

1: Hume's Moral Philosophy (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy)

Hume still appeals to sympathy there to explain the origin of all moral approval and disapproval, but he explains our sympathy with others simply as a manifestation of the sentiment of humanity, which is given more prominence.

Moral Philosophy and its Subject Matter Hume and Kant operate with two somewhat different conceptions of morality itself, which helps explain some of the differences between their respective approaches to moral philosophy. The most important difference is that Kant sees law, duty, and obligation as the very heart of morality, while Hume does not. Kant believes that our moral concerns are dominated by the question of what duties are imposed on us by a law that commands with a uniquely moral necessity. Like most eighteenth-century philosophers, he also believes that our moral lives are preoccupied with the question of how to be virtuous over the course of a life, but he defines virtue in terms of the more fundamental concepts of law, obligation, and duty. By contrast, these concepts certainly figure into morality as Hume understands it, but they are far less central. Our moral concerns are dominated by the question of which motives are virtuous, and we answer this question by looking to the responses of our fellow human beings, who “when viewing things properly” approve of those motives and character traits that are useful or immediately agreeable EPM 9. These are the terms that characterize duty and obligation for Hume, rather than the other way around. Two other differences are worth noting for the purposes of this article. First, Kant draws a bright line between moral and non-moral phenomena, such as prudence, politics, or art. For Hume, the line between the moral and non-moral is far blurrier. According to Hume, the strict separation of moral and non-moral virtues marks one way in which modern moral thought is inferior to ancient ethics; he also seems to suspect that it reflects an unhealthy fixation on responsibility and guilt inherited from Christianity Darwall A second important difference is closely related to the first. For Kant the moral is distinguished from the non-moral not only by a special form of obligation but also by its elevation above the rest of life. One of our chief moral concerns is to protect this status, which requires respecting the rational autonomy at its source and avoiding behavior or patterns of thought and desire that dishonor or degrade persons by treating ourselves or others as mere things. We see it also in the priority given to duties to self cf. Hume does not see things this way. For Hume, the domain of morality is not particularly pure, special, or elevated. It sometimes shows us at our most benevolent or most magnanimous, but morality is continuous with the rest of life, including politics and the pursuit of wealth and status in modern commercial society. Moral virtue is undoubtedly pleasing to us, sometimes powerfully so, but it does not command a unique form of respect or reverence. Neither do the rules and ideals of morality, which spring from the same propensities, ideas, and passions that drive the rest of human behavior. Morality has us far more concerned with promoting pleasure and utility. Hume and Kant both believe that philosophy should dig beneath the surface of morality and present a theory of its foundation. Second, it cannot be found in mind-independent facts about the world. Yet they disagree about the rest of the story. Hume locates the foundation of morality in human nature, primarily in our emotional responses to the behavior of our fellow human beings. By contrast, Kant locates the foundation of morality in the rational nature that we share with all possible finite rational beings. According to Kant, the will of a moral agent is autonomous in that it both gives itself the moral law is self-legislating and can constrain or motivate itself to follow the law is self-constraining or self-motivating. A heteronomous will, on the other hand, is governed by something other than itself, such as an external force or authority. These rival conceptions of morality and its foundation correspond to two very different approaches to moral philosophy. His moral philosophy is part of his larger endeavor to provide a naturalistic explanation of human nature as a whole. Hume often seems more interested in explaining morality as a natural phenomenon than in setting out a normative ethical theory, treating moral action as part of the same physical world in which we explain things in terms of cause and effect EHU 8. On this view, everything we do is open to empirical investigation and explanation. In fact, Hume often compares humans with other animals, tracing the bases of human morality to features of the mind that human beings and other animals have in common T 2. His detailed treatment of virtue and moral judgment draws heavily on observations and ideas about human nature. But Kant makes explicit that morality

must be based on a supreme moral principle, which can only be discovered a priori, through a method of pure moral philosophy G 4: We could never discover a principle that commands all rational beings with such absolute authority through a method of empirical moral philosophy. An empirical approach, he argues, can tell us how people do act, but it cannot tell us how we ought to act. Moreover, we must keep the pure and empirical parts of moral philosophy clearly distinguished, since if we do not we could find ourselves confusing conditional truths, such as what is prudentially good for certain individuals or species, with unconditional truths about fundamental moral requirements G 4: Once one has in hand the supreme principle of morality, however, one requires an understanding of human beings in order to apply it to them MM 6: One can say little about what the supreme moral principle requires as duties human agents have to themselves and to one another without knowing such things as the sorts of ends people may be inclined to adopt and the conditions under which human agency will characteristically thrive or wither. Early in his career Kant endorsed an idiosyncratic form of sentimentalism. But he often indicated that he saw Hutcheson as more significant to ethics than Hume. He seems to have associated Hutcheson more with the positive insights about the role of sensibility in ethics, whereas he seems to have associated Hume more with skepticism about practical reason Kuehn In *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime*, which often reads like the work of a mid-eighteenth century British thinker, Kant notes and analyzes the various feelings of pleasure or displeasure, and attraction and aversion, people feel to different traits and temperaments in themselves and others and to different types of literature, objects in nature, kinds of relationships, and other things. His statements about the foundation of morality and its principles convey a commitment to some form of sentimentalism, however idiosyncratic. He claims, for example, that the principles of morality are not speculative rules, but the consciousness of a feeling that lives in every human breast and that extends much further than to the special grounds of sympathy and complaisance. Kant expresses a similar line of thought in another work from the period, *Inquiry Concerning the Distinctness of the Principles of Natural Theology and Morality*, where he distinguishes between the faculty for representing truth and the faculty for experiencing the good, identifying the latter with feeling. For example, in the announcement of his lectures for the winter semester of 1783, he explains one difference between ethics and metaphysics by remarking that the distinction between good and evil in actions, and the judgment of moral rightness, can be known, easily and accurately, by the human heart through what is called sentiment, and that without elaborate necessity of proofs. If Kant was genuinely trying out a version of sentimentalism in the 1780s, this phase did not last long, nor was it a simple adoption of the theories of Shaftesbury, Hutcheson, or Hume. Morality imposes unconditional requirements, and he became increasingly convinced that sentimentalism could not explain or justify such requirements. In a number of works, Kant creates taxonomies of misguided, heteronomous ethical theories based on material determining grounds—in contrast to his theory of autonomy, in which the moral motive constitutes an objective, formal determining ground see Wood b [Other Internet Resources]; Irwin Kant distinguishes among these theories based on their accounts of the basis of moral obligation or the fundamental moral principle G 4: Such theories may assume either subjective empirical or objective rational determining grounds for the moral principle; and within each of these categories, there are theories that assume these determining grounds are external, and others that assume they are internal. Objective, internal grounds include perfection e. Objective, external grounds include the will of God e. Subjective, external grounds include education e. Subjective, internal grounds can include physical feeling, such as self-love e. Thus, Kant locates moral sense theories among those theories that assume a subjective, empirical, internal determining ground of moral feeling as the principle of morality cf. From the *Groundwork* on, Kant registers a number of complaints against sentimentalism, all of which cluster around what he takes to be the core insight into its inadequacy. No empirical principles can ground moral laws, because moral laws bind all rational beings universally, necessarily, and unconditionally; empirical principles are contingent in various ways, for example, on aspects of human nature G 4: Variance in moral feelings makes them an inadequate standard of good and evil G 4: Moral feelings cannot be the source of the supreme moral principle, because the supreme moral principle holds for all rational beings, whereas feelings differ from person to person M If duty were grounded in feeling, it would seem that morality would bind some people e. Even if people were in complete agreement

