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“Cemented with Diseased Qualities”: Sympathy and Comparison in Hume’s Moral Psychology

GERALD J. POSTEMA

Abstract: The key to unlocking the mystery of human passions, according to Hume, lay in the interaction between two fundamental psychological mechanisms or principles: sympathy and comparison. Both our sociality and our asociality find their psychic origins in the complex interaction of these principles. Due to the operation of these principles, justice is necessary for social life. It channels and controls the passions in contexts of social interaction; they in turn generate resources from which the structures of justice and the foundations of political society can be built by intelligent and sympathetic human beings. This essay explores Hume’s account of sympathy and comparison and some of the passions they generate, in the hope of gaining a better understanding of his unsentimental and unblinkered view of our social asociality.

Introduction

“Our being is cemented together with diseased qualities,” Montaigne wrote. Ambition, jealousy, envy, vindictiveness, contempt, and malicious cruelty figure prominently among them. Yet, he warned, to root out “the seeds of these qualities in Man” would be to destroy the “fundamental conditions of our lives.”¹

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Mandeville writes that it was said of Montaigne “that he was pretty well vers’d in the Defects of Man-kind, but unacquainted with the Excellencies of human Nature,” adding, “If I fare no worse, I shall think my self well used.”²² Mandeville transformed Montaigne’s suggestion into a methodology for his systematic attempt to “anatomize the invisible Parts of Man” (*Fable*, 1:145). His tale of “the grumbling hive,” and his extensive commentary on it, were designed to demonstrate that “if Mankind could be cured of the Failings they are Naturally guilty of, they would cease to be capable of being rais’d into such vast, potent and polite Societies, as they have been” (*Fable*, 1:6–7).

Mandeville developed his thesis at three levels. First, he argued the familiar claim that society benefits from individuals focusing solely on their own concerns. He argued that “it would be utterly impossible . . . to raise any Multitudes into a Populous, Rich and Flourishing Nation, . . . without the assistance of what we call Evil both Natural and Moral” (*Fable*, 1:325). Second, he argued that the glue of civilized life—politeness, manners, honor, and even virtue—has its roots not, as the moralists would have it, in a sociable nature and fundamental other-regarding passions, but in nothing more than flattery, that “bewitching engine” (*Fable*, 1:42–5, 63–7; 2:138). “The Moral Virtues are the Political Offspring which Flattery begot upon Pride” (*Fable*, 1:51). Flattery and pride, we learn later, are effects or expressions of “self-liking,” the innate principle that makes us prefer our being more than any other creature’s and assign to our persons a value above its real worth and (presumably) above that of all others (*Fable*, 2:129–30; EOH 3). Our *sociableness*—that is, our cooperative behavior and apparently self-denying and other-directed motivations—has no other source than that ineradicable, if diseased, quality. Third, Mandeville insisted that even our *sociability*—our desire for association with others and the pleasure we take in it—is not, *pace* Shaftesbury, a natural affection for others, but is rooted rather in self-liking (*Fable*, 1:323–4; 2:177–8).

[If we] examine into the Nature of man, abstract from Art and Education, [we] may observe, that what renders him a Sociable Animal, consists not in his desire of Company, Good-nature, Pity, Affability, and other Graces of a fair Outside; but [in] . . . his vilest and most hateful Qualities. (*Fable*, 1:4)

One may have a natural desire for the company of others, “but he has it for his own sake, in hopes of being the better for it; and he would never wish for, either Company or any thing else, but for some Advantage or other he proposes to himself from it” (*Fable*, 2:183).

Wolf, Serpent, and Dove

Hume, like Montaigne and Mandeville, thought the dark passions to which we are susceptible are deeply rooted in human nature, as deeply in fact as the fellow-feeling and sociality championed by Shaftesbury. Like Mandeville, Hume traced all our passions to a small set of fundamental psychological principles. He held that our individual selves, and the social life that nurtures and sustains them, are cemented with qualities that, if not strictly speaking diseased,³ are nevertheless morally ambiguous, troublesome, and often deeply troubling. Our need to see ourselves through the eyes of others and the delight we take in the company of others, while not rooted in self-liking as Mandeville argued, can drive us apart as easily as it can bring us together. Book 2 of Hume's *Treatise* offers an examination, rather than a critique or celebration, of the human passions, an "anatomist's" inquiry into the sources of our most fundamental conflicts. In this, he seems to have had Mandeville's model in mind, but, as we shall see, he deepens, refines, and redirects, and in the process transforms, the inquiry initiated by the Dutchman.

The key to unlocking the mystery of human passions, according to Hume, lay in the interaction between two fundamental psychological mechanisms or principles: sympathy and comparison. Both our sociality and our asociality find their psychic origins in the complex interaction between them. In their interactions, combinations, and repulsions, Hume sought an explanation of all of our passions—natural and moral, socially constructive and socially destructive, those we praise and those we condemn—and the principles on which we base our evaluations of them. Through an analysis of the subtle psychic chemistry of these fundamental reagents Hume sought to explain the dynamics of love and hate, humility and pride, compassion, esteem, respect and contempt, resentment, envy, and malice—the "particles of the dove kneaded into our frame along with the elements of the wolf and the serpent."⁴

In this essay, I propose to take a careful look at Hume's account of sympathy and comparison and several of the passions they generate in the hope that thereby we may gain a better understanding of his unsentimental and unblinking view of our social asociality.

1. The Legacy of Lucretius

Hume was a keen observer of human behavior, but he observed his fellows through a lens curved by the intellectual culture in which he wrote. Many of the themes and tropes influencing Hume's thinking about his two key principles, especially comparison, were richly discussed and illustrated in the classical literature from which he drew inspiration. Among the most intriguing of such sources is the Epicurean, Lucretius. His image of the shipwreck spectator appears late in Book

3 of the *Treatise* (T 3.3.2.5; SBN 595),⁵ but influence of discussions of this trope is evident throughout Book 2. We can, perhaps, better understand the dialectic of Hume's discussion against the background of these discussions.

The Serene Satisfaction of the Shipwreck Spectator

Montaigne's words quoted at the outset of the essay bracket the following passage from the proem introduction to Book 2 of Lucretius's *De rerum natura*: "Pleasant it is, when over a great sea the winds trouble the waters, to gaze from shore upon another's great tribulation."⁶ This image of a spectator viewing a shipwreck with equanimity and quiet pleasure from the secure distance of dry land appears repeatedly in Western literature. Sometimes the message is appropriated, sometimes challenged, sometimes silently altered.⁷ For Lucretius, this sentiment was witness to something important and benign in human nature: the serene satisfactions available to those who can achieve a certain distance from life's destructive turbulence. The pleasure comes, he insists, "not because any man's troubles are a delectable joy, but because to perceive what ills you are free from yourself is pleasant" (2.3-4).

The image is at work in the moral psychology of many of Hume's predecessors. In *Elements of Law*, for example, Hobbes wonders "from what passion proceedeth it, that men take pleasure to behold from the shore the danger of them that are at sea in a tempest, or in fight, or from a safe castle to behold two armies charge one another in the field?" From both joy and grief, he answers, "for as there is novelty and remembrance of own security present, which is delight; so there is also pity, which is grief."⁸ The delight predominates, but the pity, as Hobbes understands it, is no less self-referential. "Pity," he maintains, "is imagination or fiction of future calamity to ourselves, proceeding from the sense of another man's present calamity" (*Elements*, 1.9.10). The sense of another person's distress is the cause or occasion of an entirely self-referential concern.

Butler refines this response in his discussion of compassion in his fifth sermon.⁹ Seeing another person in distress, Butler argues, it is not uncommon to experience, simultaneously, three distinct feelings. One is "real sorrow and concern for the misery of our fellow creatures;" another is a reflection on our liability to similar calamities. Butler insists that the former only is "proper compassion" and the latter, which Hobbes claims is at the heart of pity or compassion, is more properly called fear.¹⁰ In addition to these feelings, and sometimes unaccompanied by them, we can feel "a peculiar calm kind of satisfaction . . . from a sense of our own freedom from the misery" suffered by the other person (Butler, 65-6, 70). Like Lucretius, Butler hastens to add that the latter feeling can be entirely innocent. It "may possibly appear to some at first sight faulty; but it really is not so. It is the same with that positive enjoyment, which sudden ease from pain for the present affords, arising from a real sense of misery, joined with a sense of our freedom

from it; which in all cases must afford some degree of satisfaction" (70). Kant, in his *Lectures on Ethics*, took a similarly tolerant view of this curiously common feature of human nature.¹¹

Voltaire took a sharply contrasting view (Blumenberg, 34–9). He found utterly monstrous the distanced indifference to the sufferings of others that Butler and the young Kant indulged without distress. He also gave the fact that we are irresistibly drawn to the spectacle of tribulations of others a quite different interpretation. It springs, he insisted, not from "comparison with oneself . . . but [from] curiosity alone."¹² The Abbé Galiani rightly added, however, that since such curiosity is vulnerable to the slightest sense of danger, it is not as independent of self-concern as Voltaire would have us believe (Blumenberg, 39).

Voltaire's reading of the Lucretian image represents a challenge to its author, for it denies the link between the reflexive pleasure of the spectator and the detached, reflective, and ultimately secure perspective of reason that Lucretius most sought to affirm. "But," he wrote, "nothing is more delightful than to possess lofty sanctuaries serene, well fortified by the teachings of the wise, whence you may look down upon others and behold them all astray, wandering abroad and seeking the path of life" (2.7–8). For Lucretius, the sage was the spectator viewing the pointless and self-defeating clamoring of ordinary people for riches, power, and position. Echoing Lucretius, Bacon, in the century before Hume composed the *Treatise*, wrote:

The Poet, that beautified the Sect, that was otherwise inferior to the rest, saith yet excellently well: It is a pleasure, to stand upon the shore, and to see ships tost upon the Sea; a pleasure: to stand in the window of a Castle, and to see a Battaile, and the Adventures thereof, below: But no pleasure is comparable to the standing upon the vantage ground of Truth: (A hill not to be commanded, and where the Ayre is always cleare and serene;) And to see the Errors, and Wanderings, and Mists, and Tempests, in the vale below: so always that this prospect, be with Pitty, and not with Swelling, or Pride.¹³

This association of the reflective distance of reason with calm indifference to the sufferings of others is the unfortunate popular legacy of the Stoics. Seneca sought explicitly to break this association arguing that, while the sage is never moved by pity or compassion, yet he will do "gladly and with a lofty spirit" all that we would expect a pity-motivated person do.

He will bring relief to another's tears, but will not add his own; to the shipwrecked man he will give a hand, to the exile shelter, to the needy alms; . . . he will grant to a mother's tears the life of her son, the captive's

chains he will order to be broken, he will release the gladiator from his training, he will bury the carcass even of a criminal, but he will do these things with un-ruffled mind, and a countenance under control.¹⁴

Rousseau, of course, could not buy this Stoic line. He regarded reason's reflective distance as a great and terrible temptation, one major source of social evil to which the savage is blessedly invulnerable. The civilized, reason-governed person's

fellow man can be killed with impunity underneath his window. He has merely to place his hands over his ears and argue with himself a little in order to prevent nature, which rebels within him, from identifying him with the man being assassinated. Savage man does not have this admirable talent, and for lack of wisdom and reason he is always seen thoughtlessly giving in to the first sentiment of humanity.¹⁵

The savage, not the sage, is Rousseau's hero. Reason's sophistication, enabling one to achieve distance from life's travails, is, in his view, a chief source of corruption of the savage heart. Even so, the discourse on pity opening Rousseau's *Emile* echoes unmistakably the Lucretian trope. "Pity is sweet," he writes, "because, in putting ourselves in the place of the one who suffers, we nevertheless feel the pleasure of not suffering as he does."¹⁶

Saints, Sinners, and the Pleasures of Contrast

Rousseau may have been inspired by another classical source, arguably less benign, and hence more attractive to Rousseau's turbulent temperament, than Lucretius. Tertullian, the third-century Christian theologian, wrote in *De Spectaculis* that perhaps the chief source of the beatitude of the blessed in heaven is the sight of the pagan philosophers, illustrious monarchs, and persecuting Roman governors burning in hell.¹⁷ Such blatant *Schadenfreude* made many subsequent beholders of this sentiment squirm. Observing with pleasure the sufferings of others, some would say, is simply wicked, and certainly not a fitting way for the blessed to spend their eternal leisure. This is surely how Schopenhauer saw it. Feeling such malicious joy may be human, he conceded, but indulging it is "fiendish and diabolical."¹⁸ Indeed, it was Satan in Milton's *Paradise Lost* who confessed that, "as from the hateful siege/of contraries," the good and pleasure of others around him creates in him the greater torment. So corrupted was he that ruefully admitted that "in Heaven . . . much worse would be my state."¹⁹ Even Nietzsche, quick to scandalize but not easily scandalized, took Tertullian's sentiment to be an extreme example of apostate *ressentiment*—fanaticism driven by the need to negate one's previous beliefs.²⁰

Tertullian seems to have set to cooking an even hotter cauldron of criticism than the more reserved Lucretius, but on reflection it appears to be overheated. Tertullian could cite biblical precedent for his judgment: "When the wicked perish there is jubilation," according to the writer of Proverbs (11:10). Aristotle's *Rhetoric* provides equal authority. Pity and indignation are opposites, Aristotle maintains: *pity* is pain at the suffering of others who do not deserve to suffer (suffering one might expect to suffer oneself), whereas *indignation* is pain at undeserved *good* fortune and pleasure at deserved evil. These are sentiments of the fair-minded and just, he judges.²¹ Nevertheless, Tertullian's remark succeeded in putting on the agenda of medieval Christian theology the troubling question of the saints' attitude towards the sufferings of the damned. St. Thomas, as we might expect, took a measured and philosophical approach to this knotty question. The saints take no delight directly and in itself in such suffering,²² he assured the faithful, but they do so indirectly when they reflect on "the order of divine justice and their own deliverance."²³ It is not malice, then, but a sense of retributive justice that motivates their rejoicing. But what is important about Aquinas's assessment is that he recognizes that what is at work is not simply a detached sense of justice, for recognition of the blessedness of one's own deliverance also enters the mix of sentiments. To be sure, he argues that even this serves to motivate a deeper appreciation of God's goodness and grace, but the self-reflective overtones are hard to ignore.

What is even more interesting for our study of Hume, however, is that Aquinas grounded this response to Tertullian's remark on a principle more rooted in epistemology than theology. Everything, St. Thomas argued,

is known the more for being compared with its contrary, because when contraries are placed beside one another they become more conspicuous. Therefore, in order that the happiness of the saints may be more delightful to them and that they may render more copious thanks to God for it, they are allowed to see perfectly the sufferings of the damned.²⁴

Human understanding and appreciation of God's world and our own experience are contextual; indeed, we know something best when *inter alia* we know what it is not, and even more when we can see it in comparison with its contrary. We might call this the *contrast principle*.

Aquinas's epistemological principle is familiar in many guises, but it can be found frequently in use in modern philosophy to discuss the Lucretian state of affairs or Tertullian's theological spectacle. Hobbes, for example, uses the same principle to characterize the root of the sufferings of the damned (*Leviathan*, 314). And Rousseau, in his second *Discourse*, called to mind the all-too-common sight of a handful of powerful and rich men enjoying the height of greatness and

fortune while the mob grovels in submissive misery. The rich and powerful “prize the things they enjoy only to the extent that the others are deprived of them,” he observed, and “without changing their position, they would cease to be happy, if the people ceased to be miserable” (“Discourse,” 158). Likewise, Kant writes in his *Tugendlehre*, “[i]t is indeed natural that, by the laws of imagination (namely, the law of contrast), we feel our own well-being and even our good conduct more strongly when the misfortune of others or their downfall in scandal is put next to our own condition, as a foil to show it in so much the brighter light.”²⁵ This tendency is “only indirectly malevolent,” he says, arising as it does from an understandable tendency to assess our well-being not in terms of its own intrinsic worth, but in comparison with others. Yet, for Kant, there is hope that we can overcome such sentiments, and live less in the opinions of others, as Rousseau would have put it, and hence less subject to the tyranny of such comparisons.

