Complexities of Character:
Hume on Love and Responsibility
Nancy Schauber
Hume Studies Volume 35, Number 1,2 (2009) pp. 29–56.
Your use of the HUME STUDIES archive indicates your acceptance of HUME STUDIES' Terms and Conditions of Use, available at
http://www.humesociety.org/hs/about/terms.html.

HUME STUDIES' Terms and Conditions of Use provides, in part, that unless you have obtained prior permission, you may not download an entire issue of a journal or multiple copies of articles, and you may use content in the HUME STUDIES archive only for your personal, non-commercial use.

Each copy of any part of a HUME STUDIES transmission must contain the same copyright notice that appears on the screen or printed page of such transmission.
For more information on HUME STUDIES contact
humestudies-info@humesociety.org

http://www.humesociety.org/hs/

Hume Studies
Volume 35, Numbers 1 & 2, 2009, pp. 29–55

Complexities of Character: Hume on Love and Responsibility

NANCY SCHAUBER

Abstract: Hume claims that moral assessments refer to character; it is character of which we morally approve and disapprove. This essay explores what Hume means by "character." Is it true that moral assessments refer to character, and should Hume think this given his other commitments in moral philosophy and moral psychology? I discuss two prominent themes—namely, Hume's views on moral responsibility; and Hume's comparison of moral feelings with feelings of love—to see what light these themes can shed on Hume's broader views about moral assessment. I argue that at least according to a traditional understanding of the term, character could not plausibly have a role to play in Hume's account of moral assessment, but that Hume's moral theory could require a conception of character different from this traditional one: a conception according to which character need not be the standard one that holds character to be consistent, stable, and well-integrated. In morally assessing others, we do not do so on the basis of their characters (at least in any robust sense of character), but on the basis of their motivational states. My account of Hume's theory of the responsibility, passions and the moral sentiments leaves intact the central Humean insights about the conditions for action and the arousal of the moral sentiment, suggesting what Hume could have said, both more plausibly and without undermining the key features of his moral psychology. And it also shows that Hume's moral theory has no need for a robust conception of character.

Nancy Schauber is Associate Professor in the Department of Philosophy, University of Richmond, 28 Westhampton Way, North Court Room 207, Richmond, VA 23173, U.S.A. E-mail: nschaube@richmond.edu.

Hume famously asserts that moral assessments refer to character; it is character of which we morally approve and disapprove. I am interested in what Hume means by "character." Is it true that moral assessments refer to character, and should Hume think this given his other commitments in moral philosophy and moral psychology? In what follows, I discuss two prominent themes—one from his moral philosophy, namely, moral responsibility; and one from his moral psychology, namely, the comparison of moral feelings with feelings of love—to see what light these themes can shed on Hume's broader views about moral assessment. I will argue that at least according to a traditional understanding of the term, character could not plausibly have a role to play in Hume's account of moral assessment, but that Hume's moral theory could require a conception of character different from this traditional one; a conception according to which character need not be the standard one that holds character to be consistent, stable, and well-integrated.[1] In morally assessing others, we do not do so on the basis of their characters (at least in any robust sense of character), but on the basis of their motivational states.

In Part I, I discuss Hume's views on the attribution of moral responsibility, considering both a compatibilist and naturalist interpretation. The compatibilist interpretation takes Hume to hold that free and responsible actions are caused by the agent. This is to say that they are caused by something internal to the agent; namely, free and responsible actions are caused by the agent's willings and desires. But only desires that truly belong to the agent cause free and responsible actions. Actions for which we are responsible are caused by something internal to the agent, namely, the agent's desires. Call this the "internality requirement." The compatibilist interpretation takes "constancy and durability" of desires to indicate that those actions truly belong to the agent and are constitutive of character. Accordingly, the compatibilist interpretation has Hume claiming that free and responsible actions are caused by character, and that character, understood as "constant and durable," satisfies the internality requirement. Against the compatibilist interpretation, I argue that "constancy and durability" do not in fact indicate that desires truly belong to someone in the sense required for agency, so that the compatibilist interpretation of Hume leaves him with an untenable account of free and responsible action.

The naturalist account of Hume's treatment of moral responsibility is more promising. It focuses on our actual practices, and the conditions under which we withhold praise and blame. The naturalist interpretation of Hume takes seriously Hume's moral psychology, maintaining that Hume understands moral responsibility in terms of deep-rooted moral sentiments. Our moral sentiments, on this view, arise as a function of causal links between action and character. On this interpretation of Hume, only character traits, or mental qualities, arouse our sentiments of moral approval or disapproval. I argue that this standard naturalist reading of Hume should be rejected on phenomenological, but not theoretical grounds. I reconstruct an alternate naturalist reading of Hume according to which we take there to be a

causal connection between an agent's *motives* and her action unless we have reason to think otherwise. Such motives must be sufficiently durable to enable causal inference, but this durability need not amount to a robust conception of character; on either a naturalist or compatibilist reading of Hume, he does not clearly make use of, nor does he give clear philosophical evidence of support to a robust conception of character. Since ascription of moral responsibility requires that the action be caused not merely by the agent, but by the agent's own motive, we need a causal explanation that shows the motive to be internal to the agent. The natural place to look for such an explanation of how Hume attempts to satisfy the internality requirement is in his discussion of the mechanism of the arousal of the indirect passions, to which I turn in Part II. Using pride as a model for the other indirect passions, I review Hume's central claims about how our sentiments of love and the moral assessment arise. The viability of Hume's account depends in part on his response to certain concerns about the object of love and moral evaluation. He needs to accommodate our impression of a person as something that hangs together, and, relatedly, he needs to explain how someone can be an object for us despite possessing both positive and negative motives. I examine Christine Korsgaard's interpretation of Hume,[2] which promises to address these concerns, but argue that her view suffers from a variety of flaws, the most serious of which are that her Humean agent is neither very Humean, nor truly an agent. I then propose a revised, naturalist reading of Hume that addresses these remaining concerns by introducing a deflated, fragmentary conception of character and persons. My view ostensibly conflicts with some of Hume's claims about constancy and durability of character—claims which are, I think at least in part a function of his being under the sway of Aristotelian ethics, according to which character traits are fixed and stable dispositions. Had he been able to see the phenomena in a different, perhaps less Aristotelian light, my proposed view of character is one that I think Hume could have found persuasive. That, at least, is what I aim to show. I begin, however, with a very brief and admittedly sketchy preliminary account of Hume's conception of character.

Preliminary Conception of Character

Hume offers the reader no systematic account of character, so what he has in mind must be gleaned from remarks scattered through the text.[3] The term "character" sometimes refers to a cluster of character traits—perhaps a unified cluster—while at other times, Hume seems to mean something closer to a single, familiar character trait, such as honesty or loyalty. So "character" can refer to a single trait, or it might sum up the bundle of a person's salient traits, as when we say, "Carol is a decent person."

While character traits are mental qualities, Hume does not clearly distinguish between other sorts of mental qualities or intellectual abilities. But when he

discusses the appraisal of character, Hume generally refers to those traits that are typically thought of as sources of motivation.[4] Character traits thus seem to refer to those mental attributes that play a distinctive role in how people act, those that are causes (or partial causes of) and are exhibited in human action[5] (T 2.3.2.6; SBN 411, T 3.3.1.7; SBN 576).[6] It is often thought (and Hume concurs) that, while it is possible for them to undergo some change, character traits are relatively permanent mental properties, constant and "durable principles of the mind" (T 2.3.2.6; SBN 411). These "durable principles" are passions; it is because they are passions that they are capable of causing actions. Character traits do not, of course, always cause actions, since it is possible for circumstances (or perhaps another passion) to thwart its exercise. As Hume puts it, "virtue in rags is still virtue" (T 3.3.1.19; SBN 584). Character, then, seems on Hume's view to be the primary source of human motivation, though it may not, in every circumstance, move us all the way to action. These observations are sketchy at best and, to a certain extent speculative, since Hume tends not to even use the term "character trait" when discussing these motivating passions.[7] We will do better by turning directly to a discussion of our practice of holding people morally responsible for what they do, since that is thought by most people to require the idea of character.

