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Abstract: The taxonomy of the moral sentiments in Hume's system has long been a source of controversy, yielding roughly four competing interpretations: that they are indirect passions (Árdal); direct passions (Kemp Smith); instinctual passions (Radcliffe); or not passions at all (Loeb). I support Loeb's position. However, contrary to Loeb's conclusion, I argue that the connection between Books 2 and 3 is more intimate than the other three interpretations suggest, as it rests on a structural correspondence between the system of the passions and the system of morality, rather than on the identity of the moral sentiments with the passions. I show that Books 2 and 3 constitute an integrated, mutually corroborative unity by sharing a common double-relation framework underlying the respective systems.

Key Words: Hume, David; moral sentiment; passion; direct and indirect passions; sensations; impressions of reflection; natural instinct; calm and violent passions; general point of view.

Introduction

The taxonomy of the moral sentiments vis-à-vis the passions in Hume's system has been a source of controversy among commentators, yielding roughly four competing interpretations: that they are direct passions (Kemp Smith 2005), indirect passions (Árdal, 1966), instinctual passions (Radcliffe 2018), or not passions at all (Loeb 1977).¹ I support Loeb's view that the moral sentiments are not a species of the passions. However, I disagree with his conclusion that the connection between Books 2 and 3 is much less intimate than the other three interpretations suggest. Rather, I argue that this connection is closer and more stable, because the two are related not by the identity of the moral sentiments with the passions, but by a structural correspondence between their respective systems. I also disagree with Loeb's suggestion that the productive mechanism of the moral sentiments is "radically different from the double relation of impressions and ideas that gives rise to the indirect passions" (1977, 401). On the contrary, I contend that approval and disapproval, like love and hatred, arise from the double relation of impressions and ideas, as emphasized by Árdal. It is this analogy between their productive circumstances, I argue, that enabled Hume to construct in Book 3 a system that is independent of yet mutually corroborative with that of the passions, as he indicated in Book 3's advertisement: "*tho' this be a third volume of the Treatise of Human Nature, yet 'tis in some measure independent of the other two, and requires not that the reader shou'd enter into all the abstract reasonings contain'd in them*" (T Ad1740).²

The aim of this paper is to show that Hume forged the connection between Books 2 and 3

¹ Carlson (2014, 75) identifies five different interpretations offered by critics: that the moral sentiments are (1) neither direct nor indirect passions, but calm emotions; (2) calm direct passions; (3) calm versions of the indirect passions of love or hatred; (4) unique species of calm indirect passions; or (5) indirect secondary impressions.

² See the [Bibliographical Note](#) to this issue of *Hume Studies* for a key to references to Hume's works.

of the *Treatise* not by classifying the moral sentiments as a species of the passions, but by claiming that they share a common structural framework with the passions in virtue of the fact that they arise, like the indirect passions, from the double relation of impressions and ideas.

1. The Division between the Moral Sentiments and the Passions

Hume's account of the passions in Book 2 begins with a division of reflective impressions into two kinds: the moral and aesthetic sentiments as the calm kind, and the passions as the violent kind.

The reflective impressions may be divided into two kinds, *viz.*, the *calm* and the *violent*. Of the first kind is the sense of beauty and deformity in action, composition, and external objects. Of the second are the passions of love and hatred, grief and joy, pride and humility. This division is far from being exact. The raptures of poetry and music frequently rise to the greatest height; while those other impressions, properly call'd *passions*, may decay into so soft an emotion, as to become, in a manner, imperceptible. But as in general the passions are more violent than the emotions arising from beauty and deformity, these impressions have been commonly distinguish'd from each other. (T 2.1.1.3)

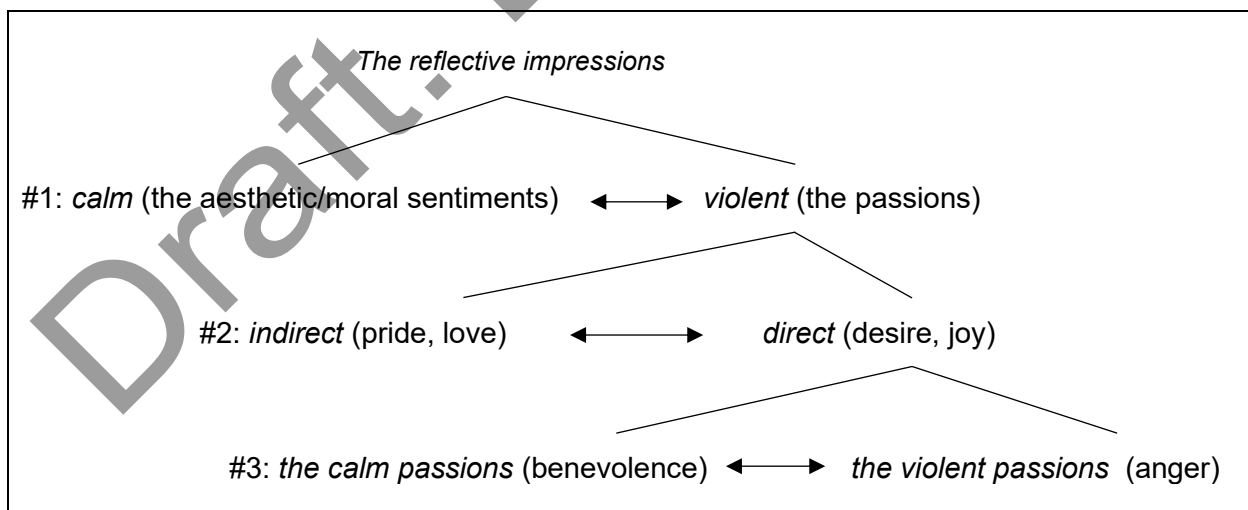
In the next passage, Hume further distinguished the violent kind of reflective impressions, that is, the passions, into two types: direct and indirect:

When we take a survey of the passions, there occurs a division of them into *direct* and *indirect*[.]

