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Abstract: In the *Treatise*, Hume writes several seemingly incompatible things about the moral sentiments, thus there is no general agreement about where they fit within his taxonomy of the perceptions. Some passages speak in favor of the view that moral sentiments are indirect passions, a few in favor of the view that they are direct passions, and yet a couple of explicit statements strongly suggest otherwise. Due to these tensions in Hume's text, we find at least five competing characterizations in the literature:

- Moral sentiments are calm emotions.
- Moral sentiments are calm direct passions.
- Moral sentiments are calm versions of the indirect passions of love or hatred.
- Moral sentiments are unique species of calm indirect passions.
- Moral sentiments are indirect secondary impressions.

This paper assesses each of these interpretations. When their virtues are brought together, a new interpretation of the origin of moral sentiments starts to emerge.

How should the moral sentiments in David Hume's *A Treatise of Human Nature* be classified? What kind of impressions are they? Since the answer has bearing on how to reconstruct the so-called general point of view from which moral evaluations are made, the question is not unimportant. However, there is no general agreement

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about where the moral sentiments fit within Hume's taxonomy of the perceptions of the mind, since he writes several seemingly incompatible things about them. For example, at the very beginning of Treatise Book 2, we read that the sense of beauty and deformity in action, that is, moral sentiments,[1] are "calm" emotions as opposed to "violent" passions[2] (T 2.1.1.3; SBN 276),[3] but in Book 3 Hume says that moral sentiments are forms of the indirect passions of love and hatred (T 3.3.5.1; SBN 614). Thus, it seems as if moral sentiments are indirect passions, despite being denominated "calm" emotions.

Love and hatred are *indirect* passions in Hume's terminology, whose objects are persons: oneself in the cases of pride and humility and another person in the cases of love and hatred (T 2.2.2.2; SBN 333). These objects are evaluated in or by the passions. Moral sentiments also have objects that they evaluate, but their objects are characters, character traits, and motives (T 3.2.1.2; SBN 477) rather than persons. Hume clearly distinguishes the two when he says, "we approve of his character and love his person" (T 3.3.3.2; SBN 602). Moreover, while the distinguishing mark of indirect passions is the fact that cause and object are distinct ideas—our love is directed at someone, the object, because of her gentleness, beauty, or whatever the cause—this is not the case with moral sentiments. The contemplation of a character causes the particular pleasure or pain that constitutes a moral sentiment directed at that object. As Hume says, "An action, or sentiment, or character is virtuous or vicious; why? because its view causes a pleasure or uneasiness of a particular kind" (T 3.1.2.3; SBN 471). For this reason, moral sentiments seem more like direct passions than indirect passions.

However, Hume opens Book 3 with the statement that "our reasonings concerning *morals* will corroborate whatever has been said concerning the *understanding* and the *passions*" (T 3.1.1.1; SBN 455). This suggests that Hume's account of the moral sentiments is based on his accounts of ideas in Book 1 and passions in Book 2 and, therefore, as if moral sentiments are different from both ideas and passions. Also, in Book 3 we learn that moral sentiments arise in virtue of sympathy (T 3.3.1.29; SBN 590), but this is not the case with direct passions and need not be the case with indirect passions. Sympathy is a mechanism by which we typically take over someone else's passion in a special way. According to Hume, the idea of another's affection is "presently converted into an impression, and acquires such a degree of force and vivacity, as to become the very passion itself" (T 2.1.11.3; SBN 317). Hume explains the moral sentiments by noting that we sympathize with others' pleasure or pain (he does not even try to explain the moral sentiments by noting that we sympathize with other people's moral sentiments).

In sum, there are several passages speaking in favor of the view that moral sentiments are indirect passions and a few in favor of the view that moral sentiments are direct passions, yet at least two explicit statements strongly suggest otherwise.

Due to these tensions in Hume's text, we find several competing characterizations of the moral sentiments in the literature: [4]

1. Moral sentiments are neither direct nor indirect passions, but calm emotions.[5]
2. Moral sentiments are calm direct passions.[6]
3. Moral sentiments are calm versions of the indirect passions of love or hatred.[7]
4. Moral sentiments are unique species of calm indirect passions.[8]
5. Moral sentiments are indirect secondary impressions.[9]

Classificatons 1 to 4 are incompatible; 5 is compatible with 3 and 4. While classifications 1 and 2 emphasize the calmness of moral sentiments, 5 emphasizes their similarity with indirect passions. Classifications 3 and 4 take account of both the statement that moral sentiments are calm emotions and the statement that they are forms of love and hatred (3) or similar to these passions (4).

While it might seem that at least one of these interpretations must be correct, and I restrict my detailed discussion to these alternatives, things are not so simple. Some people think that this issue is impossible to decide on textual grounds alone,[10] while others have suggested that the classificatory question rests on a dubious premise. Providing an interpretation that reconciles the seemingly inconsistent claims is the only way to answer the first group, and that is the aim of this paper. I cannot respond to the second group in detail, but I find it less promising than the other interpretations. According to this interpretation, since Hume argues that there is no sharp distinction between moral and non-moral virtues (natural abilities), and he defines virtue in terms of sentiments, Hume may also deny that there is a sharp distinction between moral and non-moral sentiments. Hence, moral sentiments may be a varied lot.[11]

There is something to be said for this position. Hume does argue that moral virtues and natural abilities are constituted by sentiments alike (T 3.3.4.1; SBN 606), and natural abilities cannot be excluded from the catalogue of moral virtues (T 3.3.4.3; SBN 608,[12] T 3.3.4.4; SBN 609, T 3.3.4.4; SBN 609). But this does not mean that moral sentiments do not form a unique category. Hume grants that moral sentiments are nothing but ordinary sentiments in that "moral distinctions arise from the natural distinctions of pain and pleasure" (T 3.3.4.3; SBN 608). *All* sentiments produced according to certain principles belong to the category of moral sentiments. In fact, this is the very reason why Hume has to include natural abilities among the moral virtues.