regarding their moral feelings, the universality of these feelings would be a contingent matter, and thus an inadequate ground for the unconditionally binding moral law. Indeed, if morality were grounded in feeling, it would be arbitrary: God could have constituted us so that we would get from vice the pleasurable, calm feelings of approval that we now allegedly get from virtue M So for Kant, the contingency of the ground of obligation offered by moral sense theories renders those theories inadequate; only a priori determining grounds will do. In his notes Kant remarks that moral sense theories are better understood as providing a hypothesis explaining why we in fact feel approval and disapproval of various actions than as supplying a principle that justifies approval or disapproval or that guides actions NF For this [compassion] is still one of the impulses that nature has implanted in us to do what the representation of duty alone might not accomplish MM 6: Reason and Emotion in Morality Kant, as discussed above, underwent a decisive change of mind about the views of Shaftesbury and Hutcheson. We can see this opposition at work in their respective accounts of moral judgment and moral motivation. According to Hume, moral judgments typically concern the character traits and motives behind human actions. To make a moral judgment is to detect, by means of a sentiment, the operation of a virtuous or vicious quality of mind. Reason and experience are required for determining the likely effects of a given motive or character trait, so reason does play an important role in moral judgment. For example, a person might hate or envy the courage of her enemy but this is not necessarily a moral response. On the contrary, rather than eliminating her sentiments, the judicious spectator enlarges them by means of sympathy, which enables her to resent the misery of others or rejoice in their happiness. Regarding the mechanism of sympathy, see Taylor Kant offers a very different account of moral judgment. He focuses on the first-person judgments an agent not a spectator must make about how to behave. In his view, the primary question is whether a particular mode of conduct is permissible, required, or forbidden in light of the moral law, and sentiment or emotion has no authority in this matter. It is an imperative because it commands and constrains us; it is categorical because it commands and constrains us with ultimate authority and without regard to our personal preferences or any empirically contingent ends G 4: Scholars disagree about the relationship between these two formulations of the CI, as well as their relationship to the other formulations Kant provides. Kant claims that FUL is the standard everyone actually does employ in moral judgment G 4: Others argue in favor of FEI, emphasizing, in particular, its role in the *Metaphysics of Morals*, where FEI seems to play the fundamental role in guiding judgment about specific ethical duties e. A rational being equipped with a purely formal procedure for testing maxims has all she needs. Yet such passages are misleading when read in isolation. Second, Kant frequently emphasizes that no formal procedure could specify all the principles for applying higher-order principles. The wider the duty, the more latitude for individual judgment and experience MM 6: For example, without these, one might be unable to determine whether a particular act of beneficence is more condescending than kind MM 6: Proper moral judgment in such circumstances requires attunement to the feelings of others, but also facility with the social conventions that shape the dynamics of personal interaction. Kant and Hume are clearly opposed on the question of whether reason or feeling has the final say in moral matters. Hume assigns reason to a subordinate role, while Kant takes reason to be the highest normative authority. However, it is important not to misunderstand the nature of their opposition. This is his main focus. He says relatively little about what is going on in our heads or the surrounding social environment when we actually make moral judgments. As noted above, Kant at least entertained the possibility that sentimentalism provides the correct empirical explanation of why human beings tend to approve or disapprove of the actions and motives that they do NF A similar contrast between Hume and Kant can be found in their respective accounts of moral motivation. The claim is not that reason has no role in human action, but rather that its role is subordinate to passion. Hume offers three main arguments for this claim in *A Treatise of Human Nature*.

2: SparkNotes: David Hume (1711–1776): A Treatise of Human Nature, Book III: "Of Morals"

As sympathy is enlarged in Hume beyond the narrow scope of one's family and friends, it gives way to benevolence, an interest in the well-being of all mankind, as the basis of morality, while "sympathy" as a term used by Hume is trimmed back and reduced to emotional contagion.

It is important to begin by noting that Hume claimed nowhere to be building a theory of prescriptive ethics. His project was to give a naturalistic, scientific account of human cognition and morality. The name of his first and greatest work, the *Treatise of Human Nature*, bore the revealing subtitle *Being an attempt to introduce the experimental Method of Reasoning into Moral Subjects*, indicating his intention of doing for moral subjects what Newton had done for natural philosophy. In the third book of the *Treatise*, which is a treatment of morality, his aim was to explain the process whereby we come to make moral judgments, if only to counter two schools of thought on this subject that were prominent in his time: Hume immediately makes it clear that he places himself firmly in the anti-rationalist camp, in opposition to moral rationalists such as Clarke and Locke. Moral properties are not inherent in objects and their relations, and thus cannot be inferred by our powers of reasoning. The powers of human reasoning alone cannot motivate us because reason is passive. It is, to speak anachronistically, the processing faculty of the mind. It can devise and evaluate means to some end, but cannot provide us with the ends themselves. Our ultimate ends, far from being the product of reason, are determined by our passions, which govern the ends we seek. This Hume flatly denies. Reason judges either matters of fact or matters of relations, but morality, Hume asserts, is never found in any matter of fact which it is possible to perceive or grasp by reason alone. In which-ever way you take it, you find only certain passions, motives, volitions and thoughts. There is no other matter of fact in the case. The vice entirely escapes you until you turn your reflection into your own breast, and find a sentiment of disapprobation. This too is impossible, Hume maintains, since the same relations can obtain between animals and plants as between humans, and yet former is never the subject of moral approbation and disapprobation while the latter often is. Relations alone, therefore, cannot give rise to moral distinctions. But if moral distinctions are found neither by reason nor in empirically ascertainable matters of fact or relations, then where do they have their origin? Since the first two have been ruled out, the process of elimination leaves us only with impressions. Moral sentiments are basic units of sense-experience, and as such, they can be neither true nor false. One either experiences a certain moral impression or one does not, and that is all. Virtues and vices are simply those traits which arouse our approval or disapproval in contemplating them, and we consequently approve or disapprove of actions based on our evaluation of the virtues or vices we believe to have given rise to them. The impressions from moral sense "our feelings of approval or disapproval" are caused, according to Hume, by our ability to sympathise. Sympathy is a natural propensity to share the feelings of other human beings. This sympathetic faculty is the source of moral impressions and consists in a psychological mechanism whereby one person experiences the sentiments of another through an act of the imagination. Moral impressions, the product of sympathy, are sentiments with their own, uniquely identifiable phenomenological qualities, distinguishable from other feelings of pleasure or displeasure. Assuming that an internal moral sense is the source of all our moral judgments, how can we know that this sense does not deceive us? Just as the vision of man suffering from jaundice deceives him as to the proper colour of things, so a skewed moral sense might be misleading. We can easily imagine someone who sees colours in an inverted spectrum, and likewise, we can quite easily imagine a person with a warped or inverted moral sense. From a purely naturalistic perspective, there is nothing inherently contradictory or paradoxical about the existence of someone who feels strong approval in contemplating the basest villainy, and violent disapproval upon beholding the spectacle of warm-hearted benevolence. We can even conceive of a person completely devoid of any moral sense whatsoever. This is not a problem that Hume expressly tackles, but it is never the less one which arises as soon as we seek to construct any normative theory of ethics on the basis of his moral sense account. In basing his account of morality on an innate moral sense, Hume was inspired by the philosopher Francis Hutcheson. Hutcheson, too, was a Scotsman, and like Hume he regarded morality as having foundations in human nature. Unlike him, however,

he was a minister and a religious man, and could therefore make use of means unavailable to Hume. Within a religious framework, a benevolent deity can serve as a firm foothold against relativism: If the moral sense is a natural part of man, it must have been bestowed on him by God. The authenticity and the rightness of the moral sense therefore has divine sanction. God, as a benevolent and omnipotent creator, would not have given man a moral sense that led him much astray from the truth in matters of right and wrong. Even if the moral sense could be warped in some way by experience, it is inherently disposed to be accurate. If our moral sense tells us that something is wrong, we can infer that it really is wrong, because God would never endow us with a deceiving moral sense. In dispensing with notions of God and harmony, Hume opened to the door to moral skepticism and relativism, for if a moral sense is the ultimate source of morality, then it seems impossible to establish moral facts, except insofar as the person with whom we seek to establish these fact shares our particularly constituted moral sense. Unfortunately, he thoroughly eliminated these options in his critique of alternative accounts of morality. Take the problem of the inverted or skewed moral sense posed earlier: Nonmoral premises combined with reasoning cannot lead to the discovery of moral properties. It is always necessary to smuggle in input from the sentiments in order to reach normative conclusions. One way to respond to skeptical counter-examples of varying moral senses is to claim that human nature is in fact the same everywhere, and that all human beings are endowed with an identical moral sense which never varies. A belief in the universality of human nature was, after all, one of the more striking characteristics of the Enlightenment philosophy of man. However, it is difficult to imagine the cautious, skeptical and empirically-minded Hume making a factual assertion of such scope. He does not, at any rate, do so explicitly in any of his philosophical works. In a way, his treatment of morality bears a certain resemblance to his treatment of the problem of induction. After raising the problem of induction and demonstrating the impossibility of justifying that the future will be anything like the past, Hume proceeded to explain why we in fact employ this method of inference: It is the product of habit, hard-wired into human beings, and nothing more needs to be said. In the case of morality, too, we happen to have a moral sense, also hardwired, which is the source of our moral judgments. However, this still does nothing to establish any moral facts. It is an explanation of morality, not a justification. If the innate moral sense is the source of our moral approbation and disapprobation, and there is nothing further to appeal to, then there is no framework by which to determine ethical rightness. That is a clear case of moral relativity. As an assault on the egoistic moral philosophy of Hobbes and Mandeville, it hits the mark. However, if we accept his naturalistic moral sense as the all-encompassing source of morality without supplementing it with some additional, non-subjective source, we are compelled to accept the moral relativism that this entails. Nowhere in his writings does Hume spell out the relativist consequences of his theory, but he must surely have been aware of them. Perhaps he was a moral skeptic, and believed that there was no way to establish objective moral truth. If that was the case, he was certainly much too prudent and cautious a man to have said so overtly. Routledge, , p. Penguin, , p. Hackett, , p. It is worth noting, however, that basing the rightness of the moral sense on the benevolence of God raises in turn a whole host of problematic theological and ethical questions. Berlin, Isaiah, *The Age of Enlightenment: The Eighteenth-Century Philosophers* Oxford: Oxford University Press, Oxford University Press, Cohon, Rachel ed.