[U]nder the indirect passions I comprehend pride, humility, ambition, vanity, love, hatred, envy, pity, malice, generosity, with their dependants. And under the direct passions, desire, aversion, grief, joy, hope, fear, despair, and security. (T 2.1.1.4)

On the basis of these two divisions, calm/violent and direct/indirect, Hume structured his system in Book 2 as follows:

Table 1. Hume's taxonomy of the reflective impressions



#1: All reflective impressions are initially divided into two categories: the aesthetic/moral sentiments as the calm kind, and the passions as the violent kind (T 2.1.1.3).

#2: The violent kind of impressions, or passions are subdivided into two types: indirect and direct (T 2.1.1.4).

#3: The direct passions are further subdivided into two types: the calm passions and the “violent emotions of the same kind” (T 2.3.3.9).

Yet no consensus has been reached concerning Hume’s calm/violent division in #1. Several commentators, such as Árdal, hesitate to take the distinction between the moral sentiments and the passions seriously and tend to disregard it, since Hume himself described it as a “vulgar and specious division” that is “far from being exact” (T 2.1.1.3). By contrast, others, notably Loeb (1977, 395), treat it as canonical to Hume’s system, insisting that “nowhere else in the *Treatise* is a complete ‘division’ [of reflective impressions] to be found.” Another factor that makes this initial distinction appear ambiguous is that Hume employed the calm/violent division differently in #3, where he distinguished between the two kinds of the direct passions: the calm and the violent passions.³ Despite these complications, I concur with Loeb’s view that this initial distinction is definite and fundamental to Hume’s system. Through an examination of the four principal interpretations of Hume’s taxonomy of the moral sentiments, I argue that Hume’s strategy for connecting Books 2 and 3 is not to identify the moral sentiments with the passions, but to appeal to the structural unity between the two respective systems of the passions by demonstrating that they share a common double-relation framework.

2. The Moral Sentiments Are Direct Passions: Kemp Smith’s View

Kemp Smith (2005, 167; followed by Hearn 1973, 290) claimed that, for Hume, the moral sentiments “can be identified as being the passions which we experience *on the mere contemplation* of beauty and deformity in action and external forms,” and maintained that “as thus *immediately* arising upon the act of contemplation, they have to be classified with the direct, not with the indirect passions.” The difficulty with this view, however, is that the immediate arousal of approval and disapproval in the presence of virtue or vice does not necessarily imply that they are direct passions, insofar as, for Hume, the indirect passion of love may also arise immediately, in the manner of “materials [that] take fire from the least spark” (T 2.2.4.7). Rather, as Carlson (2014, 89) insists, “moral sentiments do not arise immediately from our own pleasure or pain caused by some object, but in contemplation of characters, traits, or motives, and because of sympathy with others’ pleasure or pain.” We must distinguish “between arising immediately (‘most naturally, and with the least preparation’) and arising immediately upon an act of contemplation,” as Loeb (1977, 400–1) astutely points out, since “when Hume states that moral sentiments arise from the mere contemplation of an object, he means that they arise from the contemplation without reference to our particular interest, that is, from the disinterested contemplation of the object.”

Another difficulty in identifying the moral sentiments with the direct passions is that, as Cohon (2008, 175) observes, “redirection [of our attention] occurs whenever we feel the moral sentiments,” and hence they more closely resemble the indirect passions. When we contemplate a character trait, our approval arises as we shift our perspective from a personal to a general point of view, in accordance with Hume’s remark that, “Tis only when a character is consider’d in general, without reference to our particular interest, that it causes such a feeling or sentiment, as denominates it morally good or evil” (T 3.1.2.4). The moral sentiments are more akin to the indirect passions than to the direct ones, since their production requires a redirection of attention for their production to bring the resulting sentiments into conformity with a disinterested point of view.

It may here be recalled that a redirection of attention does not occur in the production of the direct passions, such as joy, because they have only one object necessary to their production (T

³ Immerwahr (1992, 295), among others, points out that there is an ambiguity in Hume’s use of the calm/violent division, which arises from his different employments of it.

2.1.6.5), according to Hume. By contrast, the arousal of the indirect passions involves a redirection of attention, insofar as “there are always two objects we must contemplate, viz. the *cause* or that object which produces pleasure [or uneasiness]; and self [or another’s self], which is the real object of the passion” (T 2.1.6.5; here and in what follows I make bracketed modifications to passages that Hume devoted to the discussion of pride to extend the point to the other indirect passions as well). For example, when I receive good care from a nurse and feel kind affection, the cause of my love has two component ideas: the quality and the subject. The quality is something like competent caregiving, and the subject is the nurse who possesses that skill. Love arises when the pleasure elicited by the first idea triggers the double-relation mechanism and thereby turns my view to the second idea, thereby making me “think of [the nurse’s] own qualities and circumstances.” (T 2.1.5.6). On this view, “a passion is plac’d betwixt two ideas, of which the one produces it, and the other is produc’d by it” (T 2.1.2.4).⁴ These two ideas are related to the nurse, though with this qualitative difference: the former concerns the limited or specific aspect of the nurse as the agent of a particular action, while the latter concerns the general or enduring aspect of the nurse as a kind person). This difference between the two ideas is crucial to Hume’s double-relation hypothesis,⁵ since her action engages the productive mechanism of the passion only insofar as it is a sign of her character or of an enduring principle of the mind. As Hume claimed, “Actions themselves, not proceeding from any constant principle, have no influence on love or hatred, pride or humility; and consequently are never consider’d in morality” (T 3.3.1.4).

