea of a cause of love be subject to a normative standard? The solution to this problem, I will argue, is the key to explaining why we take up the general point of view.

1.4. Love and Moral Approval

I can now explain why the problem about why we take up the general point of view can also be understood as a problem about why there is a normative standard for love. It is clear that Hume thinks that virtue and vice are intimately related to love and hate, but he is a little unsettled about what exactly the relationship is.⁹ In Hume’s official account of love in Book II of the *Treatise*, virtue is identified as *one of* the “much diversify’d” causes of love, alongside such nonmoral psychological attributes as wit, good sense, and good humor; physical attributes such as beauty and athletic ability; and external goods such as money and good family (T 330). According to Hume, love for a person can be caused by any of these things: indeed, a whole section of the *Treatise* is devoted to explaining “our esteem for the rich and powerful” (T 357–365). Given the account we looked at in 1.2, it is clear why a person’s virtues will be one of the causes of our loving him. As Hume says:

Pride and humility, love and hatred are excited, when there is any thing presented to us, that both bears a relation to the object of the passion, and produces a separate sensation related to the sensation of the passion. Now virtue and vice are attended with these circumstances. They must necessarily be plac’d either in ourselves or others, and excite either pleasure or uneasiness; and therefore must give rise to one of these four passions . . . And this is, perhaps, the most considerable effect that virtue and vice have upon the human mind. (T 473)

According to this view, virtue is one of the causes of love, and vice is among the causes of hate.

Yet at other times, Hume suggests an even more intimate connection between love and virtue. In Book III of the *Treatise*, Hume says that “these two particulars are to be consider’d as equivalent, with regard to our mental qualities, *virtue* and the power of producing love or pride; *vice* and the power of producing humility or hatred” (T 575). A few pages later he characterizes moral terms as “the terms expressive of our liking or dislike” (T 582). These remarks suggest that virtue is not just one of the many causes of love, but—at least “with regard to our mental qualities”—*the* cause of love. That is to say, the mental qualities for which we love people are *therefore* virtues. Of course, this idea coheres well with another notorious doctrine of Book III, Hume’s contention that there is no important distinction between moral virtues and natural abilities (T 606–614). One of his arguments for that contention is precisely that natural abilities, like moral virtues, give rise to love. He says:

Tho’ we refuse to natural abilities the title of virtues, we must allow, that they procure the love and esteem of mankind; . . . and that a man possess’d of them is much more intitled to our good-will and services, than one entirely void of them. (T 607)

That last remark—that those with the natural virtues are “intitled” to our good will—suggests yet another view of the relation between virtue and love that we also find in Hume’s writings: namely, that virtue is what we *ought* to love people for, or, to put it more naturally, what makes people *worthy* of love, whether or not we in fact love them for it. Virtue, in the terms of the last section, is an appropriate ground of love.¹⁰ After his description of the two regulating devices that constitute the general point of view, Hume remarks:

But however the general principle of our blame or praise may be corrected by those other principles, ’tis certain, they are not altogether efficacious, nor do our passions often correspond entirely to the present theory. ’Tis seldom men heartily love what lies at a distance from them, and what no way redounds to their particular benefit; as ’tis no less rare to meet with persons, who can pardon another any opposition he makes to their interest, however justifiable that opposition may be by the general rules of morality. Here we are contented to say that reason requires such an impartial conduct, but that ’tis seldom we can bring ourselves to it, and that our passions do not readily follow the determination of our judgment. (T 583)

A similar passage occurs after another, later, summary of the general point of view. Hume says:

And tho' the heart does not always take part with those general notions, or regulate its love and hatred by them, yet are they sufficient for discourse, and serve all our purposes in company, in the pulpit, on the theatre, and in the schools. (T 603)

These passages suggest that judgments of virtue are not judgments about what we *do* love people for, but judgments about what we *ought* to love people for. At the same time, and interestingly, both passages express skepticism about the extent to which our love is actually inspired by virtue.

In the first of the two passages I just quoted, Hume mentions "reason" as the source of these objective judgments of the lovable, but he quickly corrects that. The passage continues:

This language will be easily understood, if we consider what we formerly said concerning that *reason*, which is able to oppose our passion; and which we have found to be nothing but a general calm determination of the passions, founded on some distant view or reflection. (T 583)

This is just a reminder that the judgments that determine what we ought to love people for are not properly speaking judgments of reason, but rather calm sentiments felt from a general point of view, namely, the moral sentiments.

This reminder brings us to a fourth and final view of the relation of love and virtue found in Hume's writings, which is that moral approval itself is a *species* of love, specifically a calm form of love. This view is most clearly stated in a passage in Book III of the *Treatise* in which Hume says that moral approval and disapproval themselves are "nothing but a fainter and more imperceptible love or hatred" (T 614). We can love people for any quality that we find pleasant; but one of the main sources of our pleasure is sympathy with the pleasures of others. So, for instance, I may love you because you are kind to animals, and my sympathy with them makes me partake of the pleasure you give them. This kind of love may be more disinterested than some cases of more personal love, as when I love you because of your generosity to me. But it does not yet have the universal character of moral approval, for in itself, sympathy varies with our relations to those with whom we sympathize. For instance, resemblance may make me sympathize more strongly with women or academics than do I with men or plumbers, and the sympathy-based love I feel for those who help and champion other women or fellow academics may be stronger than the sympathy-based love I (also) feel for those who help and champion men or plumbers. Moral approval is a regulated version of this sympathy-based love. By taking the person's narrow circle as those with whom we are to sympathize, and using general rules, we fix the lovable qualities as those that are normally pleasant and useful to a person's narrow circle. This regulation of our sympa-

thy makes a further difference: for while ordinary loves, both direct and sympathy-based, are generally counted among the violent passions (T 276), moral approval is a *calm* species of love, because it is, as Hume says in the passage above, “founded on [a] distant view or reflection.”

Thus we find four slightly different accounts of the relationship between virtue and love in Hume’s texts: first, that *virtue is one of the causes of love*; second, that *any cause of love*—or at least any mental attribute that is a cause of love—is (therefore) a *virtue*; third, that *a virtue is a quality that makes its possessor worthy of love*, or a quality for which we ought to love him; and finally, that *moral approval is itself a species of love*. Though different, these accounts can be made coherent, if we suppose that Hume’s view is as follows: When we view a person from the general point of view, we feel a particularly calm species of love or hate, which is moral approval or disapproval. The qualities that arouse these calm passions are the ones we call “virtues” and “vices.” But these are not merely particular forms of love and hate, on a footing with our more personal and unregulated passions. Moral approval and disapproval are corrective of, and normative for, our more violent personal loves and hates. So, to take a fairly uncontroversial example, the prisoner who hates the judge who has condemned him, on account of the pain that the judge and her justice has caused him, has a *wrong feeling*. When the judge is considered from the general point of view, her justice is seen as a pleasant thing and causes love; and this love is normative for, and ought to be corrective of, the prisoner’s more personal feelings. This view seems to be at work in passages like this one:

And tho’ such interests and pleasures touch us more faintly than our own, yet being more constant and universal, they counter-balance the latter even in practice, and alone are admitted in speculation as the standard of virtue and morality. (T 591)

To this extent, the general point of view is the point of view from which we ought to assess people, and the loves and hates it generates should govern our other loves and hates. And so the question why we take up the general point of view might be put this way: why should there be a normative standard for love? And why should that standard be provided by the general point of view?

Part II. Hume’s Account of Why We Take Up the General Point of View

II.1. Hume’s Account in the Text of the Treatise

Hume does provide his own answer to the question why we take up the general point of view, and in this section I will examine it. It may be divided into three related points.

1. First, as I mentioned above, our sympathetic responses vary with our position with respect to others, and this varies for an individual over time, and among individuals. Hume says that in order to avoid the *contradictions* to which this would give rise if sympathy remained unregulated, we “fix on” the general point of view (T 581).

2. The second point picks up on an idea that Hume inherits from Francis Hutcheson. Following Locke, Hutcheson believed that any simple idea must come from an impression of sense. Our idea of the morally good is a simple, unanalyzable idea, and the impression that gives rise to it is the sentiment of approval. Our capacity for this sentiment is therefore a kind of sense.¹¹ Following Hutcheson in turn, Hume also characterizes the capacity for approval as a “moral sense.” With that in mind, Hume supports his first point by observing that it is our practice “with regard to all the senses” to correct our judgments from fixed standpoints in order to eliminate contradictions (T 582).