As should be obvious by now, it is not easy to fulfill every criterion an adequate interpretation of Hume's moral sentiments ought to satisfy. An interpretation has to make sense of everything Hume says about the moral sentiments in the

Treatise, including his claims about the structure of the *Treatise*. More specifically an interpretation ought to

a) account for what Hume says about the *origin* of moral sentiments, and thus explain how moral sentiments can both arise from the pleasure or pain caused by some character, trait, or motive and depend on sympathy for their origin;

b) account for what Hume says about the *nature* of moral sentiments, and thus explain how moral sentiments can be fainter forms of the indirect passions of love and hatred and form a distinctive category of impressions with a peculiar phenomenological quality;

c) account for what Hume says about the evaluative *function* of moral sentiments in light of the fact that the idea causing a moral sentiment is the same idea as the idea of its object; and

d) explain why Hume wrote so extensively of indirect passions and what he says about the organization the three books of the *Treatise*.

Below, I assess each of the five positions listed above in the light of these criteria (section 2). Before I do so, I first summarize Hume's taxonomy of the impressions (section 1). Since Hume explicitly says that moral sentiments are calm emotions, I take interpretation 1, an interpretation associated with Louis Loeb, as my point of departure. Recognizing that Loeb's arguments are inconclusive, I go on to discuss the remaining interpretations. Finally, in section 3 I use the lessons learnt from this discussion to draw the contours of a new interpretation.

1. Hume's Taxonomy: The Common Ground

Hume begins *Treatise* Book 1 with a division of perceptions into two distinct kinds: impressions and ideas. Ideas are "faint images" or copies of forceful impressions, among which we find "all our sensations, passions and emotions" (T 1.1.1.1; SBN 1). Next, Hume divides impressions into two sub-kinds: "those of SENSATION and those of REFLECTION" (T 1.1.2.1; SBN 7). Impressions of sensation are sense impressions and bodily sensations that arise "in the soul from unknown causes" (T 1.1.2.1; SBN 7). Because of this, they are the topic of anatomy rather than moral philosophy. Impressions of reflection, on the other hand, arise from copies of sensations, that is, from ideas, and are in turn divided into three kinds: passions, desires, and emotions (T 1.1.2.1; SBN 7).

Book 2 also begins with a taxonomy of perceptions.[13] Here Hume divides the impressions into *original* and *secondary* but explains that this division is the same as his former division into impressions of sensation and reflection (T 2.1.1.1; SBN 275). The only difference between the two accounts is that in Book 2 Hume says

that secondary impressions arise either directly from some sense impression or by the interposition of its idea (T 2.1.1.1; SBN 275), while in Book 1, for the most part an idea of the sense impression precedes the secondary impression (T 1.1.2.1; SBN 26).[14]

In Book 2 Hume introduces a new division: secondary or reflective impressions are divided into "calm" and "violent." I quote this important passage at length:

> The reflective impressions may be divided into two kinds, viz. the *calm* and the *violent*. Of the first kind is the sense of beauty and deformity in action, composition, and external objects. Of the second are the passions of love and hatred, grief and joy, pride and humility. This division is far from being exact. The raptures of poetry and music frequently rise to the greatest height; while those other impressions, properly call'd *passions*, may decay into as soft an emotion, as to become, in a manner, imperceptible. But as in general the passions are more violent than the emotions arising from beauty and deformity, these impressions have been commonly distinguish'd from each other. The subject of the human mind being so copious and various, I shall here take advantage of this vulgar and specious division, that I may proceed with greater order; and having said all I thought necessary concerning our ideas, shall now explain those violent emotions or passions, their nature, origin, causes, and effects. (T 2.1.1.3–4; SBN 276)

This passage supports the interpretation that takes Book 2 to be about "violent" passions while Book 3 is meant to treat "calm" emotions, although Hume never explicitly says so. Unfortunately for us, he never strictly defines the term "emotion," but Hume seems to use it to denote every kind of perception that sets the mind in motion.[15] Thus, *emotion* is a category at another level than *passion*: some of the emotions are passions, but Hume suggests that there are other emotions as well. For example, when he gives examples of secondary or reflective impressions in the opening paragraph of Book 2, he lists "the passions, and other emotions resembling them" (T 2.1.1.1; SBN 275). Hume also distinguishes between emotions and passions in his "Third Experiment," when describing how two travellers would feel when passing through a beautiful and plentiful country to which neither is related. He writes, "my emotions are rather to be consider'd as the overflowings of an elevate or humane disposition, than as an establish'd passion" (T 2.2.2.8; SBN 331). This passage suggests that among the emotions we have "overflowings" as well as passions. Finally, after making the distinction between "calm" and "violent" passions, Hume introduces the next topic by saying that he, "shall now explain those violent emotions or passions" (T 2.1.1.3; SBN 276).

While these passages provide strong evidence that Hume took emotions to include passions and other secondary impressions, some passages suggest that the relation between emotions and passions is less clear. For example, Hume notes that "those other impressions, properly call'd *passions*, may decay into so soft an emotion, as to become, in a manner, imperceptible" (T 2.1.1.3; SBN 276). Here a passion either *is* or *becomes* an emotion. However, both alternatives are consistent with there being emotions that are not passions. Thus, in Book 2, Hume makes it clear that all passions are emotions, but the reverse does not hold. However, it is still possible that Hume sometimes uses the terms "passion" and "emotion" differently, for instance, as synonyms.

In the passage quoted above, Hume describes the distinction between calm and violent reflective impressions as "vulgar," "specious" and "far from exact," but explains that he will "take advantage of this vulgar and specious division" in order to "proceed with greater order" (T 2.1.1.3; SBN 276). As I understand it, the division into "calm" and "violent" is a less exact generalization, and not a classificatory division.