By reiterating the distinguishing characteristic of the indirect passions, namely, that “Pride and humility, love and hatred are excited, when there is any thing presented to us that both bears a relation to the object of the passion, and produces a separate sensation related to the sensation of the passion,” Hume insisted that “virtue and vice are attended with these circumstances,” inasmuch as “They must necessarily be plac’d either in ourselves or others, and excite either pleasure or uneasiness; and therefore must give rise to one of these four passions” (T 3.1.2.5). The nurse’s kind care as a virtue gives rise to my approval insofar as it involves both her competent caregiving skill as a quality and the nurse herself who is a good caregiver as a subject. Love arises when the pleasure elicited by the first idea redirects my attention from the nurse as an agent of the particular action to the nurse as possessing a praiseworthy quality or character. My approval is thus situated between two distinct ideas: the idea of the nurse viewed from my personal standpoint and the idea of the nurse viewed from a general perspective. On this view, we may conclude that, contrary to Kemp Smith’s suggestion, the moral sentiments bear a closer affinity to the indirect passions than to the direct ones.

3. The Moral Sentiments Are Indirect Passions: Árdal’s View

Hume stated that

The pain or pleasure, which arises from the general survey or view of any action or quality of the *mind*, constitutes its vice or virtue, and gives rise to our approbation or blame, which is nothing but a fainter and more imperceptible love or hatred (T 3.3.5.1).

On the basis of this passage, Árdal (1966, 114) contended that “approval and disapproval are treated as a species of indirect passions,” disregarding Hume’s initial distinction between the moral sentiments and the passions. Hume’s apparently dismissive remarks that this is a “vulgar and specious division” and “far from being exact” have given commentators the impression that

⁴ According to Hume, since “there is a necessity for their conjunction, in order to produce the passion, we ought to consider them as component parts of the cause; and infix in our minds an exact idea of this distinction” (T 2.1.2.6).

⁵ Ainslie (1999) highlights the importance of this qualitative difference between the two ideas in Hume’s hypothesis of the double relation.

he did not adhere closely to the distinction, thereby allowing them to regard the moral sentiments as a species of the passions.⁶ However, I argue that Hume did not mean to question the validity of the distinction but, on the contrary, to emphasize its fundamental significance.

Hume's remark should be taken to imply that what served his current purpose was precisely such a rough and unsophisticated division as is commonly employed in everyday practice. This division had to be "vulgar and specious" to enable him to claim that the passions are, *in general*, more violent than the aesthetic or the moral sentiments. Were the distinction drawn in strict proportion to the actual felt intensity of emotion, it would have been difficult for him to assert that the rapture of poetry or music, even when it rises to the greatest height, remains a calm kind of reflective impression; or that the passions such as the love of life and benevolence are of a violent kind even when they decay into so soft an emotion as to become imperceptible. As Loeb (1977, 403) insightfully observes, this initial distinction "need be considered vulgar and specious, however, only insofar as it is 'far from being exact,' that is, applicable to types rather than to individual emotions."

As another reason for disregarding Hume's initial distinction between the moral sentiments and the passions, Árdal (1966, 94) suggested that the *fundamentum divisionis* separating the moral sentiments from love or hatred lies not in their type but in their emotional intensity, which he claimed is drawn in a manner analogous to the concept of 'force and vivacity' in impressions and certain ideas. This, however, is a forced analogy. Whereas an idea is a faint copy of an impression and can, by increasing its intensity, become an impression,⁷ a moral sentiment is never converted into a passion, because they are distinct in their origin. On Hume's account, love arises from the contemplation of the nurse's good care from a personal point of view, whereas approval arises from the contemplation of the same action from a general point of view. The distinction between the moral sentiments and the passions is clear and definite, insofar as "The imagination adheres to the *general* views of things, and distinguishes betwixt the feelings they produce, and those which arise from our particular and momentary situation" (T 3.3.1.23). By contrast, ideas are not always distinct from impressions, insofar as "these two kinds of perceptions being in great measure the same, [differ] only in their degrees of force and vivacity" (T 2.2.4.7). Granted that the moral sentiments are distinguished from the passions not merely by their emotional intensity but by their distinct origin, we may conclude that Árdal had no sufficient reason to suppose that approval and disapproval are calm forms of love and hatred.

However, Árdal's interpretation has recently received strong support from Chamberlain (2022, 89), who contends that "Hume *does* understand approbation as a calm kind of love: one which 'arises from the general survey or view of any action or quality of mind'." It is true, Chamberlain acknowledges, that this interpretation might seem to conflict with Hume's claim that, in contemplating the nurse's action, "we approve of [her] character, and love [her] person" (T 3.3.3.2) as well as with his indication that "the ultimate object of our praise and approbation is the motive, that produc'd them" (T 3.2.1.2). However, Chamberlain insists that, given Hume's repeated references to the moral sentiments as being directed towards persons, there is sufficient reason to suppose that "approbation of a trait is, *ipso facto*, approbation of that trait's possessor" (89). According to Chamberlain, any character trait that is beneficial to society will please us via delicate sympathy, since general rules render it a token of a type that is *generally* seen to cause pleasure both in its possessor and in those around her, producing a quasi-believed idea of pleasure (85). Although "any character trait which is categorized as 'benevolence' will cause a calm passion of approbation, via general rules and delicate sympathy," if "we turn our view to the idea of a benevolent desire as someone's particular

⁶ Árdal states that it is "nothing very sophisticated" and of "very little importance" (1966, 95).