Hume makes a similar, and I think more pertinent, comparison with the way we make judgments of beauty. Since the moral sense is concerned with what pleases us in characters, the idea of an objective standard of moral goodness is like the idea that there is an objective standard of beauty. Hume constantly reminds us of this connection by using phrases like “beauty and deformity” to describe characters and “moral taste” to describe approval and disapproval (e.g., T 300; T 581; EPM 173; EPM 242). And as he points out:

In like manner, external beauty is determin'd merely by pleasure; and 'tis evident, a beautiful countenance cannot give so much pleasure, when seen at the distance of twenty paces, as when it is brought near to us. We say not, however, that it appears to us less beautiful: Because we know what effect it will have in such a position, and by that reflexion we correct its momentary appearance. (T 582)

3. Third, in his most explicit remarks about why we fix on the general point of view, Hume frequently mentions the need for us to talk to each other about, and to come to some agreement upon, persons and characters. Here are some examples:

[T]is impossible we cou'd ever converse together on any reasonable terms, were each of us to consider characters and persons, only as they appear from his peculiar point of view. (T 581)

Such corrections are common with regard to all the senses; and indeed 'twere impossible we could ever make use of language, or communicate our sentiments to one another, did we not correct the momentary appearances of things, and overlook our present situation. (T 582)

[T]is impossible men cou'd ever agree in their sentiments and judgments, unless they chose some common point of view, from which they might survey their object, and which might cause it to appear the same to all of them. (T 591)

Besides, that we ourselves often change our situation in this particular, we every day meet with persons, who are in a different situation from ourselves, and who cou'd never converse with us on any reasonable terms, were we to remain constantly in that situation and point of view, which is peculiar to us. The intercourse of sentiments, therefore, in society and conversation, makes us form some general inalterable standard, by which we may approve or disapprove of characters and manners. And tho' the heart does not always take part with those general notions, or regulate its love and hatred by them, yet are they sufficient for discourse, and serve all our purposes in company, in the pulpit, on the theatre, and in the schools. (T 603)

So Hume cites, as the reasons we need to take up the general point of view, the need to avoid the contradictory judgments of unregulated sympathy, the need to stabilize all sensory judgments, and the need to converse on some agreed terms.

But there is something deeply puzzling about all of these explanations, as we can see by taking them one at a time. First, why should the fact that your sympathy-based love of people varies over time, or the fact that it differs from mine, be regarded as a *contradiction*? Suppose that I like rye bread and you like wheat bread: that is not a contradiction. Nor is it a contradiction if you liked sweets as a child but have little interest in them now. Love, as Hume understands it, is the result of the pleasure we take in a person, either directly or from sympathy, but we do not in all cases expect to take pleasure in the same things at all times or to take pleasure in the same things as other people.¹³ Why do we need to come to an agreement about whose character is good, if that is only an agreement about whom we find pleasing?

Next, consider the argument that we do this with every sense. Take as a comparison the way we make judgments about what colors things are. Hume might say that when we make such judgments, we take up a certain point of view: say, we choose regular daytime sunlight as the perspective from which we answer the question, "What color is it?" This, as Hume's account suggests, does enable us to converse about colors. If I described a thing by its color in regular daylight and you described it by its color at dusk, we might have an unnecessarily hard time communicating about something we have to talk about. Suppose I want you to locate an object using a description I give of it, and its color is to be part of this description: then we need to be able to con-

verse and agree about colors. So we fix on regular daylight as the obvious choice.

One problem with comparing this sort of regulating device to the moral point of view is that fixing on daytime sunlight does not seem to be the uniquely possible choice for regulating color language. Couldn't we have a language, for instance, in which people named things by the colors they are at dusk?¹⁴ Leave aside, for the moment, the question whether this would be just as good as our actual method. Surely it matters more for the purposes of conversation that there be *some* shared point of view than which one we use. But it would be unwelcome to say that the general point of view that regulates moral language is one of many we might have constructed for the purpose. After all, we take the judgments we make from the general point of view to be normative; it is supposed to be the point of view from which we ought to regulate our loves and hates. The point of view from which we judge colors is normative in a thin sense: if, looking at a blue object at dusk, you say, "It's purple," the conventions of our language allow me to say "No, you are mistaken." But nothing very important follows. I have corrected you on the linguistic usage and nothing more. And the linguistic usage could have been otherwise, for we could have chosen a different point of view.

One may be tempted to block this objection by pointing out that our selection of a point of view for judging colors is not arbitrary. Daytime sunlight is the light in which we do most of our looking, and, even more importantly, it is the light in which we see best. By this of course I do not mean that it is the light in which we see the colors as they really are, but rather that it is the light in which we are able to make the finest color discriminations. We might say that the trouble with using dusk as a point of view for judging color is not that blue things look purple, but that blue and purple things look more like each other, that they are harder to tell apart. So at least we can say that sunlight is the *best* point of view for regulating color language.

Could a consideration of this kind be used to account for our choice of a point of view for judging beauty or character? Hume does appeal to such a consideration in the aesthetic case. One of the attributes of the good critic, as described in "Of the Standard of Taste," is an unusually refined and delicate sensibility, an ability to notice small distinctions, and to separate out, by his senses, the different elements that go into the composition of a work. And in defending this point, Hume invokes the comparison to the senses: "It is acknowledged to be the perfection of every sense or faculty, to perceive with exactness its most minute objects, and allow nothing to escape its notice and observation" (OST 236). Hume does not make any direct argument of this kind in the moral case. But perhaps we might argue on Hume's behalf that a person's narrow circle has a more refined sense of what his character is like, of the different elements that go into its composition.

But there would still be a problem about the normativity of the judgments we make from the general point of view. The fact that a certain perspective leads to more refined discriminations is sufficient to give color judgments all the normativity they require. All we need is to establish some convention about the point of view we will use for making these judgments; and the fact that sunlight enables us to make the most discriminations seems sufficient reason to favor it.¹⁵ But in this case, *all* that we are determining is how it is best to *talk*. It is true that some of Hume's remarks about moral concepts suggest that he thinks that in that case, too, all we are trying to do is determine how we should talk. I quote once more, for example:

And tho' the heart does not always take part with those general notions, or regulate its love and hatred by them, yet are they sufficient for discourse, and serve all our purposes in company, in the pulpit, on the theatre, and in the schools. (T 603)

Yet in the moral and aesthetic cases, more seems to be at stake, at least if the normative claims involved are to be taken seriously. Presumably we are determining the direction in which we should cultivate our tastes, who is entitled to our love and services, and what we ourselves ought to try to be like.¹⁶

In any case, this leads us to Hume's final argument, which is about our need for conversations. Whether he has more in mind or not, Hume certainly does insist that we need to fix a point of view for judging characters in order to talk. But now we may ask: what is it we need to talk about here? If we had to have conversations about who was possessed of moral virtue, and come to an agreement about that, then we would need to fix a point of view for judging virtue. But if there were no normative standard applying to judgments of the pleasingness of people, there would be no moral virtue to talk about. And in general, the fact that we are pleased by different things seems to give us no difficulty in discussing them. If I say, "He's a good person," and you use a different standard of goodness than I do, then there may be room for confusion. But if I say, "I like him," and you say, "I don't," no confusion will arise. And I will not say, "He's a good person," unless a shared standard exists. So this consideration can hardly show us why a shared standard has to exist.

So we are left still facing the problem I described at the beginning of the paper. Moral approval is a calm form of love that we experience when we view a character from a general point of view. But why do we view a character from the general point of view in the first place? Hume says that it is to avoid contradictions and enable us to regulate our judgments and our language. But if we ask, "Judgments about what?" we do not get a satisfactory answer. The answer cannot be that our judgments about *virtue* are contradictory until we take up the general point of view, since we make no moral judgments at all until after we take up the general point of view. We simply love and hate, and

make judgments about whether or not we like people. And it is not, so far, obvious why we should expect to concur in our loves and hates, or regard it as a contradiction if we do not.

II.2. *The Felt Distinctness of Moral Sentiment: A Defense of Hume's Account*

In this section, I examine and reject a possible defense of Hume's account, not one that he gives, but one that I think might naturally occur to some readers.¹⁷ Hume argues that moral pleasure is characterized by a distinct phenomenological feel, different from the other pleasures we get from thinking about people. He makes this clear when he first argues that moral judgments are based on sentiments. He imagines an objector arguing that, if virtue and vice are determined by pleasure and pain, even inanimate objects, being pleasant and painful, would have virtues and vices. To this he replies that "under the term *pleasure*, we comprehend sensations, which are very different from each other, and which have only such a distant resemblance, as is requisite to make them be express'd by the same abstract term" (T 472). Not only can we distinguish, by phenomenological feel, the pleasure of drinking wine from the pleasure of surveying a good character, but, Hume adds, "Nor is every sentiment of pleasure or pain, which arises from characters and actions, of that *peculiar* kind, which makes us praise or condemn" (T 472).

The point may be extended. In those passages, Hume attributes a peculiar phenomenological feel to the pleasure we experience when we contemplate a good person's character. In passages I have already quoted, Hume also attributes a peculiar phenomenological feel to the love that immediately arises from that pleasure.¹⁸ Indeed, as we have already seen, he sometimes characterizes approval as "nothing but a fainter and more imperceptible love or hatred" (T 614) and he speaks of this love as "a calm determination of our passions, founded on some distant view or reflection" (T 583). Both moral pleasure and moral love are distinguished from other pleasures and other loves by what I will call a "felt distinctness."