3: David Hume: Ethics, passions, sympathy, Is and Ought - Google Books

Hume and Smith see things, our capacity to make moral judgments plays a vital role in strengthening and supporting the bonds of community that sympathy makes possible. 4 Moreover, they both are careful to distinguish between what, as it happens, garners moral.

David Hume, born years ago this month, was a writer of enormous range. But was he a sceptic when it came to morals? What did he have to say about why we should behave well? And what is it to behave well? Yes, it captures his empiricist and indeed experimental approach to all matters concerning the empirical world. Think of the movie, *No Country for Old Men* in which we have two characters. They are both highly rational people: Now both characters in the movie use their deductive and inductive reasoning very well to track the target down accurately. And were able to more or less quite accurately predict what the target is going to do next. But then, the difference between these two highly rational people, the hit-man on the one hand, and the Sheriff is not their capacity in their reasoning or the exercise, but rather in their sentiment. The difference in sentiments, they motivate and they behave differently. So this is an example showing us why rationality itself is not equivalent morality, a highly rational person may turn out not to be a moral person, and vice versa. What about the objects of morality? I presume the virtues, can they be rationally grasped? Hume talks about the moral rationalists in his treatise, and he is fairly dismissive of their work. Does it really amount to a law? Now he himself never, never actually stated you cannot get an ought from is. Now what he says there is actually that when someone is trying to derive an ought from is, this must be observed and reasons must be given to show how an ought can, via a series of reasoning, be derived from is. Well one way in which we might do that I suppose is, Hume says that his hypothetical writer begins by establishing the being of a God. Because, one of the statements is the definition of what ought to be done is equivalent to what God wants you to do, and then you supply the second premise that for example God wants you to be honest and then maybe you can derive. Now then in principle we can have an argument, a deductive argument from the two premises about what the term ought means and what God wants us to do, and then derive conclusion. We ought to be honest. Now but Hume would say that in order for this argument to be acceptable, each premise will have to be acceptable. Hume would reject that. If you have a definition which defines ought in terms of is, then this definition of course will contain the term ought. But then all the rest of the premises can just contain is, then together you can derive an is. Let me give you an example. He defines moral good as a quality in an object which people, via the mechanism of sympathy, will feel a pleasing sentiment towards. By this he means Bernard Mandeville, the 18th century thinker who believed that morality was an illusion, and the great English philosopher of the 17th century, Thomas Hobbes who believed that morality is founded on self-interest. So this is an empirical fact that David Hume thinks we do experience, we do observe in our daily life and the selfish school is simply wrong in claiming their own motivation to behave morally is from self-interest. Now, what is it that ultimately motivates us to moral action? Nature, according to Hume, equips us with sentiments and warm affections towards people who are close to us, for example, our family members, our spouse, our friends. However this natural warm affection and generosity are naturally confined to a narrow circle of people and relations and friends. But where morality is concerned, the requirement is that we also act in the same way towards people who are not our close relations. Hume notably said reason is and ought to be only the slave of the passions, and can never pretend to any other office than to serve and obey them. What did he mean here by the passions? By passions he means what we nowadays call emotions. For example, the desire for something, the aversion against something, esteem for character or a feeling of content towards an action. And reason I suppose essentially is inert without the passions. The argument goes like this: The first premise, he says, moral knowledge or judgment about what is good, what is evil, is supposed to motivate people to act. Now according to Hume, reason alone can never produce emotions or motivate actions. Therefore moral knowledge and judgment which is supposed to have such influence, can never be a product of reason on its own. Sympathy cannot be reduced to self-interest. So for example, if someone has never been happy, seeing another person smiling, or laughing would then cause them the sentiments of being happy. Likewise in the case of suffering.

And it is sympathy that essentially draws us to society, it draws us into the company of other people. Sympathy is one of the cements of society. Between strangers, yes, sympathy is the cement of society. But according to Hume we do have a natural affection towards people who are close to us. However, even in people who are close to us, sympathy is at work, because we naturally sympathise with people more effectively if they are in space or time closer than us, and if they resemble us in more ways. And moral distinctions are drawn by these means. We feel approval or disapproval when we contemplate the character traits or the actions of others. Now but here, we have to be careful. Not all moral sentiments are reliable indicators of virtue or vices. So in the case of judging moral character, the first condition that is the knowledge condition, must be satisfied. So if we are judging an action, then first of all we have to use reason to find out all the facts about the circumstances this action was performed, what was its motive, what was its effect on the people receiving this action? Now it is via inductive and deductive reasoning, and also observation that we are satisfied this knowledge condition about an object we are judging. And then there is a second condition which Hume calls the steady and general point of view. Now this condition is to use our imagination to actively overlook our personal interest and relation, if any of this is related to the object that we are judging. But then, different individuals, given their different relations, will naturally have different sentiments towards the same object. Then in order for individuals to come to agree in their sentiments, we need to fix a general psychological background before the individuals feel their sentiments. Will you be happy if I give you an analogy? Think of judging colour, say redness, and how do you determine whether an object looks red? Then a red object will appear to us, not quite red, maybe purplish, and in the evening when the sun is setting, maybe a red object will appear to us not quite red, but brownish. So the standard condition in the case of judging colour would be normal sunlight. So if everyone were under the normal condition to look at the same object, they would feel the same sensation, the colour. If I need the right conditions for judging the colour red, do I also need the right observers, or am I appealing to the notion here of an ideal observer with a good or at least average human eyesight, and colour discriminations? In the case of observing colour, a qualified observer must have normal eyesight. Now in the parallel case of judging moral quality, the parallel would be a normal functioning faculty of sympathy or what we nowadays call empathy. Hume maintains that while some virtues and vices are natural, others are artificial. How do these differences work themselves out? Wherever action or character trait that nature has equipped us with some natural sentiments of approbation or pleasing sentiments towards, they are natural virtues. Well what then would constitute an artificial virtue? An artificial virtue is a character trait which we feel are pleasing sentiments towards, but this feeling is not naturally generated. It is generated via the artifice of education, maybe even public propaganda. What makes a virtue artificial is the sentiments, the approving sentiments towards it; the source of the sentiment. But if the origin of these approving sentiments towards this character trait is partly out of a nature, partly amplified or extended by education, cultivation, that makes these character traits which we approve of, artificial virtue. So a willingness to pay taxes for example, that would be an artificial virtue. In the first place we know that a tax system will benefit everyone, including ourselves so we have some self-interest in paying tax. But then, when society is larger, if I managed to evade tax without being noticed, I may be motivated not to do it. But now, then how do you make sure people are motivated to pay tax? According to Hume it is sympathy at work, because we observe the negative consequence of people not paying tax, then it will bring this benefit to people in society. How do people develop a sentiment of approval towards a law, for example, pay tax. According to Hume, the first step is because we observe if the law is breached it will have negative impact on other people, and other people will suffer, so when we observe them suffering, or other people imagine the suffering of other people as a result of these moral laws being broken, then our idea of their suffering can be so enlivened as to become the feeling of suffering ourself. So if we imagine a group of beings who are incapable of empathy, then the moral philosophy or the moral system for them would be entirely different. Well, more of Hume and his moral philosophy on our website. Norva, thank you very much indeed for being with us today.

4: Kant and Hume on Morality (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy)

Sympathy is central to Hume's moral philosophy, as he considered it the source of human motivation, social interaction, evaluation, and understanding. It has been acknowledged that sympathy, for Hume, was the human ability to associate with the sensations and passions of others.