After the vulgar and specious division, Hume soon introduces a new division, saying, "When we take a survey of the passions, there occurs a division of them into *direct* and *indirect*. By direct passions I understand such as arise immediately from good or evil, from pleasure or pain. By indirect such as proceed from the same principles, but by the conjunction of other qualities" (T 2.1.1.4; SBN 276). *Direct* passions arise immediately or *directly* from good or evil, that is, from the pleasure or pain caused by some object or the idea of it. *Indirect* passions, on the other hand, are elicited by the so-called double relation of impressions and ideas and arise only *indirectly* from ideas of good or evil. Hume's prime example of an indirect passion is of a person who is proud of her beautiful house (T 2.1.5.9; SBN 288). The beauty of the house causes a pleasant sensation, which is reflected into the passion of pride. Hence, one impression (pleasure) is associated with another (pride) by similarity. Further, the house owner associates the idea of the cause (my beautiful house) with the idea of herself, which means that one idea is associated with another. Thus, the indirect passion proceeds "from the same principles," that is, from good or evil, pleasure or pain, but by "the conjunction of other qualities," that is, from the idea of possession, ownership, or some other close enough relation between self or other and the object causing pleasure or pain. What makes some of them particularly interesting and useful for Hume, namely the fact that cause and object are different ideas, is an effect of the double relation.

At the end of Book 2, Hume introduces a last, less important division of impressions: direct passions are divided into *responsive* and *productive*. Responsive passions are those that we ordinarily think of as passions: hope, fear, joy, and so on. These passions are direct responses to good or evil. Productive passions, on

the other hand, are not responses to good or evil but instincts or general impulses that produce pleasure or pain. Hume writes,

> Beside good and evil, or in other words, pain and pleasure, the direct passions frequently arise from a natural impulse or instinct, which is perfectly unaccountable. Of this kind is the desire of punishment to our enemies, and of happiness to our friends; hunger, lust, and a few other bodily appetites. These passions, properly speaking, produce good and evil, and proceed not from them, like the other affections. (T 2.3.9.8; SBN 439)

One might wonder why bodily appetites like lust and hunger are passions instead of original impressions. I suppose the answer is that unlike original impressions—a headache, for example—productive passions have objects: we are hungry *for* something. They are not just bodily sensations, nor are they ordinary sense impressions.

To recap, secondary or reflective impressions are divided into "calm" emotions and "violent" passions, even if this division is far from exact. "Violent" passions are then divided into direct and indirect, and finally direct passions are divided into responsive and productive. The question is, where do the moral sentiments belong?

2. Competing Interpretations: Pros and Cons

Earlier I provided a list of interpretations that are found in the literature and noted that the list may not be exhaustive. One additional possibility is that moral sentiments are original impressions, though it is not clear whether anyone has ever defended this interpretation. In a recent article, Remy Debes stresses the peculiar phenomenal quality of moral approbation and disapprobation and argues that moral sentiments are peculiar forms of pleasure or pain.[16] If Debes takes moral sentiments to be identical to these peculiar forms of pleasure or pain, then he would in effect be arguing that moral sentiments are original impressions. However, because it is not clear whether Debes thinks that moral sentiments are identical with peculiar pleasures and pains, thus impressions of sensation, or holds, instead, that these peculiar sentiments of pleasure and pain are reflected into secondary impressions or passions, I will not treat his thesis as an interpretation of this sort.

Debes is certainly right in underscoring the peculiarity of moral sentiments, but this peculiarity is compatible with all of the five positions discussed below. If, however, his position goes further and identifies the moral sentiments with a peculiar pleasure or pain, his interpretation faces a serious objection: Hume explicitly says that the sense of beauty and deformity in action, that is, moral sentiments, are reflective impressions (T 2.1.1.3; SBN 276, cf. T3.1.1.21; SBN 464).

Classification 1: Moral Sentiments Are Neither Direct Nor Indirect Passions, But Calm Emotions

Louis Loeb argues that moral sentiments are "calm" emotions as opposed to direct and indirect passions. His main argument is that Hume restricts the exhaustive distinction between direct and indirect to the passions (396). Loeb notes that the division into direct and indirect is based on the *origin* of the passions, and moral sentiments originate in a much different way than both direct and indirect passions (401). Moral sentiments originate from the general point of view and depend on sympathy (T 3.3.1.14–16; SBN 580–82), while indirect passions arise through a double relation of impressions and ideas.[17] It is their particular origin that makes the indirect passions violent, Loeb writes (397) referring to T 2.1.4.4 (SBN 283-84). Direct passions are violent too, because they are reflected into indirect passions and reinforced in virtue of this reflection (398).

Loeb admits that Hume never says that "calm" emotions cannot be divided into direct and indirect, but he believes that Hume thought so. He adds that if Hume thought moral sentiments were *direct* "calm" emotions, they would deserve his attention (400), but Hume says that among the direct passions only hope and fear merit particular attention (T 2.3.9.9; SBN 439). Loeb concludes that since all direct and indirect passions are violent in general, and moral sentiments are in general calm, moral sentiments are neither direct nor indirect passions.

Loeb's classification of moral sentiments as "calm" emotions is attractive, since he reads Hume's taxonomy literally. However, Loeb's arguments are not conclusive. First, the distinction between "calm" emotions and "violent" passions does not hold, since Hume argues that one and the same object can cause either a calm or violent passion depending on its distance to the person experiencing the passion (T 2.3.4.1; SBN 418). In response to this objection, Loeb rightly points out that Hume is thinking here about *tokens* of one and the same *type* of passion (398). The fact that a particular, or token, calm passion may become violent (T 2.3.8.13; SBN 437) is consistent with his interpretation.

While the type-token distinction can explain some problematic passages, Loeb cannot solve all the problems his interpretation faces by appealing to this distinction. For example, it cannot be appealed to in an explanation of the following passage where Hume clearly refers to *types* of passion, namely, certain types of desire.

> Now 'tis certain, there are certain calm desires and tendencies, which, tho' they be real passions, produce little emotion in the mind, and are more known by their effects than by their immediate feeling or sensation. These desires are of two kinds; either certain instincts originally implanted in our natures, such as benevolence and resentment, the love of life, and

> kindness to children; or the general appetite to good, and aversion to evil, consider'd merely as such. (T 2.3.3.8; SBN 417)

To explain this passage, Loeb suggests that the passions named in this paragraph are *original* rather than secondary impressions, because they are instincts, general appetites, or aversions (399). But this response is unsuccessful. As I have already argued, Hume considers productive passions real passions because they have intentional objects. The same goes for the passions discussed in T 2.3.3.8 (SBN 417), whether they are productive passions or not. In other words, Hume countenances "calm" *types* of passions.