Two points about this felt distinctness are important here. First, Hume says that we experience it "only when a character is considered in general, without reference to our particular interest" (T 472). Second, despite the felt distinctness of moral sentiments, Hume observes that it is possible to confuse moral feelings with personal feelings. He says:

It seldom happens, that we do not think an enemy vicious, and can distinguish betwixt his opposition to our interest and real villainy or baseness. But this hinders not, but that the sentiments are, in themselves, distinct; and a man of temper and judgment may preserve himself from these illusions. (T 472)

That said, one may attempt to block my objection to Hume's account this way: Moral feelings are characterized by a felt distinctness, a distinct phenomenological quality. "Virtue" is our name for whatever causes these particular feelings, the special feelings of pleasure and love that constitute approval. It is because we experience these *particular* feelings that we have something to talk about, namely, virtue. We give the name "virtue" to whatever causes these particular feelings, just as we give the name "blue" to whatever causes certain visual sensations. And then we take up the general point of view to get rid of contradictions in our judgments about virtue, just as we carry objects into the sunlight when we find ourselves disagreeing about which things are blue.

There are several objections to this solution. First, even if the feeling for virtue is distinct, it is not obvious why this should dictate that we try to arrive at an agreement about it. We have to arrive at agreements about colors because descriptions play a role in our practices—I ask you to bring me my blue sweater, for instance. The parallel in the case of judgments of value seems to be the practice of making recommendations. I might ask you to bring me a bottle of good champagne. But the practice of recommendation requires less agreement than the practice of description, and in cases where agreement cannot be found we can give up, or qualify, the practice of recommendation. If this were not so, no one would ever suspect that there is such thing as a "matter of taste."

Second, Hume says we experience this particular feeling "only when a character is considered in general, without reference to our particular interest" (T 472). If this means that we experience this feeling only when we view a character from the general point of view, it is obvious that our capacity for this feeling cannot explain *why* we adopt the general point of view. Unless there were some independent reason for taking up the general point of view, we might never have discovered our capacity for this particular feeling.

Someone may reply that perhaps saying that we experience this special feeling *only* when we take up the general point of view is overstating the case. Hume's theory involves three sorts of love: personal love, sympathy-based love, and moral approval, which is sympathy-based love regulated by the general point of view. In the remark just quoted, Hume contrasts "considering a character in general" with viewing the person through the eyes of our own personal interest. Perhaps he thinks that not only moral approval, but *every* case of *sympathy-based* love results from considering a character in general, since sympathy-based love is a disinterested response to a person's characteristics. The pleasure that produces sympathy-based love therefore has the same felt distinctness as moral pleasure. Because of this special pleasure, we experience sympathy-based love as something different from ordinary love, but indistinctly: so we take up the general point of view in order to get the cause of sympathy-based love, namely, character "considered in general," more clearly into view.

I think this probably is what Hume had in mind. But there are several problems with the suggestion, some of which are hard for me to describe without getting ahead of myself in my argument. The proposed solution depends on the idea that sympathy-based love is unlike personal love but like full-fledged moral approval, in that it occurs when we consider a character in general. This, to my mind, involves both an overly moralized conception of sympathy-based love and an inadequately moralized conception of personal love. Sympathy-based love, as we experience it before taking up the general point of view, is a response to a person's characteristics, but it is not, like moral approval, a calm and disinterested response. This is not because it is inspired by thoughts about the lover's personal interests, but because it is affected by his personal resemblance and contiguity to the person with whom he sympathizes. Sympathy-based love can be as violent and as partisan as personal love. On the other side, it is a misconception of personal love to suppose it is a response to our own interests *rather than* to a person's character. Even in its personal form, love is a response to what someone is like, not just to his effects on oneself. As I will argue in part III, personal love, however violent and partisan, must to some extent be a response to a person's character, or it is not love at all, but merely the valuing of a useful object. All of this being so, there is no good reason to believe that the sort of pleasure that causes sympathy-based love will be notably distinct from the sort of pleasure that causes personal love. And even if it were, the other point still stands: we have no more reason for expecting to agree about our sympathy-based loves than we have for expecting to agree about our personal loves. I will fill these ideas out in part III.

In any case, there is an important objection to taking this line of defense. As we have seen, Hume's view is that certain basic passions and feelings are "original" in human nature, meaning that a phenomenologically distinct feeling is originally connected to a certain kind of cause or object.¹⁹ But we do not have to posit a different *original* capacity for every passion and sentiment to which language gives a name, for some of them are modifications of others. One cause of this modification is *blending*, which results when one object gives rise to two passions. Respect, for instance, is not an original passion aroused in the face of respectable qualities, but rather a special form of love that results when the pleasing qualities in a person that cause the love also at the same time cause humility (T 390) or fear in the lover. Again, Hume supposes that the special quality of erotic love results from the mixture of love with sexual appetite (T 394–396). Other causes of difference in our feelings lie in the circumstances which give rise to them. The violence of a passion is part of its felt character, and Hume acknowledges this to be influenced by the circumstances: whether the object of the passion is present and perceived, or absent and merely thought about, for instance. Dread, we might speculate, is not an original passion in human nature, but rather can be explained as fear muted by dis-

tance. Thus, Hume's view is that a small set of basic passions is modified into a larger set of different feelings by various forces.

This means that we may distinguish two possible views about the felt distinctness of the moral sentiments. One is that we are originally equipped to experience a sentiment with exactly this qualitative feel, a particular moral sentiment, originally connected to the view of a person's character that we get when we consider it "in general." The other is that the felt distinctness that characterizes the moral sentiments is caused by, or is a by-product of, the very fact that these sentiments are experienced when we consider a character in general.

This second possibility seems obviously to be the correct account of moral approval, since Hume says that moral approval is a species of love. The special phenomenological feel—the distinctive calmness—of this love *derives from* the fact that one loves from a disinterested and artificial, or at least rather abstract, point of view. Hume argues that we mistake both moral approval and prudential desire ("the general appetite for good, and aversion to evil, consider'd merely as such") for the operations of reason precisely because of the calmness of these passions (T 417). It seems natural to suppose that the calmness of these passions is *produced* by the fact that the object of prudence (one's own long-term good) and the cause of approval (a person's character) are abstract or conceptual objects. Neither of these objects is directly perceived: rather, they are inferred or constructed from long-term patterns of event and action. And presumably the same explanation should show that the sympathetic pleasure that causes moral approval gets its distinct character from the fact that it is caused by an abstract object that we must use reasoning even to conceive.²⁰ It is not surprising that these abstract objects produce only calm sentiments in us, especially when compared to the more palpable benefits that inspire today's pressing desire or make us welcome an enemy's cowardice.

There is also an important methodological reason for favoring the view that the felt distinctness of the moral sentiments derives from the fact that they are experienced when we take up the general point of view, rather than being the result of an original endowment of our nature. Hutcheson believed that moral approval is a sentiment whose felt distinctness is original; God simply implanted that particular sentiment in us as a response to benevolence. According to Hutcheson, morality springs from the fact that we experience the sentiment of moral approval; it is the capacity for this sentiment that makes us moral animals. But the fact that we experience moral approval does not admit of any naturalistic explanation; God simply installed the capacity for this particular sentiment in us. So if we ask Hutcheson why we are moral animals, his answer must ultimately be that God made us so. Hume's ambition, consonant with his anti-religious aims, is to give a naturalistic explanation of how moral feeling arises in us. We do not need a divine origin for moral approval if it can be explained in terms of the principles of natural psycholo-

gy alone. If moral approval can be explained as a modification of love, produced by the fact that we take up the general point of view, then it can be explained naturalistically—provided, of course, that we can find a naturalistic explanation of why we take up the general point of view. In that case, Hume's answer to the question why we are moral animals will appeal to natural features of our psychological makeup, not to divine provisions. But this naturalistic aim can be achieved only if the special character of moral pleasure and moral love are the result of the fact that moral pleasure and moral love are modifications of natural forms of pleasure and love, modifications that are *produced* by the operations of sympathy and generality. If we must say that moral feeling is original, an implanted response to moral character as such, then Hume's attempt to give a completely naturalistic account of morality will have failed after all.

We can find support for the idea that the felt distinctness of moral sentiment is a product of the circumstances that give rise to it in the section on the natural abilities. There, Hume denies that there is just one moral sentiment. He imagines an opponent arguing that the feeling of approval aroused by the natural abilities is phenomenologically distinct from that aroused by the moral virtues. True, he says, but neither is there really exactly one phenomenologically distinct sentiment for all of the moral virtues:

Each of the virtues, even benevolence, justice, gratitude, integrity, excites a different sentiment or feeling in the spectator. The characters of *Cæsar* and *Cato*, as drawn by *Sallust*, are both of them virtuous, in the strictest sense of the word; but in a different way: Nor are the sentiments entirely the same, which arise from them. The one produces love; the other esteem: The one is amiable; the other awful: We cou'd wish to meet with the one character in a friend; the other character we wou'd be ambitious of in ourselves. (T 607–608)

There is a range of moral feelings, for the different virtues, in exactly the same way there is a range of different species of natural love. Clearly they are not all original, for if they were, then Hume would have failed in another way in his project of naturalizing Hutcheson's theory. For Hume also makes it clear that he wants to deny Hutcheson's thesis that there is only one virtue, benevolence, and that he wants to do it without bringing in a new explanation (that is, new original moral sentiments) for each new virtue. As he says:

It may now be ask'd in general, concerning this pain or pleasure, that distinguishes moral good and evil, *From what principles is it derived, and whence does it arise in the human mind?* To this I reply, first, that 'tis absurd to imagine, that in every particular instance, these sentiments are produc'd by an original quality and primary constitution. For as

the number of our duties is, in a manner, infinite, 'tis impossible that our original instincts should extend to each of them. (T 473)

To explain the multiplicity of virtues naturalistically, Hume must argue that whatever is phenomenologically distinct about the different moral feelings derives from differences in their objects and circumstances. In the same way, to fulfill his naturalistic aim of explaining why we have moral sentiments in general, Hume needs to argue that *everything* that is phenomenologically distinct about moral feelings, everything that distinguishes moral approval from ordinary love, can be derived from the special circumstances in which it is felt.