⁷ According to Hume, a "lively idea changes by degrees into a real impression; these two kinds of perceptions being in a great measure the same, and differing only in their degrees of force and vivacity" (T 2.2.4.7).

desire, then we will very likely experience a violent passion of the same general kind as approbation,” namely, the passion of love, which “is not apt to be treated as a *moral* sentiment” (89). As Chamberlain suggests, my approbation of the nurse’s care arises when my quasi-believed idea of the pleasure of those who benefit from her service, produced by general rules, is converted into a kind of pleasure through sympathy, in a manner analogous to the arousal of the sense of beauty.

Yet Chamberlain’s suggestion involves two difficulties. First, approbation cannot be identified with a calm form of love, insofar as there is a clear difference between the impression-source of approval and that of love. When I approve of the nurse’s kind care, what constitutes the moral sentiment, according to Chamberlain’s interpretation, is the satisfaction of others who benefit from her action, communicated to me by sympathy; whereas the pleasant sensation constituting my love is the actual pleasure elicited in my mind by her kind service. This difference is too fundamental to allow us to regard approval as merely a calm form of love, differing from it only in degree of emotional intensity.⁸

The second difficulty arises when Chamberlain points out that “according to Hume, violent and calm passions of the same general kind ‘may often be contrary, without destroying each other,’” and observes that “this allows that we will experience approbation towards even a hated ‘enemy’ if we believe that she has a benevolent desire” (2022, 89). Chamberlain is not entirely correct in this observation, because, if, as he assumes, the hatred and approbation we feel towards a hated enemy are really “violent and calm passions of the same general kind” that differ only in the degree of their emotional intensity, they would naturally tend to destroy each other, since, according to Hume, “impressions and passions are susceptible of an entire union and, like colour, may be blended so perfectly together, that each of them may lose itself” (T 2.2.6.1). Indeed, in Hume’s example, the fortifications of a hostile city may elicit our admiration for their beauty without diminishing our hatred, even though hatred and admiration are contrary in their feelings. In this case, each affection can subsist without losing itself in the other because they are *not* affections of the same kind but are distinct from one another. Hatred and approval coexist because, as Hume indicates, the imagination never confounds the feelings arising from “the *general* views of things,” such as approval and disapproval, with those arising from “our particular and momentary situation” (T 3.3.1.23). Since nowhere in the *Treatise* does Hume mention that the imagination can distinguish them even when they are different only in degree of emotional intensity, we have better reason to read Hume as treating approbation as an affection distinct from love rather than as a kind of love, as Chamberlain suggests.

It is indeed tempting to interpret Hume as having treated the moral sentiments as indirect passions, given his claim that “approbation or blame ... is nothing but a fainter and imperceptible love or hatred” (T 3.3.5.1). Yet, as Radcliffe (2018, 131) insightfully points out, this interpretation conflicts with Hume’s account of motivation in two respects. First, since love moves us to promote the happiness of another in virtue of its ‘original’ connection with benevolence, “motivation so characterized looks unlike motivation by morality,” which moves us to be virtuous (131). Second, “if approbation and disapprobation of self were pride and humility, respectively, there would be no evident way to make sense of motivation by moral sentiments,” because, on Hume’s account, pride and humility are “pure sensations, without any direction or tendency to action” (131; citing T 2.2.9.2). Thus, we may conclude that, for Hume, the moral sentiments are not to be identified with the indirect passions.

⁸ Brown (2001, 197), following Árdal, faces the same difficulty when she holds that “Hume takes the moral sentiments to be calm forms of love and hatred,” observing that, in approving of a character trait, I first experience the non-moral feeling of love; this feeling is then transformed and corrected into a moral sentiment of approbation when I take up the general point of view via sympathy.

4. The Moral Sentiments Are Instinctual Passions: Radcliffe's View

Hume explicitly stated that “morals... have an influence on the actions and affections” and that they “excite passions and produce or prevent actions” (T 3.1.1.6). Radcliffe (2018, 189) interprets him as suggesting that the moral sentiments are “instinctual passions, which, for all practical purposes, function like direct passions.” She insists that, since approval and disapproval are reflective impressions, dependent on ideas of character to which we react, they qualify as passions, albeit not as the indirect passions, for the reasons noted above (189). At the same time, she hesitates to classify them as the direct passions, noting that, even though they “can generate motives when natural motives are lacking,” they are not themselves motives (189).

Radcliffe (127) highlights that the moral sentiments of approbation and disapprobation function analogously to the direct passions by motivating us when natural motives are absent. She argues that “moral approbation and disapprobation are distinctive sorts of pleasure or pain on Hume’s view; hence, if they do motivate, it must be the case that pleasure and pain motivate directly” (126). By pointing out that “at the heart of Hume’s theory of motivation is his thesis that motives arise from the prospect of pleasure or pain,” she suggests that Hume’s account of moral motivation can be properly accommodated within the context of Book 2’s account of motivation (126). To illustrate this situation, she gives the example of self-disapprobation, arguing that “when I am pained, or feel disapprobation, at the lack of a virtuous motive commonly found in other persons, I retain an idea of my character deficiency as a painful experience, and react to it with a new impression of reflection: the desire to correct the deficiency” (128). In this case, she insists, “self-disapprobation, or pain, motivates directly, without reference to any pre-existing desire for happiness or pleasure,” prompting me to act as a virtuous agent would in that situation, in order to alleviate this pain (126). Although disapprobation is not itself a desire, it can move us by producing a motivating passion “when we bring to mind an idea of a pleasurable or painful experience and react to it” (126). On this view, she contends, “the case of motivation by moral discernment follows the same principle” as Hume’s theory of the origin of motivating passions advanced in Book 2 (126). So far, Radcliffe is persuasive in arguing that “this account makes motivation derivative of moral sentiment in the way motives are generally derived from pleasures and pains, but without regarding the sentiment itself as the motive” (129). My only question, however, is this: does it follow that the moral sentiments are ‘instinctual’ passions?