Hume may not have been aware of St. Thomas’s use of the contrast principle, but the appearance of something akin to it in Montaigne and then again in Hobbes, Butler, and Voltaire (and later even Rousseau and Kant) is evidence of its general availability to someone writing on matter of moral psychology in Le Flèche in the 1730s. He, surely, was well-aware of the Lucretian trope and with the tradition of reflection on the darker side of human nature it inspired. The shipwreck spectator of *De rerum natura* appears explicitly in the *Treatise* and by clear implication in “The Sceptic” (E 177). Although his reference to Lucretius is late in the *Treatise*, the problematic it suggests lies at the foundations of Hume’s account of human psychology. Montaigne thought the “bitter-sweet pricking of malicious pleasure at seeing others suffer”²⁶ rises to the surface of our experience from the deep waters of the human mind. Because of this, the sentiment is utterly natural, ineradicable, and, indeed, essential to human life. Hume agreed. Comparisons, contrast, self-reflexive pleasure in the plight of others, no less than deep sympathy with their sufferings, he argued, all lie at the very depths of human psychology. Let us take a closer look at these principles.

2. Sympathy: Mechanism, Modes, and Development

O, I have suffered

With those I saw suffer!

William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, Act 1, Scene 2

Hume built his science of man, and in particular his account of the passions, on three fundamental principles: association, sympathy, and comparison. Hume introduced the principle of association early in *Treatise*, Book 1, and used it extensively there. Because it is familiar to all readers of Hume, I will here assume an understanding of its basic mode of operating. I will discuss sympathy in more

detail, but only those aspects in which my view adds to the stock of excellent work on this principle already available in recent scholarly writing.²⁷ I will give more attention to the principle of comparison which has not yet been given its due in discussions of Hume's psychology. I begin with a discussion of Hume's account of sympathy.

The Mechanism and Modes of Sympathy

In the *Treatise*, Hume regards sympathy, not as a sentiment or passion (e.g., fellow-feeling, benevolence, or pity), but as a fundamental principle or mechanism of human psychology, in terms of which he hopes to explain the genesis and operation of our sentiments. Sympathy is that capacity "of easy communication of sentiments from one thinking being to another" (T 2.2.5.15; SBN 363). This distinction, which his contemporaries (notably Mandeville and Rousseau) failed to make, represents a major theoretical advance in philosophical psychology. It enabled Hume to drive his explanations of the complexities of human passions and behavior to a much deeper level than had been possible without it. Hume also observes that sympathy is not limited to the human species; indeed, cross-species sympathy is a common occurrence (T 2.1.12). Likewise, it is not limited to the communication of suffering (again as Mandeville and Rousseau thought), or even to the communication of passions and sentiments. On Hume's view, beliefs and opinions, no less than our sentiments—indeed, all the actions and contents of our minds—can be communicated via sympathy.²⁸

Hume offers a two-stage analytical model of the associative mechanism of sympathy (T 2.1.11.3, 3.3.1.7; SBN 317, 576), the outlines of which are familiar. We can summarize it as follows. Stage 1: having encountered, for example, the suffering of another creature, we form the idea of its suffering (i.e., we form the belief that it is experiencing that pain or passion). Stage 2: this idea itself is then transformed into an impression and its vivacity is amplified to the point that it "become[s] the very passion itself" as that suffered by the object of our sympathy. Important transitions occur at both stages: at stage 1, we form the idea of the other's suffering by a kind of "inference;" and at stage 2, that idea is converted into the very same kind of passion on the part of the sympathizer due to "the relation of objects to ourself . . . [which] is always intimately present to us" (T 2.1.11.4, 2.1.11.8; SBN 317, 320). Both transitions are puzzling, but a crucial feature of the second transition is important for our purposes. Hume makes the relation or resemblance between the sympathizer and the object of her sympathy essential to sympathy's psychic movement.²⁹ And the "stronger the relation is betwixt ourselves and any object, the more easily does the imagination make the transition" (T 2.1.11.5; SBN 318). However, Hume makes clear that, while the sympathizer's self is crucial for this movement, the self is *not in focus*: "in sympathy our own person is not the object

of any passion; nor is there any thing, that fixes our attention on ourselves” (T 2.2.2.17; SBN 340). Indeed, the typical effect of sympathy is “to take . . . us out of ourselves” (T 3.3.1.11; SBN 529).

Hume took this model to be an analytical reconstruction, rather than a phenomenological description, of the process by which we sympathize with another (T 2.1.11.3; SBN 317). Often the movements occur instantaneously and one is not aware of them; they may seem automatic, entirely involuntary. But this is not the only experience of sympathy that Hume has in view. He recognizes that sometimes an intentional act of imaginative attention to the sufferings of others generates the sympathetic response. Hume’s model was intended to apply to the wide variety of forms that sympathy tends to take in human experience.³⁰ They are best seen to fall along a spectrum from very primitive responses to responses that depend on sophisticated, intentionally engaged exercises of imaginative projection.

Typical cases of sympathy—or at least cases Hume thought were most familiar to us—are those in which we respond directly to suffering immediately in our presence. We “observe” in the “countenance and conversation” of another creature the typical expressions of a familiar sentiment, from which we “infer” that it is experiencing the sentiment (T 2.1.11.3; SBN 317). We often need only to look each other in the face, to participate in the other’s sentiments.³¹ In some cases, the “inference” from observation to idea concerning the other’s experiencing the passion is instantaneous, and the other’s passion floods over us. Hume offers many examples of such “contagion.”³² Some of them are responses of children,³³ but adults are equally likely to experience sympathetic contagion (T 3.3.2.2, 3.3.1.7; SBN 576, 595; also EPM 7.2; SBN 251). Sympathy, in such cases, is immediate, involuntary, and unreflective.³⁴ It appears to be an immediate and momentary response to what is often the immediate and momentary experience of another creature.

But Hume observes that at other times we engage more actively in the process. The “inference” from affect expression in behavior to cause in the mind of the other person, or from the cause in the circumstances or condition of the object to the experienced effect (T 3.3.1.7; SBN 576), may be explicit and actively entertained, as may be the resemblance between oneself and the object of our sympathy (T 2.2.4.6; SBN 354). It would be a mistake to assimilate these cases to instances of contagion or “emotional infection,”³⁵ for in these cases the sympathizer is engaged cognitively and imaginatively, and the process seems to be in substantial part under the sympathizer’s voluntary control.

Further, Hume recognizes that sympathy operates even when one is not immediately in the presence of the suffering party. Mandeville insisted that the impression of another’s suffering can only “come in at the eye or ear,” and cannot arise in the absence of the object of sympathy (*Fable*, 1:254, 256). Hume rejected

Mandeville's narrow view. "Resemblance" or "causation"—for example, relations of kinship ("causation"), acquaintance, or common heritage ("resemblance")—are often enough, in his view, to fuel the process, even in the absence of the object of our sympathy (T 2.1.11.17, 2.2.4.5; SBN 323, 353). The "resemblance" need not be close, but it may take "a great effort of imagination" to rouse the sympathetic heart (T 2.2.9.14; SBN 386).

Imagination has even more remarkable powers. Sometimes all we need to observe are the conditions or circumstances of a person to feel the sentiment we have associated with those conditions. Imagination sets the wheels of sympathy in motion. For example, seeing a stranger sleeping in a field in danger of being trod underfoot by horses, we would run to protect him from the danger, Hume observes. In doing so, I would be "actuated by the same principle of sympathy, which makes me concern'd for the present sorrows of a stranger" whose sad countenance I observe (T 2.2.9.13; SBN 385; see also T 2.2.5.16, 3.3.1.7; SBN 363–4, 576). In some cases, it is not even necessary that one observe the circumstances or condition of the person with whom one sympathizes (consider Hume's example of sympathy with the abducted infant prince at T 2.2.7.6; SBN 371). "Tis certain," Hume writes, "that sympathy is not always limited to the present moment, but that we often feel by communication the pains and pleasures of others, which are not in being and which we only anticipate by the force of the imagination" (T 2.2.9.13; SBN 385). Finally, and paradoxically, it is not even necessary that the person with whom we sympathize experiences the sentiments, or experience them with the intensity that we feel them for him (T 2.2.7.5–6; SBN 370–1). Sensing the paradox, Hume calls these cases of "partial" sympathy (*ibid.*).

In this latter set of cases, the necessary relations of resemblance and contiguity are simulated or enhanced through vivid imaginative representation of the object of sympathy or her circumstances. We imaginatively insert ourselves into the circumstances of the other person and feel what she feels, or would properly feel were she correctly to appreciate her situation (see T 2.2.7.6; SBN 371). We know that in general we feel the same such emotions, because often in the past we being in such conditions with others like the object of our sympathy, we experienced the same emotions. Imaginative projection³⁶ into the other's situation is a key form of sympathetic engagement for Hume's theory of passions, which becomes even more important, of course, for the moral theory he develops in Book 3 of the *Treatise*. In contrast with contagion at the other end of the spectrum, this form of sympathy is voluntary, self-aware, and reflective. Under some circumstances it enables the sympathizer to transcend the immediate, momentary experiences of the object of sympathy and to sympathize with the suffering individual as a temporally extended and socially located person (T 2.2.9.14; SBN 386). We will consider this "extensive" form of sympathy below when we consider the role sympathy plays in the genesis of pity and compassion.

Development of the Capacity for Sympathy

Although the *Treatise* is bursting with examples of the varieties of sympathy we have just identified, Hume never explicitly explored the relations among them. But the fact that they fall along a spectrum from the affectively and cognitively primitive to increasingly more sophisticated forms, suggests the possibility that they are related developmentally, the more sophisticated forms building upon, albeit never supplanting, the less sophisticated ones. Perhaps, then, contagion in its most primitive form provides the experiential basis and root for the “inferences” involved in the more sophisticated forms by which we move from observation of the tears and smiles of others to ideas of their sorrows and joys. Some evidence that Hume may have had something like this in mind can be found in the *Enquiry* (EPM 7.2; SBN 251), where he suggests that the contagion by which we catch the spirit of a cheerful person also engages our imagination which then enables us to enter more fully into his feelings and disposition (see also T 2.2.9.14; SBN 386). Also, Hume says we are capable of “a kind of *presensation*; which tells us what will operate on others, by what we feel immediately in ourselves” (T 2.2.1.9; SBN 332). Contagion may be one important source of this “presensation.”

Hume’s remarkable discussion of contagion at T 2.2.4.6–7 (SBN 354) lends further support to the hypothesis of a developmental relationship among the varieties of sympathy explicitly recognized by Hume. He observes that we tend to gravitate to others of similar temperament and disposition. We are serious with those who are serious, joyful with the joyful; and this happens, he says, not only in circumstances in which “we remark this resemblance” between ourselves and others, “but also by the natural course of the disposition and by a certain sympathy, which always arises betwixt similar characters.” Where we explicitly remark the resemblance, the sympathetic movement is assisted by a relation of ideas in the manner typical of the somewhat more sophisticated forms of sympathy. Where we do not consciously represent to ourselves the resemblance, “some other principle” is at work, the operation of which, he says, confirms his general account of the mechanism of sympathy and the observation he stressed on the previous page.

On the previous page he remarks with considerable warmth that “company” with another person “is naturally so rejoicing” because it presents to us “the liveliest of all objects, *viz.* a rational and thinking Being like ourselves.” This deep and immediate sense of a being *like me* has a powerful impact on our minds, opening it to communication “of all the actions of his mind,” making us “privy to his inmost sentiments and affections” (T 2.2.4.4; SBN 353). Thus, even when we do not explicitly represent to ourselves the resemblance between ourselves and another person, it has an impact on us. We might even say we *sense* or appreciate the likeness. This likeness, as Hume would say, is infused over our minds. This sense comes “with the greater ease” when “our natural temper gives us a propensity to

the same impression, which we observe in others, and makes it arise upon any slight occasion" (T 2.2.4.7; SBN 354). In such cases, resemblance is still at work, of course, but not through "ideas" of relations, but by "presenting such materials as take fire from the least spark." And, Hume adds, "as in both cases [resembling the resemblance and more immediate sensing of it] a love or affection arises from the resemblance, we may learn that a sympathy with others is agreeable" (T 2.2.4.7; SBN 354). The sympathetic mind finds pleasure in not only the artful public display of imitation,³⁷ but merely in the experience of finding oneself affectively (or cognitively) in tune with another. Sympathy with each other is in itself agreeable. When we "enter into the sentiments of others . . . we embrace them with facility and pleasure" (T 2.1.11.5; SBN 318). That "least spark" is enough to cause us to seek out the experience again in ever more complex forms. It provides the spark also for a developmental picture of the relations among the varieties of sympathy in Hume's complex portrait of the human mind.

With this developmental picture in mind, we may also be able to explain another puzzling feature of Hume's psychology, namely, his apparent lack of interest in the fundamental philosophical problem of the existence of other minds. Far from addressing and attempting to solve the problem, Hume seems merely to *assume* that we come equipped with the belief. Páll Árdal maintains that, according to Hume, one of the fundamental "natural beliefs" essential to our engaging successfully with the world around us is our belief that some of the objects we interact with in our world have minds. "It is not something that needs to be proved, for which we have some evidence. No evidence could adequately support the enormous strength of this belief."³⁸ This seems right to me, but Hume might have more to say about the genesis of this natural belief. Of course, he would not be inclined to offer a *proof* of, or even evidence for, the existence of other minds, but might offer a naturalistic explanation of its source. An Humean explanation of this natural belief—albeit one that Hume only suggests—would also begin with this primitive experience of sympathetic contagion. This experience provides not beliefs from which we can, by an exercise of reason, infer the existence of other minds, but an *experience* of another mind *in tune* with one's own.³⁹ Company with another person, Hume observes, presents to us "the liveliest of all objects, *viz.* a rational and thinking Being like ourselves" (T 2.2.4.4; SBN 353). The relation between the experience and natural belief is not inferential, but causal. The belief in the existence of another mind is *logically* prior to the attribution to it of emotions like mine, but the experience of attunement causally precedes that belief. Indeed, on this Humean explanation, the belief in other minds may at bottom, be nothing more than the reflection of this experience of another creature as to some degree in affective attunement with me, which then urges me to project my affective states onto that creature.

Furthermore, Hume insists that this experience of attunement is not limited to infants. Rather, it is constantly reinforced in our encounters with others throughout

our lives. The experience of the “good natur’d man [who] finds himself in an instant of the same humour with his company” (T 2.1.11.2; SBN 317) is repeated constantly in large ways and small throughout our lives. Of course, only some beings are such that we can find ourselves in a kind of sympathetic resonance or attunement with them. Human beings may not be the only creatures with whom we experience this resonance, but we come to learn that it is only with other human beings that we do so over a very wide range. By the same token, significantly different cognitive and, especially, affective constitutions can dampen or even make impossible the primitive resonance of sympathetic contagion.⁴⁰

Sympathy and the Ever Present Impression of Ourselves

Hume leaves this developmental account only as a suggestion, but it is an intriguing and satisfying one. On this view, even before we represent to ourselves the idea of our resemblance to another, even before we are fully capable of doing so, we sense a deep likeness accompanied by a kind of pleasure. This is the foundation of sympathy, for on the base of this experience of likeness, and the agreeableness of discovering it, we can build more sophisticated forms, as our intellectual abilities enable us to identify new and more extended resemblances and to simulate contiguity by making these representations vivid in our imagination.