Part I: Responsibility

It is often held that Hume's views about the attribution of moral responsibility depend upon ascribing to character a central role. Indeed this view is held both by those who subscribe to a compatibilist interpretation of his views on responsibility, and by those who subscribe to a naturalist reading of Hume. While compatibilists and naturalists disagree about the role of causation in the arousal of the moral sentiments, both hold that a robust conception of character figures prominently in the account. I will argue that this claim is mistaken. Whether one reads Hume as a compatibilist or a naturalist on the topic of responsibility, Hume neither makes use of nor gives evidence to support commitment to a robust conception of character. Furthermore, I will argue that such a conception of character is unnecessary, since an actor's motives serve the same causal and explanatory function. Accordingly, neither of these interpretations of Hume actually requires him to hold a view of character according to which it must be conceived of as unified and cohesive. Character need not refer to virtues and vices (or character traits more generally) as traditionally understood.

The Classic Compatibilist View of Responsibility

According to the "compatibilist interpretation" of Hume, "Hume's effort to articulate the conditions of moral responsibility should be understood primarily in

terms of his views about the *logic* of our *concepts* of 'liberty' and 'necessity.' Free and responsible action, it is said, must be caused by the agent. There is, therefore, no incompatibility between free will and determinism. On the contrary, free and responsible action (logically) *requires* causal necessity."[8] What makes an action free and responsible, on this view, is not merely that the action is caused by the agent, but that it is caused by something *internal* to the agent, which is to say that it is caused by the agent's willings and desires. Moreover, free and responsible actions are not caused by just *any* desires and willings of the agent; rather, such actions are caused by those desires and willings that are truly the agent's own. In other words, such actions are caused by the agent's *character*. We will see, however, that insisting that free and responsible actions must be caused by an agent's character does not adequately explain why we should think of the desires constitutive of character as the agent's own. The compatibilist interpretation of Hume holds that moral responsibility requires not the absence of causation, but rather that action be caused, and be caused in the right way. The right way for a free and responsible action to be caused is for it to be caused *by the agent*. The requirement that an action be caused by the agent must be further refined to distinguish those events in which the agent is merely involved from those actions that are caused by the agent in the right way (not, say, by an individual's body being blown by the wind into someone else). The requirement holds that free and responsible action is caused by something *internal* to the agent, something that involves *agency*. The compatibilist interpretation then takes free and responsible actions to be those in which an agent's desires, broadly construed, are present and play a certain role in the production of the action. Actions for which we are responsible are caused by something internal to the agent, namely, the agent's desires. This is the "internality requirement." We are, accordingly, responsible for those actions that are caused by *our own* willings and desires, but not responsible for those "actions" that are the result of external causes. This is to say, on the compatibilist interpretation, that free and responsible actions are those that flow from our character.

Two observations are in order. First, the conception of character on offer, though extremely vague, indicates nothing about the unity, cohesiveness, or stability of character. For all that has been said so far, it might be a mere succession of desires and willings. Second, it is asserted that our own willings and desires are constitutive of character, but we do not yet know in virtue of what such desires can be said to be our own. These observations are related: those desires that are suitably internal to the agent to produce free and responsible action are those that truly belong to and express the agent. These desires then are those that are constitutive of the agent's character. But now character is understood to be more of a unified, cohesive, and stable whole. Hume makes the point this way.

> The constant and universal object of hatred or anger is a person or creature endow'd with thought and consciousness; and when any criminal or injurious actions excite that passion, 'tis only by their relation to the person or connexion with him. But according to the doctrine of liberty or chance, this connexion is reduc'd to nothing, nor are men more accountable for those actions, which are design'd and premeditated, than for such as are the most casual and accidental. Actions are by their very nature temporary and perishing; and where they proceed not from some cause in the characters and disposition of the person, who perform'd them, they infix not themselves upon him, and can neither redound to his hounour, if good, nor infamy, if evil. The action itself may be blameable; it may be contrary to all the rules of morality and religion: But the person is not responsible for it; and as it proceeded from nothing in him, that is durable or constant, and leaves nothing of that nature behind it, 'tis impossible that he can, upon its account, become the object of punishment or vengeance. . . . 'Tis only upon the principle of necessity, that a person acquires any merit or demerit from his actions, however the common opinion may incline to the contrary. (T 2.3.2.6; SBN 411)

On the classical compatibilist reading, this passage suggests that Hume meets the internality requirement for free and responsible actions by contrasting the temporary and perishing nature of actions with the stability and durability of a person's dispositions and character. By meeting the internality requirement in this way, Hume seems to dispense with reference to occasional desires as possible causes of free and responsible, praiseworthy or blameworthy action. He appears to think that we can infer that only those desires that are truly the agent's own are constant and durable, and that constant and durable motives all belong to the agent in the sense specified by the internality requirement. In other words, on this interpretation, Hume appears to think that constancy and durability of motives are jointly necessary and sufficient conditions for meeting the internality requirement.

This way of meeting the internality requirement is obviously unsatisfactory. What reason is there to suppose that constancy and durability of motives are necessary and sufficient conditions to establish internality? The purpose of the internality requirement is, roughly, to locate the "moving principle" in an event internal to the agent.[9] But constancy and durability are not of themselves constitutive of the right sort of moving principle. Two counterexamples should make this evident. First, there are bodily occurrences (my proneness to indigestion, hiccups, insomnia) that may proceed from something constant and durable in me, but of which we would not want to say that free and responsible actions flow from them. My insomnia is not even an action, let alone something free and responsible that I do. Second, an agent who is brainwashed may act from such stable causes, but we

would hardly call his actions free and responsible. The objections to this sort of view are numerous and familiar, and the subject of a vast literature.[10] They point to the fact that there are constant and durable motives whose presence we merely suffer, and with respect to which we are thoroughly passive. Accordingly, these traits or desires are not truly our own—at least in the sense required for agency. From the fact that an action proceeds from something "constant and durable" in the agent, we should not conclude that such actions are free and responsible. While no positive account has been advanced, the counterexamples show that a motive's being "constant and durable" is consistent with its not being one's own in the sense required for agency. Appealing to "constancy and durability" does not address this requirement. The fact that motives and desires persist through time may confer some measure of diachronic unity on the actor, but again, such unity is entirely consistent with the actor's genuine—and justified—repudiation of such motives. It follows, then, that the equation of "durable or constant" motives with character does not advance an attempt to satisfy the internality requirement, which requires agency.

We wished to explain the difference between those actions and motives that are truly the agent's own and those motives that might operate without the agent's permission. To interpret Hume as trying to satisfy the requirement in this way dooms his effort to failure. Equating character with what is constant and durable serves no philosophical purpose; it does no real work and does not support his theory of moral responsibility.[11] Since we should not unnecessarily saddle Hume with an implausible view, we should try to explore other interpretive possibilities besides the classical compatibilist interpretation of Hume's theory of moral responsibility. Perhaps Hume does not think such a view of character is necessary to meet the internality requirement, or perhaps he has other resources available to meet this requirement.