In general, I think this throws doubt on the helpfulness of Hume's comparison of virtue to a secondary quality. Although color is (in a sense) produced by the perspective of creatures with a certain kind of vision, the differences between colors are not so produced, or not entirely so. They are based on something in the object. But if I am right, this is not true in the case of moral judgment. The felt differences between personal love, sympathy-based love, and moral approval (i.e., sympathy-based love regulated by the general point of view) result entirely from the perspective from which we view a person, not from anything in the person himself. If we take it that the distinctive calmness of moral approval is the result of the fact that the sentiment is produced from the general point of view, rather than from the special character of its object, then we must say that the general point of view *gives rise* to the distinction between ordinary love for a person and moral approval of him. And, accordingly, it gives rise to the difference in the "objects" of these two sentiments. Moral character would not exist if the general point of view did not. Since moral approval is a species of love, its object is simply a person. Blue is, or is based on, a special object of vision—certain surface properties of objects in the world. But virtue is not a special object of love. It is the object of a special love.

And so we are brought back once more to the original problem. If the idea of virtue arises from the general point of view, Hume must identify something that pressures us to occupy the general point of view. And that something cannot appeal, explicitly or implicitly, to the idea of virtue: that is, to the idea that there must be a normative standard for love. But Hume's own account of why we take up the general point of view seems implicitly to do this. There is no contradiction between my loving and your not loving the same person—unless we suppose that our loves ought to correspond. The fact that our loves are sometimes sympathy-based rather than based on our personal interests provides no special reason for us to expect them to correspond, for by Hume's own admission sympathy is in itself as variable as interest. So why should we suppose that our loves ought to correspond, unless we are already supposing that there is some normative standard governing our loves—a standard of virtue? There is no sense in saying that we take up the moral point of view in

order to get its object more clearly into view, if that object has no existence prior to the adoption of the moral point of view. As for the needs of conversation, what exactly is it that we need to talk about, if it is not the person's virtues? The world has moral properties only when we view it from the general point of view. We do not, therefore, originally take up the general point of view in order to focus on, clarify, or come to an agreement about moral properties. Why then do we take it up?

Part III. A Proposed Solution

III.1. *Why We Need A Shared Point of View*

In this part of the paper I propose an answer to the question why we take up the general point of view, and why we take the judgments we make from the general point of view to be normative. This answer is not given in Hume's texts—his answer is the one I examined and found wanting above—but it is given in the terms of his theory, and I believe makes better sense of that theory than the one he explicitly gives.²¹ The answer comes in three parts. In this section, I explain why we need *a* shared point of view for judging character, that is, why we need to come to some sort of agreement about what makes a character lovable.²² In the next three sections, I will show how we are led to take up *the* general point of view, the point of view that consists of sympathizing with the person's narrow circle and judging according to general rules. In the penultimate section, I will turn to the question why judgments made from the general point of view are normative for love.

As we have seen, we need to identify some pressure to take up the general point of view that does not depend on the prior idea that there is such a thing as moral virtue, or, to put the same point another way, that does not depend on assuming in advance that there must be a normative standard for love. I believe that the pressure to take up *a* shared point of view can be explained on the basis of Hume's theory of sympathy. Hume sees sympathy as a mechanism whereby human beings (and other animals) tend to "catch" one another's sentiments. He models his account of the sympathy mechanism on his account of the mechanism that produces causal inference, so I will begin by reviewing that account here.

According to Hume, when two ideas are associated with each other, the mind moves naturally from one to the other. Such associations are produced by resemblance, contiguity in space and time, and causality, which in turn depends on custom or habit (T 11; T 97). If in your experience smoke has always been accompanied by fire, your mind will move naturally from the *idea* of smoke to the *idea* of fire. Now in Hume's theory, sense impressions, beliefs, and mere ideas differ simply in the degree of their force and vivacity. Suppose you have a *sense impression* rather than a mere idea of smoke—you see or smell smoke, for instance. In this case, some of the force and vivacity that distin-

guishes your sense impression of smoke from a mere idea of smoke is transmitted by the associative connection, and imparted to the associated idea of fire (T 98 ff.). So you not only think of fire, but have a lively and vivacious idea of it, which according to Hume amounts to believing that (somewhere in the vicinity of the smoke) there is fire. This is why when we see smoke we always believe that there is fire, and come to think there is a causal connection between them.

Sympathy in a similar way depends on the transmission of force and vivacity by associative connections. When I am exposed to your sentiments, whether by your words, your expressions, or whatever, I first form an idea of them. But you and I, or any two human beings, bear the important associative relation of resemblance—in particular, we are susceptible to the same basic range of sentiments (T 318). Hume also supposes that “the idea, or rather impression of ourselves is always intimately present with us, and . . . our own consciousness gives us so lively a conception of our own person, that ’tis not possible to imagine, that any thing can in this particular go beyond it” (T 317). Although the details of the process are a little obscure, Hume thinks that this liveliness is transmitted by resemblance to my ideas of the passions and sentiments of others. To have an enlivened idea of a passion amounts to having a faint version of that passion itself. So by this mechanism, I come to feel your cheerfulness, your sorrow, your resentment, and your love.²³ Furthermore, since according to Hume beliefs and judgments themselves are a species of sentiment, sympathy also causes us to “catch” one another’s opinions and views.

As we have already seen, Hume emphasizes one role which sympathy plays in the formation of moral judgments. If someone hurts you, I experience your pain sympathetically, and this causes me to hate the person who hurt you. This kind of sympathy-based hate, when regulated by the general point of view, is moral disapproval itself. But sympathy plays another role in the formation of moral judgments, which Hume fails to emphasize: It follows from Hume’s theory that any perceived difference in people’s sentiments about an object will cause commotion and a sense of contradiction within the soul. As Hume himself explains:

Proud men are most shock’d with contempt, tho’ they do not most readily assent to it; but ’tis because of the opposition betwixt the passion, which is natural to them, and that receiv’d by sympathy. A violent lover in like manner is very much displeas’d when you blame and condemn his love; tho’ ’tis evident your opposition can have no influence, *but by the hold it takes of himself, and by his sympathy with you.* (T 324; my emphasis)

When exposed to the vivid presentation of sentiments contrary to your own, you “catch” these sentiments, which then come into conflict with yours. Now

we have something more like a contradiction, for now the two sentiments are both active *in you*. This, Hume thinks, and with some plausibility, explains the peculiar irritability that is produced in us when people express sentiments contrary to our own on matters about which we feel strongly. Just hearing someone say something you disagree with can set you amassing and rehearsing the arguments against it, even in the privacy of your own mind. Why should that be, unless the very expression of the unwanted opinion somehow pressures us towards entertaining and accepting it?²⁴

If Hume is right, there is pressure on those who must endure one other's company to agree about *everything*. When you really like something—a movie, a popular book, a food—even things thought to be “matters of taste”—you urge your friends to try it. If they don't like it, this sets up a tension. Suppose that some exotic new flavor of ice cream is invented, and you think it is delicious. You bring a friend to the ice cream parlor to try it, and she thinks it is revolting. This would be, for most people, slightly embarrassing, and that for both parties. Any difference of sentiment, however trivial, sets up a conflict or a tiny movement of estrangement that human beings find it difficult to endure. So on Hume's account, the problem is not really to see why the lovable is not just a matter of taste like the flavors of ice cream. The problem is to see how we can possibly treat even the flavors of ice cream as a mere matter of taste.

In exactly this way, the force of sympathy pressures us to come to an agreement about the lovableness of people. So the second role sympathy plays in the production of moral judgment is that it is the source of the pressure to take up a shared point of view. Given the way sympathy works, it doesn't matter that my loving and your hating the same person is not logically speaking a contradiction or a disagreement. If I love where you hate, and we talk about it, I will receive your hate from the contagion of sympathy, and my both loving and hating, all at once, sets up an opposition within *my* soul. Furthermore, love is a pleasant sensation, naturally inclining me to benevolence towards its object; hate is a painful one, naturally inclining me to anger. So my ambivalent attitude will be accompanied by contrary motivations, and together these sentiments will cause a commotion within me that must be quieted. And of course the same is going to happen to you. There will be pressure on us, therefore, if we talk to each other about people, to come to share the same sentiments about them.