Perhaps, then this *like me* experience, the agreeableness of discovering a resemblance, accounts for the boosting effect of the self in converting the idea of (representation to oneself) of another’s suffering into an impression, the very passion itself suffered by the object of one’s sympathy. Hume does not offer any further explanation of this process but something like the following is consistent with what he says. At the most basic level, contagion-sympathy works in the way the plucked strings of a sitar set off sympathetic vibrations of other strings. Affective attunement is direct and immediate. A similar effect can be achieved, though less immediately, through the connection established by the observer’s sense of resemblance to the object and the pleasure that accompanies that sense. The pleasurable *like me* experience accompanying the observation (or imagination) of the sentiment in another person sets off a search by the observer, scanning his affective repertoire for a like sentiment, which is then set vibrating by the enhanced idea of the object’s sentiment. The observer comes to feel the very (same kind of) passion roused by the passion of the person observed.

It is possible that at the most basic level of contagion, the effect is immediate, but it is also possible that already at some near-basic level a primitive sense of self may be involved, perhaps the elemental “impression of ourselves” that, Hume maintains, is intimately present to us at all times (T 2.1.11.4; SBN 317; see also T 2.2.2.15, T 2.2.47, T 2.3.7.1; SBN 339, 354, 427). As the observer matures cognitively and affectively, not only do his imaginative capacities develop, but so does

his sense of self. In time (and with substantial input from others, as we shall see presently) this may mature into a well-developed, coherently organized, *conception* of oneself, but at the outset, and perhaps always at its core, it is the elemental *sense* (i.e., *experience*) of something's being like me. Hume seemed to believe there was such a primitive sense of self. He recognized the existence of a real, albeit rudimentary, sense of pride in animals (T 2.1.12.5; SBN 326). Pride also requires (necessarily, we might add) a sense of self of at least this rudimentary kind. What is always intimately present to us, in Hume's view, is not an idea or conception of a *self*, let alone a conception of *one's self* (and even less an impression of a simple, unchanging, metaphysical self-substance). Rather, always present to us is an *impression of ourselves*, an experiential frame grasped not conceptually or reflectively, but implicitly and intuitively, long before we develop capacities of representational thinking and long before we develop a *sense of self*. This impression of ourselves is the contingent, but no less important, product of the associating principles of resemblance, contiguity, and causation—a sense of the intimate relationship among our sensations and sentiments.

If something like this is correct, then it would make sense to hold that the social dimensions of the self that we will survey in the next section are made possible by the psychological phenomenon Hume identifies here. Our sociality is explained in terms of deeper psychological forces. While this is not likely to slake the thirst for a transcendental explanation of the unity of apperception, it may come closer to fulfilling the more mundane purpose of the research program begun in *Treatise*, Books 2 and 3, namely, to identify the elements of a deep explanation of our instinct for the company and cooperation of other thinking beings, and of a whole lot more that puts us at odds with each other.

3. Comparison Decomposed

Three principles lie at the foundations of Hume's science of man. Having mentioned association and having discussed sympathy at some length, we turn now to consider the principle of comparison. However, we immediately face a problem, for Hume seems to use the same label for rather different, if closely related, principles. Before we can discuss the nature and mode of operation of the most important of these comparison principles, we need to distinguish each and identify their respective domains.

Context, Contrast and Reversal

Since the more fair and crystal is the sky,
The uglier seem the clouds that in it fly.

William Shakespeare, *Richard II*, Act 1, Scene 1

The first and psychologically most basic (but, in the end, not the most important for Hume's explanatory project) appears briefly in Book 1 and frequently in Books 2 and 3 of the *Treatise*. I will call it the "contextual principle." Frequently, and in a number of different connections, Hume observes that human beings "always judge more of objects by comparison than from their intrinsic worth and value" (T 2.2.8.2; SBN 372; see also T 2.1.6.4, T 2.2.8.8, T 3.3.2.4; SBN 291, 375, 593). This principle is at work not only in our attempt to make sense of perceptual experience, but also in our emotional responses to objects around us, in our evaluations of the actions of others, and even in our judgments of our selves. Hume acknowledged and sometimes highlighted the fact that this tendency can lead us astray, but, like general rules, it is essential to our cognitive and affective life. Like the association principle, the contextual principle shapes every aspect of our experience.

The contextual principle has two corollaries that are fundamental to Hume's moral psychology. One is the "social referencing principle" which I will discuss in the next section. A second corollary, often remarked by Hume, is a version of the *contrast principle* that we saw at work earlier in some discussions of Lucretius' shipwreck spectator. Hume observes that, judged in context, objects of our experience appear greater or less by a comparison with others (T 2.2.8.9; SBN 375). When the contrast principle is at work, the magnitude of great things is increased in our perception and judgment when compared with lesser things, and, more generally, features of one kind of thing are enhanced when contrasted with things possessing opposite or sharply different properties. This principle figures prominently in Hume's discussion of malice and envy, which we will discuss in detail presently, but we should note that it also works in conjunction with sympathy. It helps, for example, to account for the "pretty remarkable phenomenon . . . that the communicated passion of sympathy sometimes acquires strength from the weakness of its original" (T 2.2.7.5; SBN 370). From sympathy, we feel apprehension and sorrow for the infant prince abducted by his enemies, because "we are acquainted with [his] wretched situation." But our fear and sorrow are greatly enhanced by the manifest contrast between our own feelings and the doomed infant serene obliviousness to the danger he faces (T 2.2.7.6; SBN 371).

Although contrast, like contextual referencing, can lead us astray, Hume, like Aquinas, thought it essential for a just grasp of things. "[W]here we cannot by some contrast enhance their value," Hume wrote, "we are apt to overlook what is essentially good in them" (T 2.1.6.4; SBN 291). Also like contextual referencing, our susceptibility to the influence of contrast is a very general feature of our receptive, perceptive, and affective system.

Hume represents the third comparison principle as a consequence of the contextual and contrast principles. Applying the contrast principle to situations in which individuals observe the good or bad fortunes of their fellows, Hume concludes,

'Tis evident we must receive a greater or less satisfaction or uneasiness from reflecting on our own condition and circumstances, in proportion as they appear more or less fortunate or unhappy, in proportion to the degrees of riches and power, and merit, and reputation, which we think ourselves possess of. Now as we seldom judge of objects from their intrinsic value, but form our notions of them from a comparison with other objects; it follows, that according as we observe a greater or less share of happiness or misery in others, we must make an estimate of our own, and feel a consequent pain or pleasure. The misery of another gives us a more lively idea of our happiness, and his happiness of our misery. The former, therefore, produces delight; and the latter uneasiness. (T 2.2.8.8; SBN 375)

Through sympathy, human beings are capable of communicating “all the actions of [their] mind[s]” (T 2.2.4.4; SBN 353), but Hume recognizes that sometimes what is “communicated,” or at least taken up, is not the other person’s sentiment, but its contrary, and this, if the conditions are ripe, can take the form of envy or malice. I will call this component of the comparison principle *reversal-comparison* to distinguish it from the contextual and contrast principles which he also sometimes calls “comparison.”⁴¹ Sympathy and reversal-comparison operate from the same psychological platform, but yield contrary results. I will return presently to discuss these two opposing principles, but first we need to consider another corollary of the contextual principle.

Living in the Opinions of Others

Is it mine eye, or Valentinus’ praise, . . .

That makes me reasonless, to reason thus?

William Shakespeare, *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, Act 1, Scene 4

A direct corollary or special case of the contextual principle, of fundamental importance for Hume’s moral psychology, is what I shall call his *social referencing principle*.⁴² “Everything in this world is judg’d of by comparison,” says Hume. Our beliefs and judgments about things in our natural and social environment are judgments of them in relation to other objects in that environment. However, there is another dimension of the comparison that Hume has in mind in this kind of judgment, and even more so in the “judgment” involved in our emotional response to objects or situations in our environment: we consult (often implicitly and unself-consciously) the opinions and judgments of others (T 2.2.8.5; SBN 292).⁴³ Indeed, Hume thinks we cannot help but be constantly influenced by the opinions of others as we seek to understand our world. “So close and intimate is the correspondence of human souls, that no sooner any person approaches me, than he diffuses on me all his opinions,” Hume writes in the *Treatise* (T 3.3.2.2;

SBN 592), noting, in a parallel passage in the *Dissertation on the Passions*: “Our opinions of all kinds are strongly affected by society and sympathy” (D 152; see also T 2.1.11.1; SBN 316).

The referencing to which Hume calls attention here involves a kind of “tri-angulation” in which our perception of the object is informed by comparison with other objects and other people’s opinions of objects and states of affairs, and often their affective response to them. Sometimes, especially early in life, there is a specific person (usually a caregiver) whose judgment the child “references.” But later, Hume thinks, the social referent might equally be the “general rules” and customary responses that we learn as we participate in the ordinary social interactions of daily life.⁴⁴ Our individual responses to sensory input are shaped by patterns and customary rules that we learn early in our interactions with other thinking beings.

Social referencing plays an especially important role in shaping our attitudes, desires, and emotions, according to Hume. Hume argues that our passions and assessments would have no stable existence in our experience if they were not “seconded by the opinions and sentiments of others” (T 2.1.11.1; SBN 316). Indeed, he observes, “we can form no wish, which has not a reference to society” (T 2.2.5.15; SBN 363). All our passions have their “animating principle” in the communicated sentiments of others, “nor wou’d they have any force, were we to abstract entirely from the thoughts and sentiments of others” (ibid.). “Hatred, resentment, esteem, love, courage, mirth and melancholy; all these passions I feel more from communication than from my own natural temper and disposition” (T 2.1.11.2; SBN 317). Hume’s prescient awareness of the role of what development psychologists now routinely refer to as “social referencing” is manifest in his example of a newcomer to “our world” from an entirely foreign one:

[T]is evident, that if a person full-grown, and of the same nature with ourselves, were on a sudden transported into our world, he wou’d be very much embarrass’d with every object, and wou’d not readily find what degree of love or hatred, pride or humility, or any other passion he ought to attribute to it. (T 2.1.6.9; SBN 293–4)

Such a person may have “the same nature” as we have, but would be unable not only to participate in our rituals and practices, but to respond coherently to his natural and social environment. (Hume’s example seems to silence any doubts that the rules Hume speaks of are at least in large part *social* rules, learned through living among and interacting with others, and participating in a common life and culture, rather than biologically hard-wired dispositions.) Hume clearly sees that the communicated experience and sentiments of others with whom we interact, enable us to discriminate objects of our indeterminate feelings, give shape and

meaning to our emotional responses, and thereby acquire a sense of their proper objects and due limits. *What we experience*, not just *how we talk about* that experience, is shaped through this referencing.

Our social dependence goes even deeper. A stable and secure self-conception is possible, in Hume's view, only through social referencing. Hume observes in the *Dissertation* that "few objects, however related to us, and whatever pleasure they produce, are able to excite a great degree of pride or self-satisfaction; unless they be also obvious to others, and engage the approbation of the spectators" (D 153). Similarly, he writes in the *Treatise*: "Our reputation, our character, our name are considerations of vast weight and importance; and even the other causes of pride; virtue, beauty and riches; have little influence, when not seconded by the opinions and sentiments of others" (T 2.1.11.1; SBN 316). In Hume's account of the passions and the self, pride plays a pivotal role. That which shapes and focuses pride, for Hume, likewise determines the contours of the self.

The self of which we speak here is not the subject of the philosophical debate over personal identity famously discussed in *Treatise*, Book 1. Rather, the self of *Treatise* Book 2 is the focus of "the concern we take in ourselves" (T 1.4.6.5; SBN 253), our "present concern for our past or future pleasures and pains" (T 1.4.6.19; SBN 261).⁴⁵ This is not a metaphysical substance, but the relatively (but contingently) stable focus of practical concern. This self, Hume tells us, can only exist by contextual comparison. "Ourself, independent of the perception of every other object, is in reality nothing: For which reason we [i.e., we subjects] must turn our view to external objects; and 'tis natural for us to consider with most attention such as lie contiguous to us, or resemble us" (T 2.2.2.17; SBN 340–1). We can do this only with the help of others around us. "Men always consider the sentiments of others in their judgments of themselves" (T 2.1.8.9; SBN 303), Hume observes, and they are utterly at a loss without this point of reference. "[O]f all our opinions, those, which we form in our own favour; however lofty or presuming; are, at bottom, the frailest, and the most easily shaken by the contradiction and opposition of others" (D 152). One's sense of self depends for its development, and in a large measure for its persistence, on its being "seconded" in the opinion and sentiments of others. We are unable to achieve "a due distance" from ourselves, so we must rely on the opinions of others "who are better qualified to form just opinions concerning us" (ibid.). Love of fame, Hume insists, is not an original passion, but rather the expression of this deeper, universal need for affirmation, the need "to fix and confirm [the] favourable opinion" of others (ibid.). One takes on a distinct profile for oneself only in the mirror of others' sentiments.

Hume assigns the task of defining our conceptions of ourselves to pride. In his eyes, pride and its companion and opposite, humility, were the key self-regarding and self-organizing passions. Our repeated experiences of pride and humility give shape to our self-conceptions by enabling us to distinguish with

increasing precision features belonging to ourselves and those that define us, those which “are . . . consider’d connected to our being and existence” (T 2.1.9.8; SBN 302).⁴⁶ Pride keeps a storehouse of self-defining qualities or personal ideals. It gathers together that which one most admires and regards as worthy, not at a distance or impersonally, but as a proper focus of one’s concern and energy—as that around which the various aspects of our lives have and can be seen to have personal meaning. To claim, as Hume does, that our pride only takes shape through the influence and seconding in the opinions and sentiments of others, is to underscore our dependence on the models provided by others. They teach us concretely “what degree of love or hatred, pride or humility, or any other passion [one] ought to attribute” to an object, relation, or experience (T 2.1.6.9; SBN 293). Penelhum sums up this part of Hume’s view well. “My own pride is in part the product of the mentality of others, not only my own,” he writes. “They are the co-creators of my self-image. . . . The self is not discernible within but largely ascribed by transference from without.”⁴⁷

Social referencing clearly depends on sympathy, but it is a form of comparison and a foundation for contrast- and reversal-comparison. It appears, then, that sympathy and comparison are both key components in human psychological development in Hume’s view. It is essential for us that “the minds of men are mirrors to one another” (T 2.2.5.21; SBN 365), reflecting each other’s sentiments and opinions, and thereby reinforcing, enhancing, and stabilizing them through iterations (“reverberations”) of the mutual reflections. The image of the mirror underscores the interdependent nature of this constitution. At work here is not mere imitation, one party producing an exact replica of the other’s state of mind, but rather a mutual adjustment, mutual affective accommodation.

Although one can hardly fail to hear echoes of Mandeville’s psychology in all of this, Hume makes a dramatic departure from Mandeville’s attempt to locate a large part of human motivation in “self-liking.” Two major differences stand out. First, for Mandeville a sense of self—indeed, an inordinate sense of one’s value—is the presupposed source of pride, whereas Hume turns the relationship around: experiences of pride and humility give the self its determinate shape. Second, at the root of these passions, and so at the root of our conceptions of ourselves, is the more fundamental psychological principle of social-referencing, the principle which enables us to acquire not only a secure sense of self, but also a stable and focused emotional life. This principle, in turn, depends on even more basic principles of sympathy and contrast-comparison. Mandeville’s science of man skates on the surface of the waters into which Hume’s inquiry plunges deeply.