Naturalistic Account of Moral Responsibility

On the naturalistic account of Hume's treatment of moral responsibility, Hume's starting point is not the logic of the concepts of liberty and necessity, but our actual practices and, more specifically, the conditions under which we give or withhold praise and blame. The alternative, naturalistic interpretation of Hume understands responsibility in terms of deep-rooted feelings, namely, the moral sentiments.[12] As Paul Russell argues, necessity plays a crucial role in Hume's argument because, by nature—that is, of necessity—we have moral sentiments. So responsibility, on this view, is connected with Hume's doctrine of necessity and naturalism. The naturalist interpretation of Hume looks to causal links between actions, character, and our reactive sentiments. The standard naturalist view maintains that, according to Hume, only character traits (of the robust sort) or mental qualities (seen from

the general point of view) arouse our sentiments of moral approval or disapproval. While a naturalist reading of Hume is preferable (since it seems to make better sense of his text), the standard naturalist suggestion that, according to Hume, only traits of character arouse moral sentiments should be rejected. Since the standard naturalist reading takes Hume's account to be descriptive, that reading should be hospitable to the alternative view that it is our *motives*, not our robust character traits, that provide the causal link between actions and our reactive moral sentiments. For the phenomena that the theory purports to describe in fact do not support the claim that only robust traits of character arouse sentiments of moral approval and disapproval. Or so I will argue.

How does Hume's account of the mechanism of the arousal of sentiment support a theory of moral sentiment? According to the naturalist interpretation, Hume's analysis of causation as constant conjunction and causal inference enables him to show that causal necessity applies to the human realm just as much as it does to the natural realm. And this suggests to the naturalist that our ascriptions of responsibility require that there be causal links between actions, character and our reactive moral sentiments.

The naturalistic account holds that Hume *describes* the role that moral sentiment plays in holding people responsible. Hume holds that only certain objects in certain circumstances arouse the moral sentiment; only character traits, or mental qualities (seen from the general point of view) arouse our sentiments of moral approval or disapproval. It is, Hume holds, *psychologically* impossible to see a person as responsible for actions believed to be caused by external forces. The psychological mechanism of the arousal of the moral sentiment requires, not logically, but as a matter of psychological fact, that we see actions as caused by the character of the agent as a condition for moral appraisal. In other words, the very possibility of moral assessment is tied to the fact that we infer character (that is, something constant and durable in the agent) as the cause of actions. In this way, we do not *judge* but rather *feel* people to be responsible. And this, of course, lays the foundation for Hume's analysis of moral assessment in terms of the passions. Nonetheless, the naturalistic interpretation still owes us an account of why character is taken to be the cause of action. And this account must, of course, be consistent with Hume's views on causation.

It is familiar enough that Hume claims that although we may believe that A causes B, there is no "necessary connection" in the objects themselves. Roughly speaking, necessity, for Hume, is a matter of "constant conjunction of like objects" and inferences of the mind from one to the other. It might seem, then, that the claim that there is a causal link between a character, or character trait and an action, depends on the observation of constant conjunction between character and action. But in fact, Hume adds that no one in actual practice doubts that there is a constant conjunction and inference in the realm of action.

> Even when these contrary experiments are entirely equal, we remove not the notion of causes and necessity; but supposing that the usual contrariety proceeds from the operation of contrary and conceal'd causes, we conclude, that the chance or indifference lies only in our judgement on account of our imperfect knowledge, not in the things themselves, which are in every case equally necessary, tho' to appearance not equally constant or certain. (T 2.3.1.12; SBN 403–04)

In practice, we believe there is a constant conjunction between motives and actions both *generally*—we think that actions are regularly produced by a certain kind of "force" in actors[13]—and more *specifically*—we believe that certain kinds of actions are produced by certain kinds of motives and desires. For instance, we believe that the action of preparing dinner is typically produced by the desire to have something to eat; the action of fitting out a guest room is typically produced by the motive of hospitality.

Hume's view of action causation nonetheless suggests that we infer the motive—say, hospitality—from the action when we take there to be a constant conjunction of the two. Of course we neither *observe* motives generally, nor do we normally observe, or have any other sort of evidence of a single individual repeatedly fitting out a guest room. This type of action—fitting out a guest room—is what hospitable people often do, although the particular token may be observed only once. We infer that Margo acts from hospitality not because we witness her fitting out her guest room many times (hospitality does not require constant redecoration), but because she does what many others do to be hospitable. We infer Margo's motive of hospitality to have caused her fitting out the guest room because (a) we don't doubt that Margo's actions are caused; (b) we think that hospitality is typically the cause of people doing things to make their guests comfortable; (c) there is (we shall stipulate) no countervailing evidence to suggest that her fitting out the guest room has some other cause. It is by nature that we routinely take an actor's motives to cause her actions, rather than the observation of a constant conjunction between motive and action.

Nonetheless, while we may never doubt the general law that actions are caused by motives, more specific inferences regarding particular cases are not *natural* and may be more or less warranted, depending on the evidence available for the inference. For instance, (a) a person may be hospitable but lack the resources to demonstrate anything recognizable as hospitality; (b) a person may be hospitable but choose unrecognizable ways of demonstrating this motivation (she doesn't realize her guests prefer to go to sleep early, so she keeps them up until all hours); (c) a person may fit out a guest room only because she loves to decorate her house; (d) a person may fit out the guest room only because she feels obligated to allow people to sleep in her house, even though she hates having guests and resents the

feeling of obligation, and so on. There is, in short, any number of causal chains that might result in the same overt behavior.[14] When there is a great variety of possible non-deviant causal chains, causal inferences between actions and motives are less "easy"—the mind doesn't pass readily from one idea to the other. The result is not an uncertainty that the action was produced by some motive of the actor, but uncertainty as to *which* motive. Such uncertainty is not uncommon for thoughtful people.

The difference between the naturalness of general inferences from motive to action, and difficulties of inferences from particular motives to particular action tokens suggests the naturalist should take the following view of moral responsibility. In the ordinary course of events, we normally take others to be appropriate targets of moral responsibility, though in particular cases, we may withdraw this sentiment, or the sentiment may fail to be aroused. And this appears to be Hume's view as well. Even though Hume holds, at least on the naturalist reading, that we naturally feel others to be morally responsible, and we naturally take others to cause their actions, Hume gives no indication that he thinks we have reliable knowledge of what in particular motivates an individual to act on any given occasion (though he does think that the union of some actions with some motives is constant and certain). (See T 2.3.1.12; SBN 403–04.) And since there are so many ways for the usual pattern of constant conjunction and inference to break down, cautious skepticism seems a reasonable view for Hume to take. Hume's view can be reconstructed, then, as follows: an actor is connected to her action by *motives* that are hers (and not by character); this is what makes us take the actor as the cause of the action. But we do not feel the actor to be the cause in virtue of performing a multitude of token actions of the same type. She is taken to be the cause of her actions generally in virtue of the fact that we never doubt that some (perhaps unknown or unobserved) constant conjunction must be operative. In short, Hume's view suggests that failing to see an actor as cause of her actions will only occur in atypical cases.

I have argued that ascription of moral responsibility psychologically requires not only a causal link between actor and action, but that the action be taken to be caused by the agent's own motive. This is to say that the internality requirement must be met. But an action being caused by the agent's motive is not sufficient to meet the internality requirement; the requirement is satisfied only if the action is caused "in the right way." It is perhaps for this reason that the standard naturalist interpretation assumes the claim that moral sentiment is aroused by actions that proceed from a person's character.

Suppose that merely a causal link is not sufficient for an actor to be felt morally responsible for an action. Hume, the naturalist, could hold that there is an important difference between *motives* as causes of action and *character* as cause of action. Hume could then hold that *causal* responsibility, which is believed to be present in

the case of an action caused by the agent's motives, is not identical to or sufficient for *moral* responsibility. The naturalist could then hold that only when we believe character is the cause of action do we feel someone to be morally responsible.

This view is not satisfying. It is unsatisfying because we still do not understand why only character, but not a person's motives, arouses the moral sentiment. The objection to the naturalist cannot be "why ever not?" since this reading purports to be descriptive, not normative. Perhaps the most telling response to the naturalist is, "check your facts." It seems to me that once we take an agent's motives to be her own, we *do* have a feeling of moral approval and responsibility. My objection, then, is not theoretical; Hume has simply not—interpreted in the standard naturalist way—accounted for all the phenomena.

