University of Alberta

Of The Standard of Sentiments: Hume on Virtue and Beauty

by

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Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to my Grandparents

Isabel Goodine
Louis Goodine
Doreen Foulston
Lyall Foulston

all of whom have known the value of a good education.

Abstract

Some critics of Hume's sentimentalist moral theory charge that a system of morality grounded in sentiments cannot provide us with a set of standards that are stable across times and places. Hume addresses this sort of worry in his appeal to what he calls the General Point of View, accounting for how we correct sentiments. Many explanations of the General Point of View rely heavily on the perceptual analogy, comparing moral judgment to sense-perceiving physical objects. I explain the perceptual analogy, and then show its limitations for explaining Hume's theory of correcting moral sentiments. In the second section, I explain Hume's analogy between virtue and beauty. I show how Hume characterizes the correction of aesthetic sentiments in his essay "Of The Standard of Taste," and then I show how the analogy between beauty and virtue can help us to better defend Hume against his objectors, helpfully explaining Hume's theory of morals.

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Chapter 1: Hume's Sentimentalism

A. Introducing Sentimentalism, and The Objectivist Complaint

David Hume's moral theory stresses the central role of a spectator's sentiments in telling the difference between virtue and vice, right and wrong. Without a capacity for feeling sentiments, Hume thinks, we could never begin the project of making moral distinctions. "To have the sense of virtue," Hume writes, "is nothing but to *feel* a satisfaction of a particular kind from the contemplation of a character." (*T* 471; 3.1.2.3. Hume's emphasis)[1] Not simply stating that our sentiments help us to *discover* what is right and wrong, Hume tells us that sentiments of approbation and disapprobation make up the meaning of our moral evaluations. Thus, for Hume, our understanding of morality cannot be separated from our sentimental experience of morality. As such, Hume tells us that morality is inextricably connected to our moral sentiments. Instead of grounding our moral systems in reason, Hume thinks our ability to respond sympathetically to the pleasures and pains of others forms the basis of morality. Morality, in Hume's view, depends largely on our inherent natures as sympathetic beings. This conception of morality is often categorized as a *sentimentalism*. Sentimentalism tells us that our feelings, emotions, or sentiments are what make character traits virtuous or vicious, and for other things whether they are good or bad, beautiful or ugly. As such, the sentimentalist view tells us that the way of knowing whether some character is virtuous or

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[1] My citations of Hume's *A Treatise of Human Nature* will be made in the text, in parenthesis. A *T* is followed by the page number from the second edition edited by L.A. Selby-Bigge and P.H. Nidditch (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1978) followed by a semicolon, and then the numbers of the Book, Part, Section and paragraph number of the passage.

My citations of Hume's *Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals* are from *Enquiries Concerning Human Understanding and Concerning the Principles of Morals*, Third edition, edited by L.A. Selby-Bigge and P.H. Nidditch. (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1975). References to the second *Enquiry* will begin with *EPM* followed by the page number.

vicious (or whether some *act* is right or wrong) is to be established through reflection about how such characters (and actions) make us *feel*.

Some of Hume's critics, (whom I will call "objectivists" [2]) think that Hume's sentimentalism is very mistaken, criticizing Hume's emphasis on the importance of sentiments in our understanding of morality. Centrally, objectivists treat moral claims as objective claims about matters of fact, which can be considered either *true or false*. Further, the objectivist conception of morality treats moral claims as universal: it is not as if (morally speaking) murder is wrong *to me*, or *to you*. Rather, objectivists will treat murder as *intrinsically* wrong, independently of an observer's sentiments.

Our system of moral judgment relies on a set of shared standards, which allow us to evaluate conduct in a stable way. We apply moral standards to others in a variety of places, times and contexts, and we can also use such standards to guide our own action and deliberation. Objectivists, against sentimentalist moral theories like Hume's, think that it is not possible to develop a stable system of moral evaluation when sentiments are given a constituting role in our moral theory. First, they worry about the variability of sentiments. Between different persons, and even within the same individual at different times, sentimental dispositions will vary. While some object may excite emotion X in one time and place, it may evoke emotion Y in another time and place. Because sentiments are very variable, objectivists charge that a sentimentalist moral theory will be too much at the mercy of the individual whims of particular and peculiar observers. Because objectivists think that one system of telling right from wrong applies to all of us, all of the time, they claim that sentiments (which seem idiosyncratic by nature) will fail to explain

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[2] The term "objectivist" has nothing to do with the moral doctrines of Ayn Rand, though she called her own system of thought "objectivism". The distinction between "objectivism" as opposed to Hume's subjective theory of morality is very central to my project, and I think my usage of the term is justified and appropriate for my purposes.