Radcliffe (128) observes that “the principle that motives derive from the prospect of pleasure or pain is a summary of Hume’s account of the origin of motivating passions, at least for those passions that are not among the natural instincts.” In this remark, she clearly acknowledges that, for Hume, the direct passions include not only non-instinctive but also instinctive ones. The non-instinctive direct passions are what Radcliffe characterizes as the *derived passions* (22), that is, those that arise directly from the idea of pain and pleasure, that is, without involving the double relation of impressions and ideas: such as desire, joy, and fear (T 2.1.1.4; T 2.3.9.2). Hume treated these derived passions as non-instinctual, even though they arise from the mind’s “*original* instinct, [which] tends to unite itself with the good, and avoid the evil, tho’ they be conceiv’d merely in idea” (T 2.3.9.2). [Notably, the indirect passions also belong to the category of derived passions, in light of Hume’s claim that “both direct and indirect [passions], are founded on pain and pleasure, and that, in order to produce an affection of any kind, ’tis only requisite to present some good or evil” (T 2.3.9.1).] By contrast, the instinctive direct passions are described in two separate places: first, as those produced by “certain instincts originally implanted in our natures, such as benevolence and resentment” (T 2.3.3.8); and second, as those arising “from a natural impulse or instinct, which is perfectly

unaccountable,” such as the desire of punishment to our enemies, and hunger (T 2.3.9.8).⁹

When Radcliffe maintains that the moral sentiments move us by producing desire when we bring to mind an idea of a pleasurable or painful experience and react to it (128), they are to be regarded as more akin to non-instinctual passions, such as desire and fear, rather than to instinctual ones, such as benevolence and hunger. A tension then arises between her claim that the moral sentiments are “instinctual” passions and her assertion that they are “the products of the general inclination to good and aversion to evil” (22).

5. The Moral Sentiments Are Not the Passions: Loeb’s View

Loeb (1977, 402) argues that, given Hume’s initial distinction between the moral sentiments and the passions as calm and violent reflective impressions, “the moral sentiments are special cases of neither direct nor indirect passions and fall outside the principal subject matter of Book 2.” On the one hand, he rejects Kemp Smith’s interpretation that moral sentiments are direct passions, claiming that, for Hume, “the productive mechanism of the moral sentiments is sufficiently elaborate to exclude moral sentiments from the class of direct passions, which arise from good and evil most naturally, and with the least preparation” (401). Indeed, as Loeb plausibly notes, had Hume regarded the moral sentiments as direct passions, he could not have maintained in T 2.2.9.3 that only hope and fear merit particular attention among the direct affections. On the other hand, Loeb disagrees with Árdal’s view that the moral sentiments are calm forms of love and hatred, emphasizing that their productive mechanism is “radically different from the double relation of ideas and impressions that causes the indirect passions” (401). According to Loeb (401), whereas the production of the indirect passions from the double relation requires only a subsidiary role for sympathy, relying on the relation of an object to ourselves, the moral sentiments are entirely dependent on sympathy, which communicates the affections of others and thereby corrects the resulting sentiments so as to conform to a disinterested point of view.

By highlighting the different origins of the moral sentiments and the indirect passions, Loeb contends that Hume’s initial distinction between calm and violent reflective impressions should be regarded as “canonical” in Hume’s system. Hence, he insists that the moral sentiments, belonging to the former kind, cannot be classified as passions, which are of the latter kind. He maintains that approval and disapproval are neither direct nor indirect passions, since the direct/indirect distinction is introduced only after the calm/violent division and thus constitutes a subdivision of it, exhaustively dividing the passions into two kinds: direct and indirect. Indeed, Loeb argues with much insight that, had Hume treated the moral sentiments as a species of the passions, then “the treatment of passions in Book 2 [would have become] central to the understanding of Book 3” (395), thereby reducing the system of morals to a mere subsystem of the passions. This is an outcome that would be incompatible with Hume’s *Advertisement to Book 3*.¹⁰ Notably, nowhere in the *Treatise* did Hume refer to the moral sentiments as

⁹ This distinction between instinctual and non-instinctual direct passions is central to Hume’s account of motivation, which depends on the supposition that two principles operate on the will, namely, the calm and the violent passions. This supposition committed him to explaining two distinct motivational circumstances: one in which there is a contrariety of motives and passions, and another in which no such contrariety exists (T 2.3.3.10). Hume’s strategy for the former circumstance was to explain motivation in terms of the combat between the two kinds of instinctual passions, namely, the calm and the violent passions, whereas his strategy for the latter was to appeal to the force or violence of the non-instinctual passions. Significantly, what pertains to Hume’s theory of motivation, advanced in T 2.3.3, are the non-instinctual passions, those arising from the prospect of pain or pleasure. That theory therefore has nothing to do with those instinctual passions that arise “from a natural impulse or instinct, which is perfectly unaccountable” (T 2.3.9.8).

¹⁰ Hume announced in T Ad1740 that, since the third volume of the *Treatise* is “in some measure independent of the other two,” it is not necessary for the reader to “enter into all the abstract reasonings contain’d” in the preceding two books.