Someone might raise the following sort of objection to my analysis. Stipulating without explaining that the agent's motives are her own is problematic. Friends of character will say that the point of introducing the notion of character is precisely this: by maintaining that actions for which we feel people responsible proceed from the agent's character, we show that the motives really do belong to the actor because they are part of her character.

The objection, of course, has merit; the solution, however, is dubious. The objection raised is the familiar one that has vexed responsibility theorists at least since Aristotle. To my knowledge, there are many suggestions but no widely accepted answer to the question, "which of an agent's actions are truly her own?" In my view, attributing actions to a person's character, without giving a substantive account of the notion of character, does not help, but merely serves to disguise an admittedly perennial problem. The term "character" remains a placeholder in need of filling.

My suggestion, then, is to flesh out Hume's view as follows. Let us take as our starting point our actual practices and, more specifically, the conditions under which we give or withhold praise and blame. Those conditions, I maintain, include circumstances in which we take actions to be produced by the agent's own motives. In such circumstances, the moral sentiment is aroused; and this describes the normal course of affairs. We assume that most actions are produced in this way (just as Hume claims) unless we have compelling evidence to doubt it. Compelling evidence might consist not only in traditional legal excuses of mistake, accident, duress, and provocation, but also the absence of any kind of durability whatsoever. Hume's moral psychology (rightly) maintains that the moral sentiment will not be aroused when we take the action (and its motive) to be a mere fluke. The durability need not be "robust" or "fixed" in a person's character, but it must be sufficient for us to regard someone as the author of her action, since regarding someone as the author of her action is required for the arousal of the moral sentiment.[15] On the proposed view, however, neither absence of excuses nor durability is sufficient by itself to arouse the moral sentiment. My suggestion also has the

advantage of extending the naturalist account in this way. When we consider our moral responses, typically they are not "all or nothing" (at least among thoughtful people). In response to actions that seem produced by motives whose efficacy seems diminished by traditional excuses, we will be more reticent, our feelings of approval and disapproval less robust. When motives seem entirely independent of such excuses, our moral sentiments are more whole-hearted.

This proposal does not, of course, even begin to give a positive account of what makes an action truly one's own. It relies instead on Hume's view that we take there to be a causal connection between an agent's motives and actions unless we have reason to think otherwise. It takes "character," as Hume uses the term, to refer to those motives that belong to the agent. Given that Hume does not give a systematic account of character, but only makes scattered remarks throughout the text, it does not appear to conflict in any significant way with anything Hume has to say about character or motives. In sum, nothing Hume writes about moral responsibility appears to commit him to a more robust view of character. While the view I reconstruct for him leaves certain problems unresolved, it is both more economical and more plausible.

Part II: Love

I have argued that ascription of moral responsibility psychologically requires not only a causal link between actor and action, but that the action be taken to be caused by the actor's own motive. In other words, the arousal of the moral sentiment depends on the motive being seen as the agent's own, or what I have called the "internality requirement" for the arousal of moral sentiment. In essence, I argued that Hume has been interpreted as having attempted to satisfy the internality requirement by attributing an agent's motives to her character, but that the notion of character—at least in any robust sense—did no real work. Attributing motives to character does not satisfy the internality requirement.

The internality requirement would, if satisfied, tell us on account of what a motive belongs to an agent. Merely being caused by the actor is, for reasons already discussed, necessary but not sufficient for being "caused in the *right way*." (Actors, for instance, cause accidents, but being *that* sort of cause does not arouse the moral sentiment.) The right sort of causal explanation of the arousal of the moral sentiment must show the *cause* of the moral sentiment to be intimately related to the *object* of the moral sentiment. In the context of Hume's naturalist theory of the indirect passions, Hume describes a mechanism for the arousal of pride, humility, love, and hatred. Once we make suitable emendations to accommodate sympathy and the objectivity of moral assessments, this is a natural place to look for Hume's response to the internality requirement. We will see that when we take into account various phenomenological considerations, the causal account of the

indirect passions needs to do more than just explain the arousal of the passions. It must also be able both to accommodate our impression of a person as something that hangs together and to explain how someone can be "an object for us" despite possessing both positive and negative characteristics, or motives. In what follows, I will review the main features of Hume's discussion of the mechanism of the arousal of the indirect passions in order to show how Hume thought the cause and object of an indirect passion are related. I then consider Korsgaard's interpretation of Hume's moral psychology, according to which Hume succeeds in satisfying the internality requirement by taking a person's character to be both the cause and object of love. I will argue that Korsgaard's reconstruction of Hume suffers from two defects: it appears to flout Hume's insistence that the cause and object of an indirect passion must be distinct; and it ultimately fails to provide a solution to the internality requirement because it fails to accommodate authorial agency.

In the *Treatise*, the nature of moral feelings is explained within the framework of Hume's theory of the genesis of the passions, with the help of the principle of sympathy. On his theory of the genesis of the passions, passions are produced from pains and pleasures either directly or indirectly; this leads to Hume's distinction between the direct and indirect passions. Hume devotes a great deal of attention in Book 2 of the *Treatise* to the four indirect passions, which he treats in two pairs, namely pride and humility, and love and hatred. He thinks all of these indirect passions have something in common, and his moral theory is based on the genesis of these passions. In Book 3, Hume describes the conditions under which these passions become moral sentiments, or "objective forms of love and hatred."[16] In order to understand the mechanism of their arousal, let us consider pride as a model for the indirect passions.

Pride, Hume tells us, is "that agreeable impression that arises in the mind, when the view either of our virtue, beauty, riches or power makes us satisfy'd with ourselves" (T 2.1.7.8; SBN 297). Humility is a disagreeable impression with a view of the same things. Pride is always caused by our thinking of a subject that is (a) related to the self and (b) has a pleasing quality.[17] Pride and humility are contrary passions that have the same *object*; what they have in common is that each always has the *self* as its object (by "object" Hume means the one who is feeling these passions). These passions also have the same *causes* in the sense that the cause of both are *qualities* that belong to subjects. The passions differ because the quality of the subject may be either pleasurable or displeasurable. So, for instance, the beauty (pleasing quality) of my house (subject) produces in me (object) the passion of pride.

This mechanism of the arousal of the passions determines the conditions under which the passion will be aroused. Hume adds one more feature to the mechanism of the arousal of these passions that will be of great significance for moral appraisal, namely, the operation of the principle of sympathy. Sympathy

is a principle that communicates and coordinates impressions within the minds of different persons.

> When any affection is infus'd by sympathy, it is first known only by its effects, and by those external signs in the countenance and conversation, which convey an idea of it. The idea is presently converted into an impression, and acquires such a degree of force and vivacity, as to become the very passion itself, and produce an equal emotion, as any original affection. (T 2.1.11.3; SBN 317)

> By the principle of sympathy, the passion of one person gives rise to the same passion in another; through the principle of sympathy, passions are, as it were, contagious. Sympathizing with the passions of others broadens our own experience of passions. This point is important with respect to moral evaluation since our sympathetic awareness of others' responses helps us to focus on the cause of moral evaluation—the qualities in the subject—rather than our own interests. Sympathy helps to move us beyond our own point of view, and closer to what might be called a moral perspective. But the moral sentiment, Hume tells us, resembles love more closely than it resembles pride, it being "nothing but a fainter and more imperceptible love or hatred."[18] (T 3.3.5.1; SBN 614)

Moral approval and love are importantly similar for a variety of reasons. Both sentiments are ways of valuing others. The object of both love and moral approval is another person on account of agreeable qualities she possesses.[19] Of particular interest here is the role that persons play in the arousal of love. Hume tells us that the *object* of love cannot be (for reasons we will discuss momentarily) the *cause* of love. How is the *object* of love, the *person*, related to the *cause* of love? If we can answer this question, we will be able to see how Hume attempts to satisfy the internality requirement. First, however, we need to better understand the terms of the relation.