References and Further Reading 1. Some of these distinctions are controversial, and work is needed to make them more precise. Hume and Smith are the main witnesses to this development. However, the point where these two traditions intersect is precise. Further more, when they did use it in the context of overcoming otherness, they marginalized it. However, even in a relatively value neutral inquiry such as psychoanalysis, the use of empathy as a method of data gathering has turned out to be relevant to ethics. Issues arise around the coherence and integrity of character and the self as a bulwark against unethical behavior such as rampant cheating, drug abuse, gambling, moral malaise and other individual, social, and communal ills. The Samaritan today that would be a local inhabitant, a Palestinian stops to help the individual in need. Multiple, overlapping descriptions are available of the Samaritan as a would-be moral agent. His sympathy was aroused. His empathy was aroused. In the case of those who crossed the road and passed by the victim without stopping, the experience of empathic distress was decisive arguably. They handled the empathic experience of suffering by avoiding the situation. In the case of the Samaritan, the empathic distress was transformed into sympathetic distress under one description Hoffman An entirely different description is available: The neighbor is the individual in need. At the level of phenomenal awareness of everyday human experience in the world with other humans, the minimal essential constituents of empathy include: In terms of the example of the Good Samaritan, the Samaritan is empathically receptive to the suffering of the traveler. This openness informs his understanding of the possibility that the other is a fellow traveler like himself. The other is interpreted as a neighbor in the second person. This neighborliness is expressed in words and deeds by his stopping and altruistically giving assistance. This working definition includes the possibility of alternative, orthogonal definitions, for example, from the perspective of functional causality. The Anglo-American Tradition a. Always the astute phenomenologist, the philosopher, David Hume, witnesses the divergence of sympathy into components that will blend with the judgment of taste, taking on an irreversible dimension of evaluation, across both an ethical and aesthetic dimension. Other components identified by Hume develop into the form of human empathy known to us as the mere communicability of affect, subject to further cognitive processing. Relying on his simple psychology of ideas and impression, sympathy reverses the operation of the understanding, which converts impressions of sensation into ideas. In the case of sympathy, the operation is in the other direction – from idea to impression. Sympathy arouses ideas in the recipient that are transformed into impressions – though this time impressions of reflection - through the influence of the ideas. Thus, the operation of sympathy: Sympathy reverses the operation of the understanding, which transforms impressions of sensation into ideas. Sympathy arouses impressions through the influence of ideas. The functional basis of this sympathetic conversion will turn out to be the imagination. This is an impression of reflection that is fainter and calmer than the initial idea or impression of anger. I thus experience what may be variously described as a trace affect, a counter-part feeling, or a vicarious experience – of anger. In short, the one individual now knows what the other is experiencing because she experiences it too, not as the numerically identical impression, but as one that is qualitatively similar. This introduces the other and the distinction between one individual and the other. Hume distinguishes between sympathy and emotional contagion T 2. Sympathy requires a double representation. What the other is feeling is represented in a vicarious feeling, which is what sympathy shares with emotional contagion. Hume establishes sympathy as the glue that affectively binds others to oneself and, by implication, binds a community of ethical individuals together. In this case, a counterpart feeling - a vicarious feeling - is aroused in oneself and, in turn, becomes the experiential basis for further cognitive activity about what is going on with the other person. However, Hume finds now that he is at risk of having undercut ethics by giving to sympathy such a central role in creating community. We are much less affected by the pleasures and pains of those at a great distance than by those in

our immediate physical vicinity or say close family relations. So an earthquake in China creates less sympathetic distress in me than an earthquake in Los Angeles in my own country, even if I am perfectly safe in either case. According to Hume, my ethical approbation of and obligations to those at a great distance from me are no less strong than to those close at hand. The balance of impartiality needs to be restored by appealing to an unbiased ideal observer. In turn, this sets up a tension between the sympathetic observer of the moral agent and the ideal, unbiased one. This is an issue. The ideal observer and the sympathetic one are complementary at best, and possibly even contrary. Being sympathetic reduces distance between individuals; being an ideal observer creates distance. Let us now look at two possible ways of resolving the tension between the ideal observer and sympathy as the basis for moral approbation and disapproval. Slote will have a third approach considered in detail further below. Hume says that the motivation to justice is produced through sympathy in observing the beneficial results of justice Darwall. Indeed Hume expresses what would become a very Kantian approach, though whether he does so consistently is an issue: Hume is not a closet Kantian. Sympathy is a source of information about the experience of the other individual. But that is not all. Darwall does not follow him there, but, as we shall see, it is a matter of controversy whether the modern account of empathy should do so. The second approach is a reconstruction of the disinterested spectator as the sympathetic spectator. Appreciating what the other is feeling is a useful, though not always decisive, data point in evaluating the ethical qualities of the agent being considered in the judgment of approbation. What the other is experiencing is useful input to the process of ethical assessment of the quality of character of the individual in question. Within the context of the Treatise, Hume builds a complete sense of sympathy out of the contagiousness of the passions by adding the idea of the other to the communicability of affect. In the Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals the contagiousness of the passions is all that will remain of sympathy: The passions are so contagious, that they pass with the greatest facility from one person to another, and produce correspondent movements in all human breast. Where friendship appears in very signal instances, my heart catches the same passion, and is warmed by those warm sentiments, that display themselves me T 3. Hume moves sympathy from the center to the periphery of his account of human judgments approbation and disapproval. This is complimented by the contrary movement of taste from the periphery to the center. Thus the distinct boundaries and offices of reason and of taste are easily ascertained. The former conveys the knowledge of truth and falsehood; the latter give the sentiment of beauty and deformity, vice and virtue. Thus, Hume is engaging in what we might describe a journey back from morality to its foundation and infrastructure in taste. The merit of benevolence and its utility in promoting the good of mankind through attributes useful and agreeable to oneself and others looms large in founding morality for example, Hume. Compassion takes on the content of qualities useful to mankind as benevolence. This former point is essential. Taste gives us an enjoyment of the qualities of the characters of persons in conversation, humor, and friendship that are a super-set of what empathy does today in our current usage with its fine-grained distinctions in accessing the experiences of other persons. The other main witness to the vicissitudes of sympathy is Adam Smith, to whom we now turn. He also acknowledges a traditional overlap between the two, noting, however, the generalization of sympathy: Pity and compassion are words appropriated to signify our fellow-feeling with the sorrow of others, sympathy, though its meaning was, perhaps, originally the same, may now, however, without much impropriety, be made use of to denote our fellow-feeling with any passion whatever. Here sympathy is not some separate reactive affect that occurs in witnessing the pain and suffering of another individual. Rather sympathy operates as the communicability of affect the passions regardless of the particular passion. For example, in defining sympathy, Smith cannot use the same term without succumbing to the logical fallacy of *petitio principii*: As we have no immediate experience of what other men feel, we can form no idea of the manner in which they are affected, but by conceiving what we ourselves should feel in the like situation [. This points to three results. Sympathy is not responsive in the sense of pity or compassion, the latter being reactions to the suffering of another. Yet sympathy has its responsive dimension. Sympathy requires a responsive approbation or disapprobation of the beneficial or mischievous conduct of the other individual. In Smith, sympathy is fellow feeling plus disapprobation: That where there is no approbation of the conduct of the person who confers the benefit, there is little sympathy with the gratitude of him who receives it: This is a

definitive textual answer. But this is just understatement for effect. Sympathy is simply missing in the case of an unmerited boon conferred by a would-be benefactor. The bounds of disapprobation align closely with those of sympathy. The nuances that arise are many and varied; but Smith is more consistent than he is generally credited in standardly using sympathy as the source of intuitions about the merit or demerit of other individuals. This extends not only to their conduct but in the heartfelt attitude they bring to the conduct and its consequences. When sympathy breaks down, when we have no fellow feeling with the other, then it is a strong indication that the other has put himself outside the community and is blameworthy, lacking merit. The result is an ethics of the well-bred English gentleman, including his attachments to reputation, prudence, temperance, and so on. Stephen Darwall is keenly aware of this and makes the point: Thus Darwall, keenly aware of his own second person inquiry: However, Darwall arguably overlooks the point indicated in the above-cited quote that, for Smith, sympathy is fellow-feeling plus disapprobation, not fellow feeling pure-and-simple. But though sympathy is very properly said to arise from an imaginary change of situations with the person principally concerned, yet this imaginary change is not supposed to happen to me in my own person and character, but in that of the person with whom I sympathize.

5: The Theory of Moral Sentiments - Wikipedia

1. Moral Philosophy and its Subject Matter. Hume and Kant operate with two somewhat different conceptions of morality itself, which helps explain some of the differences between their respective approaches to moral philosophy.

One is a question of moral epistemology: Ethical theorists and theologians of the day held, variously, that moral good and evil are discovered: Hume sides with the moral sense theorists: Hume maintains against the rationalists that, although reason is needed to discover the facts of any concrete situation and the general social impact of a trait of character or a practice over time, reason alone is insufficient to yield a judgment that something is virtuous or vicious. Moral rationalists of the period such as Clarke and in some moods, Hobbes and Locke argue that moral standards or principles are requirements of reason – that is, that the very rationality of right actions is the ground of our obligation to perform them. The moral sense theorists Shaftesbury and Hutcheson and Butler see all requirements to pursue goodness and avoid evil as consequent upon human nature, which is so structured that a particular feature of our consciousness whether moral sense or conscience evaluates the rest. Hume sides with the moral sense theorists on this question: Closely connected with the issue of the foundations of moral norms is the question whether moral requirements are natural or conventional. Hobbes and Mandeville see them as conventional, and Shaftesbury, Hutcheson, Locke, and others see them as natural. If there were nothing in our experience and no sentiments in our minds to produce the concept of virtue, Hume says, no lavish praise of heroes could generate it. So to a degree moral requirements have a natural origin. Thus he takes an intermediate position: While even so law-oriented a thinker as Hobbes has a good deal to say about virtue, the ethical writers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries predominantly favor a rule- or law-governed understanding of morals, giving priority to laws of nature or principles of duty. The chief exception here is the moral sense school, which advocates an analysis of the moral life more like that of the Greek and Hellenistic thinkers, in terms of settled traits of character – although they too find a place for principles in their ethics. Yet he insists on a role for rules of duty within the domain of what he calls the artificial virtues. Hume roundly criticizes Hobbes for his insistence on psychological egoism or something close to it, and for his dismal, violent picture of a state of nature. Yet Hume resists the view of Hutcheson that all moral principles can be reduced to our benevolence, in part because he doubts that benevolence can sufficiently overcome our perfectly normal acquisitiveness. While for Hume the condition of humankind in the absence of organized society is not a war of all against all, neither is it the law-governed and highly cooperative domain imagined by Locke. It is a hypothetical condition in which we would care for our friends and cooperate with them, but in which self-interest and preference for friends over strangers would make any wider cooperation impossible. In the realm of politics, Hume again takes up an intermediate position. He objects both to the doctrine that a subject must passively obey his government no matter how tyrannical it is and to the Lockean thesis that citizens have a natural right to revolution whenever their rulers violate their contractual commitments to the people. He famously criticizes the notion that all political duties arise from an implicit contract that binds later generations who were not party to the original explicit agreement. On his view, human beings can create a society without government, ordered by conventional rules of ownership, transfer of property by consent, and promise-keeping. We superimpose government on such a pre-civil society when it grows large and prosperous; only then do we need to use political power to enforce these rules of justice in order to preserve social cooperation. So the duty of allegiance to government, far from depending on the duty to fulfill promises, provides needed assurance that promises of all sorts will be kept. The duty to submit to our rulers comes into being because reliable submission is necessary to preserve order. Particular governments are legitimate because of their usefulness in preserving society, not because those who wield power were chosen by God or received promises of obedience from the people. In a long-established civil society, whatever ruler or type of government happens to be in place and successfully maintaining order and justice is legitimate, and is owed allegiance. However, there is some legitimate recourse for victims of tyranny: The indirect passions, primarily pride, humility shame, love and hatred, are generated in a more complex way, but still one involving either the thought or