III.2. *How We Come to Take Up the General Point of View:*

A Preliminary Account

It would be characteristic of Hume to suppose that we learn to take up the general point of view gradually and as the result of natural processes, rather than deliberately and all at once. I think he has something like this in mind: If sym-

pathy pressures us to agree about people, it will also pressure us to move toward a shared standard that will make it possible for us to agree. Uncomfortable with our differences, I will try to see the person through your eyes and you will try to see him through mine. Enough of the resulting adjustments will lead to the formation of the general point of view. I express antipathy for the enemy general who has captured me, perhaps castigating him as ferocious. The soldier guarding me, finding this grating, reminds me of the inspiration and other benefits he and his fellow soldiers gather from the very attribute I have just criticized. Sympathy with members of the general's narrow circle presses me in the direction of admiring the attribute in question and so of admitting "courage" as a virtue, regardless of its effect on my own interests. Since it is the members of his narrow circle who are most likely to have sentiments about what a person does, it is from their point of view that such pressures and the attendant adjustments will most often be generated. Within the narrow circle, general rules will then produce pressures and adjustments of another sort. Today my father's prudence thwarts my desire, but how often have I been its beneficiary! Adjustments of these kinds become habitual whenever two people whose interests are at odds talk about some third person, or whenever I think about someone who affects me in different ways at different times. And so we acquire the habit of looking at people from the general point of view.²⁵

The story is not implausible, but it is incomplete. Why is my response in these cases a *personal* one—in Strawson's terms, a reactive attitude, in Hume's own terms, an indirect passion—at all?²⁶ Why do I respond to the person as such, rather than merely liking or disliking his action? Why not hate the sin but leave the sinner alone? And why does my reaction to the person focus on his *dispositions*, his ferocity or courage or prudence? In order to get a satisfactory account of this aspect of Hume's view, we must turn once again to Hume's theory of love.

III.3. Character and the Object of Love

Recall that according to Hume, the object of love, hate, pride, or humility, is a person. This is an original feature of these passions. Early in the section on pride and humility, Hume tells us:

'Tis evident, that pride and humility, tho' directly contrary, have yet the same OBJECT. This object is self, or that succession of related ideas and impressions, of which we have an intimate memory and consciousness. (T 277)

And the "other" that is the object of love or hate is another such self, or, as Hume says:

As the immediate object of pride and humility is self or that identical person, of whose thoughts, actions, and sensations we are intimately conscious; so the object of love and hatred is some other person, of whose thoughts, actions, and sensations we are not conscious. (T 327)

The self referred to here seems to be the bundle of successive perceptions (“succession of related ideas and impressions”) that Hume discusses in his famous section on personal identity (T 251–263). Yet in that discussion, Hume distinguishes between “personal identity, as it regards our thought or imagination, and as it regards our passions or the concern we take in ourselves” (T 253). This seems to suggest that the notion of the person as the object of pride or love is not the same as the notion of the person as a bundle of successive perceptions. And indeed we might wonder how another person can be the object of love, if the personhood of the other person is something of which we are essentially “not conscious” (T 327, quoted above). How do I attach the causes of my love (actions, beauty, money) to their objects (other selves) if those objects are inaccessible bundles of perceptions?

Hume suggests an answer in a passage in which he discusses the conditions under which we love or hate someone for his actions. He starts by asserting that we love and hate others for those qualities that are “constant and inherent in his person and character” (T 348). He continues:

But if the uneasiness proceed not from a quality, but from an action, which is produc'd and annihilated in a moment, 'tis necessary, in order to produce some relation, and connect this action sufficiently with the person, that it be deriv'd from a particular forethought and design. 'Tis not enough, that the action arises from the person, and have him for its immediate cause and author. This relation alone is too feeble and inconstant to be a foundation for these passions [love and hate]. It reaches not the sensible and thinking part, and neither proceeds from any thing *durable* in him, nor leaves anything behind it; but passes in a moment, as if it had never been. On the other hand, an intention shews certain qualities, which remaining after the action is perform'd, connect it with the person, and facilitate the transition of ideas from one to the other. (T 349)

That passage is the predecessor and exact parallel to another that occurs in the section on the liberty of the will. Here Hume is concerned to explain why the doctrine of necessity is essential for holding people responsible. We can hold people responsible for their actions only if we regard the people themselves as the causes of their actions; and we can do that only if we regard their actions as caused by their characters. Hume says:

Actions are by their very nature temporary and perishing; and where they proceed not from some cause in the characters and disposition of the person, who perform'd them, they infix not themselves upon him, and can neither rebound to his honour, if good, nor infamy, if evil. The action itself may be blameable; it may be contrary to all the rules of morality and religion: But the person is not responsible for it; and as it proceeded from nothing in him, that is durable or constant, and leaves nothing of that nature behind it, 'tis impossible he can, upon its account, become the object of punishment or vengeance. (T 411)

Indeed, since as we have seen moral approval and disapproval are just calm and impersonal forms of love and hate, these two passages say exactly the same thing: we can love or hate a person for an action only if we can see it as proceeding from his character.

The problem Hume is addressing here is a familiar one. The idea essential to holding a person responsible for an action or loving him for it is that *he* should be its cause. But why should we regard him as the cause in any special way if he is just one of the places through which the causal chain leading to this action or event has passed? If I push you from behind, as a result of having been pushed from behind myself, you will cease to blame me as soon as you understand that that is what happened. But if I push you from behind, as a result of having been angered by the things I overheard you say, you will blame me. In each case, the causal chain passes through me, so what is the difference? Hume is perfectly well aware of this familiar puzzle, since he himself deploys it elsewhere to suggest slyly that God must be responsible for all of our wrongdoing (EHU 99–103). Here, however, Hume seems to suppose that you may be regarded as *the* cause of your action, provided that the causal chain goes through your character. He seems here to gesture toward a conception of what we might now call agent-causation, and it is worth noting the comparison with Kant, who also thinks we must be the causes of our actions and their consequences in order to be held responsible for them. For Kant, agent-causation is achieved when the person is the first cause, the initiator of the causal chain. For Hume, agent-causation seems to be achieved when the person's character serves as a kind of filter in the causal chain, making the outcome turn out one way rather than another.

The lesson we should draw from these remarks is not that actions are a special case—that unlike the other grounds of love, they cannot function as grounds unless we can trace them to a person's character. Rather, the important point here turns on the fact that nothing counts as an *action*, that is, as the sort of movement that can be the ground of love or praise, *unless* a person is its cause.²⁷ And if the person is the cause of the movement/action only if the movement/action can be traced to his character, then the person is, essential-

ly, his character. Or at least we may regard someone as the author of actions and so as a person only insofar as we regard him as having a character.²⁸ This provides Hume's answer to the questions I raised at the end of the last section: it explains why our response to an action must also be a response to the person, and also why the response to the person must be a response to his dispositions.

I do not mean to suggest that Hume mischaracterizes his own theory when he says that the object of love or pride is a "succession of related ideas and impressions" (T 277, quoted above), or a bundle of "thoughts, actions, and sensations" (T 327, quoted above). That is, I am not claiming that the character *rather than* the conscious self is the object of love or pride. Instead, I mean to spell out the implication of Hume's own assertion that an action "reaches not the sensible and thinking part" of a person unless we can trace it to his character. The implication is that the person's character is the outward appearance or manifestation of his sensible or thinking part. In fact, this interpretation suggests a way Hume might deal with another problem in his account to which he does not pay sufficient attention. Even in the case of the ideas and impressions that succeed one another in *my own* mind, and of which I am introspectively aware, I need some way to distinguish those that are merely caused by the associative process from those that are thoughts that I actively think—ideas of which I am the active cause, the thinker, the author. It is to these that we must trace actions if we are to hold a person responsible for them, and find in them grounds for love or pride. On a Humean account of mental activity that mirrors his account of outward actions, the thoughts I think, as opposed to the ones I merely undergo, will be attributable to me only insofar as they can be identified as the products of my intellectual "character," the regular patterns in the way my own mind works. So the proposal I am making here is meant to bridge Hume's two notions of personal identity, at least if we suppose that by "personal identity . . . as it regards our passions or the concern we take in ourselves" (T 253), Hume means character. The conscious self that is the author of a person's own thoughts and actions and so would seem to be the proper object of pride or love, cannot be identified, even by the person herself, independently of her character. To think of someone as a person we must think of her as having a character.²⁹

To love someone, then, we must see her as a person. And to see her as a person is to see her as the cause of her thoughts and actions, and, more generally—as I will argue in the next section—as the cause of happiness and misery to herself and others. To regard someone as the cause of certain effects, as opposed to regarding her as a place through which the causal chain leading to those effects happens to run, we must regard her as having a character. Since the object of love or of moral approval is a person, and to see someone as a person is to see her as having a character, love and moral approval focus our attention on the person's character. With this idea in hand, we can explain

both why we must assess people from the general point of view, and why the general point of view provides us with a normative standard for love.

III.4. *Character and the General Point of View*

As we have just seen, Hume supposes that we cannot view a person as the cause of her actions unless we view her as having a character. I have not yet said, however, exactly why Hume thinks this is so. The answer to this question is the key to the importance of the general point of view.

I have already described Hume's theory of causal inference. As the description makes clear, and as is well known, Hume thinks that we cannot make a causal inference without regular observation of the connection between two kinds of events. It is only if smoke is *regularly* accompanied by fire that the customary association between these two ideas is set up, which eventually enables us to make the judgment that smoke and fire are causally connected. Furthermore, Hume argues that the necessary connection between these two events does not exist, or rather is not known to exist, "out there" in the world. Instead, causal connection consists simply in this: that when you perceive smoke, you always believe there is fire. Causal connection exists in the eye of the beholder.