Secondly, because Hume never writes that "calm" emotions cannot be divided into direct and indirect, it is *possible* that he thought they could. Anyone defending Loeb's position needs to make it at least plausible that moral sentiments are neither direct nor indirect impressions of any kind. Since being direct or indirect is a characterization in terms of the origins of emotions arising from pleasure and pain (or good and evil), one would have to show either that moral sentiments do not arise from pleasure or pain or that there is a third way that something can arise from pleasure or pain which is neither direct nor indirect. Loeb chooses the latter alternative, but he never explains it. Finally, while Loeb is able to explain why Hume treats the moral sentiments in a separate book, and not in Book 2 (because they are not passions), he is unable to—at least he does not—explain why the *Treatise* contains such a long and intriguing discussion of the indirect passions.

Classification 2: Moral Sentiments Are Calm Direct Passions

Norman Kemp Smith reconstructs Hume's classification of the secondary impressions differently from Loeb. According to Kemp Smith, Hume first divides the passions into primary (productive) and secondary. Secondary passions are then divided into direct and indirect; finally direct passions are divided into "violent" and "calm" (168). Kemp Smith argues that "As . . . immediately arising upon an act of contemplation, [moral sentiments] have to be classed with the direct, not the indirect passions" (167). According to Kemp Smith, when contemplating a character, we *immediately* feel whether it is good or bad, or as Hume puts it, "Our approbation is imply'd by the immediate pleasure they convey to us" (T 3.1.2.3; SBN 471).

Kemp Smith's view faces serious objections. First, the fact that Hume starts with the "calm" vs. "violent" division signifies that he regards it, albeit a rough generalization, as more basic than the direct vs. indirect division, especially since he explicitly says "The reflective impressions may be divided into two kinds, *viz.* the *calm* and the *violent*" (T 2.1.1.3; SBN 275). And it is only after drawing this distinction that Hume divides the "violent" impressions, "properly call'd *passions*,"

into direct and indirect. After expressing his intention to "explain those violent emotions or passions," he says that "[w]hen we take a survey of the passions, there occurs a division of them into *direct* and *indirect*" (T 2.1.1.3; SBN 275).

There is another, more important reason not to classify the moral sentiments as direct passions: Hume's claim that "[o]ur approbation is imply'd by the immediate pleasure" (T 3.1.2.3; SBN 471) need not be taken to mean that moral sentiments arise immediately from the disinterested contemplation of characters in the way a direct passion arises immediately.[18] The contemplation of characters *does* produce the peculiar pleasure or pain that is reflected in moral approval or disapproval, but not alone. Sympathy is also required, since the peculiar pleasure or pain involved in moral sentiments is generally not our own (T 3.3.1.29; SBN 590).[19] In the following passage Hume makes it clear that it is only when sympathizing with others' pleasures that our own feeling or sentiment becomes disinterested.

> Now in judging of characters, the only interest or pleasure, which appears the same to every spectator, is that of the person himself, whose character is examin'd; or that of persons, who have a connexion with him. And tho' such interests and pleasures touch us more faintly than our own . . . [t]hey *alone* produce the particular feeling or sentiment, on which moral distinctions depend. (T 3.3.1.30; SBN 590; emphasis added)

Kemp Smith is aware of the importance of sympathy, but he never sorts out the details of Hume's account. However, it appears that if moral sentiments were direct passions, as he believes, the contemplation of a character would alone give rise to the pleasure or pain that would just be moral approval or disapproval; no sympathy with those affected by the character would be needed.

Two additional difficulties for someone defending Kemp Smith's view are to explain Hume's claim that moral approval is a fainter form of love and why he wrote so much about the indirect passions if they are irrelevant to his account of the moral sentiments. One final argument against Kemp Smith's view was mentioned by Loeb, namely Hume's statement that "none of the direct affections seem to merit our particular attention, except hope and fear" (T 2.3.9.9; SBN 439). That would be a strange thing to say were the moral sentiments direct passions.[20] I conclude that moral sentiments are *not* direct passions.

Classification 3: Moral Sentiments Are Calm Versions of the Indirect Passions of Love or Hatred

Hume's statement that moral sentiments are fainter versions of love and hatred is commonly cited as evidence for the view that moral sentiments are indirect passions. Hume says, "The pain or pleasure, which arises from the general survey or

view of any action or quality of the *mind*, constitutes its vice or virtue, and gives rise to our approbation or blame, which is nothing but a fainter and more imperceptible love or hatred" (T 3.3.5.1; SBN 614). This passage has led some scholars to conclude that moral sentiments are literally forms of ordinary love and hatred.

This evidence is, however, inconclusive. Hume's claim that moral sentiments are calm or imperceptible forms of love and hatred may also be explained by the fact that the possible causes of moral sentiments are a subset of the possible causes of love and hatred. It can also be explained if moral sentiments depend on sympathy with other people's love and hatred, so that moral sentiments might be described as love and hatred felt from the general point of view.

One advantage of these alternative interpretations is that they provide an explanation for Hume's claim without requiring that the objects and causes of moral sentiments be different. By relating moral sentiments to indirect passions in this way, Hume ensures that we morally approve and disapprove of the right kinds of things—that is, characters, traits, or sometimes motives. In the following passage Hume identifies virtue and vice with the power to produce pride or love and humility or hatred.