experience of pain or pleasure. Intentional actions are caused by the direct passions including the instincts. Of the indirect passions Hume says that pride, humility, love and hatred do not directly cause action; it is not clear whether he thinks this true of all the indirect passions. Hume is traditionally regarded as a compatibilist about freedom and determinism, because in his discussion in the Enquiry concerning Human Understanding he argues that if we understand the doctrines of liberty and necessity properly, all mankind consistently believe both that human actions are the products of causal necessity and that they are free. The two treatments, however, surprisingly enough, are entirely consistent. Hume construes causal necessity to mean the same as causal connection or rather, intelligible causal connection, as he himself analyzes this notion in his own theory of causation: In both works he argues that just as we discover necessity in this sense to hold between the movements of material bodies, we discover just as much necessity to hold between human motives, character traits, and circumstances of action, on the one hand, and human behavior on the other. He says in the Treatise that the liberty of indifference is the negation of necessity in this sense; this is the notion of liberty that he there labels absurd, and identifies with chance or randomness which can be no real power in nature both in the Treatise and the first epistemological Enquiry. Human actions are not free in this sense. This is the sense on which Hume focuses in ECHU: Hume argues, as well, that the causal necessity of human actions is not only compatible with moral responsibility but requisite to it. To hold an agent morally responsible for a bad action, it is not enough that the action be morally reprehensible; we must impute the badness of the fleeting act to the enduring agent. Not all harmful or forbidden actions incur blame for the agent; those done by accident, for example, do not. The Influencing Motives of the Will According to Hume, intentional actions are the immediate product of passions, in particular the direct passions, including the instincts. He does not appear to allow that any other sort of mental state could, on its own, give rise to an intentional action except by producing a passion, though he does not argue for this. The motivating passions, in their turn, are produced in the mind by specific causes, as we see early in the Treatise where he first explains the distinction between impressions of sensation and impressions of reflection: An impression first strikes upon the senses, and makes us perceive heat or cold, thirst or hunger, pleasure or pain, of some kind or other. Of this impression there is a copy taken by the mind, which remains after the impression ceases; and this we call an idea. This idea of pleasure or pain, when it returns upon the soul, produces the new impressions of desire and aversion, hope and fear, which may properly be called impressions of reflection, because derived from it. Not just any ideas of pleasure or pain give rise to motivating passions, however, but only ideas of those pleasures or pains we believe exist or will exist T 1. More generally, the motivating passions of desire and aversion, hope and fear, joy and grief, and a few others are impressions produced by the occurrence in the mind either of a feeling of pleasure or pain, whether physical or psychological, or of a believed idea of pleasure or pain to come T 2. These passions, together with the instincts hunger, lust, and so on, are all the motivating passions that Hume discusses. The will, Hume claims, is an immediate effect of pain or pleasure T 2. The will, however, is merely that impression we feel when we knowingly give rise to an action T 2. The causes of action he describes are those he has already identified: Hume famously sets himself in opposition to most moral philosophers, ancient and modern, who talk of the combat of passion and reason, and who urge human beings to regulate their actions by reason and to grant it dominion over their contrary passions. His view is not, of course, that reason plays no role in the generation of action; he grants that reason provides information, in particular about means to our ends, which makes a difference to the direction of the will. His thesis is that reason alone cannot move us to action; the impulse to act itself must come from passion. The first is a largely empirical argument based on the two rational functions of the understanding. The understanding discovers the abstract relations of ideas by demonstration a process of comparing ideas and finding congruencies and incongruencies; and it also discovers the causal and other probabilistic relations of objects that are revealed in experience. Demonstrative reasoning is never the cause of any action by itself: Probable or cause-and-effect reasoning does play a role in deciding what to do, but we see that it only functions as an auxiliary, and not on its own. Our aversion or propensity makes us seek the causes of the expected source of pain or pleasure, and we use causal reasoning to discover what they are. Once we do, our impulse naturally extends itself to those causes, and we act to avoid or embrace them. Plainly the impulse to act does not arise from the reasoning but is only directed by it.

Probable reasoning is merely the discovering of causal connections, and knowledge that A causes B never concerns us if we are indifferent to A and to B. Thus, neither demonstrative nor probable reasoning alone causes action. The second argument is a corollary of the first. It takes as a premise the conclusion just reached, that reason alone cannot produce an impulse to act. Given that, can reason prevent action or resist passion in controlling the will? To stop a volition or retard the impulse of an existing passion would require a contrary impulse. If reason alone could give rise to such a contrary impulse, it would have an original influence on the will a capacity to cause intentional action, when unopposed ; which, according to the previous argument, it lacks. Therefore reason alone cannot resist any impulse to act. Therefore, what offers resistance to our passions cannot be reason of itself. The third or Representation argument is different in kind. One might suppose he means to give another argument to show that reason alone cannot provide a force to resist passion. Yet the Representation Argument is not empirical, and does not talk of forces or impulses. Therefore, a passion or volition or action , not having this feature, cannot be opposed by truth and reason. The argument allegedly proves two points: The point here is not merely the earlier, empirical observation that the rational activity of the understanding does not generate an impulse in the absence of an expectation of pain or pleasure. The main point is that, because passions, volitions, and actions have no content suitable for assessment by reason, reason cannot assess prospective motives or actions as rational or irrational; and therefore reason cannot, by so assessing them, create or obstruct them. By contrast, reason can assess a potential opinion as rational or irrational; and by endorsing the opinion, reason will that is, we will adopt it, while by contradicting the opinion, reason will destroy our credence in it. The Representation Argument, then, makes a point a priori about the relevance of the functions of the understanding to the generation of actions. Hume allows that, speaking imprecisely, we often say a passion is unreasonable because it arises in response to a mistaken judgment or opinion, either that something a source of pleasure or uneasiness exists, or that it may be obtained or avoided by a certain means. In just these two cases a passion may be called unreasonable, but strictly speaking even here it is not the passion but the judgment that is so. And there is no other instance of passion contrary to reason. Either way, Hume denies that reason can evaluate the ends people set themselves; only passions can select ends, and reason cannot evaluate passions. Instrumentalists understand the claim that reason is the slave of the passions to allow that reason not only discovers the causally efficacious means to our ends a task of theoretical causal reasoning but also requires us to take them. The classificatory point in the Representation Argument favors the reading of Hume as a skeptic about practical reason; but that argument is absent from the moral Enquiry. Ethical Anti-rationalism Hume claims that moral distinctions are not derived from reason but rather from sentiment. His rejection of ethical rationalism is at least two-fold. Moral rationalists tend to say, first, that moral properties are discovered by reason, and also that what is morally good is in accord with reason even that goodness consists in reasonableness and what is morally evil is unreasonable. Hume rejects both theses. Some of his arguments are directed to one and some to the other thesis, and in places it is unclear which he means to attack. Demonstrative reasoning discovers relations of ideas, and vice and virtue are not identical with any of the four philosophical relations resemblance, contrariety, degrees in quality, or proportions in quantity and number whose presence can be demonstrated. Nor could they be identical with any other abstract relation; for such relations can also obtain between items such as trees that are incapable of moral good or evil. Furthermore, were moral vice and virtue discerned by demonstrative reasoning, such reasoning would reveal their inherent power to produce motives in all who discern them; but no causal connections can be discovered a priori. Causal reasoning, by contrast, does infer matters of fact pertaining to actions, in particular their causes and effects; but the vice of an action its wickedness is not found in its causes or effects, but is only apparent when we consult the sentiments of the observer. Therefore moral good and evil are not discovered by reason alone. Hume also attempts in the Treatise to establish the other anti-rationalist thesis, that virtue is not the same as reasonableness and vice is not contrary to reason.