Recall that different passions are produced depending on the way in which different causes and objects are related. Like pride, love is *caused* by agreeable qualities; unlike pride it always takes as its object another person, "of whose thoughts, actions and sensations we are not conscious" (T 2.2.1.2; SBN 329–30). Love, then, is an agreeable impression of another. It is caused by their agreeable *qualities*.

In each case, Hume insists on the distinction between the *object* of a passion and the *cause* of a passion. Why? Because "as these passions [pride and humility] are directly contrary, and have the same object in common [the self]; were their object also their cause; it cou'd never produce any degree of the one passion, but at the same time it must excite in equal degree of the other; which opposition

and contrariety must destroy both" (T 2.1.2.3; SBN 277–78). Hume is pointing out that if an indivisible person were the cause of both pride and humility, not only would the sentiments cancel one another, but also reference to their cause could explain nothing.

Hume may have in mind something like the following seemingly unintelligible exchange. "What is the cause of your love?" "Lola." "And what is the cause of your hate?" "Lola." The responses to the questions don't explain, but the paradox is easily resolved. I love Lola because of X, and I hate her because of Y, where X and Y are aspects of Lola. So it is not immediately obvious that Hume needs this distinction between cause and object, since the explanatory problem to which he alludes might be avoided simply by denying conceptual indivisibility to the object. There is no paradox in supposing that one object can produce a variety of impressions, nor is there a paradox in supposing that one object can produce contrary impressions, so long as the production of contrary impressions does not violate the principle of non-contradiction. I love her, but Lola is a complicated woman.

The imagined exchange about Lola, it will be objected, does not indicate whether I love Lola. The objector points out that what pleases me about Lola is (among other things) her sense of humor, and what displeases me about Lola is her competitiveness. But I have not answered her question, "Do you love Lola or not?" I will stipulate now that I love Lola. And what about her competitiveness? I still find it displeasing. The fact that I love her does not dispel the loathing I feel for her competitiveness. Nor does the fact that she is competitive diminish my love for her. Furthermore, it is not as though these emotions are weighed against one another on some psychic scale, so that my hatred of Lola's competitiveness diminishes my love of her sense of humor, with the result that I am left with some tepid feeling of affection. It is more like this: given my experiences of Lola, I love her. But even loving her as I do, I still find her competitiveness distasteful. I love her despite the fact that some of her qualities are disagreeable. In short, love seems to be "compatible with the most inauspicious beliefs about its target."[20]

My love for Lola suggests that, although she is the object of my love, she is still the bearer of a variety of disparate, and not entirely pleasing qualities. The suggested complexity of the object of love points to a second concern about the cohesiveness of the object of a passion. Suppose that those we love can be a patchwork of disparate qualities. Still for an impression to be an object, it must, it seems, be an impression of something that hangs together. So on this view, our impression of a person (for instance, Lola) must be an impression of something that hangs together rather than an impression of a succession of locally contiguous but otherwise unrelated movements. The conditions for disparate qualities giving rise to an impression of an object raise some important questions. First, how can this demand that the object of an impression hang together accommodate the phenomenon of the complex object of love? Second, recall that we were

promised that the relation of cause to object would show us how Hume attempts to satisfy the internality requirement. Does Hume's psychology of the passions help him to make good on that promise? We turn now to an account of Hume's moral psychology that purports to address these concerns.

The idea that the required relation between the cause of passion and the object of passion satisfies the internality requirement has been explored and defended (though not precisely in these terms) by Christine Korsgaard.[21] Korsgaard offers an interpretation of Hume according to which character is the object of both love and moral approval; because only through the notion of character can we form an impression of a person "as the cause of a person's own thoughts and actions"[22]—of something that hangs together. Furthermore, Korsgaard proposes a concept of a *person* that explains how cause and object are related.[23] A person becomes the object of love because, in her view, being the *cause* of love is what makes it *possible* for one to be the *object* of love. In other words, Korsgaard promises to show how the internality requirement can be met through the concept of personhood, where the concept of personhood involves being conceived of as a cause. Her two-part argument can be reconstructed as follows.[24]

Part 1: **The object of passion**

- Moral approval is a kind of love. (T 3.3.5.1; SBN 614) (It is an indirect passion, a reactive attitude.)
- The object of love is always another person. (T 2.2.1.2; SBN 329–30)
- The object of moral sentiment therefore is always another person.
- Persons are their characters.
- Therefore, character is the object of moral sentiment.

Part 2: **The cause of passion**

- Causation requires the perception of constant conjunction between two objects.
- The cause of love is agreeable qualities constantly conjoined to motives.
- The cause of moral approval is agreeable qualities constantly conjoined to motives.
- The sentiment of moral approval is aroused by actions that proceed from a person's character.
- Character is the object of moral sentiment.

- The cause and the object of both love and moral approval are character.

Korsgaard thinks, then, that the object of the sentiment that hangs together is the person. The concept of a person hangs together precisely because to be a person

is to be the author of one's own thoughts and actions, where *author* is to be understood as the cause of the person's thoughts and actions. Furthermore, it is only through character that actions are caused in the right way to arouse love or the moral sentiment.[25]

What entitles Korsgaard to equate the object of moral sentiment that hangs together with "character" and equate "character" with person? Hume has told us that character is the object of the moral sentiment, that persons are the object of love, and that the moral sentiment is aroused by the perceptions of a constant conjunction of motives with actions. Love, for instance, is aroused only in those who take there to be a causal link between the actor and her pleasing actions.[26] Since the cause is not located in the object, causal inference is possible only if the constant conjunction is observed to occur. Korsgaard puts the point this way: "[N]o one can form an idea of you as a cause—that is, as having certain characteristic dispositions—without *regular* observation of what you do. Your character is a form of causality, but causality in the eye of the beholder. You are a cause when others infer your future conduct from your past conduct."[27] Local observers in the actor's narrow circle make the causal inference, and those who are remote rely on the inference made by others in taking the actor as an object of moral evaluation.

Causal inference, on this account, is premised upon the existence of durable motives; otherwise (and assuming that constancy requires temporal duration) motives would not last long enough to be constantly conjoined. From the point of view of the narrow circle of observers, what the actor does is not perceived as "fluky," but rather a product of her *character*. The role played by the agent's narrow circle, then, is crucial for Korsgaard's account.[28] Humean character is constituted, on Korsgaard's view, by constant and durable motives. It is in virtue of possessing such motives that someone is said to be the author of, or have authority over her actions. Authority, being the form of causality, is identical with character.[29]

We can now begin to see how Hume, on Korsgaard's interpretation, satisfies the internality requirement. Recall that for the internality requirement to be met, we needed to show that actions are caused "in the right way," and so needed an account of how the moving principle of action is internal to the agent. Recall also that we needed to address how the patchwork of qualities that cause a passion (for example, love) can have a single person, rather than a hub of movement, as its object. Given that Korsgaard thinks that character is inferred by the regular observations of someone's narrow circle, this makes it seem natural to suppose that character is identical with the person. In sum, Korsgaard argues that the right sort of causal link between motive and actor is inferred by the narrow circle, because someone's actions (which are said to indicate her character) fit into a pattern of behavior. The internality requirement is thus satisfied by not merely linking, but by identifying the cause of the moral sentiment with the object of the moral sentiment.

The most questionable, but also most crucial claim in Korsgaard's argument is that persons are their characters.[30] Equating persons with their character appears to solve two problems with a single stroke: first, persons are authors of their thoughts and actions, and second, the notion of authority suggests agential unity (committees do not author thoughts and actions). This is just to say that as persons, we are the (right sort of) cause of our actions. But furthermore, it is in virtue of having character that we are taken to be the (right sort of) cause of our actions, and so are also taken to be the object of the moral sentiment. The concept of a person, according to Korsgaard, simultaneously coinstantiates both cause and object. Only something that hangs together in this way (rather than, say, something that is the hub of locally contiguous movement) can be the object of a moral sentiment. In Korsgaard's view, then, granting that character is the object of moral sentiment requires taking the further step of equating persons with their characters.