> Now since every quality in ourselves or others, which gives pleasure, always causes pride or love; as every one, that produces uneasiness, excites humility or hatred: It follows, that these two particulars are to be consider'd as equivalent, with regard to our mental qualities, *virtue* and the power of producing pride or love, *vice* and the power of producing humility or hatred. In every case, therefore, we must judge the one by the other; and may pronounce any *quality* of the mind virtuous, which causes love or pride; and any one vicious, which causes hatred or humility. (T 3.3.1.3; SBN 575, cf. T 3.2.1.5; SBN 473)

While the same kinds of objects that cause moral sentiments have the power to produce love and hatred, pride and humility, the reverse does not hold. Some inanimate objects can cause love and hatred but not moral sentiments (T 3.1.2.4; SBN 471). Hume adds that the cause of a moral sentiment "must necessarily be plac'd either in ourselves or others" (T 3.1.2.5; SBN 473). For example, Hume thinks that material wealth and power can cause love and pride, hatred and humility (T 2.1.10; SBN 309–15), but not moral approval or disapproval.[21] He never explains why wealth and power cannot cause moral sentiments, but if the cause and object of a moral sentiment is the same idea, we get an explanation of Hume's requirement that the cause of a moral sentiment be placed in a person: the reason that the causes of moral approval and disapproval—virtues and vices—have to be mental is that their objects are mental qualities.

This so-called inference from the best explanation amounts to another argument against the view that moral sentiments are indirect passions. If they were, Hume's condition would have to be explained differently, but how? It would be absurd to morally approve or disapprove of inanimate objects (T 3.1.1.21; SBN 464), but it is not obviously absurd that inanimate objects could *cause* moral sentiments. It would be absurd to love or hate inanimate objects too, yet such objects *can* cause love and hatred.

Don Garrett argues that moral sentiments need to be *distinctively* moral impressions, thus they cannot be forms of ordinary love and hatred (*Cognition and Commitment*, 193). According to Garrett,

> [Hume] is asking whether [moral distinctions'] occurrence can be explained as a *product of inference operating on representations of the objects of evaluation*, or whether we must instead recognize the occurrence of some specifically moral *non*inferential element. It is for this reason that he thinks he can treat the question of whether moral distinctions are derived from reason as interchangeable with the question of whether we make such distinctions "by the means of our impressions or our ideas" (THN 456). Given his Copy Principle—that ideas must be copied from impressions—he thinks that such a noninferential element would require the existence of distinctively moral impressions. (*Cognition and Commitment*, 193)[22]

Garrett's point is this: since moral distinctions are *not* the product of reason and inference, we need to experience or have experienced moral sentiments in order to be able to make moral distinctions. Such sentiments must be *distinctively* moral, and they must be *impressions*. Calm versions of non-moral sentiments such as love and hatred would not be distinctively moral: we would not know for sure when our calm passion of love turned into moral approval. Since every idea is copied from an impression, there cannot be ideas of moral sentiments without such impressions. Hence moral sentiments form a unique or distinctive category of (reflective) impressions. Garrett is right: Hume wants to explain moral distinctions in terms of impressions, and for this he needs distinctive moral sentiments. If moral approval were a form of love, we would not be able to distinguish moral from non-moral distinctions.

Charlotte Brown, who takes moral sentiments to be calm forms of love and hatred *and* a product of the general point of view, objects to Garrett that when we correct our sympathetic responses by adopting the general point of view, non-moral loves and hatreds are transformed into moral ones in a way similar to the rise of an impression of a necessary connection in causation ("Is the General Point of View Moral?" 2000). Brown's objection may be interpreted in at least

two ways. If she believes that moral sentiments are identical with calm, corrected forms of love and hatred, I believe she is wrong. As Garrett points out, it is unclear how many corrections we need to go through before we have a moral sentiment. Thus, moral sentiments would not be distinctively moral. Secondly, since Hume holds that sentiments are not as easily corrected as beliefs, this does not seem to be Hume's view (Garrett, "Replies," 213). If Brown believes that calm, corrected forms of love and hatred are reflected as another kind of passion, namely as moral sentiments, she may be right, but then her view is consistent with Garrett's. At any rate, Hume needs distinctively moral sentiments, and that criterion is not satisfied by the view that moral sentiments are calm versions of love and hatred.

Classification 4: Moral Sentiments Are Unique Species of "Calm" Indirect Passions

According to Páll Árdal, moral sentiments are unique species of "calm" indirect passions. For Árdal the difference between ordinary love and moral approval depends on the perspective of the evaluator. He argues that an evaluator who adopts a disinterested perspective—that is, the general point of view—evaluates a character trait as virtuous in that he or she morally approves of the character or person.[23] Due to the disinterested perspective, moral sentiments assume a peculiar phenomenal quality.

This looks promising. However, Árdal also believes that moral sentiments are indirect passions and that a "double relation" is at work in their production. The disinterested spectator approves of the person who is the bearer of a character trait *because* of this trait, which then is virtuous. In other words, the disinterested spectator associates the idea of a character trait (the cause) with an idea of the person whose trait it is (the object) and associates the impression of a peculiar pleasure with moral approval, the objective passion.[24] Thus there is a double relation of impressions and ideas. Árdal distinguishes the particular pleasure from the moral sentiment in the following passage.

> The independent feelings of pleasure or pain that cause the objective indirect passions are of a special kind. One may for that reason be tempted to call these feelings, rather than the indirect passions themselves, moral sentiments. However, the actions that arouse these feelings always have to be taken to indicate some quality in the agent, if his character were to be considered, and would thus cause the indirect passion. Unless this is the case moral approval or disapproval would not be aroused. (Árdal, "Another Look," 409)

According to Árdal, moral sentiments are disinterested or objective evaluations of *characters* in virtue of being indirect passions, just as love and hatred are attitudes towards *persons* in virtue of being indirect passions. Since we take actions to be signs of motives or traits, we associate from action to character, and morally approve of the character. Árdal assumes that Hume already had a view about moral evaluation of characters when he set out to write the *Treatise* ("Another Look," 405). This would explain the structure of the entire work and especially Hume's preoccupation with pride and humility, love and hatred, in Book 2. Since moral sentiments are also evaluative attitudes, they are similar to indirect passions, which are attitudes towards people.