“passions,” nor did he include approval or disapproval among the passions.¹¹

I agree with Loeb’s claim that Hume’s initial distinction between the moral sentiments and the passions should be taken seriously, but I disagree with his conclusion that, since “moral sentiments are special cases of neither direct nor indirect passions,” the “connection between Books 2 and 3 of the *Treatise* is much less intimate than” Kemp Smith and Árdal suggest” (402). On the contrary, I contend that precisely because the moral sentiments are not a species of the passions, the two books achieve an intimate structural unity by sharing the double-relation framework, thereby constituting an integrated and mutually reinforcing system.¹² I also dispute Loeb’s contention that the productive mechanism of the moral sentiments is radically different from that of the indirect passions. They are different, he argues, because “the association of ideas in that context [of the double relation] depends upon considering an object as related to oneself or another; but moral sentiments arise when such personal interests are disregarded,” insofar as “sympathy need not have any role in the origin of indirect passion” (401). Against this contention, I argue in the rest of this paper that approval and disapproval arise from the double relation of impressions and ideas, involving a redirection of attention and thereby engaging sympathy.

6. A Parallel between Moral Sentiments and Indirect Passions

Thus far, we have seen that Kemp Smith, Radcliffe, and Loeb, each for different reasons, maintain that the moral sentiments, unlike the indirect passions, do not arise from the double relation of impressions and ideas, though they acknowledge their intimate connection with the indirect passions. Cohon (2008, 175), holding that the moral sentiments are indirect secondary impressions, though not strictly indirect passions, even denies the necessity of the double relation for their production. By contrast, other commentators, notably Árdal, contend that approval and disapproval are calm forms of love and hatred, and are therefore to be explained as effects of the double-relation process from which the indirect passions arise. I align myself with this latter view, maintaining that the moral sentiments are the products of the double-relation mechanism. Though this, I argue, does not entail that they should be classified as a species of the passions.¹³

Árdal (1966, 114) emphasized that there exists “a strict parallel between the principles accounting for the origin of the indirect passions and those accounting for the origin of approval and disapproval of persons.” Hume highlighted this parallel by reiterating that, “Pride and humility, love and hatred are excited, when there is any thing presented to us, that both bears a relation to the object of the passion, and produces a separate sensation related to the sensation of the passion” (T 3.1.2.5). He insisted that vice and virtue “are attended with these circumstances” insofar as “They must necessarily be plac’d either in ourselves or others, and excite either pleasure or uneasiness; and therefore must give rise to one of these four passions” (T 3.1.2.5). He further underscored this analogy as follows:

We have already observ’d, that moral distinctions depend entirely on certain peculiar sentiments of pain and pleasure, and that whatever mental quality in ourselves or others gives us a satisfaction, by the survey or reflection, is of course virtuous; as every thing of this nature, that gives uneasiness, is vicious. Now since every quality in ourselves or others, which gives pleasure,

¹¹ Árdal pointed out that “Hume does not include approval and disapproval among the indirect passions when he discusses this topic in Book 2” (1966, 113). Cohon (2008, 182n) also notes that Hume never called the moral sentiments “passions.”

¹² Hume observed that “I am not, however, without hopes, that the present system of philosophy will acquire new force as it advances; and that our reasonings concerning *morals* will corroborate whatever has been said concerning the *understanding* and the *passions*” (T 3.1.1.1).

¹³ Tweyman (1995, 3:435) argues forcefully that “the production of the moral sentiments depends upon the double relation discussed in Book 2 in the context of the indirect passions of pride, humility, love and hatred.”

always causes pride or love; as every one, that produces uneasiness, excites humility or hatred: It follows, that these two particulars are to be consider'd as equivalent, with regard to our mental qualities, *virtue* and the power of producing love or pride, *vice* and the power of producing humility or hatred. (T 3.3.1.3)

Hume, having thus insisted that the same causal principles operate in producing both the moral sentiments and the passions, concluded that “we must judge of the one by the other; and may pronounce any *quality* of the mind virtuous, which causes love or pride; and any one vicious, which causes hatred or humility” (T 3.3.1.3). At this point, the following question arises: why was Hume so concerned to establish an analogy between the circumstances in which the moral sentiments and the passions arise, even though, as we have seen, they are not strictly identical? My answer is that Hume employed this analogy as a principal strategy to forge a close connection between Books 2 and 3. That is, by demonstrating that, like the indirect passions, the moral sentiments arise from the double relation of impressions and ideas, he aimed to establish that the system of the passions and the moral system form an integrated and mutually reinforcing unity by sharing a common framework of the double-relation.

Let us now explore how, on Hume's account, my approval of the nurse's kind care arises from the double relation of impressions and ideas, involving a redirection of attention, though in a manner distinct from that involved in the production of love.

It may be recalled that Hume's hypothesis of the double relation of impressions and ideas, from which the indirect passions arise, amounts to a purely mechanistic input-output model, wholly dependent on “the remarkable properties of human nature,” namely, the association of impressions and the association of ideas. When I contemplate the nurse's kind care, my love arises through a process in which the two ingredients that compose her service, namely, a pleasant sensation and the idea of the nurse as the cause, are converted into the ingredients that constitute the passion, namely, a pleasant sensation and the idea of the nurse as the effect. The conversion occurs in virtue of their being both pleasant and related to the nurse through the associations of impressions and ideas. Conversely, the nurse's kind care functions as the cause of my love insofar as it provides the two ingredients necessary to compose the passion. Love thus arises when the pleasure I experience from the kind care furnishes the passion with the impression-source of the affection, thereby triggering the double-relation mechanism.