Now this means that no one can form an idea of you as a cause—that is, as having certain characteristic dispositions—without *regular* observation of what you do. Your character is a form of causality, but causality is in the eye of the beholder. You are a cause when others infer your future conduct from your past conduct. But only certain people observe you with sufficient regularity to see you as the cause of anything. These people are *the members of your narrow circle*. Therefore your character is something that exists in the eyes of your narrow circle. It is something that is constructed from their point of view. This means that to see you as having a character is *essentially* to take up the point of view of your narrow circle towards you.³⁰

To support this, I want to draw attention to something strange Hume says in both of the texts I quoted earlier, in which Hume argues that we cannot connect an action to a person unless it springs from his character. In the passage about love, Hume complains that an uncharacteristic action "neither proceeds from anything durable in him, *nor leaves any thing behind it*" (T 349; my emphasis). In the passage about necessity, Hume says that an uncharacteristic action "proceeded from nothing in him that is durable or constant, and *leaves nothing of that nature behind it*" (T 411; my emphasis). He also says the action fails to *infix* itself upon the person. Now what is meant by saying that an action "leaves something behind it"? The answer is that if it is a characteristic action it forms part of the pattern of constant conjunction that will eventually lead the members of your narrow circle to expect certain sorts of actions from you. What it leaves behind is a sort of trace in the minds of your narrow

circle, a contribution to their tendency to make certain inferences about you. Hume confirms this at the end of the passage on love when he says:

On the other hand, an intention shows certain qualities, which remaining after the action is perform'd, connect it with the person, *and facilitate the transition of ideas from one to another.* (T 349; my emphasis)

In that sense, the action leaves behind a trace that forms a part of your character.

This conclusion may be reinforced, I think, by some reflections about the general nature of the virtues as Hume sees them. Consider this list of Humean virtues: justice, benevolence, courage, prudence, magnanimity, cheerfulness. Of what genus are these species? Certainly, they generally bear on our actions, and are displayed in them, but in a wide variety of ways. Some of them, like benevolence, motivate us directly to actions: benevolent people regularly do kind or helpful actions. Others, like justice, motivate us to a general policy of cooperation with the social system rather than to certain particular actions. Courage is not directly a motive at all, but rather is what is sometimes called an "executive" virtue. But "courageous" also characterizes the way a person reacts to things—to sudden alarms or bad news, say. I suppose magnanimity can motivate you to heroic actions, but it seems to be more a matter of personal style. Cheerfulness has little to do with action, although it does show up in one's outward demeanor. In short, the character traits that we call virtues and vices don't have a single common structure. Certainly, they are not all motives, as Hume sometimes misleadingly suggests.³¹

What they do have in common is this. They are dispositions that we pick out as such only because of their regular connection to the happiness and misery of people; they are the kinds of things a person's narrow circle would be apt to find salient or important about him. We do not first discover that there is such an attribute or disposition as, say, courage, and then on further observation discover that on the whole its effects are useful or pleasant. Instead, we pick out courage as a disposition by noticing a certain regular way of being useful or pleasant. We might say that character traits are essentially normative dispositions, not natural dispositions about which we make normative judgments. A person has a character exactly insofar as she is the cause of happiness and misery to herself and her regular associates, that is, to her narrow circle.³² Character is a normative notion all the way down.

We can now see why the general point of view is essential. To view someone through the eyes of love or hate is to respond to him as a person. To respond to him as a person is to view him as having a character. To view him as having a character is to view him as a cause, that is, a regular source, of happiness and misery to himself and others. And to view him as such a cause is to

view him through the eyes of his narrow circle, that is, from the general point of view. A person's character, his personhood, is constructed from the general point of view. Thus the pressure to take up the general point of view is built into the original connection between love and its object, a person.

III.5. Why the Love of Character Is Normative for Love

We are now in a position to explain why moral approval, or love regulated by the general point of view, is—or seems to us to be—normative for love in general. I begin with a preliminary point. Recall that according to Hume's account of love, you *can* love a person for anything pleasant with which you can associate him (T 331–332). You can love a person for his wealth, his fine clothes, his cheerful disposition, or his virtues. You can even love him because his crimes redound to your benefit. In all of these cases, Hume insists that the person is the *object* of love, while the *cause* of love varies. But moral approval, the standard of virtue, is love grounded in a person's character. So the normativity of moral approval carries with it the thought that we *ought* to love people for their characters. And according to Hume, a person as such *is* his character. (Or to put it more accurately, we can only see someone as a person by viewing him as having a character—but I will not continue to add this qualification.) So the normativity of moral approval is naturally connected to a commonplace thought that Hume's separation of cause and object makes it hard even to formulate, namely, that we ought to love people for *themselves*.

Let me say something about the difficulty I just referred to. As we saw, Hume argues that the causes of pride, humility, love, and hate must be different from their objects, because if you could love a person just because he is himself, and also hate him just because he is himself, you would always do both at once. So it must be because of something *about* the person that you love or hate him. This argument seems to force Hume to treat both a person's virtues and, say, his good looks, or even his wealth, as "something about the person" and to that extent as on a footing. And this in turn makes it difficult for Hume even to formulate the colloquial distinction between loving someone for himself and loving him for an incidental reason.

But if moral love is the love of character, and character is the person himself, then moral approval is the one form of love in which cause and object come together, and we can say that you love the person for himself. As we have also seen, Hume suggests that this form of love is normative for love in general—that we feel that we ought to "regulate [our] love and hatred" (T 603) by the standard of virtue that moral approval provides. Our question is why moral approval seems to be normative for love in this way.

To see why, recall Hume's somewhat surprising theory of what it means for a passion to have an object. The object of a passion is an idea on which the mind becomes fixed when one is in the grip of the passion. This means, by

Hume's own account, that the sentiment of love focuses our attention on the *person*. If we take this to mean focusing our attention on the person *as such*, and if the person as such is his character, then Hume's view should be that love itself, by the very nature of the passion, tends to focus our attention on a person's character.

With that in mind, we can reconstruct Hume's view as follows. The object of love is a person, and as we have seen, that means that when you feel love for a person, your mind fixes its attention on the person herself. You focus your attention on *her*. Since a person is essentially a being with a certain character, love makes you think of her character. Once you think of her character, it is bound to strike you as pleasant or painful, depending on whether the person is in general a cause of happiness or misery to the members of her narrow circle, because of your sympathy with them. And that pleasure or pain will then inspire you with love or hate—a new love or hate, so to speak, in addition to the one that drew your attention to her personhood or character in the first place. Since love focuses your attention on her character, there is pressure *built into the nature of love itself* to take character for at least one of its causes or grounds as well as for its object. There is pressure, that is to say, to love the person for herself. But if I hate someone for her character, while loving her, say, because her crimes redound to my benefit, there is going to be a conflict, and an instability, in my own attitude. For my love draws my attention to her character, and if I hate her whenever I think of her character, that is, whenever I think of her *as a person*, then it is hard to see how my attitude toward her can continue to *be* love.

This doesn't mean that character is the only proper ground of love. We do not need to foist on Hume the view that we love people (or even should love people) only because they are good. Beauty, for instance, might be what draws your attention to someone in the first place, and might remain a considerable part of the cause of the pleasure that you take in her. But if what you feel for her is love, not mere aesthetic appreciation, then the love will turn your mind to her personhood, her character. If her character is loveable, then what you are loving is *a beautiful person*. Better still—although here we get beyond Hume's text—you might come to see her beauty as an expression or emanation of her character—her smile as gracious, her expression as gentle, and so on.⁴⁵

But if you do not come to take some pleasure in her character too, if you are indifferent to it or have a distaste for it, your attitude cannot remain, in any stable way, the passion of love, for that passion constantly draws your attention to her character, and makes you think about and respond to her character. You might of course retreat to a merely aesthetic appreciation of her as a beautiful object, but then your attitude is no longer love. The love of a bad person is not therefore impossible, but someone who loves a bad person will be driven to try to find, and to cling to, traces of goodness or greatness in her character. For a parallel reason, there will be an instability in hate grounded in

an incidental attribute, where its object has a good character, or is not known to have a bad one. To quote Hume again, but with a slightly different reading:

It seldom happens, that we do not think an enemy vicious, and can distinguish betwixt his opposition to our interest and real villainy or baseness. But this hinders not, but that the sentiments are, in themselves, distinct; and a man of temper and judgment may preserve himself from these illusions. (T 472)

On the present interpretation, we make this kind of error not merely because the sentiments of approval and disapproval resemble those of personal love and hate, but because approval and disapproval are normative standards that arise from the very nature of love and hate. Love needs to idealize its object, and hate either to vilify or depersonalize it.

It is one of the merits of this account that the normative standard that results is an internal or constitutive standard for love or hate.³⁴ An internal standard is one that arises from the nature of the object to which it applies, rather than being imposed upon it from the outside. The advantage of internal standards is that their normative force is unquestionable. If I say, "Bake a cake, and make it taste good," and you ask why you should make it taste good, we will think you don't know what baking cakes is all about. But if I say, "Bake a cake, and make it ten feet high," and you ask why you should make it ten feet high, your question seems perfectly in order. External standards give rise to further questions, and leave room for skeptical doubt. But we do not need to know why cakes should taste good, knives should be sharp, or works of philosophy should be illuminating. Of course, not every cake does taste good, not every knife is sharp, and not every work of philosophy is illuminating. But it is the very nature of such objects to aspire to meet these standards. And in the same way, we might say that on Hume's account, love by its very nature aspires to be the love of character, to find its ground in the person himself.