At the end of his second *Discourse*, Rousseau writes that, unlike the savage, social and civilized man “knows how to live only in the opinion of others” and “from their judgment alone . . . draws the sentiment of his existence.” Lacking an internal gyroscope, he lives entirely “outside himself” and as a result “every-

thing becomes factitious and bogus: . . . honor without virtue, reason without wisdom, and pleasure without happiness" ("Discourse," 161). Hume agrees that we live in the opinion of others," but he would not agree that in doing so we live "outside of ourselves," or that this is a deep spiritual sickness of civilized man, as his French counterpart insisted. "Ourself, independent of the perception of every other object, is in reality nothing" and so, to have any conception of self, we must look outward, to others. This dependency is not corruption of primitive purity, but the natural development of human personality, not slavery, but matter of mutual adjustment, without which, a coherent object of concern is not available to us. Hume did not entertain the Romantic fantasy of the savage of exquisitely well-modulated *amour propre* and naturally balanced inclinations. Outside the opinions of others—that is, apart from their participation with us in the mutual process of forming and directing attitudes, opinions, emotions, and ultimately determining a coherent focus of concerns that give stable and enduring shape to our lives—no self is possible.

4. Benevolence, Pity, and the Whole Bent of Our Passions

We have explored Hume's understanding of the fundamental principles of his psychology, especially sympathy and comparison's component principles. In the remainder of this essay, we will consider the way in which, according to Hume's system, the principles give content and direction to our passions. We begin with the genesis of pity in sympathy.

Although sympathy with the joys and sorrows of others involves feeling those same joys and sorrows, Hume makes very clear that this does not necessarily engender *concern* in the sympathizer for the other person, or an inclination to alleviate her sufferings or to promote her well-being. Sympathy and its immediate product is one thing; benevolence, compassion, and pity are other, further things. In fact, so clear is Hume about their distinctness that he found it necessary to write a lengthy section (T 2.2.9) to explain why sympathy can and frequently (but by no means necessarily or universally) does issue in pity or compassion.

On Hume's view, benevolence is a spontaneous, and in that sense "original," concern for the well-being of others, typically those to whom one is antecedently attached (T 2.2.6.3-6; SBN 367-8). It is a direct passion. Pity, in contrast, is an indirect passion. Born of sympathy with the sufferings of others, pity combines pain at the misery of another with a desire to alleviate it.⁴⁸ In this respect, it "imitates the effects . . . of love" or benevolence (T 2.2.8.1, T 2.2.9.3-4; SBN 372, 382). Pity is "counterfeited" benevolence, because it arises indirectly, not "originally" or spontaneously, from sympathy with the pitied person. Sympathy enables us to "counterfeit" benevolent concern when we encounter strangers, that is, when spontaneous concern is naturally limited (T 2.2.7.1-2; SBN 368-9).⁴⁹ Thus, some

compassion is “artificial” in one sense of the term, although it is not dependent on conventions. Yet, sympathy itself, while useful and perhaps indispensable for extending the scope of our concern and sense of humanity, is morally neutral, as Hume describes it. It is a fundamental human capacity, and a powerful explanatory principle, but it is not itself a virtue⁵⁰ and offers no guarantees that what it generates will be rightly judged as virtuous.

Yet, pity poses a puzzle for Hume, for this love-mimicking response is the opposite of what his account of love and hate and of the mechanism of sympathy would lead us to expect (T 2.2.9.4; SBN 381). Pity is a “reversal” of the expected movement of sympathy. The sympathizer feels the other person’s pain and misery and that, on the Humean story, typically causes the sympathizer to respond in aversion to the pain he feels *and* to its sympathy-inducing “cause,” the person with whom he sympathizes. Hume calls this response to the person “hate.” But the behavior of the person moved to pity and compassion by the sufferings and misery of another mimics spontaneous benevolence acting out of “love.” This reversal, Hume admits, cries out for explanation.

Hume’s explanation is complex and obscure (T 2.2.9). He calls into play a newly minted principle, which he thinks is essential to explaining some crucial movements of sympathy, especially pity and malice (T 2.2.9.11; SBN 384-5). It holds that “’tis not the present sensation alone or momentary pain or pleasure, which determines the character of any passion, but the whole bent or tendency of it from beginning to end” (T 2.2.9.2; SBN 381). This “whole bent” principle unites with the mechanism of association by a double relation of impressions and ideas to produce the same tendency to act in behalf of the other party that is characteristic of benevolence. It is not easy to follow Hume’s rambling discussion in this section of the *Treatise*, but something like the following seems to capture what Hume had in mind.⁵¹

To begin, consider the double relation between the ideas and impressions of benevolence and pity. Put simply, the relations are, on the one hand, the relation between benevolence and pity and, on the other, that between benevolence and its motive direction or tendency, namely, action to remedy the misery of the suffering person (D 156-7; T 2.2.9.3; SBN 382). The association of benevolence and pity, in turn, depends on the resemblance between the two passions in their whole bent. The association of pity with benevolence and benevolence with its motive direction lend, by the causation of the double relation, the motive direction of benevolence to pity. To understand Hume’s explanation, we need to understand the nature of the resemblance between benevolence and pity, and for that we need first to understand the whole bent of benevolence and then consider how pity acquires its resemblance to benevolence in this respect.

The whole bent of benevolence, which one feels towards a family member, loved-one, friend, or partner, consists not merely of unconnected momentary

sensations, but also of an extensive pattern of emotionally charged links tracking the fortunes and misfortunes of the beloved as she goes through life. The benevolent person is connected to his beloved, friend, or partner as a temporally extended person, and is engaged with and deeply interested in the ups and downs of her welfare. Now, for the double-relation association to work, pity must have a similar pattern, but this is just what sympathy in typical examples does not seem to produce. Encounters with strangers typically have no such history, so we would expect the sympathizing person to respond to the momentary situation and sufferings of the other person. But, Hume maintains, this does not happen when sympathy gives rise to pity. For in such cases, imagination enables us to cast the present plight of the stranger we encounter in a wider light. The conception of the person we entertain is not confin'd merely to its immediate object, but diffuses its influence over all the related ideas, and gives me a lively idea of all the circumstances of that person, whether past, present, or future; possible, probable, or certain. By means of this lively notion I am interested in them; take part with them; and feel a sympathetic motion in my breast, conformable to whatever I imagine in his (T 2.2.9.14; SBN 386).

Thus, sympathy creates in the pitying person a pattern of engagement with the well-being of the suffering stranger, albeit in the imagination, that resembles the pattern of benevolence. And, thus, through the associative mechanism of the double relation, the remaining feature of the whole bent of benevolence, its motive direction, is transferred to the compassionate person and she is motivated to act to give succor to the suffering stranger. She does so because she sees him more broadly as a temporally extended, socially connected person, not merely as the occasion of momentary discomfiture.

This "extensive sympathy" takes place, according to Hume, when the initial sympathetic response is especially intense: "when the present misery of another has any strong influence on me" (T 2.2.9.14; SBN 386). "When a sympathy with uneasiness is weak, it produces hatred or contempt . . . [but] when strong, it produces love or tenderness" (T 2.2.9.12; SBN 385). The vividness of the initial sympathetic response may be due to the intensity of the suffering immediately manifest to the observer, but this is not the only possible source, according to Hume. By "a great effort of imagination," one can form a sufficiently vivid idea of the suffering of another person in the future. Nevertheless, Hume adds, we will not be able to work ourselves up to exert this effort "without being aided by some circumstance in the present, which strikes upon us in a lively manner" (T 2.2.9.14; SBN 386).

This then is Hume's explanation. A reader of the *Treatise* might be excused for being impressed more by its ingenuity than its plausibility. In its favor, however, we can concede that it helps explain why sometimes we are unable to muster compassion with the suffering of some strangers, for the fact may be that we are unable to conjure the circumstances past and future of the person with sufficient vividness to

generate the requisite temporally extended conception of the person. And this allows us at least some appreciation for the limits of sympathy-generated sentiments. Still, it is not at all obvious that in all cases in which we are moved by compassion to ameliorate another's suffering we find ourselves conjuring up his whole life, or even a sizeable chunk of it, and engaging ourselves imaginatively in it.

Pity, Vulnerability, and the Self

On the other hand, other features of Hume's account of the nature of pity are much more congenial. Hume's account decidedly and satisfyingly departs from a long tradition of understanding of this passion.⁵² Mandeville favors the crude view that pity is ultimately self-directed because it is just the uneasiness or pain caused by directly observing the suffering of another (*Fable*, 1:56, 254-6). La Rochefoucauld offers a variation on this theme: Pity is "a shrewd precaution against misfortunes that may befall us. We give help to others so that they have to do the same for us on similar occasions, and these kindnesses we do them are, to put it plainly, gifts on ourselves in advance."⁵³ Hobbes's definition of pity is a bit more refined and is perhaps the most familiar representative of this tradition. "Pitty," he writes, is "*Griefe*, for the Calamity of another." It arises "from the imagination that the like calamity may befall [one]self" (*Leviathan*, 43). This is just what one might expect from Hobbes, who was always inclined to find an ulterior motive for every aspect of human active and mental life, but this understanding of pity is not unique to philosophers generally inclined toward egoistic explanations of the passions. One finds a similar line in philosophers as different as Aristotle, Rousseau, and Nietzsche.

In his *Rhetoric*, Aristotle defines pity as "a certain pain at an apparently destructive or painful evil happening to one who does not deserve it and which a person might expect himself or one of his own to suffer . . . when it seems close at hand." He draws the obvious conclusion that "those who are utterly ruined do not feel pity [because] they think there is nothing left for them to suffer" (152 (1385b13-6)). Rousseau gives a vivid illustration of this Aristotelian point in *Emile*. "One pities in others only those ills from which one does not feel oneself exempt." "Why are kings without pity for their subjects? Why are the rich so harsh to the poor?" he asks. "It is because they do not have fear of becoming poor" (*Emile*, 224). Aristotle incorporates two elements in his definition of pity for which Hume found no room in his account: the judgment that the suffering is undeserved⁵⁴ and the worry that one is vulnerable to the same fate.⁵⁵ While the former is impersonal, that latter is clearly self-regarding. Aquinas seems to agree with Aristotle's definition of pity and so identified the source of pity in our own sense of vulnerability in virtue of our "real union" with the other person. But, influenced by Augustine's definition of compassion, identified another source in the "union of affections," that is, love

of the suffering person. "Charity," Aquinas the moralist insisted, can and ought to prevail over the former.⁵⁶

The self-reflexive element of the traditional analysis of pity left it vulnerable to the criticism that its apparent other-regarding direction is a thin veil for what is at bottom a troubling form of weakness and self-absorption. The thesis has its roots in Stoicism, and is manifest in Mandeville (*Fable*, 1:56) and Rousseau (*Emile*, 221), but it came to full flower in Nietzsche's denunciation of pity. Pity, in his view, is a self-deceptive cover for the pitier's own impotence. "What in the end distinguishes men without pity from those with it? Above all . . . they lack the susceptible imagination for fear."⁵⁷ From Hume's point of view, this criticism is misplaced. Although pity depends on sympathy, and so on an implicit resemblance between the pitier and the pitied, it is impersonal. The self is not in focus. Sympathy takes us out of ourselves; it involves no comparison of the sufferer's condition with one's own. It arises from appreciation of the danger or suffering of the pitied, but one need not be actually or potentially endangered or subject to the suffering oneself. On the contrary, it is *comparison* (or, rather, *contrast*) of one's condition with that of another that tends to "reverse" the affective direction of sympathy and pity.

5. Pity Revers: Malice and Envy

Envy is ever joynd, with the Comparing of a Mans selfe;
And where there is no Comparison, no Envy.
F. Bacon, "Of Envy"

As we have just seen, pity "reverses" the expected movement of sympathy. In Hume's (and Mandeville's) account, malice and envy effect a further reversal. This time it is pity that is reversed (T 2.2.8.9; SBN 375).⁵⁸ A careful look at Hume's discussion of these two dark passions, pure cases of reversal-comparison, will give us a better understanding of the anatomy of this principle of the mind. Since echoes of Mandeville's analysis sound clearly in Hume's discussion, it will be useful to outline the Dutchman's thoughts briefly before setting out Hume's more nuanced account.

Mandeville's Malice

For Mandeville, envy combines grief and anger: grief at the happiness of others, for the things they possess but we palpably lack, which erupts in anger against the cause of the pain (*Fable*, 1:135). Envy hides in the dark corners of the mind because the "strong Habit of Hypocrisy" teaches us "to hide even from ourselves the vast Extent of Self-Love."⁵⁹ Yet, it cannot remain hidden and eventually explodes into anger directed against the envied party, relieving us of our self-sorrow. "We cherish and cultivate [anger] to save or relieve our selves, at least in part, from

the Uneasiness we felt from the first” (ibid.). Likewise, Mandeville understands malice to be the satisfaction we take in seeing the others robbed of their happiness. Malice is prompted not by injury but by rivalry, but not simple competitive rivalry, in which the fortunes or misfortunes of one’s competitor are inversely related to one’s own, for malice arises heedless of any advantage to ourselves except the pleasure we take in beholding the rival’s misfortune (*Fable*, 1:139).

Like Montaigne, Mandeville thinks malice can be harmless—one thinks of the shipwreck spectator, although, surprisingly, the Epicurean Mandeville never clearly invokes the Lucretian image—but spurred by pride and anger it extinguishes all pity and turns cruel. Indeed, malice is “the Reverse of Pity” (*Fable*, 1:259–60). This more virulent form of malice is the offspring of envy (*Fable*, 1:139). The anger indulged to relieve envy’s self-sorrow inspires the imagined downfall of the envied and motivates action to see it done. Short of this, envy’s anger may drive persons of delicate inclinations inward into smoldering indolence (*Fable*, 1:138). However, in the “peevish and quarrelsome” it engenders emulation, the competitive drive to outdo the irritating success of the envied person (*Fable*, 1:137–8). This socially constructive passion must not be ascribed to any natural virtue, but to the same root passion that can erupt in cruelty. For the sacrifice of his ease and opportunity, one who chooses to compete with his rival is compensated by the enhancement of his pride, “the greater his Pride is, the more Self-denial he’ll practice to maintain his Conquest” (*Fable*, 1:138). Envy, according to the circumstances, can produce cruelty or self-destructive *ressentiment*, or it can engender healthy, socially productive competition.

The root of malice and envy, Mandeville argues, is pride, which in turn is rooted in self-liking (*Fable*, 2:127, 176). *Self-liking* is that innate principle that makes us prefer our being more than any other’s and assign to ourselves outsized value (*Fable*, 2:129–30; EOH 3). From this “vast Esteem we have for our selves” (*Fable*, 1:67) proceed “an extraordinary Concern in what others think of us,” and in particular a love of praise (*Fable*, 1:67, 2:64; EOH 4, 6).⁶⁰ The dark and potentially destructive passions of envy and malice are expressions of self-liking, but not its only possible expressions (EOH 3). Self-liking and pride take these forms only when people are “altogether destitute of the Opportunities to display the Symptoms of Pride that are allow’d of.” Although “often an unknown Guest” in the hearts of men, self-liking, in those who are denied socially “warrantable” outlets for their pride, “is easily turn’d into Envy and Malice, and on the least Provocation it sallies out in those Disguises, and is often the Cause of Cruelty” (*Fable*, 2:127).

Blind to their Sufferings

Hume’s explanation of malice and envy in some important respects departs from Mandeville’s and deepens it in other respects. According to Hume, malice

is simply joy in the sufferings of others, while envy is suffering at another's joy (T 2.2.8.1, T 2.2.8.12; SBN 372, 377). As we feel pity "without friendship or enmity to occasion this concern or joy" (T 2.2.7.1; SBN 369), so, too, malice and envy are "unprompted by offence or injury." Hume regards the personal response of hate or anger to offense or injury not as malice, but resentment, a very different emotion. More generally, like Mandeville, Hume distinguishes the pleasures and sorrows of malice and envy from the engaged interest we take in our fortunes and misfortunes, and thereby, in those of our partners or rivals in competitive situations (T 2.2.9.5-9; SBN 382-4).