how morality actually works. Second, objectivists often charge that sentiments, emotions, passions, and feelings are irrational. To be rational is to follow rules of reasoning that lead to truth: but passions and emotions are not *true* or *false* so much as they might be considered *appropriate* or *inappropriate*. The fact that murder is wrong cannot be established by irrational emotions, objectivists will charge. Rather, objectivists will say that the appropriateness of our feelings of disapprobation toward murder are made appropriate by the fact that murder is wrong. Third, objectivists may charge that sentimentalism cannot capture the universal applicability of morality. Objectivists will worry about how it can be the sentiments of a third-party observer will generate moral obligations. Fourth, and connected to the last point, is that objectivists will be very uncomfortable with the idea that a sentimentalist moral theory treats virtue and vice as a matter of taste. Problematically, it will seem that taste cannot be disputed: my taste is my taste, and your taste is your taste. Again, this does not capture the universal applicability of morality, in the objectivist's eye. If some act or character trait is morally good *to me*, it must also be morally good *to you* and to every other observer who undertakes the project of moralizing. The sentiments cannot generate the levels of stability necessary for a satisfactory account of the Good and its universal applicability. These charges, of being variable, being irrational, lacking universal applicability, and being a matter of taste, we can see, criticize sentimentalism as being unable to generate stable standards that apply across times and places. These objectivist critiques of sentimentalism have appeared amongst Hume's contemporaries, as well as in recent times.

In the eighteenth century, Thomas Reid famously claimed that right and wrong could not be distinguished merely through sentiment or feelings. Reid famously compared Hume's moral judge to a legal judge, and wrote:

> In a case that comes before him, he must be made acquainted with all the objects, and all their relations. After this, his understanding has no farther room to operate. Nothing remains, on his part, but to feel the right or the wrong; and mankind have very absurdly called him a *judge*; he ought to be called a *feeler*.[3]

Reid also complains about Hume's denial that qualities such as virtue and beauty could be based in some matter of fact, or some quality that exists in the world. Hume wrote that "Euclid has fully explained all the qualities of the circle; but has not in any proposition said a word of its beauty. The reason is evident. The beauty is not part of the circle." (*EPM* 291) Reid flatly denies Hume's claim, writing: "But is it certain that beauty is not any quality of the object? [...]Beauty is a quality of the circle, not demonstrable by mathematical reasoning, but immediately perceived by good taste." [4]As such, we can see that Reid expresses two broad complaints against Hume's theory: 1) morality is more than a matter of sentiments (virtues and vices are known by a judge, rather than feeler) and 2) virtue and beauty are properties intrinsic to objects that exist in the real world. Passions, to Reid, seem to have no intentional object; a mere feeling of disapprobation might be seen as something private, like an itch, a perception which is not *about* anything.

Similar criticisms of Hume have also appeared in recent times. Philippa Foot claimed:

> Now this theory of Hume's about moral sentiment commits him to a subjectivist theory of ethics. He could not maintain both that a man calls qualities virtues when he happens to feel towards them this particular sentiment, and that statements about virtue and vice are objective. For were they objective, like ordinary statements of fact, there would have to be some way of deciding, in case of disagreement, whether one man's opinion or

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[3] Thomas Reid, *Essays on The Powers of the Human Mind, To Which are added, An Essay on Quantity and An Analysis of Aristotle's Logic*, (London: Thomas Tegg, 1827) p. 672.

[4] ibid., p. 673.

> another's was correct -- as the opinion that the earth is flat can be shown to be mistaken by a voyage around the globe. [5]

Foot continues:

> [Hume's sentimentalist] theory does not look at all plausible. We are not inclined to think that when a man says that an action is virtuous or vicious, he is talking about his own feelings rather than a quality which he must show really to belong to what is to be done. It seems strange to suggest that he does not have to bring forward any special *fact about the action* in order to maintain what he says.[6]

Foot's worries overlap with Reid's. Morality cannot be a matter of feeling, to Foot, because then we would have not have any way of telling "whether one man's opinion or another's was correct." Foot tells us that even moral disagreements are to be settled by reference to matters of fact. Just as the claim that the earth is round is going to be confirmed by a belief's correspondence to some truths out there in the world, Foot also thinks that a similar method of discovery will lead us to moral truths.