Although this is a strong conclusion, the examples given above make it clear that we are not driven to the even stronger conclusion that a love grounded in something other than character is not really love at all. Or rather, the sense in which we might say that such a love is "unreal" is a special sense. Certainly, we do sometimes say that someone who loves another only for his beauty or his rank or his money "does not really" love him. In other moods, however, we might be inclined to describe the same situation not by denying the reality of the love, but rather by asserting that there is something inherently defective about it. Hume's theory can accommodate both of these thoughts, for there is a class of objects for which the "inherently defective" and the "not real" tend to coincide. And these are precisely those objects that are subject to an internal standard, objects that have a norm built into their nature. Take, for instance, "reason" or "art." We can, and do, equivalently say,

“That’s a terrible reason” and “That’s no reason at all,” or, again, “That’s bad art” and “That’s not art.” It is in just this way that we waver between “That’s not really love” and “That’s a poor sort of love” when someone fails to love another for herself. “Poor” and “unreal” coincide in this case, because love, like reason and art, has a norm built into it. So when we say that on Hume’s account you should love a person for his virtues, because this is what it means to love him for himself, we are not talking about some moral standard applied to love from on high. Rather, the idea is that love itself aspires to respond to people as moral beings.

III. 6. Conclusion

We are now in a position to answer the question from which we began. Why do we take up the general point of view when we think about and respond to people? The answer has two parts. First, the pressure to take up some shared point of view, and form a common standard for judging people, comes from sympathy between those who respond to, and assess, a person. Sympathy ensures that any difference of sentiment about a person is internalized by those who perceive that difference, and the resulting internal commotion and ambivalence lead us to seek a point of view from which we can form a shared standard. Second, the particular features of the point of view we arrive at—the fact that we judge from the standpoint of the narrow circle, and in accordance with general rules—arise from the fact our responses to people are indirect passions or reactive attitudes, responses of love and hate. Love and hate focus our attention on their proper object—a person, considered as such, therefore considered as having a character. To have a character is to be the cause of your actions, and more generally of happiness and misery, to yourself and those around you. And given Hume’s theory of causation, your character quite literally exists in the eyes of your narrow circle. This means that love and hate pressure us to view a person through the eyes of her narrow circle. When we view someone through the eyes of her narrow circle, sympathy is again operative, causing us to love or hate the person in sympathy with them. The resulting calm passions are moral approval and disapproval. Although calmer than ordinary love, moral approval exerts a normative pressure on our ordinary loves, for any form of love turns our attention to the person’s character, and to approve of a person’s character is to love her for herself.

We take up the general point of view because that is the point of view from which others appear to us *as persons*. If love and sympathy did not impel us to view the world from the general point of view, our fellow human beings would just be so many useful or dangerous objects to us. According to Hume, it is only when we view the world from the general point of view that the moral world—the world composed of *people* who have *characters* and perform *actions*—comes into focus.

NOTES

In writing this paper, I have benefited from working through Rachel Cohon's "The Common Point of View in Hume's Ethics," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 57 (1997): 827–850, which presents different answers to some of the same questions. I am grateful to audiences at the University of Kentucky, the University of Michigan, New York University, and Tufts University for responses to an earlier version of this paper. Jay Schleusener and James Chandler commented on a still earlier version, and I thank them especially for discussions of the concept of character in the eighteenth century. Charlotte Brown and Arthur Kuflik read and commented helpfully on various drafts, and I am obligated to them as well as to Harry Frankfurt for interesting discussions of love and its relationship to morality.

1. References to Hume's works will be inserted into the text, using a letter or acronym for the titles followed by the page number, as follows:

T = *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge, 2nd ed. revised by P. H. Nidditch (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978).

EHU = *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, in *Enquiries Concerning Human Understanding and Concerning the Principles of Morals*, ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge, 3rd ed. revised by P. H. Nidditch (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975).

EPM = *Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*, in *David Hume: Enquiries Concerning Human Understanding and Concerning the Principles of Morals*, ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge, 3rd ed. revised by P. H. Nidditch (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975).

OST = "Of the Standard of Taste," in *David Hume: Essays Moral, Political and Literary*, ed. Eugene F. Miller (Indianapolis: Liberty Classics, 1985).

2. I argue that Hume does provide an answer to what I have here called "the fully normative question" in *The Sources of Normativity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), Lecture II, sects. 2.2.1–2.2.7, pp. 51–66.

3. The second proposal is more sophisticated because it at least partly recognizes that on Hume's view, virtue and vice depend on moral judgment rather than existing prior to it.

4. For Aristotle's remarks on the ontology of love and friendship, see esp. *Nicomachean Ethics* VIII.1 1155a3, VIII.2 1155b27–1156a1, VIII.5 1157b25–1158a1, IX.5 1166b30–1167a1. In the first of these passages, Aristotle declares friendship to be a virtue; but in the latter ones, he suggests that it also essentially involves relationship. Kant's main discussions are found in *The Metaphysical Principles of Virtue*, sects. 46–47, pp. 469–473 in the standard Prussian Academy pagination; and in the *Lectures on Ethics*, pp. 162–171 and pp. 200–209 in the translation by Louis Infield (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1980). I discuss their views in "Creating the Kingdom of Ends: Reciprocity and Responsibility in Personal Relations" in my *Creating the Kingdom of Ends* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

5. Arthur Kuflik suggested the term "grounds" to me in a helpful discussion of this point.

6. Harry Frankfurt has suggested to me that if you love somebody *for* something, then your love is conditional: you will cease to love him if he loses that attribute.

We agree that this does not apply to loving someone “for himself.” But that leaves open the question whether any attempt to specify or identify the essence of the “self” for which you love someone renders the love conditional. Frankfurt thinks that it does; so he thinks that what I am here calling the grounds of love should be understood as mere causes. According to Frankfurt, you might be *drawn to* someone because he has certain virtues, for example, but once you love him you will do so even if he ceases to have those virtues. So you don’t love him *for* his virtues. In the text, I claim that Hume’s idea of a cause is an attempt to capture the idea of a ground; Frankfurt, going the other way, would say that what I am calling a ground can only operate as a cause.

7. The fact that love has grounds suggests that it is neither a mere feeling (which might only have a cause) nor of course an action (which might be done for a reason), but something more like a reaction to a perception. As I mention in the text, you do not decide to love someone because he is kind and supportive, but neither do these attributes simply cause love in you in a mechanical way; rather, your love is a response to your awareness of him *as* kind and supportive. Thus there is something correct in Hume’s account of the passions as “secondary impressions” (that is, impressions that are responses to other impressions). We might say that the passion of love is an intelligent, although not quite a rational, response; love can occur only in an intelligent creature that has some cognition of its world.

8. The nearest thing to the *because* of love, at least in cases where the love is made intelligible by the *because*, seems to be the *because* of psychoanalysis—for instance, when we explain a “Freudian slip.” In this case, too, the ground makes the slip intelligible, as if the slip were a rational action, but the ground seems to operate not as a reason but rather as a cause, since the slip is not deliberate. Unfortunately, love and hate themselves are so often offered as the grounds of Freudian slips that this comparison is not very helpful in throwing light on the nature of this sort of *because*.

9. Hume treats love and hate as if they were opposites, and on a footing. I think this is wrong, for reasons that emerge most clearly in connection with the issue of “grounds.” Although love sometimes has grounds, and grounds are like justifications in the sense that they make love intelligible, yet there is a sense in which love does not seem to need a justification. Of course, we might try to dissuade someone from the love of an unworthy object. But consider how odd it would be to say: “You have no excuse for loving him!” Whereas it does not seem odd at all to say that someone has no excuse for hating someone. And some might think that when hate does have a justification, or even when it has (good?) grounds, that makes it something else instead—resentment or indignation, say. These ideas may even be thought to lend support to those religious and moral traditions that hold that love is or ought to be the default position, so to speak, in our attitude toward others, whereas hate requires some special reason. But I do not mean here to put forward any developed views; rather, I mean to bring out the obscurity of the topic, and some reasons for doubting the symmetry of love and hate. For purposes of this paper, however, I will not quarrel with Hume’s treatment of love and hate as simple opposites.

10. In the opening passages of *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*, Hume characterizes the moral skeptic (someone who denies the reality of moral distinctions) as committed to the view that “all characters and actions [are] alike entitled to the affection and regard of everyone” (EPM 169–170).

11. See Francis Hutcheson, *An Inquiry Concerning Moral Good and Evil*, 261–270; and *An Essay on the Nature and Conduct of the Passions and Affections*, 301–302. The page citations here refer to the selections from Hutcheson's works in D. D. Raphael's *British Moralists 1650–1800* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1991), vol. II.

12. A scenario: someone sighting Marilyn Monroe a couple of blocks away says, "Now there is a beautiful woman," and his interlocutor replies "You think so? She just looks like a blob on the horizon to me."