Like pity and benevolence, according to Hume, envy and malice are naturally linked to typical motives for action (D 157). They imitate the effects of hate as pity imitates the effects of love: they share the "direction" of hate and so take on its "whole bent." Envy and malice, themselves closely linked, are both linked to "anger": the pain one feels in one's own condition spurs actions designed to bring pain to the envied person in order to relieve one's pain. As Bacon observed, the envier looks to the sufferings of others to redeem his own.⁶¹ Malice, in Hume's focus, is not merely the distinct feeling of *Schadenfreude*; rather this emotion when it conjures the desire to add to its victim's torment or humiliation for the pleasure one is likely to receive on the rebound (T 2.2.8.12; SBN 377).⁶²

This response is easy to explain on Humean principles, since the envier feels the other's gladness as a curse, and the natural response to this pain is hatred issuing in aversive action against its perceived "cause."⁶³ The "reversal," however, comes at an earlier stage: instead of rejoicing in the other's gladness, one suffers; instead of feeling their pain, one rejoices in their suffering. The psychological principle at work, Hume asserts, is not "self-liking," although he agrees with Mandeville that the self looms large in the perspective of the envier or malicious person. But neither is the principle sympathy perverted in some way. It is, rather, a different principle, *reversal-comparison*, the operation of which he describes as follows.

In all kinds of comparison an object makes us always receive from another, to which it is compar'd, a sensation contrary to what arises from itself in its direct and immediate survey. The direct survey of another's pleasure naturally gives us a pleasure; and therefore produces pain, when compar'd with our own. His pain, consider'd in itself, is painful; but augments the idea of our own happiness, and gives us pleasure (T 3.3.2.4; SBN 594).

This is, first of all, a reversal of the expected sympathetic response to the real or imaginatively projected conscious experiences of the other person. Hume's explanation of this reversal-comparison draws on the principles we have already explored, in particular the contrast principle. Reading this passage in light of Hume's original presentation of the principle of reversal-comparison (T 2.2.8.9; SBN 375-6), it is possible to sketch the mechanism Hume thought was involved. Observing the suffering of another person, one forms an idea of this suffering,

but if the self (i.e., a sense of one's own condition) is already in one's view, the contrast principle simply boosts this sense, enhancing one's existing sentiments. As Mercer put it, "Instead of entering into [the other's] feelings we keep dwelling on ourselves with the result that we see the other's situation *only in comparison with our own*" (32). Reversal-comparison involves no conversion of an idea into an impression, as is the case with sympathy. "Sympathy being the conversion of an idea into an impression," Hume writes, "demands a greater force and vivacity in the idea than is requisite to comparison," which, he implies does not involve such a conversion (T 3.3.2.5; SBN 595). Rather, one's existing sentiment (say, of relative contentment or of relative discontent) is simply "augmented." What is reversed is not the *sentiment* initially produced by sympathy, but rather our *expectations* regarding the impact of the suffering of others on the observer.⁶⁴

Like the envious in *Purgatorio*, Hume's envious see with their eyes but not their hearts.⁶⁵ At the same time, we must keep in mind that the passions rooted, in part or in whole, in reversal-comparison are intensely *social* passions. The person experiencing these sentiments is no temporary solipsist, but rather he is keenly sensitive to the affective experiences of his fellows. The difference is that, like a *camera obscura*, they produce in him an inverted image.

Of course, it is possible for sympathy to set off reversal-comparison. This seems to be the case when we respond with humility even to cases of "overweening conceit" or "ill-breeding" in which the pride of another is indiscreetly forced upon us (T 3.3.2.7, 17; SBN 596, 601). This is one of those cases in which sympathy and reversal-comparison work in tandem to produce an unexpected result. We will consider other examples in section 6.

Hume also recognizes the possibility of a purer case of reversal-comparison, analogous in structure to malice, but without either the dark side of that emotion or the motivation to act on it. Explicitly invoking the Lucretian image of the shipwreck spectator, Hume says that sometimes we can give ourselves a heightened sense of our own present comfort and fortune by reflecting briefly and imaginatively from the safety of land on the misfortunes of those at sea in a storm (T 3.3.2.5; SBN 594). This sense of comfort can be enhanced even more if one is actually standing on the shore observing at a considerable distance the plight of the tempest-tossed seafarers.

Avoiding the high-temperature moral tone of Voltaire and Schopenhauer, the "anatomist" Hume simply observes that, at a certain distance, appreciation of the sufferings of others yields the reverse of the response sympathy would generate were suffering in our immediate presence. What is striking in all cases of reversal-comparison, as Hume describes its operation, is that, in contrast with sympathy, the self is not only *operative* but is a very present *object* or focus of the heart's movement, an essential and consciously represented *term* of the relation from which the sentiment is generated. When comparison is doing its work, the

self comes prominently into the foreground of the mind. Yet, Hume's explanation does not stop with a principle of "self-liking," *amour propre*, or, as Mercer puts it, "our natural self-centeredness" (32), but builds on deeper and even more pervasive principles of our affective and cognitive life: contrast and reversal-comparison. We cannot explain the difference between the movements of sympathy and reversal-comparison in terms of the presence or absence of the observer's self, but rather in the different roles it plays in those processes. We will explore this matter more fully below. But what is already manifest in this discussion is the fact that the "diseased qualities" of malice and envy have their root causes in a psychological principle that is essential to the constitution of human nature. To root out these qualities would risk destroying that very constitution.

Sympathy and Comparison in the Theatre

The interpretation of Hume's principle of reversal-comparison I have offered is further supported by considering Hume's view of the movement of sympathy in spectators of tragic drama who pass "thro' a long train of grief, terror, indignation, and other affections" manipulated by the artful poet or playwright (T 2.2.7.3; SBN 369). In "Of Tragedy," Hume sets out to explain the puzzling fact that spectators of a fine tragedy "are pleased in proportion as they are afflicted, and never are so happy as when they employ tears, sobs, and cries to give vent to their sorrow, and relieve their heart, swoln with the tenderest sympathy and compassion" (E 217). Here again, it would appear that we have "pity reverst." Indeed, were someone to feel such pleasure in the presence of actual suffering, we would likely call it malice. Yet, we do not condemn the experience in theatre-goers and eagerly seek the experience for ourselves, thinking it an entirely innocent rather than malignant delight.

Reasonably, one might anticipate a Humean explanation of this reversal of the expected movement of pity as another instance of the Lucretian trope, driven by reversal-comparison. This is, indeed, the kind of explanation offered by an author in *The Adventurer* in the 1750s. The compassion allegedly experienced in this case, he argued, can be

resolved into that power of imagination, by which we apply the misfortunes of others to ourselves. . . . [We] pity no longer than we fancy ourselves to suffer, and [are] pleased only by reflecting that our sufferings are not real; thus indulging in a dream of distress, from which we can awake whenever we please, to exult in our security, and enjoy the comparison of the fiction with truth.⁶⁶

Apart from the obvious Hobbesian overtones in the author's use of the term "pity" the explanation sounds Humean. The analogue to the "distance" enjoyed by the

shipwreck spectator is the theatre-goer's keen awareness of the fictional nature of the tragic scenario played out on stage. Yet, Hume was never tempted to offer this explanation. Part of the reason for this may have been that if he were to deploy his principle of reversal-comparison at this point, as he did to the shipwreck scenario, he would have had to join Mandeville in denying that the theatre-goer experienced the passions that the playwright sought to arouse.⁶⁷ Comparison, as we have seen, works from the same platform of observation or imagination as sympathy, but generates opposite results, but Hume recognized that the puzzle he sought to address arose from the fact that it is the experience of passions that are "in themselves disagreeable and uneasy" that gives us pleasure. The "infusion of a new feeling" softens the passions sympathetically communicated (E 221). For the puzzling phenomenon to arise, sympathy must be fully deployed. Hume looked for an explanation elsewhere.

At work in tragedy, as in many other arts, are two quite different passions (or groups of them) with different objects or causes and different affective valences, according to Hume. Sorrow, terror, compassion, indignation, and the like are generated by the playwright's skillful engagement of the spectators' sympathy for the distress and misfortunes of the tragic characters, but the spectators also take pleasure in the beauty of the playwright's artistry. Because the latter is typically stronger than the former, "the subordinate movement is converted into the predominant, and gives force to it, though of a different, and even sometimes though of a contrary nature" (ibid.). "The uneasiness of the melancholy passions is not only overpowered and effaced by something stronger of an opposite kind; but the whole impulse of those passions is converted into pleasure, and swells the delight which the eloquence raises in us" (E 220). At least this is what happens when pleasure in the artistry exceeds the intensity of the passions sympathetically generated by it.

Understandably, Hume's contemporary critics found this explanation unconvincing, but the value of Hume's discussion in "Of Tragedy" for our purposes lies not in the plausibility of its argument about the art of tragedy, but in the light it sheds, by way of contrast, on the principle of comparison. Three points of contrast can be noted. First, on Hume's hypothesis, pity experienced in the theatre is reversed by *beauty* (or aesthetic pleasure), not by comparison. The drama-generated aesthetic sentiments overwhelm and reverse the very real emotions of compassion that sympathy generates. Second, in contrast to the explanation offered by his critic, Richard Hurd, Hume's account of the spectator's experience of tragedy has no significant role for the spectators' sense of self in the paradoxical reversal.⁶⁸ Hume regards our appreciation of beauty as entirely disinterested and sympathy-generated passions, of course, never take the spectator's self as object, on his account. Third, on Hume's account, these *sentiments* are reversed, whereas, when comparison is at work, it is our *expectations* about people's responses to the suffering of others that are reversed.

Hume's refusal to use his notion of reversal-comparison to explain the "reversal" of the expected movement of sympathy among spectators of tragedy in the theatre lends support to our understanding of reversal-comparison. The latter principle may work in tandem with, or compete against the deliverances of sympathy, but it is a distinct principle of the mind, in Hume's psychology, capable of exerting its force on the direction of the passions without the complicity of sympathy.

6. Sympathy and Comparison: Modes of Interaction

We have seen that nothing is simple or straightforward once the apparently simple mechanism of sympathy sets to work in the human heart. The pain one feels in sympathy with a stranger's suffering prompts an unexpected movement to salve the wound and ameliorate the suffering, a movement that mimics that of love of a friend. And Hume's story becomes far more complex once the comparison principles are introduced. Moreover, these principles rarely work in isolation; on the contrary, they often influence the sentiments simultaneously, or nearly so, sometimes cooperating, sometimes conflicting (T 2.2.9.1; SBN 381).

In this section, we will ask why, at times, one principle or the other firmly takes hold, locking out the other. This will require us to consider the role that the self plays in the operation of both mechanisms. If the self is always present to us, as Hume insists repeatedly, and it is precisely the presence of the self as a key term in the contrast that generates "reversal" of the sentiments experienced by other persons, how does sympathy ever get a chance to operate at full power? Is not self, or resemblance or relation to self, both the very condition of sympathy's operation and the cause of its being supplanted comparison? We will address this question presently, but first it would be helpful to consider how, on Hume's account, cooperative interaction between the two principles sometimes yields key human passions in a kind of mixed mode.

Mixed Modes

Hume held that ideas resist mixture and only admit of "conjunction," being "endow'd with a kind of impenetrability" (T 2.2.6.1; SBN 366), but he also allowed that impressions, especially passions, mix freely. Love merges with desire for the well-being of another, for example, as does hate with anger. Even more remarkably, results of the contrary movements of sympathy and reversal-comparison often combine. Respect, for example, combines sympathy-induced regard for the good qualities of the object of respect, and thus love of their possessor, with comparison-induced humility, which is a kind of pain at one's own relative lack of such qualities. In this mixture, love or esteem tends to be the more prominent (T 2.2.10.3; SBN 390), but does not eclipse humility, which remains in the sentiment's

mix. Contempt, by the same token, is a mixture of comparison-induced pride and sympathy-induced hate, but in this case pride is manifestly the stronger partner (*ibid.*). The “strength” of these different components is measured in units of intensity of the communicated affect. In like manner, in the *Enquiry*, Hume notes that the misfortunes of others often prompt pity, but also this sentiment “is nearly allied to contempt, which is a species of dislike, with a mixture of pride” (EPM 6.33n; SBN 248n).⁶⁹

In a different way, both sympathy and contrast-comparison are jointly at work in giving shape and content to pride itself. Comparison is essential because that which one takes pride in depends not only on some special connection between oneself and the object of pride (which Hume calls the “cause” of pride), but it also depends crucially on the conviction that the qualities of that object are both unusual and worthy of esteem. These assessments depend on the judgments of others. Hence, social referencing is essential to the formation of pride; so too, obviously, is the contrast principle, for both the esteem and the distinctiveness depend on contrasts. By the same token, this referencing is impossible without the operation of sympathy, the ability to register the opinions and love of others. In one of the most famous passages of *Treatise*, Book 2, Hume makes this point forcefully by illustrating how “the minds of men are mirrors to one another” (T 2.2.5.21; SBN 365; D 152). Also, as we have seen, sympathy teams up with contrast in cases of “partial sympathy” where “the communicated passion of sympathy acquires strength from the [contrasting] weakness of its original” (T 2.2.7.5; SBN 370).

Hume suggests an even more complex cycle of mixing of these principles in his brief analysis of self-malice, one of several “irregular appetites for evil” that arise from comparison (T 2.2.8.11; SBN 376). When one directs malice towards oneself, Hume observes, the displeasure one feels at one’s own pleasure and fortune, compared with the distress one’s friend is suffering, moves one to seek afflictions for oneself. In this case, sympathy with one’s friend compared with a keen sense of one’s own good fortune causes not, as one would expect from the operation of comparison, an increase in one’s pleasure at one’s good fortune, but on the contrary a desire to diminish that pleasure. Why? Because sympathy with the friend who is close to one dominates one’s affective response and so grief drowns out the guilty pleasure of comparison and yields precisely the opposite response, Hume rather summarily asserts. Proximity, as we shall see, is pivotal for the operation of the fundamental principles of sympathy and reversal-comparison, but Hume’s suggestion here still leaves unexplained why one would seek afflictions for oneself in such cases, rather than attempt to relieve those of his friend. It appears that in this case, sympathy has only a limited effect on the soul of the self-abuser: the self still looms large in the foreground of one’s emotional experience and it spurs a further “reversal,” now turning the “hate” inward.

Contiguity and the Interplay between Sympathy and Comparison

Sympathy and comparison sometimes work together as vector forces. Yet, at times, one principle eclipses the other. Some circumstances seem to favor the operation of sympathy, others favor reversal-comparison. This difference is due in part to the different roles that the self plays in the two mechanisms: in sympathy as condition but in comparison as object, as an explicit term of a comparative relational thought. Let us consider how Hume tries to explain these complexities of his system. I will pursue the discussion at two levels. First, we will consider the effect of contiguity on the interplay between sympathy and comparison. Then we will consider the more complex story of the genesis of envy and malice, those specific effects of reversal-comparison.

Central to Hume's story of the operation of sympathy is *contiguity* between sympathizer and the object of her sympathy. This theme—contiguity in time and place is important for the full-power operation of sympathy—was already announced in *The Fable of the Bees* (1:254–7). Mandeville writes that compassion “comes in at the eye or ear . . . and the nearer to the object is the more we suffer, and the more remote it is the less we are troubled with it.” Thus, to witness a criminal execution, “if it is a great way off, moves us but little, in comparison to what it does when we are near enough to see the Motion of the Soul in their Eyes, observe their Fears and Agonies, and are able to read the Pangs in every Feature of the Face” (*Fable*, 1:256). At a sufficiently great distance, one is left indifferent to the suffering. “When the Object does not strike, the Body does not feel it.” Of course, we may still *talk* of pity and compassion, but the emotion is counterfeited for public effect with no more substance than the sentiment behind a man's claim to be “your most humble servant” (*Fable*, 1:257).