Reid's and Foot's critiques of Hume are driven by their underlying assumptions about what a moral theory must do. The central concern of their overlapping complaints is that a moral theory can provide us statements that are truth-evaluable, and which are not simply true for particular individuals but are instead true in a universal, and non-relative sense. A moral theory will be stable for individuals across times and places, and it will also be stable from person to person across varying contexts and cultures. When Reid complains about Hume's moral agents being "feelers" rather than judges, he expresses the worry that sentiments are private to the agents feeling the sentiments, and are therefore particular to judges, and idiosyncratic. Foot, similarly, complains that when a person makes a moral judgment, he does not simply talk "about his own feelings." Closely

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[5] "Hume on Moral Judgment" in *Virtues and Vices, and other Essays in Moral Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2002), p 76-7.

[6] ibid.

connected to the complaint that feelings are private is the idea that moral judgments are directed at the world around us. This is what Reid seems concerned with when he tells us that beauty is a quality *of* a circle. Foot says that it is some "special fact about the action" that makes it right or wrong. Objectivists think that value will ultimately derive from real facts in the world. Wrongness *really is* a quality of murder, and beauty *really is* (at least according to Reid) a quality of a circle.

Hume, I think, accepts the idea that a system of morality needs to be stable across times, places, and persons. Hume, however, thinks that sentiments can be stable enough to ground a system of morality. The fact that we have a stable system of moral judgment, Hume will tell us, does not imply that these standards are grounded in objective matters of fact. Reid tells us that beauty is a "quality" of a circle, and Foot draws an analogy between resolving moral disagreements and resolving a disagreement about the shape of our planet. This objectivist account, then, tells us that moral facts are grounded in object-given reasons. Grounding morality in matters of fact, objectivists think, is the way to get a stable morality going, insofar as it gives us reason to take morality seriously in our evaluation of others and when reflecting on how we ought to direct our own action.

The challenge for Hume's theory, then, will be to explain how virtue and vice can be based in sentiment, while still holding that we can plausibly give an account of an adequately stable system of morality (but one that does not ground morality in object-given reasons). If moral qualities are not objective qualities, what kind of qualities *are* they for Hume? If morality is grounded in sentiments, why is morality not *just* a mere matter of taste? If a moral system is stable, what must it do? What does it mean to be *adequately* stable? Hume's responses to these questions, we will see, emerge from his characterization of moral sentiments, and in his account of the General Point of View. In the next section, I will look at Hume's denial of objective, empirically discoverable moral

truths, before showing his sentimentalist solution to the problem. Hume's solution to the objectivist worry, I want to show, is that Hume thinks that a sentimentalist moral theory can be stable, and that his explanation of morality gives us strong reasons to take Hume's account of virtue and vice seriously.

B. What was Hume Arguing Against?

In order to defend Hume against object-driven theories such as Foot's and Reid's, we need to specify just how Hume was opposed to their position. This section will first give an overview of Hume's rejection of reason as the source of moral distinctions, and will then sketch Hume's positive theory, which treats sentiments as the ground of moral distinctions.

Earlier, I suggested that objectivist objections (such as Foot's and Reid's) appeal to the notion of moral truths. If we are going to consider the idea of moral truths in Hume's programme, it will be worth our while to consider Hume's idea of what a "truth" is. In Book II of the *Treatise* he writes, "[t]ruth is of two kinds, consisting either in the discovery of the proportions of ideas, consider'd as such, or in the conformity of our ideas of objects to their real existence." (*T* 448; 2.3.10.2) In places, Hume treats reason as a sort of tool for getting at the truth. Reason, like truth, comes in two types for Hume's programme - both demonstrative reason, and also experiential-causal reason. Demonstrative reason is the sort that can be known without any reference to experience, and produces truths *a priori* by comparing relations of ideas. For example, geometrical proofs, conceptual truths, and the proposition that red is not the same thing as blue, are products of such demonstrative reasoning. The other type of reason for Hume uses empirical experience to discover objective facts about the world - so while we begin with a series of sense-impressions and reflections about these impressions, we eventually come

to posit a world of external objects that resemble our impressions, with their properties of shape, mass, solidity, and so forth. These objects in the external world are sometimes called "real existences" by Hume.[7] Hume denies that either of these two kinds of reason can give us the sort of information that we need to make moral distinctions (that is, to tell right from wrong, and virtue from vice). Hume's denial that demonstrative reason can give us access to moral truths is based on Hume's conception of how demonstrative truths operate in the understanding. Demonstrative truths, such as mathematical equations, can never motivate actions. But moral ideas do motivate actions - so they cannot possibly be generated by the kind of reasoning that never motivates actions. (*T* 457; 3.1.1.7)[8]