Árdal advances the following passage from the *Treatise* in defense of his interpretation:

> Now in judging of characters, the only interest or pleasure, which appears the same to every spectator, is that of the person himself, whose character is examin'd; or that of persons, who have a connexion with him. And tho' such interests and pleasures touch us more faintly than our own, yet being more constant and universal, they counter balance the latter even in practice, and are alone admitted in speculation as the standard of virtue and morality. They alone produce that particular feeling or sentiment, on which moral distinctions depend.
>
> As to the good or ill desert of virtue or vice, 'tis an evident consequence of the sentiments of pleasure or uneasiness. These sentiments produce love or hatred; and love or hatred, by the original constitution of human passion, is attended with benevolence or anger. (T 3.3.1.30–31; SBN 590–91)

Contemplation of a character (in Árdal's account, it should be of a mental quality or character trait) leads to a particular sentiment, which in turn gives rise to a particular passion and to a special kind of benevolence or anger. Árdal maintains that the "account Hume gives of desert thus further strengthens my claim that the evaluations of persons are for Hume special kinds of indirect passions" ("Another Look," 415), for just as love is attended with benevolence, moral approval is attended with praise.

There are several possible readings of the passage just quoted, not every one of which implies that moral sentiments are indirect passions. One is to read "these sentiments" in the last sentence as non-particular sentiments, that is, as ordinary pleasure and pain rather than moral sentiments, which in virtue of the double relation, are reflected as ordinary love or hatred. Since love and hatred are attended with benevolence and anger "by the original constitution of human passion," moral sentiments may also be attended with (special kinds of) benevolence

and anger, that is, a tendency to praise or blame, by an original constitution of human passion. In other words, Hume may simply offer similar explanations for analogous phenomena.

There are other, stronger arguments against Árdal's view. It is quite clear from Hume's text that no association of ideas is involved in the production of moral sentiments, and thus that the cause of a moral sentiment and its object are the same. That which is evaluated and thus morally approved or disapproved of—a character, trait, or sometimes motive—is identical with that which causes the approval or disapproval. As Hume says, "An action, or sentiment, or character is virtuous or vicious; why? because its view *causes* a pleasure or uneasiness of a particular kind" (T 3.1.2.3; SBN 471; emphasis added). In other words, the idea of the character, trait, or motive causes the particular pleasure that constitutes moral approval in virtue of sympathy. Further, when Hume states that "[w]e do not infer a character to be virtuous, because it pleases: But in feeling that it pleases after such a particular manner, we in effect feel that it is virtuous" (T 3.1.2.3; SBN 471), it is clear that the character is the object of our feeling. If, as Hume claims, "[t]he very feeling constitutes our praise or admiration" (T 3.1.2.3; SBN 471), then that which is praised—the object of the moral sentiment—must be the character.

That the cause of a moral sentiment and its object are the same is evident in the passages where Hume wants to establish the importance of sympathy for moral sentiments, virtue, and vice: "'Tis only when a character is consider'd in general, without reference to our particular interest, that it causes such a feeling or sentiment, as denominates it morally good or evil" (T 3.1.2.4; SBN 471; see also T 3.3.1.9; SBN 577). If reflection on the tendency of characters or mental qualities is enough for moral sentiments to arise, perceptions of characters or traits *cause* moral approval or disapproval. Since these characters and traits are also the objects of moral approval and disapproval, it is not the case that the cause and object of a moral sentiment always are different ideas, or that mental qualities always are the causes of moral sentiments while characters (or persons) always are their objects, as Árdal would have it.

A final objection is that we do not morally approve or disapprove of *persons*, as Árdal thinks (*Passion and Value*, 116). On the contrary, Hume distinguishes the two, person and character. For example, he says that when a man is "serviceable and useful within his sphere, we approve of his character, and love his person" (T 3.3.3.2; SBN 592). He makes a similar distinction later in the *Treatise*. At the beginning of his section on the natural virtues, Hume discusses a number of character traits that we are said to approve of (T 3.3.1.9–T 3.3.1.15; SBN 577–81) then concludes that we praise *persons* because of these traits (T 3.3.1.16–17; SBN 582). In the *Treatise*, Hume only twice writes that we *approve* of the person (T 3.3.1.29; SBN 590), both passages appearing in a single paragraph. In that paragraph he says that we approve of a person who has certain mental qualities (T 3.3.1.29; SBN

590). The other sixteen times Hume uses the word "approve" in Book 3, it is about qualities (4), characters (4), quality or character (1), passions (1), actions (1), virtue (1), justice (2), moral principles (1), or a prince (1).[25]

The conclusion to draw is that Árdal's view fails. Humean moral sentiments are not indirect passions because there is no association of ideas involved in their origin. The idea causing a moral sentiment is the same as its object-idea: a character, trait, or motive.

Classification 5: Moral Sentiments Are Indirect Secondary Impressions

Rachel Cohon suggests that moral sentiments are indirect secondary impressions but not necessarily indirect *passions*. She thinks that the cause and object of moral sentiments are different ideas, but no double relation of impressions and ideas need be involved in the production of moral sentiments ("Hume's Indirect Passions," 175). According to Cohon, the idea causing the pleasure or pain that is reflected as moral approval or disapproval is not the idea of a character or trait but that of the feelings with which the disinterested evaluator sympathizes. She argues as follows:

> I can sympathize with a poor man who struggles to survive . . . without making any moral evaluation . . . . But if I learn that he suffers as he does because of the choices and attitudes of a grasping, insensitive sweatshop owner, then I experience moral disapproval—of [the sweatshop owner]. My sympathetically derived uneasiness is the same . . . . But in the former case my feeling is not a moral evaluation while in the latter it becomes one, and in the former case it does not have the sweatshop owner as its intentional object while in the latter it does. ("Hume's Indirect Passions," 175)[26]

There are several reasons to reject Cohon's classification. First, on Cohon's reading, Hume regards the cause and object of a moral sentiment as different, but I have shown that this is not the case. Cohon's interpretation also suggests that Hume takes moral sentiments to be evaluations of particular persons, and I have shown that this is not true. Cohon's interpretation is also problematic because, as she notes, Hume never classifies moral sentiments as indirect passions or as indirect secondary impressions ("Hume's Indirect Passions," 178).