Hume echoes Mandeville's theme, but, sounding in the mode of Hume's more sophisticated psychology, it has very different resonance. He recognized, for example, that sympathy works on the sentiments even in the absence of the suffering person; indeed, even in the absence of suffering in the object of sympathy (e.g., the doomed infant prince). Still, Hume recognized that actual physical distance not only affects the intensity of the sympathetic response, but can also determine whether one responds with sympathy or with reversal-comparison to the sentiments of others.

Taking his cue from Lucretius, Hume maintains that a certain distance between the observer and observed person, if not corrected by a sophisticated and active imagination, is likely to yield reversal-comparison. There is a kind of “medium” or middle distance at which reversal-comparison works (or is likely to be dominant in one's psychology). “Now as every thing, that is contiguous to us, either in space or time, strikes upon us with [a strong and lively] idea, it has a proportional effect on the will and passions, and commonly operates with more force than any

object, that lies in a more distant and obscure light” (T 3.2.7.2; SBN 535). Thus, if the sufferings are too distant from the observer, her “idea [of them will be] too feint” to prompt contrast with her own condition and will have “no influence by comparison.” Brought face-to-face with the sufferings of another person, the idea will “be too strong” and it will “operate on [her] entirely by sympathy” (T 3.3.2.5; SBN 594–5). If one views the distress close up, such that “I can perceive distinctly the horror, painted on the countenance of the seamen and passengers, hear their lamentable cries, see the dearest friends give their last adieu, or embrace with a resolution to perish in each other’s arms,” sympathy-generated compassion and pity will dominate (T 3.3.2.5; SBN 594). However, if we are brought too close to the suffering, our pity circuits are overwhelmed and they shut down. Using Mandeville’s own example to illustrate the contrary point, Hume writes that a person directly witnessing the cruel execution of a criminal at the rack “feels no . . . tender emotions; but is in a manner overcome with horror, and has no leisure to temper this uneasy sensation by any opposite sympathy” (T 2.2.10.18; SBN 388). Extreme fear drives out pity, Aristotle observed, because that which is truly dreaded absorbs us in our own suffering (154 (1386a19–24)). In Hume’s view, it is not overwhelming fear for ourselves, but the overwhelming immediacy of the suffering that effaces the distinction between self and other.

The picture that emerges from these passages is something like the following. For sympathy to work at full power, it is necessary that one have a keen sense of the sufferings of the other party. It is not enough that one recognizes *that* she is suffering, but that suffering must be *brought home* to one. For this to occur, one must connect it with like sufferings of one’s own, on the basis of the palpable impression *she* is *like me*. Both relata are crucial for the operation of sympathy. I must have a sense that *she* is like me, so that the suffering I observe engages *me*. If it is sufficiently present to engage me, but still too distant to blunt my always keen sense of my own condition, I will sense the contrast between her condition and mine and react to her suffering with the reverse of pity. If, however, her suffering is vividly present to me, then, it is not *me* (i.e., my self or condition) but *her being like me* that provides the frame within which I take in her suffering.

Also, for sympathy to work its magic and generate compassion, one must be able at the same time to sense a difference between the sympathized feelings and firsthand experience of them. Sympathy, in Hume’s account, does not involve absorption into the experience of the other party; it does not depend on obliteration of one’s sense of difference.⁷⁰ On the contrary, Hume says, should the experience of the other’s suffering have the effect of such absorption, then the response of pity or compassion is blocked. Just as pain beyond a certain threshold can so dominate a person’s consciousness that it crowds out everything else, so very intense, immediately witnessed suffering, even if *occasioned* by the suffering of another, becomes one’s own suffering and the focus on it makes it impossible

to act in any but a manner of complete self-absorption, or rather absorption in the suffering (that it is *mine*, as opposed to someone else's, drops out). On the other hand, if the distance between self and the other person becomes great enough *in one's awareness*, the sense of one's own present situation and of oneself—that is, one's sentiments and passions (T 2.2.2.15; SBN 339)—will be stronger, more vividly present, than the situation and sentiments of the other party. And thus the similarities and (usually, more impressively) the contrasts between the two will be brought to one's consciousness. The contrast principle can do its work, enhancing the stronger, making the positive even more agreeable (when contrasted with the misfortune of others) and the negative more painful (when set against the joys of others).

Thus, the same elements—impression of oneself, sense of resemblance between oneself and the other party, and a sense of difference between us—are involved in both sympathy and comparison, on Hume's account. They yield different results when and to the extent that the other party's circumstances and experiences are vividly presented to the observer. Actual contiguity of time and place can reach the degree of vividness of presentation to focus the attention of the observer on the other's experience rather than on the relationship between oneself and the other. However, *pace* Mandeville, Hume held that a strong imagination can also do so and the result will not be merely false public show. The heart can be moved by imagined circumstances just as it can by that which “comes in the eye and ear.” Yet, he is aware that often it will not be activated, or will not be strong enough, and the contrast/comparison will be difficult for the observer to ignore.

Of course, one's consciousness might contain both psychic movements almost simultaneously, or rather in cycles, depending on whether the imagination can sustain the vividness of representation of the circumstances or experience of the other party. Recall that, according to Hume, observation of the prosperity of another may produce envy and “at the very same time, or in very short intervals,” respect (EPM 6.33n; SBN 248n). In some such cases, the two principles might yield a single mixed-mode sentiment, and in others a kind of alternation of sentiments akin to the alternation of perceptions when presented with a duck/rabbit figure.

Proximity and the Prominence of the Self

But envy is a far more complicated case than the simple presentation in the passage from the *Enquiry* just surveyed suggests, for envy, and its dark companion malice, arise only in certain contexts and outside these contexts either the essential contrasts are not made or the effects of them are greatly weakened (T 2.2.8.13; SBN 377–8). But these contexts are not differentiated in terms of the relative contiguity between observer and object. Following a long tradition of reflection on these passions, Hume maintains that their genesis depends on a certain kind of *proximity*.

Aristotle wrote in the *Rhetoric* that we tend to envy our “equals” and peers, that is, “those like [our]selves in terms of birth, reputation, age, disposition, reputation, possessions, as well as those who just fall short of having all of these on an equal basis” (159 (1387b 25–30)). Bacon elaborated this theme in his essay on envy. “Kings, are not envied, but by Kings,” he argued, and “neare Kinsfolks, and Fellowes in Office, and those that have beene bred together, are more apt to Envy their Equals, when they are raised.” Moreover, he astutely observes, “Men of Noble birth, are noted to be envious toward New Men, when they rise. For the distance is altered; and it is like a deceit of the Eye, that when others come on, they thinke themselves goe backe” (“Of Envy,” 28–19). Echoes of Bacon’s essay sound clearly throughout Hume’s discussion of envy.⁷¹

Envy occurs, says Hume, where there is a certain kind and degree of “resemblance and proximity” between the envier and the envied. “A common soldier bears no such envy to his general as to his sergeant or corporal; nor does an eminent writer meet with so great jealousy in common hackney scriblers, as in authors, that more nearly approach him” (T 2.2.8.13; SBN 377). Far from the greater disproportion creating the greater uneasiness from the comparison, “great disproportion cuts off the relation, and either keeps us from comparing ourselves with what is remote from us, or diminishes the effects of the comparison” (T 2.2.8.13; SBN 377–8), but envy takes hold in one’s narrow circle (E 233). The measure of distance Hume initially seems to have had in mind, perhaps the most prominent, is social rank, but he was keenly aware that “resemblance” can be salient in many different dimensions. It was a common theme in classical writing that where envy takes hold, “potter is furious with potter and craftsman with craftsman,” singers envy singers, and even beggars are envious of beggars.⁷² Similarly, Hume observed that poets envy other poets, but not philosophers, or even poets of a different kind, of a different nation, or of a different age. “All these differences,” he says, “prevent or weaken the comparison, and consequently the passion” (T 2.2.8.15; SBN 378). The proximity, ultimately, depends on a “bond or connecting quality join[ing] them in the imagination” (T 2.2.8.13; SBN 378).

Envy, Malice, and the Sense of Self

... about the envious brain
 Cold poison clings and doubles all the pain
 Life brings to him. His own woundings he must nurse,
 And feels another’s gladness as a curse.

Aeschylus, *Oresteia*

We can now draw together the discussion of the two preceding sub-sections to explain the role of the self in the genesis of envy and malice. To explain Hume’s account of the unique chemistry of sympathy and reversal-comparison we had

to employ a very thin notion of self—a combination of an impression of the familiarity of one's own, especially one's present, sentiments and passions, and an impression of another's being like me. We also saw that a richer notion of self, a conception of oneself as a person of a certain kind, defined by certain existential connections, had its roots in pride generated through social referencing. Although one might be inclined to regard these elements as building blocks of human sociality, Hume was just as keenly aware of their antisocial potential. Or rather, he saw in these deep features of human psychology sources of a wide range of sentiments, some of which typically bind us together, while others can drive us apart. "Popular sedition, party zeal, a devoted obedience to factious leaders; these are some of the most visible, though less laudable effects of this social sympathy in human nature" (EPM 5.20; SBN 224).⁷³ Our being is cemented with these ambiguous qualities. Our dependency on others prepares the soil no less for the darker, destructive emotions of envy, spite, and malice than for the socially benign and necessary sentiments of compassion and cooperativeness.

The social-referencing principle at the heart of Hume's psychology makes human beings dependent on the views and sentiments of others for a coherent sense of themselves and the world around them. We always consider the sentiments of others in our judgments of ourselves. Pride and humility are not self-sustaining; they languish unless supported "by some excellency in the character, in bodily accomplishments, in cloaths, equipage or fortune" (T 2.1.5.7; SBN 288) and it is never sufficient to appreciate these qualities privately. Our pleasure in them must be mirrored in the esteem of others (T 2.2.5.21; SBN 365). In this way, we come to identify those features of ourselves to which we have an "existential connection" and which thereby come to form our conception of ourselves as socially-located persons.

The need to have one's love for an object affirmed by others we most esteem encourages us to go out of our way to secure the affirmation of others. This can bring people together and bind them fast to each other, but it can equally drive them into hopeless spirals of destructive rivalry. No one understood this better than Shakespeare.⁷⁴ It is hell, Hermia exclaims, "to choose love by another's eyes."⁷⁵ So Valentinus discovers in *Two Gentlemen of Verona*. He goes out of his way to praise his love, Silvia, and tries, in every way possible, to prove that Julia, his friend Proteus's lover, is plain and uninteresting in comparison, all in hopes of winning Proteus's affirmation of his amorous desire. But Valentinus is so successful that he turns Proteus away from Julia and kindles in him a burning desire for Silvia. What began as an attempt to secure his friend's affirmation ends in intense rivalry, envy, and eventually Proteus's violent rape of Silvia when she refuses to requite his love. Shakespeare here captures the dynamics of envy and malice as Hume's moral psychology accounts them.

Some of our dependence on others is likely to be broadly based, deriving from the influence of the customs and practices of the culture. But much of it is likely to

come from a narrower range of sources, especially from those whom one admires (T 2.2.9.11; SBN 321). Early in life, this dependency is most likely to be felt with respect to our “neare Kinsfolks,” as Bacon reminded us. But, as we mature and the range of our contacts widens, our focus will include “Fellowes in Office” and rank. As our aspirations become more focused and our social interactions more selective and sophisticated, so too the “resemblances” keyed to our conception of self become more focused and sophisticated. Aspiring to be philosophers of quality and distinction, we come to depend on philosophers, not poets, preachers, or politicians, for affirmation.

One might expect, on Humean principles, that noteworthy “resemblances” would have a special energy. For others in such proximity are “like me” not merely in some generally relevant respect or other, which might be sufficient to launch sympathy, but in respects that have signal significance *for me* as I tend to view myself, because they touch matters closer to the core of my sense of self. Recall Hume’s account of the double relation of impressions and ideas that engenders and sustains pride in some object (T 2.1.5). According to Hume, some thing, relation, possession, or quality (the “subject” or “cause” of one’s pride) which resembles or is related in some important way to oneself (its “object”) causes pleasure; this pleasure then yields a resembling pleasure that is directed back to the self that is related to that “cause.” The connection to oneself of the valued object must be publicly recognized to be something distinctive and admirable and worthy of the focus of one’s energies (T 2.1.6.4; SBN 291–2). This movement, Hume maintained, produces an idea of the self (T 2.1.5.6; SBN 287). Hume does not mean by this, as some have claimed, that by itself it produces the self (that is, the person’s sense of self), but he means rather that the movement focuses one’s attention on oneself (T 2.1.9.2; SBN 304). Not only is the connection (resemblance) between the subject of pride and its object (the possessor of the admired quality) operative in the movement of the double relation, but also the movement makes one’s self an important object of one’s attention.

A similar movement and similar resulting focus, I suggest, is involved when referencing and proximity engage comparison. Again, where there is proximity, the resemblance has a special significance for the person involved, because it touches on matters at one’s core, and thus has a special energy. It, too, like the movement of pride, focuses one’s attention on one’s sense of self. Now, we are off to the races, for the generic contrast principle takes the differences noted between the “resembling” parties and enhances them, making the other’s good fortune not an affirmation of oneself but a reproach for one’s now amplified deficiencies. This movement is made even more powerful by the fact, as Hume sees it, that pride (and hence one’s conception of self) depends on eminence. Hobbes maintained that “man, whose Joy consisteth in comparing himself with other men, can relish nothing but what is eminent” (*Leviathan*, 226). Hume agrees. He writes, “goods which are common to

all mankind, and have become familiar to us by custom, give us little satisfaction" (T 2.1.6.4; SBN 291). Comparing ourselves with others with respect to these goods, "we find we are not in the least distinguish'd" and this, says Hume, is sufficient to destroy our pride, even though they give us pleasure (T 2.1.6.5; SBN 292).

Why, then, does not reversal-comparison, especially comparison-generated contempt, happen more frequently? Why does it not silence sympathy? There are several things we can say in Hume's behalf in light of our understanding of his principle of comparison. First, Hume is willing to admit that reversal-comparison extends its influence throughout our emotional lives. It is operative not only in its relatively pure form in malice and envy, but also in mixed forms in respect and contempt. And, in view of the importance of eminence for pride, contempt-inspiring comparison may have a large field on which to play. "A man of sense and merit," one who is already relatively secure in his sense of self, "is pleas'd with himself, independent of all foreign considerations," says Hume. "But a fool must always find some person, that is more foolish, in order to keep himself in good humour with his own parts and understanding" (T 3.3.2.7; SBN 596). This is the darker side of pride. After all, eminence is relative to a comparison class, and one may be driven by circumstances to embrace it wherever one can find it. Jimmie, in Thomas Babe's play, *Demon Wine*, loses his job and then his integrity, but when he meets Buffalo Bill, his even more desperate homeless old high school buddy, he can say, "We all gotta be better than somebody to survive and I'm better than you, so I'm okay."⁷⁶ This is an analogue of what Hume calls "the vanity of power" (T 2.1.10.12; SBN 315) and comparison in such circumstances causes contempt. Apparently, in a pinch, it can sustain a sense of self.