Korsgaard's solution to the internality requirement is elegant but flawed. First, the identification of the cause of the moral sentiment with the object of the moral sentiment appears to flout Hume's insistence that cause and object must be distinct.[31] Hume requires the distinction, recall, because if, for instance, someone were both the object and cause of the sentiment, she could cause both love and hate, with the result that both passions would be extinguished. We should not try to avoid the dilemma by supposing, for instance, that someone who is loved cannot cause hate for the simple reason that she is pleasing through and through. Admittedly, this solution might be welcomed by Korsgaard since it meshes well with her view that character and causes arise for us from the inferences made by the actor's narrow circle, and that those inferences are made possible by the narrow circle observing a pattern of action indicating the actor's motives. The narrow group, Korsgaard could argue, would not make the inference to character if there were significantly conflicting evidence. If we insist that we only causally infer character from the uniform constant conjunction of motives (as Korsgaard proposes we do), then Hume need not insist that the cause and object of sentiment are distinct for the simple reason that someone who is the object of love *cannot be* the cause of hate.

This suggestion is untenable, and the way in which it is implausible is instructive. Even granting that a person's narrow circle infers an actor's motives from frequent observations of patterns of behavior, it strikes me as wildly implausible to suppose that most of us do not present our audience with significant countervailing evidence. Since persons are loved by their narrow circle, it cannot be because they are perceived to be unified. Most of us act differently around friends, family, co-workers, tax collectors, and so on. In some of these circumstances we are lovable, in others rather less so. And even with the same people, one may not be uniformly pleasing. (Remember funny but competitive Lola?) Two things seem certain: not all of our motives are of a piece, and this fact is not an insurmountable barrier to being loved.

The fact that persons are loved even when they are not (especially) cohesive indicates that Korsgaard is mistaken in supposing that a robust conception of character is needed for causal inferences, and suggests that (1) "persons" should not be equated with "robust character"; (2) "robust character" isn't necessary for an object of sentiment to hang together; and (3) robust character is not necessary for agential authority. A person need not be the bearer of only agreeable qualities in order to be loved, nor need a person be the bearer of only virtuous qualities in order to be the object of moral approbation. To suggest otherwise would be to hold that only moral saints could arouse our moral esteem. This is a conclusion we should wish to avoid.

If uniformity of motives is required to infer an actor's causality, this counts against Korsgaard's reconstruction of Hume, since it makes the reconstructed Humean position unnecessarily simple to refute. But this is not the only problem with Korsgaard's view. Korsgaard promised to show that a person is an active participant in, and thus the author of, her actions because actions are the expression of character, and character mirrors the author of actions, namely, the person "of whose thoughts, actions and sensations we are not conscious" (T 2.2.1.2; SBN 329–30). But we can now see that Korsgaard's view is also philosophically flawed in another way such that it ultimately fails to address the internality requirement for agency.

Recall that the internality requirement can be met by showing in what agential authority consists. We have seen that on Korsgaard's account, insisting that character is the form of agent causation implies that the possession of character just is to have agential authority. But character, on Korsgaard's view, is constructed by others (the narrow circle) on the basis of their perceptions of patterns of motivations. Character, then, must ultimately refer to the *pattern of expectation* in the observers. But surely the fact that someone seems predictable in the eyes of her narrow circle does not imply that she is the *author* of her actions in the sense required.[32] While constant and durable passions bring with them the prospect of predictability, Korsgaard is mistaken to assume that the requirement that passions be constant and durable brings with it is *authorial agency* in Korsgaard's sense. The fact that others may be able to *predict* what we will do does nothing to indicate our authorship of our actions. As we have seen, there is no conceptual connection between constancy and durability on the one hand, and agential authority on the other.[33] Without such authority, the construction of character and persons by the narrow group does not ultimately satisfy the internality requirement.

Part III: Another View

In both the discussion of responsibility and of love, the main complaint I have voiced about Hume's treatment of the sentiments is not theoretical, but rather

phenomenological. In the case of responsibility, I pointed out that in fact we do appear to feel others are responsible for what they do—we praise and blame them for those actions that proceed from *motives* that are their own, and not just for actions that proceed from character. In the case of love, I argued that while we love persons, those we love are typically a patchwork of pleasing and distasteful qualities—so that, again, it seems that the object of love (and therefore the moral sentiment) is not the person's character. In focusing on the phenomenological shortcomings of Hume's stated position, I have intentionally left open the possibility that Hume's rich account of moral sentiment is indeed philosophically promising.

To see the significance of my objections, indeed for them to have any force at all, it will be necessary to try to say something about the kind of conception of character whose role in moral sentiments I am denying. I have tried to show that Hume's moral theory can be reconstructed without appeal to at least one common understanding of the term "character." Hume can say everything he wants to say about the moral sentiments by using what might be called "fine-grained virtue terms," rather than global ones that rely on a standard broader conception of character. Although I think that such an interpretation of Hume is philosophically preferable, it is not unproblematic. These remarks will, of necessity, offer only a sketch since, as I have already noted, Hume gives no systematic account of what he has in mind by "character," and often seems to use the terms "character" and "motive" interchangeably. Furthermore, the term "character" never occurs in Hume's text without it being clear that Hume is thinking of something "constant and durable," while "motives" can, for Hume, be fleeting. Third, while her conclusion is not convincing, Korsgaard points to important philosophical considerations that make it tempting to understand Hume's conception of character to be of something that is unified, cohesive, and stable, since it is in virtue of character that our impression of a person hangs together. Lastly, Hume himself uses traditional virtue terms (for example, honesty, meekness, generosity) in a global sense to designate kinds of characters. Nonetheless, the conception of character that suggests that character is consistent, stable, or especially well integrated is neither necessary for Hume's purposes nor warranted by the phenomena.[34] Accordingly, I think that Hume, the naturalist, would, on being convinced of the relevant phenomena, reject a robust view of character in favor of a thinner notion.[35]

To see that a thinner conception of character is consistent with Hume's aims—indeed, that Hume could have had something like this in mind—it may be useful to recall what he actually says.

> Actions are by their very nature temporary and perishing; and where they proceed not from some cause in the characters and disposition of the person, who perform'd them, they infix not themselves upon him, and can neither redound to his hounour, if good, nor infamy, if evil. The action

> itself may be blameable; it may be contrary to all the rules of morality and religion: But the person is not responsible for it; and as it proceeded from nothing in him, that is durable or constant, and leaves nothing of that nature behind it, 'tis impossible that he can, upon its account, become the object of punishment or vengeance. (T 2.3.2.6; SBN 410)

Interpreting Hume as a naturalist, his meaning must at least roughly coincide with the phenomena. The most relevant phenomena, I believe (and I think Hume could agree), are these.

- Actions do in fact sometimes redound to the actor's honor.
- Actors are often blamed and taken to be blameable for what they do.
- Actors are sometimes excused for their actions that are contrary to rules of morality.

Hume the naturalist should say that a person is praiseworthy just in case she is the sort of person we typically praise. In the ordinary run of things, we take all others with whom we have regular dealings to be appropriate candidates for praise (or blame) unless we are given reason to believe otherwise.[36] The naturalist account of praise and blame is premised on the existence of a causal connection between motives and actions. Hume would need to maintain, then, that motives are sufficiently constant and durable to enable observers to make appropriate causal inferences. They must be the sorts of motives we normally suppose others to have unless we have reason to think otherwise. I have argued that our own observations of others does not suggest that people are especially consistent, and so do not possess character in a robust sense. This view is consonant with Hume's views about causation and is one to which Hume should be hospitable.