6: F. L. Van Holthoon, Adam Smith and David Hume: with Sympathy*: F. L. van Holthoon - PhilPapers

In developing this sympathy-based moral sentimentalism, Hume surpasses the divinely-implemented moral sense theory of his predecessor, Francis Hutcheson, by elaborating a naturalistic, moral psychological basis for the moral sense, in terms of the operation of sympathy.

September 29, Jacqueline A. Reviewed by Christopher Williams, University of Nevada, Reno In the final paragraph of his *Treatise of Human Nature*, Hume declared that while the "anatomist ought never to emulate the painter," the former was "admirably fitted to give advice" to the latter and added that it was "even impracticable" to paint without doing the anatomical homework first. Exploiting abundant textual sources, Jacqueline A. Pride, sympathy, and humanity -- as Hume delineates each -- are the trio of ideas that anchor her narrative and it is this trio at which the subtitle of the book gestures. Of the three, the greatest of these is humanity. The book has six chapters. The cash value of this understanding of social theory is that the passions people actually experience are "fundamentally culturally structured" Because they are so structured, sympathy -- the transmission of sentiment across persons -- turns out to be an important element in the explanation of how passions -- and more generally, "patterns of feeling and behavior" 70 -- arise and are perpetuated. Social power, the very idea, receives considerable attention, and Taylor takes a particular interest in the ways social rank typically as established by wealth and property, including, notably, the ownership of slaves and gender roles constitute power or the lack of it. While developing these themes, she attempts to defend Hume against the charge made by philosophers such as R. Collingwood and Alasdair MacIntyre that he has an ahistorical, uniformitarian picture of human nature, and she situates Hume in relation to other theorists of emotion such as William James, Jesse Prinz, and Claire Armon Jones. In the three remaining chapters, Taylor shifts her view to moral feeling: Taylor begins with the account of moral judgment in Book Three of the *Treatise* but finds it defective, thinking that Hume "neglects the social inequalities he has examined and instead appears to regard all persons as having more or less equal moral standing" as evaluators As for the self-appraisals that persons undertake, this version of the moral sentiment is capable of properly certifying pride as a virtue as against the Christian tradition and its secularized Hobbist successor. As already noted, the discussion of power in the third chapter is primarily about social power: This cultural emphasis is very much in the catholic spirit of Hume, and readers for whom the shock of billiard balls remains the paradigm of Humean causation can expect to be set straight by Taylor. In providing a wealth of pertinent detail, her book makes valuable contributions to a more three-dimensional understanding of Hume, especially in the later chapters. Aspects of her narrative do raise some questions, however. This is not at all a problem, I think, because pride, and the closely related notion of dignity, are so vitally important at the end of the story she aims to tell. On a more substantive note, there are concerns we might have about the causal investigation of the passions. As we saw above, the investigation is supposed to be neutral with respect to our evaluation of the causes. But is it really? How ultimately separable the anatomist and the painter are in matters of the mental is a difficult general question, but even if we restrict ourselves to Hume interpretation it is possible to find signs that separation is not unproblematic. In the *Dissertation on the Passions*, Hume characterizes pride as "a certain satisfaction with ourselves, on account of some accomplishment or possession, which we enjoy" and humility as "a dissatisfaction with ourselves, on account of some defect or infirmity. If evaluation has already been made, and philosophers are not its authors, it would seem that evaluation must come from the dispositions available in a given society. Those dispositions could lead the members of a society who internalize them to regard ownership of slaves as an accomplishment, for example. Taylor would hardly dispute this possible source of pride, and her remarks on the cultural constitution of pride underline the contingency, agreeable in this instance, of such a source. Although the better-read members of a society will most likely concur with Hume that the "remains of domestic slavery, in the American colonies, and among some European nations, would never surely create a desire of rendering it more universal," those same persons could take considerable and not readily imperiled pride in the slaves they happen to own. This point is important for two reasons. But when Hume considers cultural constitution that which is "artificial," in his idiom , he wants to show that the

artificial has as solid a claim to authority as the natural, artificiality notwithstanding. The historical evolution of the moral sense will be a piecemeal affair for the Humean, and Taylor has a good thought, in her final pages, when she says that "the process by which the members of a moral community are included or excluded in the practice of moral appraisal" is one wherein "we negotiate the virtues of moral evaluation", emphasis hers. I take it that this means that we do not necessarily foresee how the negotiations will turn out. But should we expect philosophers -- the humane Humeans -- to lead the negotiating team? This thought might fund a different criticism of Hume from the type of criticism Taylor advances. An area in which Hume does show reformist zeal is religion. But if some evaluative dispositions are traceable to religious ideas current in a society, then Hume can be faulted for slighting their influence, and the complaint would not be merely about an historical slight but a philosophical one. Relatedly, Taylor may overrate the power of sympathy, a capacity that persons of refined sensibility would possess to a high degree. The desirability of expanding sympathy by whatever name we call it has a pronounced moral tinge for us today, and humanities education is often justified on the ground that it helps to cultivate the expansion. However, when Taylor writes, "Sympathy is thus the means of reproducing and sustaining forms of social life and schemes of value" 70, emphasis hers, I hesitate. The transmission of value -- tradition in the best sense -- is needful for any society, but it seems unduly confident to assign this job to sympathy. It is possible that Taylor is thinking of a critical transmission of value in which sympathy should have a role. But even with such a qualification, caution is advisable. If we would know why in contrast to our ancient forebears we disapprove of the killing of obnoxious princes, a straightforward explanation merely adverts to the inconveniences as Hume might put it of the practice, to its long-term destabilizing impact on governments. The explanation need make no appeal to sympathy even if, as in the ostensibly similar case of justice, sympathy does enter into the explanation of our approval once sentiment regarding tyrannicide has changed. A relatively bland appeal to "history and experience" could suffice here as well as in many other cases of changed sentiment. The disagreements here might even resolve, to a certain extent, into differences of recommended tone. In particular, the conception of dignity that occupies center stage by the end presents a salutary reminder that dignity is far from being an exclusive possession of those who prefer Kant to Hume. Readers who maintain the opposite predilection will applaud that reminder.

7: Hume and Smith on Sympathy, Approbation, and Moral Judgment - Oxford Scholarship

This essay has benefited considerably from discussion at the Sympathy Workshop organized by Eric Schliesser at the University of Richmond, and at the Adam Smith Society session at the Central Division Meetings of the American Philosophical Association Meeting in New Orleans.

Sixth sense[edit] Hutcheson had abandoned the psychological view of moral philosophy, claiming that motives were too fickle to be used as a basis for a philosophical system. Instead, he hypothesised a dedicated "sixth sense" to explain morality. The Theory of Moral Sentiments begins with the following assertion: How selfish soever man may be supposed, there are evidently some principles in his nature, which interest him in the fortunes of others, and render their happiness necessary to him, though he derives nothing from it, except the pleasure of seeing it. Of this kind is pity or compassion, the emotion we feel for the misery of others, when we either see it, or are made to conceive it in a very lively manner. That we often derive sorrow from the sorrows of others, is a matter of fact too obvious to require any instances to prove it; for this sentiment, like all the other original passions of human nature, is by no means confined to the virtuous or the humane, though they perhaps may feel it with the most exquisite sensibility. The greatest ruffian, the most hardened violator of the laws of society, is not altogether without it. Sympathy[edit] Smith departed from the "moral sense" tradition of Shaftesbury, Hutcheson, and Hume, as the principle of sympathy takes the place of that organ. It was the feeling with the passions of others. It operated through a logic of mirroring, in which a spectator imaginatively reconstructed the experience of the person he watches: As we have no immediate experience of what other men feel, we can form no idea of the manner in which they are affected, but by conceiving what we ourselves should feel in the like situation. Though our brother is on the rack, as long as we ourselves are at our ease, our senses will never inform us of what he suffers. They never did, and never can, carry us beyond our own person, and it is by the imagination only that we can form any conception of what are his sensations. Neither can that faculty help us to this any other way, than by representing to us what would be our own, if we were in his case. It is the impressions of our own senses only, not those of his, which our imaginations copy. By the imagination, we place ourselves in his situation. However, Smith rejected the idea that Man was capable of forming moral judgements beyond a limited sphere of activity, again centered around his own self-interest: The administration of the great system of the universe To man is allotted a much humbler department, but one much more suitable to the weakness of his powers, and to the narrowness of his comprehension: But though we are Nature has directed us to the greater part of these by original and immediate instincts. Hunger, thirst, the passion which unites the two sexes, and the dread of pain, prompt us to apply those means for their own sakes, and without any consideration of their tendency to those beneficent ends which the great Director of nature intended to produce by them. The rich only select from the heap what is most precious and agreeable. They consume little more than the poor, and in spite of their natural selfishness and rapacity, though they mean only their own conveniency, though the sole end which they propose from the labours of all the thousands whom they employ, be the gratification of their own vain and insatiable desires, they divide with the poor the produce of all their improvements. They are led by an invisible hand to make nearly the same distribution of the necessaries of life, which would have been made, had the earth been divided into equal portions among all its inhabitants, and thus without intending it, without knowing it, advance the interest of the society, and afford means to the multiplication of the species. In a published lecture, Vernon L. It explains why human nature appears to be simultaneously self-regarding and other-regarding. The Sixth Edition[edit] Consists of 7 parts: Of the propriety of action Part II: Of merit and demerit; or of the objects of reward and punishment Part III: Of the foundations of our judgments concerning our own sentiments and conduct, and of the sense of duty. Of the effect of utility upon the sentiments of approbation. Of the influence of custom and fashion upon the sentiments of moral approbation and disapprobation. Of the character of virtue Part VII: Of systems of moral philosophy Part I: Of the propriety of action[edit] Part one of The Theory of Moral Sentiments consists of three sections: Of the sense of propriety Section 2: Of the degrees of which different passions are consistent with propriety Section 3: Of the effects of