Significantly, this conversion involves a redirection of my attention from the nurse as the agent of a service to the nurse as a kind person, thereby rendering my idea of the nurse qualitatively different. This redirection is involved because love and hatred have “a peculiar direction of the thought as an original quality” (T 2.1.5.3). Given this original quality, the passion, once produced, always turns my view to the nurse, and makes me think of her own qualities and circumstances (T 2.1.5.6). The distinction between the former idea, as the cause of the passion, and the latter, as its object, is essential to Hume's double-relation hypothesis. He insisted: “We must therefore make a distinction betwixt the cause and the object of the[se] passion[s]; betwixt that idea, which excites them and that to which they direct their view, when excited” (T 2.1.2.4). As Cohon (2008, 169-70) points out, what makes indirect passions ‘indirect’ is this redirection of our attention involved in their production.

Now, turning to my approval of the nurse's care, we may find that the productive circumstances are parallel to those of the production of love, insofar as my approbation, like love, consists of two components: a pleasant sensation and the idea of the nurse. As Hume indicated, “To have the sense of virtue, is nothing but to *feel* a satisfaction of a particular kind from the contemplation of a character.” This is a “very feeling [that] constitutes our praise or admiration” (T 3.1.2.3). The double relation of impressions and ideas is thus established between the nurse's kind service and my approbation, each of which is pleasant in itself and bears a relation to the nurse. We therefore have reason to suppose that a double association of impressions and ideas takes place between the two corresponding sets of components, the one

constituted by the nurse's action and the other by my approbation, thereby converting the former into the latter. The only problem left to be explained, then, is how the same cause that produces my love also gives rise to the pleasure "of that *peculiar* kind, which makes us praise or condemn," via the same double-relation mechanism (T 3.1.2.4).

We can find an important clue to this question in Hume's observation: "'Tis only when a character is considered in general, without reference to our particular interest, that it causes such a feeling or sentiment, as denominates it morally good or evil" (T 3.1.2.4). He seems to suggest that what makes the moral feeling "peculiar" is the redirection of our view from a personal standpoint to a general one (T 3.1.2.4). How, then, is such a redirection possible in the production of approval, which, unlike love, lacks "a peculiar direction of the thought as an original quality" (T 2.1.5.3)? Hume answered that we owe this redirection to sympathy, which "takes us so far out of ourselves, as to give us the same pleasure or uneasiness in characters which are useful or pernicious to society" (T 3.3.1.11). As he indicated, at the heart of his moral theory is sympathy, which, once engaged by the contemplation of a character trait, conveys to us the affections of those who regard it as beneficial to society, thereby redirecting our attention from our own interest to that of others. This redirection of attention is essential to the production of the moral sentiments in the following two respects.

First, what provides the impression-source of my approval of the nurse's kind care is not my own actual pleasure elicited by her action, as in the case of the production of my love, but rather the sympathetic pleasure of others, namely, the idea of their pleasure converted into a kind of pleasure through sympathy.

Second, the redirection of my view from a personal to a general perspective involves a shift of focus from the nurse's particular action to her character, since, for Hume, "any *action* [can] be either virtuous or vicious... only as a sign of some quality or character," that is, only when it "depend[s] upon durable principles of the mind, which extend over the whole conduct, and enter into the personal character" (T 3.3.1.4). What we morally approve or disapprove of is therefore not persons but their characters, traits, or motives, as Hume succinctly put it: "we approve of [her] character, and love [her] person" (T 3.3.3.2). Here, then, lies a clear contrast between the two productive circumstances of approval and love: the former arises from the association between the idea of the nurse as the agent of the action and the idea of her valuable character, whereas the latter is produced through the association between the idea of the nurse as the agent of the action and the idea of the nurse as a kind person.

Yet this interpretation stands in direct opposition to Carlson's (2014, 87) claim that, for Hume, "the idea causing a moral sentiment is the same as its object-idea," and hence that "perceptions of characters or traits *cause* moral approval and disapproval" without the mediation of any association of ideas. According to her, "reflection on the tendency of characters or mental qualities is enough for moral sentiments to arise," since "that which is evaluated and thus morally approved or disapproved of, that is, a character, trait, or sometimes motive, is identical with that which causes the approval or disapproval" (87). Carlson's point is that, given that approval and disapproval arise only in contexts where a person's character constitutes the subject matter, that is, only insofar as an action already figures in the causal process as a sign of character, moral sentiments arise directly from the contemplation of such character without involving the double relation of impressions and ideas. Carlson rejects Kemp Smith's view that, for Hume, the moral sentiments are direct passions, observing that, unlike direct passions, "they do not arise immediately from our own pleasure or pain caused by some object, but in contemplation of characters, traits, or motives, and because of sympathy with others' pleasure or pain" (87). She also denies Árdal's claim that approval and disapproval are calm forms of love and hatred, pointing out that, unlike love, what we morally approve of is not persons, as Árdal argues, but characters (87). She concludes that "moral sentiments are reflective impressions of some other kind," that is, they are "calm emotions" distinct from both the direct and the indirect passions (89).