Any plausible moral theory needs to accommodate the commonsense intuition that the moral sentiment is (and for that matter should be) aroused only by, roughly speaking, enduring characteristics. But from the fact that we do and should assess only enduring characteristics, it does not follow that we assess and should assess only *global* (or "robustly stable" or "semi-permanent") virtues or character traits. Do we call a person hospitable if she enjoys hosting dinner guests but loathes having overnight guests? That depends on what sort of invitation you are after. The question, on the naturalist reading, is not, "*Should* we call such a person hospitable?," but rather, "*Do* we call such a person hospitable?" Do we morally approve of this person? I suppose so, even though we would feel additional approval were she to enjoy both sorts of guests.

In claiming that we approve of motives with this sort of limited scope, I am offering a gloss of what Hume should mean by "constant and durable." In all cases in which someone is prepared to use a character trait term, she is implicitly affirming that she does not view its bearer as inconstant. The problem may be that

our language is misleading: someone might think that global virtue terms are the benchmark for constancy, and this is what, for instance, "hospitality" refers to. (You don't count as hospitable unless you are in all circumstances moved to be hospitable.) For the sake of clarity, we might instead say of our hypothetical host that, as one who enjoys dinner guests, she has the virtue trait of hospitality$_1$, and with respect to *that* sort of hospitality her motivation is constant and durable. This strikes me as a more realistic portrait both of what people are like and of what we are prepared to praise and blame. Yet if this is correct, we could have myriad subdivisions of global virtues and character traits. In that case, we—and Hume—would do just as well to speak of a person's motives rather than character.

Suppose Hume's theory is not diminished by substituting reference to "motives" in place of "character" (something which Hume already sometimes does. See, for instance, T 3.2.1.1; SBN 477). This still leaves us with some unfinished business concerning Hume's claims about love that I cannot resolve here but that I should at least mention. There is no denying that Hume holds that the object of love is another person, "of whose thoughts, actions, and sensations we are not conscious" (T 2.2.1.2; SBN 329–30). In the simple cases, love is an agreeable impression of another, and we suppose the cause to be certain pleasing qualities, uncomplicated and uncontaminated by anything disagreeable. But even fairly ordinary cases of love are not so simple. A variety of diverse qualities may inhere in one person, making it unclear how or why only some qualities are causally efficacious. In light of this, it is tempting to suggest that we love certain qualities, rather than the person. This response, however, is unsatisfactory. Various qualities may serve as the grounds of love—they may be what we point to to render our love intelligible—but they ground our love for the *person*.

Can the proposed conception of fragmented character be used to make sense of Hume's claims about love? Or does Hume's account require a more robust conception of character? Any plausible account of human love must be able to accommodate the fact that, in spite of the complexity of persons alluded to above, the object of love is indeed a person, understood in something like the way Korsgaard suggests, namely, as the author of one's own actions.[37] Again, on a naturalist approach, we need to consider the relevant phenomena, namely, that we do love others, our love is aroused by their pleasing qualities, and we love others even while we recognize the loved one's "flaws," and even though one who is loved can be the source of displeasure (arguably the greatest source of displeasure, but that is another matter). If Hume is understood to be describing our practices, then his conception of a person would need to be consistent with these facts. And the facts suggest that in loving others, we do take them to be the authors of their own actions, but not in virtue of robust character traits.

The naturalist interpretation of Hume, which incorporates a thin notion of character, does provide a rather deflationary view of persons, but it is not a view

Korsgaard must reject. The fundamental flaw of Korsgaard's account of persons is her insistence both that persons must be constructed by an actor's narrow circle, and that they must be constructed by inference from robustly constant and durable motives. Korsgaard appears to focus on the idea that the narrow circle would be unable to form the idea of a person if there were significant "contrariety in experience" (T 1.3.12.5; SBN 132), and because of this, the notion of "person" is correspondingly more robust than the naturalist account. The naturalist reading, by contrast, supposes that, absent significant contrary evidence, we can be assumed to cause our actions. Similarly, we assume that those we love are persons unless given reason to suppose otherwise.

This assumption squares well with our ordinary experience, and is one Hume could easily accept. Our love for others can withstand the discovery of myriad quirks and countless inconsistencies. No bright line or clear threshold is crossed when someone ceases to be a person for us. A person ceases to be a person for us when, in reflecting upon ourselves, we discover that we no longer have reactive sentiments toward the actor. This can happen on a particular occasion, when we realize that the actor is not the cause of some deed that affects us (as when he steps on my toe because pushed by someone else), or it may be a relatively permanent discovery, as when we realize that someone is crippled by dementia.[38] The object of love must "hang together," but we can and do tolerate a fair bit of dissonance before love—and persons—fall apart for us.[39]

Our impression of an object of love may be as I have already argued, of a patchwork of qualities inhering in a subject, of a person who may be constituted by both agreeable and disagreeable qualities. Agreeable qualities that are causally efficacious in the right way produce the passion of love, and we speak of loving *persons*. But to make these sentiments intelligible—to ourselves or to others—we refer to the specific causes of our sentiments. In doing so, we point to different features of the person, which may in turn separately evoke a variety of feelings. Even when we love another person, our feelings for her need not be univocal. To suggest otherwise would, I suspect, eliminate the possibility of human love. This is a conclusion we should not wish to embrace. The object of love must be, to put the point rather clinically, the bearer of properties that give us reason to love her. But the person who is the object of love should not be construed as her character: as the sum of the expectations of those who see her as the cause of her actions. Since the object of love may be a patchwork of qualities, not all of her actions will be cut from the same cloth.

I have tried to sketch in very broad brushstrokes how a naturalist conception of a person might square with a Humean conception of love, but such a sketch cannot be completed until and unless the relation between love and moral approbation has been clarified. Such a task is beyond the scope of the present essay. As things stand, about persons we should conclude that they are not, on my reconstructed view of

Hume, the object of moral sentiment. The object of moral sentiment seems to be typically, though not always, that which motivates an action; and a motivation may be approved of in the abstract, independent of its possession by any person. Actions arouse the sentiment of approval when the motives that produce the action are the agent's own. Though neither by itself is sufficient, the absence of so-called "excusing conditions," and some measure of durability (though it need not be "robust" or "fixed" in character), will typically be sufficient to establish that what someone did was not a mere movement, and not unmotivated; but if what someone does is not unmotivated, then it should be traceable to some passion of the actor. It appears then, that as far as Hume goes, passions that belong to the actor and are not global virtues, but are constant and durable in the sense described, should—and do—arouse the moral sentiment. Admittedly, this account leaves much to be explained. But it leaves intact the central Humean insights about the conditions for action and the arousal of the moral sentiment, and so suggests what Hume *could* have said, both more plausibly and without undermining the key features of his moral psychology. And it also shows that Hume's moral theory has no need for a robust conception of character.

NOTES

For helpful comments on this essay I would like to thank John Simmons, Miriam McCormick, and an audience at the University of Virginia. I would especially like to thank the two anonymous readers from *Hume Studies* for their very helpful and generous comments.

1 John Doris uses these terms to capture what are often taken to be the salient features of traditional virtue terms. He calls such character traits "global." John M. Doris, *Lack of Character: Personality and Moral Behavior* (Cambridge University Press, 2002), 22.

2 "The General Point of View: Love and Moral Approval in Hume's Ethics," *Hume Studies* 25.1–2 (1999): 3–41.

3 In what follows, I make extensive use of discussions from Annette C. Baier, *A Progress of Sentiments* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991); John Bricke, *Hume's Philosophy of Mind* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980); Jane McIntyre, "Character: A Humean Account," *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 7 (1990): 193–206; and Paul Russell, *Freedom and Moral Sentiment* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).