But there is more to be said in behalf of Hume's story. Envy and malice depend on proximity, but Hume recognized that proximity is a function of resemblance. Aristotle, Bacon, Mandeville, Rousseau, and many other students of these passions, locate the source of envy and malice in rivalry. At first, Hume seems to take a different view of the matter: malice and envy, like pity, he says, are occasioned by neither friendship nor enmity (T 2.2.7.1; SBN 369). However, Hume's view, I think, is consistent with the common thought. *Mere* rivalry, in the sense of opposed interests and competitive behavior, may not be enough to generate envy or malice, in Hume's view. However, rivalry with those in some proximity to one is another matter, especially if the proximity is that of potter to potter, poet to poet, and philosopher to philosopher (T 2.2.8.15; SBN 378). The relevant proximity, as we have seen, depends on a bond joining them in the imagination (T 2.2.8.13; SBN 378), the resemblance or difference depends on a comparison class that one finds especially salient.

Moreover, as Bacon explained, social proximity is important in large part because the success of kin, peers and neighbors "doth upbraid unto them their owne Fortunes; And pointeth at them, and commeth oftner into their remembrance, and

incurreth likewise more into the note of other” (“Of Envy,” 28). Envy is not merely grief at another’s success; it also involves unhappy admiration of that other person that one conceals from oneself (EPM 6.33n; SBN 248n). “Fools may our scorn, not envy raise,” wrote John Gay, “For envy is a kind of praise.”⁷⁷ This admiration turns back upon oneself as a reproach;⁷⁸ one feels another’s gladness as a curse. For this self-reproach to take hold there must be some respect, important to the envier, in which the object of envy and he are neighbors or peers, seeking the same ends, as Aristotle put it. There must be some relevant and telling points of comparison between them that serve as measures for the envier’s self-assessment. So, the good fortune of some who are near to one in some respects, for example, near kin or “Fellows in Office,” may not bring reproach, because the contrast between us does not touch matters on which one’s sense of self depends. On Hume’s account, the differences between us that make a difference in contrast are those which engage the self, either enhancing or threatening it. Only some differences have that power, and the power they have will surely vary widely from person to person.

The above account also allows us to explain to some extent the role of competition or rivalry in reversal-comparison, and, more specifically, in envy and malice. As we noted earlier, Hume does not follow the tradition that locates a major source of these destructive sentiments in actual competition and opposed interests. But there is still a sense in which the envier is tempted to regard the envied as the cause of his pain. For, although the envied person may *do* nothing to increase one’s humiliation—to reproach one in one’s own eyes—his good fortune not only brings one’s comparative failure to one’s attention, but also enhances it by contrast. The rivalry is the product of an illusion, but, Hume recognizes, it may be no less emotionally real to the envier.

Conclusion

Rousseau traced all the corrosive inequalities of civilized society to the unavoidable drive among civilized human beings to live outside themselves, finding confirmation of their existence only in the opinions of others. The unremitting rage to distinguish ourselves produces what is best and what is worst in human beings—albeit “a multitude of bad things against a small number of good ones” and “everything becomes factitious and bogus” (“Discourse,” 158, 161). In the same mode, Nietzsche famously located *ressentiment*—the wellspring of humility, religious self-sacrifice and love, as well as envy, malice, spite, and revenge—in impotent striving for the good things that others have.⁷⁹ Although these qualities, for almost all of us, are deep in the marrow of our souls, they are, in the view of Rousseau and Nietzsche, undeniably diseased and perverted, distorting and disordering the human mind and social life. Hume’s account of human psychology contrasts sharply with this Romantic pessimism.

Following Mandeville's project (but not his doctrine), Hume takes an unimpassioned, detached approach to explaining the human soul and human sociality. No villains or saints fill his story, just basic human capacities, principles, and dependencies, and their emotional and behavioral manifestations. He located the explanation of human behavior firmly in the study of the passions and movements of the human heart. In turn, he grounded this study in a small set of fundamental mechanisms or principles—not self-love as Hobbes and Mandeville had insisted, nor in some irreducible social urge understood as innate compassion or a natural desire for companionship as many of their critics insisted, but rather in the principles of sympathy and comparison.

In Hume's theory, these principles bear a complex relation to self-love and sociality, but they are psychologically the more fundamental. In terms of them and their interactions alone can we understand the nature and genesis of sociality and self-love. In their terms alone can we explain both our deep dependence on social intercourse and the passions that tend to drive us apart. With these principles, also, Hume explains the genesis and influence of most of the important human passions—pride and humility, compassion and pity, respect, contempt, envy and malice among them. All of them, whether socially beneficial or destructive, are expressions of psychological forces that knit together the human frame. This theory seeks in every principle, application, and example to demonstrate that human beings, as individual selves and as social units, are indeed cemented together with diseased qualities. Hume uses sympathy and comparison, taken separately and in various combinations, to explain all aspects of human nature, the dark sides as well as the bright.

NOTES

I began working on this paper during my stay at the Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study in the Humanities and Social Sciences, a wonderful institution with a wonderful motto: "no obligations, just opportunities." The essay was drafted in large part during my stay at the Bellagio Study and Conference Center. I am very grateful to the Rockefeller Foundation for giving me the opportunity to prepare this work in surroundings of extraordinary beauty and grace. The essay was given its final shape during my fellowship year at the National Humanities Center, a local, dear friend and a scholar's dream retreat. Versions of this essay were read and discussed at the University of Lund and at the Hume Conference in Helsinki. It is a pleasure to acknowledge the critical support of valued colleagues. I am especially grateful to Jackie Taylor for her astute editor's eye which among other things helped me clarify the structure of the argument of this essay and to Donald Ainslie and an anonymous reviewer for *Hume Studies* for comments that helped me correct embarrassing blunders and deepened my understanding of Hume's psychology.

1 Michel de Montaigne, "Of the Useful and the Honorable," in *The Complete Essays*, trans. M. A. Screech (London: Penguin Press, 2003), 891–906, 892. I have slightly altered the translation.

2 Bernard Mandeville, *Fable of the Bees or Private Vices Public Benefits*, ed. F. B. Kaye, 2 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1924), 1:5. Hereafter cited in text as *Fable* followed by volume and page numbers. Mandeville refines and develops themes of *Fable* in his *Enquiry into the Origin of Honour and the Usefulness of Christianity in War* (London: John Brotherton, 1732), hereafter "EOH" followed by page number, cited in text.

3 Mandeville, when writing soberly, also pretended that he had no interest in judging the psychological qualities and principles he studies (*Fable*, 1:41; EOH 5). The influence of Cicero on Hume's moral psychology and moral philosophy is considerable, but Hume resisted the Stoic tendency in Cicero to regard the passions as diseases of the mind or motions of a disturbed soul that must be subordinated to the firm governance of disinterested reason. For Cicero's moral psychology see his *Tusculan Disputations*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1971), esp. chaps. 3 and 4.

4 These are the words of William Rose, a contemporary reviewer of Hume's *Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals*, in *Monthly Review* 6 (1752): 1–19, repr. in *Early Responses to Hume's Moral, Literary and Political Writings*, ed. J. Feiser (Bristol, England and Sterling, VA: Thoemes Press, 1999), 1:20.

5 References to Hume's works will be placed in the text as follows:

T= David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. David Fate Norton and Mary J. Norton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); numbers correspond to book, part, section and paragraph in T.

D= David Hume, *A Dissertation on the Passions*, in *Essays Moral, Political and Literary*, ed. T.H. Green and T.H. Grose (London: Longmans, Green, & Co., 1898).

E= David Hume, *Essays: Moral, Political, and Literary* ed. Eugene Miller (Indianapolis: Liberty Classics, 1985).

EHU= *An Enquiry concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Tom L. Beauchamp (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), numbers refer to section and paragraph.

EPM= David Hume, *Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals*, ed. Tom L. Beauchamp (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), followed by section and paragraph number.

H= David Hume, *The History of England*, ed. William Todd (Indianapolis: Liberty Classics, 1983), 6 vols.

SBN= David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge, 2nd ed., revised by P. H. Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978); and *Enquiries concerning Human Understanding and concerning the Principles of Morals*, ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge, 3rd ed., revised by P. H. Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon Press).

6 Lucretius, *De rerum natura*, trans. W. H. D. Rouse, revised by M. F. Smith (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992), 2.1–2, hereafter cited in the text by book and line number. John Florio, the seventeenth century translator of Montaigne's *Essays*, offers a more poetic translation: "Tis sweet on ground seas, when windes waves turmoyle, / From land to see an others grievous toyle." <http://www.uoregon.edu/~rbear/montaigne/>.

7 Hans Blumenberg offers a fascinating account of this history image. See *Shipwreck with Spectator*, trans. S. Rendell (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1997), hereafter cited in the text.

8 Thomas Hobbes, *The Elements of Law*, ed. F. Toennies, (London: Simpkin, Marshall, and Co, 1889), 1.9.19, hereafter cited in the text as *Elements*.

9 Joseph Butler, *Fifteen Sermons* (1729; New York: Robert Carter & Brothers, 1860; repr. Charlottesville, Va.: Lincoln-Rembrandt, 1993), 65–6, 69–70, hereafter cited in the text.

10 In *Leviathan*, Hobbes reverses the components of his earlier account: Compassion (or pity) is "Griefe, for the Calamity of another," arising "from the imagination that the like calamity may befall [oneself]." Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. R. Tuck (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 43, hereafter cited as *Leviathan*. Butler charges that Hobbes confuses pity with fear. *Sermons*, 64–5n.

11 "We may enjoy in stormy weather, when comfortably seated in our warm, cosy parlours, speaking of those at sea, for it heightens our feeling of comfort and happiness." *Lectures on Ethics*, trans. L. Infield (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), 218.

12 Quoted in Blumenberg, *Shipwreck*, 36.

13 Francis Bacon, "Of Truth," in *The Essayes or Counsels, Civill and Morall*, ed. M. Kiernan (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1985), 7–9, 8. Following both, perhaps, Hume uses the same image in "The Stoic," E 150–1.

14 Seneca, "On Mercy," in *Moral Essays*, vol. 1, trans. J. W. Basore (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1928), 357–447, book 2, chap. 6.

15 Jean-Jacques Rousseau, "Discourse on the Origin of Inequality," in *The Social Contract and Discourses*, trans. D. A. Cress (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1983), 105–61, 135, hereafter cited in the text as "Discourse."

16 Rousseau, *Emile*, trans. A. Bloom (New York: Basic Books, 1979), 221, hereafter cited in the text as *Emile*.

17 See chap. 30 in Tertullian, *De Spectaculis*, trans. T. R. Glover (London: William Heinemann, 1931), esp. 297–9. Gibbon provides a vivid translation: "You are fond of spectacles . . . expect the greatest of all spectacles, the last and eternal judgment of the universe. How shall I admire, how laugh, how rejoice, how exult, when I behold so many proud monarchs, and fancied gods, groaning in the lowest abyss of darkness; so many magistrates, who persecuted the name of the Lord, liquifying in fiercer fires than they ever kindled against the Christians; so many sage philosophers blushing in redhot flames with their deluded scholars." Edward Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, 5 vols. (Philadelphia: John Winston, 1845), 1:537.

18 Arthur Schopenhauer, *On the Basis of Morality*, trans. E. F. J. Payne (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1965), 135, quoted in John Portmann, *When Bad Things Happen to Other People* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 75.

19 John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, ed. J. Boss, Renaissance Editions (London: 1667), <http://darkwing.uoregon.edu/%7Erbear/lost/lost.html>. 8.119–22. Text references are to the Book and lines of this edition.

20 Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, ed. K. Ansell-Pearson and C. Diethe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 31–3. Scheler brought this passage to mind. Max Scheler, *Ressentiment*, trans. W. W. Holdheim (New York: Free Press, 1961), 67. Nietzsche echoes Gibbon's crushing criticism of Tertullian: the "stern . . . [and] zealous African" expressed the sentiments of many Christians, "who, in this world, found themselves oppressed by the power of the Pagans, were sometimes seduced by resentment and spiritual pride to delight in the prospect of their future triumph." Gibbon, *Decline and Fall*, 1:537.

21 Aristotle, *On Rhetoric*, trans. G. A. Kennedy (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 152–6, hereafter cited in text.

22 Indeed, they may even pity the sinner. The sinner is a proper object of pity, Aquinas argued, because the suffering can be regarded as non-voluntary or "accidental," since even sinners ultimately will perfect happiness, but fail to understand what this consists in. See Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* II-II, 30.1 ad 1, and A Keaty, "The Christian Virtue of Mercy: Aquinas' Transformation of Aristotelian Pity," *Heythrop Journal* 46 (2005): 181–98, 189.

23 *Summa Theologiae III (Supplement)*, Q 94, a. 3, trans. English Dominicans (London: Burns, Oates, and Washbourne 1912–1936; repr. New York: Christian Classics, 1981).

24 *Summa Theologiae III (Supplement)*, Q 94, a. 1.

25 Immanuel Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals, Doctrine of Virtue*, trans. M. Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 253.

26 Montaigne, *Essays*, 892.

27 One might make one's way into this large literature through the work of Mercer and Árdal. Philip Mercer, *Sympathy and Ethics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), esp. chaps. 2 and 3; Páll S. Árdal, *Passion and Value in Hume's Treatise*, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1989), chap. 3. A very helpful recent discussion of the mechanism of sympathy can be found in Jacqueline Taylor, "Sympathy, Self, and Others," in *Hume's Treatise: A Critical Guide*, ed. Donald C. Ainslie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming). Relatively little attention has been paid to the role of comparison in Hume's psychology. For brief discussions of comparison see Árdal, *Passion and Value*, 59–61; Mercer, *Sympathy and Ethics*, 32–3; Annette Baier, *A Progress of Sentiments* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press), 146–50, 207–9, and Walter Brand, *Hume's Theory of Moral Judgment* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1992), 82–90.

28 See T 2.1.11.2, 2.1.11.7, 2.2.2.4, 2.3.6.8, 3.3.2.2 (SBN 316, 317, 353, 427, 592).

29 The importance of this second stage is made clear at EHU 2.2 (SBN 17).

30 For a helpful discussion of these forms, or “variations” of the Hume’s basic “explanatory schema,” see Donald C. Ainslie’s “Sympathy and the Unity of Hume’s Idea of the Self,” in *Persons and Passions: Essays in Honor of Annette Baier*, ed. Joyce Jenkins, Jennifer Whiting, and Christopher Williams (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005): 143–72, 145–50.

31 David Norton notes that Hume seems to follow Cicero here (see Norton’s annotation to T 2.1.11.3 at 501–2). Hume is not alone among moderns in holding this view. Grotius, for example, wrote that “in order that they all might recognize their natural social bond and kinship,” God gave human beings not only language, but also “the ability to look each other in the face.” Hugo Grotius, *The Freedom of the Seas*, trans. R. V. D. Magoffin (New York: Oxford University Press, 1916), 2. And Mandeville observes that we are moved to pity “when we are near enough to see the Motion of the Soul in their Eyes, observe their Fears and Agonies, and are able to read the Pangs in every Feature of the Face” (*Fable*, 1:256).

32 See, for example, T 2.1.11.2, 3.3.2.2 (SBN 317, 576, 592), EPM 7.2 (SBN 251), and E 202.

33 See T 2.1.11.2 (SBN 316). It is widely known that a single infant crying in a hospital nursery can set off a chain reaction of neonate bawling. From his armchair, Hume observed what contemporary psychologists have demonstrated, namely, that our ability to communicate our sentiments to others depends fundamentally on the “imitative nature” of the human mind (E 202). See, for example, the work of Andrew Meltzoff and his associates: Andrew N. Meltzoff, “Foundations for Developing a Concept of Self: The Role of Imitation in Relating Self to Other and the Value of Social Mirroring, Social Modeling, and Self Practice in Infancy,” in *The Self in Transition: Infancy to Childhood*, ed. Dante Cicchetti and Marjorie Beeghly (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 139–64; A. N. Meltzoff and M. Keith Moore, “Why Faces are Special to Infants,” in *Developmental Neurocognition: Speech and Face Processing in the First Year of Life*, ed. Benedicte de Bousson-Bardès, et al. (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1993), 211–25; A. N. Meltzoff and R. Books, “‘Like Me’ as a Building Block for Understanding Other Minds,” in *Intentions and Intentionality: Foundations of Social Cognition*, ed. Bertram F. Malle, Louis J. Moses, and Dare A. Baldwin (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2001), 171–91; and *Perspectives on Imitation: From Neuroscience to Social Science*, ed. Susan Hurley and Nick Chater (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2005).