Cohon's suggestion is problematic for yet another reason. Cohon points out that "Hume does not offer any explanation" of how the introduction of a thought of the person who caused misery transforms a non-moral sentiment into a moral sentiment. She concludes, "This is a significant gap in his otherwise meticulous explanation of the generation of moral sentiments" ("Hume's Indirect Passions," 175). Such a gap is problematic indeed, and we need not accept that it exists. For example, there is no gap if Hume does not consider moral sentiments to be indirect

impressions. The gap that arises from Cohon's analysis is especially problematic because it is not clear how cause and object could be different ideas if no double relation or association of ideas were involved. How, then, could the original sentiment be redirected at the right object? Perhaps we should read Cohon as saying that the sympathized uneasiness has no intentional object at all but is simply an original impression that becomes reflected as a moral sentiment with an intentional object when the sympathizer learns about the insensitive sweatshop owner and her deeds. It is still a mystery how the reflected sentiment finds its proper object.

3. Conclusions and a Sketch of a New Interpretation

Where did the assessment of existing interpretations take us? What conclusions are there to be drawn? First, moral sentiments are not *indirect* passions or any other kind of indirect impression. Hume almost explicitly states that the idea causing a moral sentiment is the same as its object-idea. (See, for example, T 3.1.2.4; SBN 471.)

Secondly, moral sentiments are not *direct* passions. Moral sentiments do not arise immediately from our own pleasure or pain caused by some object, but in contemplation of characters, traits, or motives and because of sympathy with others' pleasure or pain (See, for example, T 3.2.2.24; SBN 498–99.). Hence, we may conclude that moral sentiments are reflective impressions of some other kind; as Hume explicitly writes, they are "calm" emotions.

It remains to explain exactly *how* moral sentiments depend on sympathy and exactly how moral sentiments relate to direct and indirect passions. Hume writes that from the general point of view, an idea of a good and useful character or trait is associated with a lively idea of pleasure: "When any quality, or character, has a tendency to the good of mankind, we are pleas'd with it, and approve of it; because it presents the lively idea of pleasure; which idea affects us with sympathy, and is itself a kind of pleasure" (T 3.3.1.14; SBN 580). The lively idea of pleasure affects us in virtue of sympathy: we sympathize with the pleasure and love that we more or less consciously imagine others to experience because of the character, trait, or motive under examination. Together with the idea of the character, these sympathetic feelings cause moral approval. Differently put, the idea of the character, trait, or motive *and* the pleasure or pain felt in sympathy—or its idea—are two necessary causal conditions of moral sentiments (T 3.3.1.29–30; SBN 590).

I believe that the role of sympathy in the origin of moral sentiments has commonly been misunderstood. Since the feelings sympathized with are not moral sentiments but ordinary, non-moral pleasure and pain, what we feel when sympathizing is not moral approval or disapproval. Nonetheless, moral sentiments are produced by sympathy. Hume says that it is in virtue of sympathy that we approve or disapprove of characters beyond our own interests: "we have no such extensive concern for society but from sympathy; and consequently 'tis that

principle, which takes us so far out of ourselves, as to give us the same pleasure or uneasiness in characters which are useful or pernicious to society, as if they had a tendency to our own advantage or loss" (T 3.3.1.11; SBN 578). We sympathize with others' pleasures and pains, and because of that we morally approve or disapprove of characters that cause these feelings. If we experience or believe that a certain kind of character, trait, or motive has a tendency to cause pleasure, the idea of it causes moral approval. Hence, we morally approve of characters *because* of sympathy, not *in* sympathy. Hume says that we experience the effects of an artificial virtue, for example, justice, as pleasurable thanks to sympathy, and we morally approve of justice because of that. The sympathetic passion is a necessary causal condition for the moral sentiment. In other words, we sympathize with pleasure, which means that our sympathetic impression is pleasure and not moral approval, but we morally approve of justice (and of other artificial virtues) because of the pleasure it produces among mankind, which we experience in sympathy. Analogously, we morally approve of the natural virtues because of the pleasure they produce in other persons and with which we sympathize (T 3.3.1.10; SBN 577).

The difference between arising *in* sympathy and *because* of sympathetic feelings is subtle, but apart from being decisive for the classification of moral sentiments within Hume's taxonomy, it affects the construction of the general point of view, which becomes somewhat more plausible. When making moral evaluations, we do not have to sympathize with actual or imagined persons. It is enough that we remember having sympathized in like situations, that is, the *idea* of a sympathized pleasure or pain is enough; we do not have to feel it. The only feeling that is needed for moral evaluation is a peculiar pleasure or pain caused by the idea of a character, trait, or motive *and* by (the memories of) sympathetic feelings. This peculiar pleasure or pain is reflected as a calm moral sentiment.

Let us use Cohon's example about the sweatshop owner to illustrate this. We sympathize with the pain experienced by the poor man suffering the effects of the shop owner's greedy character. When contemplating greedy characters from the general point of view, this idea and our sympathized pain (or the memory of it) together give rise to a peculiar pain reflected into moral disapproval of greedy characters, which means that we disapprove of the shop owner's character. Thus, the moral sentiment is directed at its cause, the greedy character, not at another object. Of course, the idea causing our pain by sympathy is the idea of the poor man's pain. But that idea cannot be the object of our disapproval, nor is it the only idea required for disapproval to arise. Moral disapproval is far from an immediate response to one's *own* pain or a direct passion; nor is it sympathized hatred or an indirect passion. Nonetheless, moral disapproval is a kind of impression

Hume's diverse claims about moral sentiments no longer seem incompatible. Although sketchy, the emerging interpretation satisfies every one of the criteria listed at the beginning of this paper:

(a) Moral sentiments *originate* from disinterested contemplation of characters, traits, or motives. When we think of such objects, we sympathize with the pleasure or pain of those affected by the character, trait, or motive. Together with the idea of the character, trait, or motive, these sympathetic feelings (or their ideas) cause a peculiar pleasure or pain reflected as moral approval or disapproval.

(b) The *nature* of moral sentiments is distinctive: they form a distinctive category of impressions in virtue of their distinctive origin, which gives them their calm but peculiar phenomenal quality. All the same, moral sentiments might be thought of as fainter forms of love and hatred: whatever causes a moral sentiment also has the power to cause an indirect passion. In this sense, moral sentiments are love and hatred felt from the general point of view.