prosperity and adversity upon the judgment of mankind with regard to the propriety of action; and why it is more easy to obtain their approbation in the one state than the other Part I, Section I: Of the Sense of Propriety[edit] Section 1 consists of 5 chapters: Of sympathy Chapter 2: Of the pleasure of mutual sympathy Chapter 3: Of the manner in which we judge of the propriety or impropriety of the affections of other men by their concord or dissonance with our own Chapter 4: The same subject continued Chapter 5: Of Sympathy[edit] According to Smith people have a natural tendency to care about the well-being of others for no other reason than the pleasure one gets from seeing them happy. He calls this sympathy, defining it "our fellow-feeling with any passion whatsoever" p. He argues that this occurs under either of two conditions: We see firsthand the fortune or misfortune of another person The fortune or misfortune is vividly depicted to us Although this is apparently true, he follows to argue that this tendency lies even in "the greatest ruffian, the most hardened violator of the laws of society" p. Smith also proposes several variables that can moderate the extent of sympathy, noting that the situation that is the cause of the passion is a large determinant of our response: The vividness of the account of the condition of another person An important point put forth by Smith is that the degree to which we sympathize, or "tremble and shudder at the thought of what he feels", is proportional to the degree of vividness in our observation or the description of the event. Knowledge of the causes of the emotions When observing the anger of another person, for example, we are unlikely to sympathize with this person because we "are unacquainted with his provocation" and as a result cannot imagine what it is like to feel what he feels. Thus, sympathetic responses are often conditional onâ€”or their magnitude is determined byâ€”the causes of the emotion in the person being sympathized with. Whether other people are involved in the emotion Specifically, emotions such as joy and grief tell us about the "good or bad fortune" of the person we are observing them in, whereas anger tells us about the bad fortune with respect to another person. It is the difference between intrapersonal emotions, such as joy and grief, and interpersonal emotions, such as anger, that causes the difference in sympathy, according to Smith. That is, intrapersonal emotions trigger at least some sympathy without the need for context whereas interpersonal emotions are dependent on context. Smith makes clear that we sympathize not only with the misery of others but also the joy; he states that observing an emotional state through the "looks and gestures" in another person is enough to initiate that emotional state in ourselves. Furthermore, we are generally insensitive to the real situation of the other person; we are instead sensitive to how we would feel ourselves if we were in the situation of the other person. For example, a mother with a suffering baby feels "the most complete image of misery and distress" while the child merely feels "the uneasiness of the present instant" p. Smith argues that this pleasure is not the result of self-interest: Smith also makes the case that pleasure from mutual sympathy is not derived merely from a heightening of the original felt emotion amplified by the other person. Smith further notes that people get more pleasure from the mutual sympathy of negative emotions than positive emotions; we feel "more anxious to communicate to our friends" p. Smith proposes that mutual sympathy heightens the original emotion and "disburdens" the person of sorrow. In contrast, mocking or joking about their sorrow is the "cruellest insult" one can inflict on another person: To seem to not be affected by the joy of our companions is but want of politeness; but to not wear a serious countenance when they tell us their afflictions, is real and gross inhumanity p. He makes clear that mutual sympathy of negative emotions is a necessary condition for friendship, whereas mutual sympathy of positive emotions is desirable but not required. Not only do we get pleasure from the sympathy of others, but we also obtain pleasure from being able to successfully sympathize with others, and discomfort from failing to do so. Sympathizing is pleasurable, failing to sympathize is aversive. Smith also makes the case that failing to sympathize with another person may not be aversive to ourselves but we may find the emotion of the other person unfounded and blame them, as when another person experiences great happiness or sadness in response to an event that we think should not warrant such a response. Of the manner in which we judge of the propriety or impropriety of the affections of other men by their concord or dissonance with our own[edit] Smith presents the argument that approval or disapproval of the feelings of others is completely determined by whether we sympathize or fail to sympathize with their emotions. Specifically, if we sympathize with the feelings of another we judge that their feelings are just, and if we do not sympathize we judge that their feelings are unjust. This holds in matters of opinion also, as Smith

flatly states that we judge the opinions of others as correct or incorrect merely by determining whether they agree with our own opinions. Smith also cites a few examples where our judgment is not in line with our emotions and sympathy, as when we judge the sorrow of a stranger who has lost her mother as being justified even though we know nothing about the stranger and do not sympathize ourselves. However, according to Smith these non-emotional judgments are not independent from sympathy in that although we do not feel sympathy we do recognize that sympathy would be appropriate and lead us to this judgment and thus deem the judgment as correct. He goes on to establish it completely and in all its parts, without any regard either to the great interests, or to the strong prejudices which may oppose it. He seems to imagine that he can arrange the different members of a great society with as much ease as the hand arranges the different pieces upon a chess-board. He does not consider that the pieces upon the chess-board have no other principle of motion besides that which the hand impresses upon them; but that, in the great chess-board of human society, every single piece has a principle of motion of its own, altogether different from that which the legislature might choose to impress upon it. If those two principles coincide and act in the same direction, the game of human society will go on easily and harmoniously, and is very likely to be happy and successful. If they are opposite or different, the game will go on miserably, and the society must be at all times in the highest degree of disorder. Thus, sympathy plays a role in determining judgments of the actions of others in that if we sympathize with the affections that brought about the action we are more likely to judge the action as just, and vice versa: If upon bringing the case home to our own breast we find that the sentiments which it gives occasion to, coincide and tally with our own, we necessarily approve of them as proportioned and suitable to their objects; if otherwise, we necessarily disapprove of them, as extravagant and out of proportion p. The same subject continued[edit] Smith delineates two conditions under which we judge the "propriety or impropriety of the sentiments of another person": Smith lists objects that are in one of two domains: Smith argues that sympathy does not play a role in judgments of these objects; differences in judgment arise only due to difference in attention or mental acuity between people. Smith continues by noting that we assign value to judgments not based on usefulness utility but on similarity to our own judgment, and we attribute to those judgments which are in line with our own the qualities of correctness or truth in science, and justness or delicateness in taste. Thus, the utility of a judgment is "plainly an afterthought" and "not what first recommends them to our approbation" p. Of objects that fall into the second category, such as the misfortune of oneself or another person, Smith argues that there is no common starting point for judgment but are vastly more important in maintaining social relations. Judgments of the first kind are irrelevant as long as one is able to share a sympathetic sentiment with another person; people may converse in total disagreement about objects of the first kind as long as each person appreciates the sentiments of the other to a reasonable degree. However, people become intolerable to each other when they have no feeling or sympathy for the misfortunes or resentment of the other: Another important point Smith makes is that our sympathy will never reach the degree or "violence" of the person who experiences it, as our own "safety" and comfort as well as separation from the offending object constantly "intrude" on our efforts to induce a sympathetic state in ourselves. Thus, sympathy is never enough, as the "sole consolation" for the sufferer is "to see the emotions of their hearts, in every respect, beat time to his own, in the violent and disagreeable passions" p. It is this which is "sufficient for the harmony of society" p. Not only does the person dampen her expression of suffering for the purpose of sympathizing, but she also takes the perspective of the other person who is not suffering, thus slowly changing her perspective and allowing the calmness of the other person and reduction of violence of the sentiment to improve her spirits. As a friend is likely to engage in more sympathy than a stranger, a friend actually slows the reduction in our sorrows because we do not temper our feelings out of sympathizing with the perspective of the friend to the degree that we reduce our sentiments in the presence of acquaintances, or a group of acquaintances. This gradual tempering of our sorrows from the repeated perspective-taking of someone in a more calm state make "society and conversation Of the amiable and respectable virtues[edit] Smith starts to use an important new distinction in this section and late in the previous section: The "person principally concerned": The person who has had emotions aroused by an object The spectator: The person observing and sympathizing with the emotionally aroused "person principally concerned" These two people have two

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different sets of virtues. The person principally concerned, in "bring[ing] down emotions to what the spectator can go along with" p.