34 See also E 112 and H 5:258, 6:491.

35 As Mercer tried to do, *Sympathy and Ethics*, chap. 2.

36 Note the difference here between Hume’s account of imagination-generated sympathy, and that of Adam Smith. On Hume’s view, sympathy based on imaginative entertaining of the circumstances of the other person does not involve in any way imaginatively inserting oneself into the position and point of view of that person. Hume’s theory recognizes a process of imaginative *projection*, perhaps, but not one of imaginative *introjection*, as Smith does in the following passage: “By the imagination we place ourselves in his situation, we conceive ourselves enduring all the same torments, we enter as it were into his body, and become in some measure the same person with him, and thence from some idea of his sensations, and even feel something which, though weaker in degree, is not altogether unlike them;” and in this passage: “But

though sympathy is very properly said to arise from an imaginary change of situations with the person principally concerned, yet this imaginary change is not supposed to happen to me in my own person and character, but in that of the person with whom I sympathize. . . . I not only change circumstances with you, but I change persons and characters." Smith, *A Theory of the Moral Sentiments* (Indianapolis: Liberty Classics, 1976), 48, 501–2.

37 In "Of Tragedy," Hume writes, "tragedy is an imitation; and imitation is always of itself agreeable" (E 220); see also E 222, where he speaks of "the charms of imitation."

38 Árdal, *Passion and Value*, xxii.

39 Developmental psychologists speak of "affect attunement." See Daniel M. Stern, et al., "Affect Attunement: The Sharing of Feeling States between Mother and Infant by Means of Inter-modal Fluency," in *Social Perception in Infants*, ed. Tiffany M. Field and Nathan A. Fox (Norwood, N.J.: Ablex Publishing Co., 1985), 249–68.

40 Take, for example, the profound differences between autistic and non-autistic people. See Elijah Millgram's review of Temple Grandin's *Thinking in Pictures* (New York: Vintage Books, 1996) in *Hume Studies* 26 (2000), 198–200. Grandin is the autistic person at the center of Oliver Sacks' *An Anthropologist on Mars* (New York: Knopf, 1995).

41 Contemporary social psychologists have paid some attention to this phenomenon. They call it "contrast empathy" or "counter-empathy." See David Aderman and Gail L. Unterberger, "Contrast empathy and observer modeling behavior," *Journal of Personality* 45 (1977): 367–80; Dolf Zillman and Joanne R. Cantor, "Affective Responses to the Emotions of a Protagonist," *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 13 (1977): 155–65; Basil G. Englis, Katherine B. Vaughan, and John T. Lanzetta, "Conditioning of Counter-Empathetic Emotional Responses," *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 18 (1982): 375–91. I am grateful to Louis Loeb for alerting me to this literature.

42 I use this term to mark the similarities between Hume's account and recent theories of child development that stress the importance of what they call "social referencing" for cognitive and emotional development of children. See Saul Feinman, "Social Referencing in Infancy," *Merrill-Palmer Quarterly* 28 (1982): 445–70 and *Social Referencing and the Social Construction of Reality*, ed. Saul Feinman and Michael Lewis (New York: Plenum Press, 1992).

43 Jackie Taylor offers a similar account of Hume's view of the social constitution of the self in "Sympathy, Self, and Others." Taylor emphasizes the contribution of sympathy to the social constitution of the self, while I tend to emphasize contextual-comparison, but our approaches are complementary. I learned a great deal from this paper.

44 The role of custom and shared, internalized "general rules" is pervasive in the *Treatise*. In connection with the specific point in the text see T 2.2.8.5 (SBN 374) and especially T 2.1.6.8–9 (SBN 293). "It may not be amiss," Hume writes, "to observe on this occasion, that the influence of general rules and maxims on the passions very much contributes to facilitate the effects of all the principles, which we shall explain in the progress of this treatise" (T 2.1.6.9; SBN 293).

45 Hume's view of the relation between the notion of self of *Treatise*, Book 1 and the notion of self of Book 2 has been the subject of much dispute. For an illuminating

discussion of the ins and outs of this debated topic see Terence Penelhum, *Themes in Hume* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2003), chaps. 2–6. Important contributions to this debate are made in Jane McIntyre, “Personal Identity and the Passions,” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 27 (1989): 545–57; Baier, *Progress*, 120–31; and especially Ainslie, “Sympathy and Unity,” 150–66.

46 I follow here Ainslie's illuminating discussion in “Scepticism About Persons in Book II of Hume's *Treatise*,” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 37 (1999): 469–92, 478–83. He calls these self-defining properties “existential connections” (478).

47 Penelhum, *Themes in Hume*, 153–4.

48 Here Hume follows a long line going back to Augustine's characterization of *miser cordia* in *The City of God*, trans. Gerald G. Walsh, et al. (Garden City: Doubleday, 1958), bk. 9, chap. 5.

49 Here, as often in the *Treatise*, the language is Mandeville's, but not the thought. According to Mandeville, pity “counterfeits” the virtue of charity or benevolence and we often mistake pity for charity even in our own actions (*Fable*, 1:254–5, 257). The passion is counterfeit because, while it has the effects of selfless love, it is at bottom entirely self-directed (*Fable*, 1:56, 255–6), and hence fails Mandeville's definition of virtue (*Fable*, 1:48–9). Hume clearly puts Mandeville's image in a very different light. For Hume, there is nothing incomplete, feigned, or self-deceptive about pity. It “counterfeits” benevolence by mimicking its movement, scope and effects.

50 Notwithstanding what Hume says at T 3.3.6.2 (SBN 619), for what Hume there regards as a virtue is not the psychological mechanism of sympathy, but one of the sentiments it engenders, namely, what he calls in the *Enquiry* “fellow-feeling” or the “sentiment of humanity.”

51 I follow here Ainslie's interpretation suggested in his “Sympathy and Unity,” 148–9.

52 For a discussion of this “pity tradition” see Martha Nussbaum, “Pity and Mercy: Nietzsche's Stoicism,” in *Nietzsche, Genealogy, Morality: Essays on Nietzsche's Genealogy of Morals*, ed. Richard Schacht (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 139–67, 141–4.

53 La Rochefoucauld, *Maxims*, trans. L. Tancock (London: Penguin, 1959), §264.

54 If one rejoices in deserved suffering, one feels “indignation,” Aristotle says in the *Rhetoric* (156 (1386b9–16, 1386b26–32)). Like Aquinas after him, Aristotle holds that the judgment of deservingness distinguishes indignation from malice.

55 Cicero includes the first of these elements but leaves out the second entirely. “Pity,” he writes, “is a grief at the misery of another who suffers wrongfully; for no one is moved by pity at the punishment of a parricide or of a betrayer of his country.” *Tusculan Disputations*, bk 4, chap. 8. Earlier in the *Disputations*, Cicero offers a simpler account: “pity is an uneasiness which arises from the misfortunes of another” (bk 3, chap. 10).

56 Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* II-II. 30, discussed in Keaty, “Christian Virtue of Mercy,” 185–93.

57 Nietzsche, *Daybreak*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), aphorism 133.

58 In contrast, in Dante's medieval Christian mind, the reverse or opposite of envy is not limited to pity but embraces selfless generosity and engagement in the common good. Its exemplars are Mary, who at the Cana wedding, entreats Jesus to help the host whose wine had run out, seeking in any way she can to enhance the joyous revelry, and Plyades, who offers his life in place of the condemned Orestes. Dante Alighieri, *Purgatorio*, trans. J. Hollander and R. Hollander (New York: Doubleday, 2003), 13, 28–33 (references are to Canto and lines). The envious, in contrast, “set [their] hearts on things that of necessity cannot be shared” (14, 86–7), that “divided, lessen each one's share” (15, 50).

59 *Fable*, 1:135. La Rochefoucauld writes, “We often pride ourselves on even the most criminal passions, but envy is a timid and shamefaced passion we never dares acknowledge.” *Maxims* §27. At *Fable* 2:176 Mandeville more precisely traces envy to “self-liking.”

60 The similarity between this notion and Rousseau's notion of *amour propre* is manifest, but unlike Rousseau, Mandeville does not beat his breast over its dominant role in human motivation. Like a botanist, who sees no distinction between weeds and flowers, but interests himself in the natural history of all flora, Mandeville seeks to understand the natural history of this deep principle (EOH 5). For Rousseau, the ultimate moralist as Mandeville would see it, this passion is not nature-given but induced by competition and fertilized by corrupt civilization, and all efforts must be taken to eradicate it or at least confine and control its noxious influence as best we can. A keen student of Montaigne (*Fable*, 1:5), Mandeville believes that to root out this “seed of diseased quality” would destroy human life.

61 Bacon, “Of Envy,” in *Essays*, 27–31, 28, hereafter cited in the text as “Of Envy.”

62 Árdal distinguishes between joy at the misfortune of another (*Schadenfreude*) and the wish for the unhappiness of another (*böswilligkeit*), neither of which are immediately motivating (*Passion and Value*, 63). Hume seems to restrict the term malice to cases in which these are causally linked to “anger” and hence a motive to action. Of course, he recognizes the existence of lesser forms, especially in the case of the pleasures of the shipwreck spectator, but unlike Mandeville, he was not inclined to think of them as forms of malice.

63 Hume describes this dynamic of responding in “hate” to the perceived cause of suffering (one's own or another's) at T 2.2.2.27 (SBN 346).

64 To an extent, I follow Mercer here, *Sympathy and Ethics*, 32–3. In contrast, Baier, *Progress*, 149–50, and Ainslie, “Sympathy and Unity,” 145, hold the view that the comparison involved is that between *sympathetically received* sentiments and sentiments regarding one's own condition. Thus, any movement of reversal-comparison, on their view, requires a prior engagement of sympathy regarding the same object of the passions. Comparison reverses the psychic direction of sympathy. This fine point of difference has important implications for our understanding of the nature of the interaction between sympathy and reversal-comparison. I believe Hume's text favors the reading I offer, but the evidence is not utterly decisive.

65 To purge them of their sin, the eyes of the envious are stitched shut with wires of iron (13, 70–2). Dante's image is haunting and discomfiting. It symbolizes, perhaps, the specific form of their corruption—according to common medieval etymology, *invidia* came from *in* and *video* which they understood to mean “not seeing” (R. Hollander, *Purgatorio*, 269). Seeing the happiness of others with their eyes, the envious fail to see them with their hearts, but rather see only themselves and what they lack. But the aim of blinding them “like . . . untamed falcons who cannot be calmed” (13, 72), might also be therapeutic. The envious, no longer able to sense the differences that so deeply disturbed them when sighted and, so, insensible to how great these differences stand in the eyes of others, are freed from the iron grip of self on their sentiments and actions and are enabled freely to love with generosity of spirit, a love that returns as in a mirror the more it is given (15, 73–5).

66 *The Adventurer*, No. 110, quoted by George Campbell in *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* (London: 1776), chap. 11, which is reprinted in Feiser, *Early Responses*, 2:297. Feiser attributes the quote to John Hawkesworth, founder and editor of *The Adventurer*.

67 Mandeville held that the dramatist by stimulating the imagination causes something superficially resembling compassion in the audience, but this is only “an Imitation of Pity; the heart feels little of it” (*Fable*, 1:257).

68 Hurd's explanation clearly draws on the Lucretian trope. “We find our hearts affected, and even pained, by a good tragedy,” Hurd writes. “But we instantly recollect that the scene is fictitious; and the *recollection* not only abates our uneasiness, but diffuses a secret joy upon the mind in the discovery we make that the *occasion* of our uneasiness is not real” (quoted in Feiser, *Early Responses*, 2:150).

69 This is Hume's nod to the tradition that reduces pity to a species of self-concern which, as we have seen, he otherwise resolutely opposes.

70 In the *Enquiry*, Hume argues that “no force of imagination can convert us into another person, and make us fancy, that we, being that person, reap benefit from those valuable qualities that belong to him” (EPM 6.3; SBN 234). Jamie Ferreira correctly argues that, in this passage, Hume does not deny the possibility of a role for imagination in sympathy, but rather insisting that the separate identities of sympathizer and object are not jeopardized by the process. “The upshot of [this] discussion,” he writes, “is that the other's good becomes ‘our own’ even though we do not become the other.” Ferreira, “Hume and Imagination: Sympathy and ‘the Other,’” *International Philosophical Quarterly* 34 (1994): 39–57, 45.

71 Hume's first example of envy is the complex example of social superiors envying their inferiors “when they perceive their inferiors approaching or overtaking them” (T 2.2.8.12; SBN 377). Hume gives several examples of this form of envy in his *History of England*. See especially H 1:169, 463, 2:129, 149, 160, and 5:53, 158.

72 Hesiod, *Works and Days*, verses 25–6, quoted in Peter Walcot, *Envy and the Greeks* (Warminster: Aris and Phillips, 1978), 9. Aristotle quotes this passage in his discussion of how friendship can turn to enmity under conditions of rivalry-generated envy (136 (1381b15–20), 160 (1388a15–6)).

73 Commenting on the atrocities committed during the Irish Rebellion of 1641, Hume wrote, “death was the lightest punishment, inflicted by those rebels: All the tortures

which wanton cruelty could devise, all the lingering pains of body, the anguish of mind, the agonies of despair, could not satiate revenge excited without injury, and cruelty derived from no cause. To enter into particulars would shock the least delicate humanity. Such enormities, though attested by undoubted evidence, appear almost incredible. Depraved nature, even perverted religion, encouraged by the utmost license, reach not to such a pitch of ferocity; unless the pity, inherent in human breasts, be destroyed by that contagion of example, which transports men beyond all the usual motives of conduct and behaviour" (H 5:342). Compare Cass Sunstein's discussion of the contemporary social psychology literature in *Why Societies Need Dissent* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003), especially chaps. 3–4.

74 "Thou doest love her, because thou knowest I love her." Shakespeare, "Sonnet 42," line 7. Rene Girard argues in *A Theater of Envy: William Shakespeare* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991) that Shakespeare was a master theorist of what he calls "mimetic desire."

75 Shakespeare, *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Cambridge University Press), Act 1, Scene 1.

76 Thomas Babe, *Demon Wine* (New York: Dramatists Play Service, 1989), Act 1, Scene 3.

77 John Gay, "The Hound and the Huntsman," in *Fables* (London: Tonson and Watts, 1727), fable 44. Kierkegaard echoes the thought: "Envy is concealed admiration. . . . Admiration is happy self-abandon, envy, unhappy self-assertion." Søren Kierkegaard, *Sickness unto Death*, trans. W. Lowrie (New York: Doubleday, 1954), 217.

78 Hobbes writes in his compendium of Aristotle's *Rhetoric* that we envy "those that attain unto, or do the things that turn to our reproach, not being done by us." Hobbes, *The Whole Art of Rhetoric*, in *The English Works of Thomas Hobbes*, ed. Sir W. Molesworth (London: J. Bohn, 1839), 464. See Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, (1388a17): "We also envy those whose possession of or success in a thing is a reproach to us" (W. Rhys Roberts, translation, in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKeon (New York: Random House), 1401).

79 Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, essay 1, section 10 (*ressentiment* is "the vengefulness of the impotent").