4 "We have already observ'd, that moral distinctions depend entirely on certain peculiar sentiments of pain and pleasure, and that whatever mental quality in ourselves or others gives us a satisfaction, by the survey of reflexion, is of course virtuous; as every thing of this nature, that gives uneasiness, is vicious" (T 3.3.1.7; SBN 575–76). Russell points out that they may not all be motives, since some of the character traits mentioned, such as courage, are sometimes thought to be executive virtues and so not

sources of motivation. But courage is, nonetheless, a source of pleasure and so praiseworthy in Hume's view.

5 Now it is not true that character traits always determine human behavior, nor is it true that only character traits determine human behavior. If it is possible to refer to something other than character traits to render an action intelligible, then the attributability of action does not require character; but this is to get ahead of ourselves.

6 David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed.David Fate Norton and Mary Norton (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), abbreviated "T" in the text and cited by Book, part, section, and paragraph number, followed by the page number in *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. L. A.Selby-Bigge, 2nd ed., revised by P. H. Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), abbreviated "SBN" in the text.

7 Hume never, to my knowledge, claims that character traits, or character, is a "durable principle of the mind," though this phrase may be used by Hume in apposition to "character." Most of the occurrences of "character" in the *Treatise*, are accompanied by "motive," "disposition," "quality," and "principles in the mind." For example, T 2.3.2.6, T 2.3.3.5, and T 3.3.1.7 (SBN 411, 415, 575).

8 Paul Russell, "Hume on Free Will," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* Winter 2007, http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/hume-freewill/.

9 See Aristotle's discussion of the "voluntary" in *Nicomachean Ethics*, 2nd ed., trans. T. H. Irwin (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1999), Book 3, chap. 5.

10 For a sampling of the literature, see *Perspectives on Moral Responsibility*, ed. John Martin Fischer and Mark Ravizza (New York: Cornell University Press, 1993).

11 While the classical compatibilist account of responsibility founders on this problem, Hume's failure (on this interpretation) is no more or less egregious than that of various contemporary philosophers (such as Harry Frankfurt or Gary Watson) to meet this challenge.

12 The discussion that follows owes much to Paul Russell's account in *Freedom and Moral Sentiment* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).

13 Note that Hume holds that a motive is not essentially different from force (T 3.2.5.14; SBN 525).

14 See Donald Davidson on deviant causal chains in "Actions, Reasons and Causes," *The Journal of Philosophy* 60.23 (1963): 685–700.

15 The issue of durability is slippery, especially on a naturalist account. An anonymous referee pointed out that "any quality that arouses our indirect passions must be durable enough to enable the association of ideas involved in the generation of the passion to be effective." This seems just right as an interpretation of Hume. But it is difficult to get beyond the general formula to say anything more specific. Any naturalist account is obliged to account for the relevant phenomena, namely the arousal of the passion. If we consider an unmediated account (one that does not make accommodations for the principle of sympathy), we notice that there is a great amount of variation in how quickly passions are aroused (think "youthful infatuation" or "love at first sight," compared to those who are more reserved in their emotional bearing). And when we

do make accommodations for the principle of sympathy, that principle often functions as a corrective for our sentiments, rather than a barrier to their formation. (I resented his failure to return my call until I discovered that he had laryngitis.) It is precisely the difficulty of saying anything positive about durability that makes it tempting to account for moral assessment in negative terms.

16 See Annette C. Baier, *A Progress of Sentiments: Reflections on Hume's* Treatise (Harvard University Press, 1994).

17 Elizabeth Radcliffe*, On Hume* (: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 2000), 50.

18 Those who follow Ardal in their understanding of the taxonomy of the passions tend to view moral sentiment as a form of love (for example, Phillip Mercer, "Hume's Concept of Sympathy," in *Sympathy and Ethics* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972], reprinted in *David Hume: Critical Assessments*, ed. Stanley Tweyman, 6 vols. [New York: Routledge, 1995], 4:437–60). Charlotte Brown, "Is Hume an Internalist?" *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 26(1988): 69–87; Christine Korsgaard, "The General Point of View: Love and Moral Approval in Hume's Ethics," *Hume Studies* 25.1–2 (1999): 3–41. Thomas Hearn, Jr. thinks Ardal is mistaken in his claim that the moral sentiment is an indirect passion and so, *a fortiori*, can't be identified with love. Annette Baier concurs with Hearn on this point. See "Ardal on the Moral Sentiments in Hume's *Treatise*," *Philosophy* 48.185 (1973): 288–92

19 Interestingly, Hume thinks that while they may both be sources of motivation, only the moral sentiment must motivate; love does so usually, but need not.

20 Ronald de Sousa, *The Rationality of Emotion* (MIT Press: Bradford Books, 1991), 116.

21 See Korsgaard, "The General Point of View."

22 Ibid., 29.

23 It should be noted that this is the concept of a person that Korsgaard thinks makes the best sense of Hume, not her "all things considered" position.

24 This is essentially the same argument Korsgaard offers for why character, rather than action, is the object of moral evaluation. See Korsgaard, "The General Point of View." Both Korsgaard and Brown, "Is Hume an Internalist?" *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 26.1 (1988): 69–87, hold that character comes to be in the eyes of the actor's narrow circle. The notion of character as cause depends upon the perception of a person producing regular effects or by relying on general rules that specify the general effects and tendencies of character traits, not their actual effects (T 3.3.1.19; SBN 584–85).

25 Korsgaard makes this point repeatedly (28, 29, 35).

26 That loves requires the perception of a constant conjunction between actor and pleasing motives is not altogether clear. It may be that robust love has more stringent requirements of this sort than paler versions.

27 Korsgaard, "The General Point of View," 30.

28 One of the readers of this essay has pointed out that Hume is clear that there are people of "importance" and "weight" (T 3.3.3.14; SBN 613–14) who influence a large

circle and whose influence is by no means local or narrow. This suggests another serious defect in Korsgaard's interpretation of Hume, namely, attributing excessive importance to the actor's narrow circle.

29 Korsgaard, "The General Point of View," 30.

30 An anonymous reader of this essay points out another unconvincing feature of Korsgaard's view that I do not discuss; namely, that Hume makes it clear that a person can change and alter her character, and so cannot be committed to any view that identifies persons or collapses persons into their characters.

31 Korsgaard is in fact well aware of Hume's argument concerning the distinctness of cause and object, but does not see this as a defect of her view. She suggests that his argument may not apply to the case of moral love, which is love of character (32). I hope in what follows to show why I do not find this claim entirely persuasive. And in any case, there is no clear evidence in Hume's text for this distinctive kind of love.

32 Such predictability is, for instance, entirely consistent with the actor having been brainwashed.

33 There are, of course innumerable examples to suggest quite the contrary. To mention just two: my constant and durable disposition to insomnia is surely not an indication of my agency; the same can be said for my indigestion.

34 The growing literature on situationism depends on social science experiments that purport to show that there is no evidence for the existence of global character. More important, in my view, is that it is theoretically otiose.

35 Since I think that Hume's use of the term "character" is imprecise, it is not immediately obvious whether this would count as a change in his view, or simply a clarification.

36 I take this to be part of Peter F. Strawson's point in claiming that reactive attitudes belong to our usual way of interacting with others. See "Freedom and Resentment," *Proceedings of the British Academy* 48 (1962): 1–25.

37 I leave out of the discussion the possibility of loving countries, institutions, ideals, and so on.

38 I draw on Strawson here in his discussion of our experience of reactive attitudes. See "Freedom and Resentment."

39 These comments about the object of love do not address a further issue, namely whether moral approbation can ultimately be understood as a kind of love. One difference is that moral approbation is not constrained by the corporeality of persons: we can and do evaluate persons piecemeal. There is nothing especially problematic (unless one is wedded to a theory of the unity of virtues) in say, finding a person fair, but not especially generous, or fair and generous in some circumstances but not others. Since this sort of evaluation is not only possible, but common, we should reject one of two claims: either a person should not be equated with character, or the moral sentiment is not a kind of love. I cannot fully resolve that issue here.