8: Hume: Sympathy - Bibliography - PhilPapers

SYMPATHY AND BENEVOLENCE IN HUME'S MORAL PSYCHOLOGY The structure of the paper is as follows. In the first section, I will clarify Hume's account of sympathy and its relation to benevolence in the *Treatise*.

November 26, The Ethics of Hume The theory of ethics offered by Hume in his *Treatise of Human Nature* is substantially different from other such theories of the time. In particular, 1 Hume largely attempts to present a descriptive, not normative, account of morality; 2 Hume is concerned not directly with the morality of actions, but with virtuous character; and 3 Hume rejects the idea that reason, so championed by other modern philosophers, plays the primary role in determining the moral worth of actions. However, I believe this is incorrect. In this paper I will focus on these three observations and sketch replies to several arguments. I hope to show not only that the objections fail and that Humean morality is prescriptive, but also that Hume provides what is in many ways a much richer and more accurate account of ethics than those offered by moral rationalists. The concepts of the passions, virtue, and sympathy are central to an understanding of his moral theory. According to Hume, the passions emotions are secondary impressions or impressions of reflection Hume, 2. These include calm passions such as beauty and deformity, direct violent passion such as grief and joy, and indirect violent passions such as love and hatred. Other passions include generosity, hope, ambition, envy, fear, and despair Hume, 2. Passions are caused, in part, by virtues and vices, which produce moral pleasures and pains respectively Hume, 2. In Book 3 Hume explores natural virtues essential to human nature such as compassion and friendship, and artificial virtues social conventions such as justice, promise-keeping, and allegiance Hume, 3. Though these virtues are not natural in the sense of being essential, they arise naturally in society. Society arises out of enlightened self-interest; in particular, Hume says, it is advantageous to join forces to gain power, to form a division of labor to increase ability, and to increase security through mutual succor Hume, 3. Hume illustrates that promise-keeping as well derives from mutual self-interest Hume, 3. It is the combination of natural self-interest and a sense of an extended societal self that Hume uses to explain the origin and continuation of society, justice, and morality. Hume provides neither a consequentialist nor deontic theory and relies instead on virtue. An action is virtuous if it proceeds from a virtuous motive Hume, 3. A virtuous character, then, is important because virtue motivates moral action. It is important to note that virtuous character both arises naturally and is encouraged by experience and moral education. Finally, I wish to consider the statement that Hume stands in opposition to moral rationalism. According to Hume, reason alone cannot produce action, so rational judgment plays at most a limited role in moral decision-making Hume, 3. Yet there is something that motivates the will to moral action, and it is not reason Hume, 3. Moral sentiments are not logical statements, but expressions of feeling. Here Hume endorses a form of expressivism: To pronounce an action virtuous or vicious is to experience a feeling of praise or blame from the contemplation of the action Hume, 3. Does Hume provide a moral framework that can serve as a guide to correct moral action? Recall the first objection that Hume is merely describing a moral system. As Hume provides no way to get from is statements to ought statements, Hume cannot prescribe action. Moral action and expression of moral sentiments are not rarities in society, but common occurrences. To understand morality, it is necessary to understand both what moral action involves and the role morality plays in society. A second objection is that without the intervention of reason, we will be unable to deliberate about moral actions and will fail to act morally on many occasions. This, too, I believe, is wrong, as it disregards the fact that we are basically moral and that moral motivation appears to be internal. We do not constantly appeal to reason to determine moral worth; if we are to speak of a faculty of moral sense, it is something quite different from reason. Similarly, moral rationalists, seeming to assume that people are not basically moral, insist that reason is required to perform action. These objections fail both because we naturally perform moral action out of both self-interest and sympathy and because virtue can be perfected through education. Hume does not leave us without a program for performing moral action; on the contrary, he provides us with explicit guidelines: Finally, another objection is that it is unclear how Hume makes the leap from virtuous character to virtuous or moral action. How is it that a virtuous person is directed with little or no conscious intervention to

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recognize and perform moral action? Hume addresses this in his very description of the origin and continuance of society. In very small groups the natural virtues alone may lead to moral action, but in larger groups the artificial virtues are required. From sympathy - our ability to share pain and pleasure and observe vice and virtue in the action of others - desire for the artificial virtues naturally arises, and these are the very virtues which will lead to moral action in society. I believe this is preferable to a theory in which morality can only be arrived at through conscious and impersonal reasoning. Furthermore, I believe that Hume is right to reject moral rationalism. Finally, although Hume does not offer an explicit calculus of moral action, I believe Hume provides a framework for moral action which is prescriptive enough: References [] Hume, David. A Treatise on Human Nature. David Fate Norton and Mary J. On 26 Nov ,

9: Hume's Moral Sense Theory and the Spectre of Relativism | |

Third, moral impressions are worth considering only from a social point of view because our actions are considered moral or immoral only with regard to how they affect others, not how they affect ourselves. This concept leads Hume to classify sympathy, feeling for fellow human beings, as the foundation of moral obligation.

Instead of beginning his moral inquiry with questions of how morality ought to operate, he purports to investigate primarily how we actually do make moral judgments. As Hume puts it: As this is a question of fact, not of abstract science, we can only expect success, by following the experimental method, and deducing general maxims from a comparison of particular instances. The final sentence, it is probable, which pronounces characters and actions amiable or odious, praise-worthy or blameable Sentimentalism and reason[edit] Hume defends his sympathy-based moral sentimentalism by claiming that, contrary to moral rationalism , we can never make moral judgments based on reason alone. Reason deals with facts and draws conclusions from them, but, all else being equal, it could not lead us to choose one option over the other; only our sentiments can do this, according to Hume. It defines virtue to be whatever mental action or quality gives to a spectator the pleasing sentiment of approbation; and vice the contrary. According to Hume, we know moral truths via our sentiments—our feelings of approval and disapproval. As Humean-inspired philosopher John Mackie suggests, for there to exist moral facts about the world, recognizable by reason and intrinsically motivating, they would have to be very queer facts. Sympathy, altruism, and egoism[edit] According to Hume, our sympathy-based sentiments can motivate us towards the pursuit of non-selfish ends, like the utility of others. For Hume, and for fellow sympathy-theorist Adam Smith , the term "sympathy" is meant to capture much more than concern for the suffering of others. Sympathy, for Hume, is a principle for the communication and sharing of sentiments, both positive and negative. In this sense, it is akin to what contemporary psychologists and philosophers call empathy. In developing this sympathy-based moral sentimentalism, Hume surpasses the divinely-implanted moral sense theory of his predecessor, Francis Hutcheson , by elaborating a naturalistic, moral psychological basis for the moral sense, in terms of the operation of sympathy. After providing various examples, Hume comes to the conclusion that most, though not all, of the behaviors we approve of increase public utility. Does this then mean that we make moral judgments on self-interest alone? Unlike his fellow empiricist Thomas Hobbes , Hume argues that this is not in fact the case, rejecting psychological egoism —the view that all intentional actions are ultimately self-interested. In addition to considerations of self-interest, Hume maintains that we can be moved by our sympathy for others, which can provide a person with thoroughly non-selfish concerns and motivations, indeed, what contemporary theorists would call, altruistic concern. Virtue ethics[edit] The first-order moral theory that emerges from the second Enquiry is a form of virtue ethics. According to Hume, the kinds of things that our moral sentiments apply to—the things of which we approve and disapprove—are not particular actions or events. Rather, we ultimately judge the character of a person—whether they are a virtuous or vicious person. Hume ultimately defends a theory according to which the fundamental feature of virtues is " Hume calls these so-called "virtues", such as self-denial and humility, monkish virtues. Rather vehemently, he writes: We observe, on the contrary, that they cross all these desirable ends; stupify the understanding and harden the heart, obscure the fancy and sour the temper. We justly, therefore, transfer them to the opposite column, and place them in the catalogue of vices For example, Hume attempts to defend, contrary to many religious teachings, that a certain amount of luxury, even pride, is virtuous. Hume makes important distinctions in his classifications of virtues. They are classified as being either "artificial" or "natural". The key distinction between these virtue classes is their origin. Artificial virtues originate from and depend on social structures such as courts and parliaments. This category of virtues include fidelity, justice, chastity and adherence to law. Natural virtues are not created but are automatically present in humans since birth. The following quote highlights this: EPM, Section 2, Part 1. Hence, the second major distinction between natural and artificial virtues is that the former type are universal whereas the latter can vary from society to society. Hume then proceeds to delineate the nature of these virtues in detail. The long and helpless infancy of man requires the combination of parents for the

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subsistence of their young; and that combination requires the virtue of chastity or fidelity to the marriage bed. EPM, Section 4 The following quote highlights the origin of this virtue - the notion that this virtue was "created" is particularly evident: EPM, Section 4 Clearly then, the virtue of fidelity was "created", and therefore it is distinctly artificial. An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals 1 ed. Retrieved 28 June

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