13. But see sect. III.1.

14. Wittgenstein discusses the possibility of such alternative ways of fixing terms in *Philosophical Investigations* (trans. G. E. M. Anscombe. New York: Macmillan, 1971), § 64, p. 31e.

15. It is open to question whether this is the sort of case Hume had in mind when he talked about making these corrections for all of the senses. In "The Common Point of View in Hume's Ethics," Rachel Cohon reads Hume as having in mind the use of a shared point of view to correct for the effects of distance, thus bringing the case of sensory judgments closer to the case of aesthetic judgments. The idea is that when we see something far away we avoid concluding that it is small by taking up a fixed point of view. The difficulty with reading Hume that way, however, is that the normative standard for judging size is based on simple correctness—judgments of relative size are factual—so that comparison is less appropriate to the moral case than the one I discuss in the text.

16. Actually I think that Hume's account gives rise to a problem about the normativity of aesthetic judgement as well. On Hume's view, questions of taste are settled by critics, who are distinguished among other things by their refined sensibilities. But Hume does not make it clear why the rest of us, who lack refined sensibilities, should like or try to like the things that those who have such sensibilities do.

17. Readers who are discouraged by the length of this paper will be glad to know that those who are not tempted by the defense of Hume I criticize in this section may skip it without losing anything essential to the main argument.

18. Hume's account involves two distinctively moral sentiments—a pleasure we take in the character of the person to whom the virtue is attributed, and a love that is grounded in that pleasure. There is a certain unclarity in the text about which of these two things Hume has in mind when he talks about "moral approval." I don't think it matters very much, but I think he is best read as equating moral approval with the love that arises from the pleasure, as suggested by his own remark that approval and disapproval are fainter and more imperceptible forms of love and hate (T 614). Approval takes a person as its object, which suggests that it is a form of love; pleasure as Hume understands it has only a cause, not an object.

19. See, for example, the account of how pride is originally connected to the idea of self at T 287.

20. Hume himself stresses that the role of reason in moral judgment is to "pave the way" for approval or disapproval by giving "a proper discernment of its object" at EPM 173.

21. This is primarily an interpretive paper, but the interpretation I give is a constructive one. The view I assign to Hume is not his own expressed view. Neither is

it my own view, since I do not accept Hume's account of moral judgment. It is, rather, a reconstruction that aspires to use the resources of Hume's own philosophy to answer questions I believe he deals with unsuccessfully in the text of the *Treatise*. Audiences who heard an earlier version of this paper sometimes expressed puzzlement about my own stance and the methodology it involves. Why reconstruct a view so that it makes better sense, if you cannot thereby make it into something you think correct? The answer is twofold. First, I am interested in seeing to what extent Hume's theory may be successfully reconstructed in its own terms, and in particular how much ethical work can be done from the essentially third-personal stance he assumes. See nn. 30 and 32 for more on this point. Second, I think that there is something right about several aspects of Hume's theory as I construct it here, in particular about the complex relation between loving someone and thinking him good or virtuous, which, as I will explain in sect. III.5, I take it to imply.

22. I am using the phrase "shared point of view" to describe the species of which "the general point of view" is a member.

23. I can also feel these sentiments sympathetically when you don't feel them or when I have no direct evidence that you feel them but when I suppose they would be appropriate given your circumstances. The important thing is that the idea of your having the sentiment should arise in my mind as a result of my observing or thinking about you and your circumstances.

24. While I think that the phenomenon Hume describes is real, I think that there would only be a contradiction, in the strict sense, if the same agent endorsed the two sentiments; and only a threat of contradiction if the same agent was tempted to do so. Hume conceives of belief in terms of the vividness, or force and vivacity, of an idea, not in terms of its active endorsement; to that extent, his account of belief renders it peculiarly passive. This may be because he takes as his paradigm sensory beliefs, which do seem to arise automatically in us. As we say, we cannot help but believe what is before our very eyes. Many philosophers think that logical arguments also operate on us by producing irresistibly vivid conclusions in the face of which we are passive, although I myself am inclined to doubt that: I think that in the case of an argument, the mental activity of arriving at the belief, working through the argument and putting the ideas together, is what constitutes the act of endorsement. Yet I think that Hume is right that the vivid expression of another's views sets up in us something like a pressure or temptation to endorse them; this is why our natural response is to fend them off by rehearsing the reasons and arguments against them. I discuss a related phenomenon, resulting from the publicity of language and the resulting capacity of people's words to make us entertain their thoughts, in *The Sources of Normativity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), sects. 4.2.2–4.2.9, pp.136–142.

25. Charlotte Brown has pointed out to me that the account here coheres with the footnote at EPM 274–275, where Hume claims that "an untaught savage" judges people solely in terms of his own interest, while a civilized person has learned to judge in accordance with "enlarged reflections" and "general rules."

26. See P. F. Strawson, "Freedom and Resentment," in his *Freedom and Resentment and Other Essays* (London: Methuen, 1974), 1–25.

27. Strictly speaking, it is not correct to say that the person is the cause of an action, since nothing not caused by a person could be an action. We should rather say that the person is the cause of an intentional movement, or something of that

sort. In the passage from T 411 quoted in the text, Hume appears to lose track of this fact, and to entertain the idea of an agentless action. It is possible, however, to read the passage as employing that idea only as a *reductio*.

28. The concept in terms of which we understand what it means to view a person as a person—call it the “personhood concept”—has a complex structure. On the one hand, it must identify something universal—something that all persons have in common. On the other hand, precisely because the person is the object of the indirect passions or reactive attitudes, it must be something that differentiates us from one another, in important, non-incidental ways. Love and hate, in particular, are supposed to be attitudes we have to particular individuals, and yet which are supposed to attach to their personhood rather than something more incidental about them. So the personhood concept must be something that, although universal, admits of non-accidental individuating features if we are to make sense of these ideas and feelings. Apart from textual considerations, the notion of character, since it is a universal feature of human beings but also differentiates us in essential ways, seems promising for the purpose. On this conception, character is what enables us to identify someone as a person in general, and his particular character is a manifestation of the inner thoughts and actions that make him *him*. You regard him as responsible when his actions proceed from his character; you regard him as lovable when he has a lovable character, and so on.

29. There are some difficulties with this argument, which I cannot explain until the next section. See n. 32.

30. Elsewhere I have argued that according to Kant and Plato, persons are self-constituting, and in particular, that we constitute ourselves as agents by acting in accordance with justice, in Plato’s account, or on the categorical imperative, in Kant’s (see my “Self-Constitution in the Ethics of Plato and Kant,” *Journal of Ethics* 3 (1999): 1–29). In this section and the last, I argue that according to Hume’s view, persons are *socially* constituted, and in particular that we constitute someone as an agent by viewing him from the general point of view. As I read them, all three philosophers are concerned with the question what is required before a person may be regarded as the cause of his actions (or rather, since nothing without an author can *be* an action, of his intentional movements). All three think morality is essentially involved in the constitution of an agent: Plato and Kant think that to successfully constitute yourself as the cause of your actions you must act morally, while Hume thinks that to constitute another as the cause of his actions is to view him from the general (moral) point of view. Hume’s view therefore provides a rather exact third-personal analogue, as well as a helpful third-personal supplement, to the Kantian/Platonic view I think correct.

31. For instance, Hume says, “when we praise any actions, we regard only the motives that produced them” (T 477). Hume’s list of the virtues does not support this remark, since, for example, we may praise an action for its courageousness.

32. In her forthcoming paper, “Hume and Responsible Agency,” Charlotte Brown argues that Hume’s arguments identifying action with what springs from character fail to capture the notion of responsible agency needed to support the reactive attitudes or indirect passions. As Leonard Katz also pointed out to me in a discussion of this paper, Hume really shows only that we respond to the person as a cluster of dispositions, and see the action as a product of those dispositions. The problem is that we do this even with ordinary objects—Katz’s example is a hero with a favorite

sword, which he characterizes as light, well-balanced, sharp, etc. Of course, to the extent that the hero regards the sword as a favorite, and uses the dispositional terms to express his favor, the hero does take up a quasi-personal attitude towards the sword. But he does not therefore hold the sword *responsible* for its effects. The root of the problem, I think, is this: The view of an object as a cluster of dispositions does enable us to assign certain effects to that object, and so to regard the object as *the cause* of certain normatively important states and events. But it does not, as Hume suggests in the passages quoted in the last section, “reach the sensible and thinking part” in the way needed to support moral responsibility. To hold someone responsible, we must see him as a fellow subject of deliberation, not merely as a cluster of dispositions. If Hume’s argument is to work, it therefore needs more shoring up at this point. In my view, we run up against the limits of Hume’s third-personal approach here—we will never be able to reach “the sensible and thinking part” in the needed sense, working only with Humean resources.

33. Certainly this works in reverse—we like the looks of almost everyone we really care for, whether conventionally beautiful or not, because we see the person *inhabiting* his looks.

34. I have discussed the idea of an internal standard elsewhere. See “The Normativity of Instrumental Reason” in Garrett Cullity and Berys Gaut, eds., *Ethics and Practical Reason* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 215–254, esp. 249–250; and “Self-Constitution in the Ethics of Plato and Kant,” esp. 14–15. Some of the discussion here is lifted from the first of those papers.