Although I concur with this conclusion, I disagree with Carlson's claim that, for Hume, the cause of a moral sentiment and its object are the same. I do so because her claim entails that the moral sentiments share the essential feature of the direct passions rather than that of the indirect ones, and therefore conflicts with Hume's assertion that "approbation or blame,... is nothing but a fainter and more imperceptible love or hatred" (T 3.3.5.1). It must be recalled that the salient feature of the direct passions is that a direct passion "has only one object necessary to its production, viz. that which gives pleasure [or pain]" (T 2.1.6.5). By contrast, the production of an indirect passion depends on "two objects [that] we must contemplate, viz. the *cause*, or that object which produces pleasure [or pain]; and self [or another's self], which is the real object of the passion" (T 2.1.6.5). Hence, whereas in the latter case a redirection of attention from the first to the second idea must occur in order to consider both, no such redirection takes place in the former, insofar as the cause and the object are one and the same idea. If, as Carlson maintains, "the cause of a moral sentiment and its object are the same" (2014, 87), it follows that the moral sentiments are more akin to the direct rather than to the indirect passions. This, however, contradicts Hume's repeated association of the moral sentiments with the latter. Insofar as the moral sentiments share the distinguishing feature of the indirect passions by involving a redirection of attention for their production we have reason to reject Carlson's suggestion that "no association of ideas is involved in the production of moral sentiments, and thus that the cause of a moral sentiment and its object are the same" (87). On the contrary, I argue that approval, like love, involves the association of ideas precisely because its production depends on the redirection of attention.

Here, one might raise an objection by offering an apparent counterexample. I am pleased with someone's flattery, yet I come to feel disapproval when I discover that others, too, are pleased by the same flattering words she used for her own advantage.¹⁴ Granted that, as we have supposed, the impression-source of the moral sentiment is the pleasure of others communicated by sympathy, it might seem contradictory that, in the present case, I feel disapproval even though both I and others are delighted by her flattery. However, no contradiction is involved in the present case, because this is the effect of the *correction* of the resulting sentiment through sympathy. That is, since for Hume "sympathy ... is nothing but the conversion of an idea into an impression by the force of imagination" (T 2.3.6.8), it relies heavily on general rules, which inform me that such flattery is pernicious rather than beneficial in the eyes of moral observers. According to Hume, general rules are "general establish'd maxims" formed through custom and practice (T 2.1.6.9), which involve "unreflective, automatic, associations of ideas"¹⁵ by "creat[ing] a species of probability," hence, they "sometimes [influence] the judgment, and always the imagination" (T 3.3.1.20). Not surprisingly, sympathy owes the correction of resulting sentiments to general rules, which facilitate the imagination in forming lively ideas of others' sentiments by determining whether the tendency of a character aligns with the interests of society, thereby bringing the resulting sentiment into conformity with common opinion through correction (T 3.3.1.11).

Conclusion

Through an examination of four competing interpretations of the taxonomy of the moral sentiments in relation to the passions, we have seen that Hume's distinction between the two kinds of reflective impressions in T 2.1.1.3 ought to be regarded as fundamental to his system. I have argued that this initial distinction is crucial to his project of constructing an intimate connection between Books 2 and 3 in terms of a structural unity between the moral system and the system of the passions. This is because his strategy is to appeal to the analogy between the

¹⁴ I am grateful to Elizabeth Radcliffe for providing me with this apparent counterexample for consideration.

¹⁵ Chamberlain (2022, 99) highlights this aspect of general rules, referring to Donald Ainslie and Ryan Hickerson.

productive circumstance of the moral sentiments and that of the indirect passions and thereby to demonstrate that the two systems share a common double-relation framework.

I thus concur with Loeb's interpretation, among the four considered, that the moral sentiments are neither direct nor indirect passions and therefore fall outside the scope of Book 2. This view also accords with Garrett's (1997, 193) contention that the moral sentiments "form a unique category of reflective impressions." Garrett reasonably maintains that approval and disapproval should be understood as "the existence of distinctively moral impressions," since, given Hume's Copy Principle, moral ideas must ultimately derive from the moral sentiments of approbation and disapprobation (193). Yet when he further claims that the correction of the resulting sentiment through sympathy presupposes a prior experience of these uniquely moral impressions, his view becomes open to criticism. As Brown (2001, 199) plausibly points out, this has the implication that human nature contains a specifically moral element from the outset. This is a view that conflicts with Hume's opposition to Hutcheson's moral-sense theory, according to which we are determined by a natural instinct to possess distinctively moral impressions prior to experience.

To summarize, on Hume's account, the moral sentiments are distinct from the passions,¹⁶ even though, like the passions, they are reflective impressions arising from the perception of pleasure or pain. His reason, as suggested above, is that the connection between Books 2 and 3 is more intimate, where the system of morality and the system of the passions are unified by their structural tie than where the moral sentiments are regarded as a species of the passions. I have argued that here lies the chief reason that made him so concerned with the analogy between the two productive circumstances from which the moral sentiments and the indirect passions arise. He thus forged the structural connection between the two books by attributing to the two respective systems a common double-relation framework. He further reinforced this connection in two ways, as Radcliffe (2018, 127) fully describes. On the one hand, the moral sentiments share the distinguishing feature of the direct passions, moving us like the direct passions by generating motives when natural motives to morality are lacking. On the other hand, they are also intimately related to the indirect passions, by entering into the double relation of impressions that produce pride, humility, love, and hatred. Thus, Hume successfully constructed an integrated and mutually corroborating system in Books 2 and 3.¹⁷

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¹⁶ As Garrett (2026, 188) points out, Hume "never, in any of his writings, calls any of the aesthetic or moral sentiments 'passions,'" "nor does he ever describe any of the aesthetic or moral sentiments as either 'direct' or 'indirect.'" "This is because," according to Garrett, "as he originally indicated in T 2.1.1.3, they are not passions at all; they are instead among the 'other emotions.'"

¹⁷ An earlier version of this paper was presented at the 50th International Hume Society Conference, held at Oxford in 2024. I am deeply grateful to the editors, Elizabeth S. Radcliffe and Mark G. Spencer, and to two anonymous reviewers, for their generous and invaluable comments and encouragement. I am also indebted to Peter Kail for his constructive feedback.

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