(c) Moral sentiments *function* as evaluations of characters, traits, or motives. In the case of indirect passions, where cause and object are different ideas, the idea causing the indirect passion might be considered its ground: one person loves another *because* of the first person's generous actions. The ground of a moral sentiment, where cause and object are the same idea, is the pleasure or pain experienced by those affected by the character, trait, or motive, and sympathized with.

(d) The connection between moral sentiments and the indirect passions explains why Hume wrote so much about the indirect passions[27] and why he structured the content of the *Treatise* the way he did.

I conclude that Loeb is right about the nature and classification of moral sentiments—they are "calm" emotions—while Árdal and others who argue that moral sentiments are indirect impressions are right about their function—moral sentiments are evaluations of characters, traits, or motives. None of the existing interpretations gets everything right about the origin and the role of sympathy. My own hypothesis about these things needs to be tested properly. That is a future project.

NOTES

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1 I read the phrase "beauty and deformity in action" as referring to moral virtue and vice. This reading is confirmed by a passage in Book 3 where Hume returns to beauty and deformity: "if these moral relations coul'd be apply'd to external objects, it wou'd follow, that even inanimate beings wou'd be susceptible of moral beauty and deformity" (T 3.1.1.21; SBN 464).

2 Although Hume says he will use this "vulgar and specious" division into calm and violent, he also distances himself from it because it is inexact (T 2.1.1.3-4; SBN 276). Because of that, I will write the terms "calm" and "violent" within quotation marks when they are used as—quasi—category terms.

3 References to the *Treatise* are to Hume, *Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. Norton and Norton, hereafter cited in the text as "T" followed by Book, part, section and paragraph numbers, and to *Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. Selby-Bigge, rev. by Nidditch, hereafter cited as "SBN" followed by page numbers.

4 In Árdal, "Another Look," 407, we find a forerunner to this list.

5 Loeb, "Hume's Moral Sentiments."

6 Kemp-Smith, *Philosophy of David Hume*.

7 Penelhum, "Hume's Moral Psychology"; Brown, "Is the General Point of View Moral?"; Korsgaard, "General Point of View."

8 Árdal, *Passion and Value* and "Another Look." Unique species are not just versions of ordinary indirect passions such as love and hatred.

9 Cohon, "Hume's Indirect Passions," 179.

10 Brown, "From Spectator to Agent," 33.

11 Jonas Olson in private conversation.

12 T 3.3.4.3 (SBN 609) is surprising. At T 3.1.2.4 (SBN 471), Hume says, "'tis evident, that under the term pleasure, we comprehend sensations, which are very different from each other, and which have only such a distant resemblance, as is requisite to make them be express'd by the same abstract term." He soon continues, "an inanimate object and the character or sentiments of any person may, both of them, give satisfaction; but as the satisfaction is different, this keeps our sentiments concerning them from being confounded" (T 3.1.2.4; SBN 471). One would expect the satisfaction produced by cleanliness and by generosity to be different too, but Hume does not think that this is the case.

13 Book 3 is differently cast. Hume just repeats his division of perceptions into impressions and ideas and then asks whether it is by means of ideas or impressions that we make moral distinctions (T 3.1.1.3; SBN 456).

14 Another difference is that in Book 1 reflective impressions are divided into passions, *desires*, and emotions (T 1.1.2.1; SBN 26), but in Book 2, desires are not mentioned as a separate subgroup of its own but as a type of direct passion (T 2.1.1.4; SBN 276). None of these differences is of any importance for my discussion.

15 See Schmitter, "17th- and 18th-Century Theories."

16 Debes, "Recasting Scottish Sentimentalism." See also Debes's "Hume's Peculiar Sentiment."

17 Sometimes sympathy is a secondary cause of an indirect passion (T 2.2.5; SBN 357–65), but that is not a general condition for indirect passions.

18 See Loeb, Hume's Moral Sentiments," 400-01.

19 Don Garrett asserts that "Hume clearly states that we can have moral sentiments in response to some natural virtues *without* any sympathy at all" ("Replies," 213). I think Garrett is wrong on this point. In the passage Garrett refers to, Hume immediately continues, "[b]ut however directly the distinction of virtue and vice may seem to follow from the immediate pleasure or uneasiness, which particular qualities cause to ourselves or others'; 'tis easy to observe, that it has also a considerable dependence on the principle of *sympathy* so often insisted on" (T 3.3.1.29; SBN 590). In other words, moral sentiments just *seem* to follow directly from pleasure or uneasiness; in all cases they also depend on sympathy.

20 See Loeb, "Hume's Moral Sentiments," 400.

21 I am grateful to Rachel Cohon for pressing this point.

22 See also Garrett, "Replies," 205-215.

23 Árdal wavers about the proper object of a moral sentiment. Sometimes it is the character ("Another Look," 405), and sometimes the person ("Another Look," 414).

24 Although Árdal wavers about the cause and the object of a moral sentiment, this seems to be his official view (*Passion and Value*, 116).

25 Hume says we approve of qualities (twice in T 3.3.1.10; SBN 577; T 3.3.4.11; SBN 611), characters (T 3.1.1.2; SBN 456; T 3.3.3.2; SBN 602; T 3.3.3.4; SBN 604), quality or character (T 3.3.1.11; SBN 578; T 3.3.1.14; SBN 580), characters and manners (T 3.3.3.2; SBN 602) passions (T 3.3.2.11; SBN 598), actions (T 3.2.11.4; SBN 568)), virtue (T 3.3.6.3; SBN 619), justice (T 3.3.6.1; SBN 618; T 3.3.6.4; SBN 619), moral principles (T 3.3.6.3; SBN 619) and a prince (T 3.2.11.4; SBN 568).

26 Cohon's reconstruction has no room for the peculiar pleasure that is involved in moral sentiments. She claims that "[m]y sympathetically derived uneasiness is the same" ("Hume's Indirect Passions," 175).

27 I also think that Hume was interested in psychology and the passions in general, not just in moral psychology and moral sentiments.

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