Hume then goes on to deny that the source of moral distinctions lies in empirically grounded reasoning. Although we can use such reasoning to ascertain the existence of tables, trees, and rocks, we can not use it to establish the existence of object-given moral facts. He writes:

> But can there be any difficulty in proving, that vice and virtue are not matters of fact, whose existence we can infer by reason? Take any action allow'd to be vicious: Wilful murder, for instance. Examine it in all lights, and see if you can find that matter of fact, or real existence, which you call *vice*. 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, as long as you consider the object. You never can find it, till you turn your reflexion into your own breast, and find a sentiment of disapprobation, which arises in you, towards this action. Here is a matter of fact; but 'tis the object of feeling, not of reason. It lies in yourself, not in the object. So that when you pronounce any action or character to be vicious, you mean nothing, but that from the constitution of your nature you have a feeling or sentiment of blame from the contemplation of it. Vice and virtue, therefore, may be compar'd to sounds, colours, heat and cold, which,

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[7] Of "real existences", Hume writes: "by the observation of external signs, we are inform'd of the real existence of the object, which is resembling or contiguous." (*T* 317-8; 2.1.11.4).

[8] In one dramatic example, Hume writes that "'Tis not contrary to reason to prefer the destruction of the whole world to the scratching of my finger" (*T* 416; 2.3.3.6) Hume's point is that reason, as a method for accessing truths, will not give us preferences or passions. This, broadly, shows why Hume thinks that reason *alone* cannot motivate us to choose any particular action.

> according to modern philosophy, are not qualities in objects, but perceptions in the mind. (*T* 468-469; 3.1.1.26)

What Hume is really denying here is that there is an observer-independent Truth about morality. We discover that our sentiment of approbation does not resemble anything in the object; certainly not in the way that our perceptions of shape and solidity do. Furthermore, when we reflect on where our attention is directed when we discover a feeling of disapprobation, we find that the impression originates in one's own breast, rather than the object itself. Virtue and vice are not matters of fact or real existences, capable of being sense-perceived. Rather, Hume understands moral sentiments and impressions as arising from human wants and desires, and in keeping with this view that morality is to be ultimately determined by what people want and care about. Virtue and vice are neither relations of ideas, nor matters of fact, according to Hume. Thus, Hume does not treat virtue and vice as "Truths" in either of the senses that he proposes. Hume also denies that moral qualities are even qualities that we can experience (i.e., "hot" and "red" are qualities, although they are not real existences). Hume considers the example of parricide: while it might seem that the wrongness of such an act is determined by some special quality of an object that makes us feel disapprobation, Hume thinks this cannot be the case. He considers a case of a sapling that outgrows and topples its parent tree. While we perceive this case to be an example of parricide, we do not feel disapprobation towards the oak tree. Hume takes it, then, that our perceptions of moral disapproval are not direct responses to any special quality or relation that could cause our moral impressions. Because even parricide, when considered as a relation, will not always garner disapprobation, Hume denies that there are moral qualities intrinsic to the world, which are capable of being experienced.

Hume's claim that moral sentiments are not discovered by either demonstrative or empirical reasoning is reinforced by his theory of the passions. Hume writes:

> A passion is an original existence, or, if you will, modification of existence, and contains not any representative quality, which renders it a copy of any other existence or modification. [...] 'Tis impossible, therefore, that this passion can be oppos'd by, or be contradictory to truth and reason; since this contradiction consists in the disagreement of ideas, consider'd as copies, with those objects, which they represent. (*T* 415; 2.3.3.5)

This claim treats passions as impressions, though impressions without any representative quality. Whereas our sense impressions of real existences resemble external objects, passions are different. As "original existences," a passion *originates* in the mind of a spectator. The impression does not resemble anything, or copy anything in the world of real existences. As we can see in the moral case, the sentiments of disapprobation we feel about bad character traits are original existences. The sentiment of disapprobation is not something we copy out of objects: it is something we superadd onto the external world when we experience it. This treatment of passions as "original existences" places a constraint on how we are to think about moral sentiments, as we cannot to think of them as copies of some other existing object; this sort of impression is not to be evaluated according to truth or falsity, or how well it resembles anything.

How are we able to tell right from wrong, then? Hume proposes that moral judges possess a "moral sense,"[9] and tells us that morality "is more properly felt than judg'd of" (*T* 470; 3.3.2.1). What do we feel when we feel morality? Hume says that to feel virtue "is nothing but to *feel* a satisfaction of a particular kind from the contemplation of character." (*T* 471; 3.3.2.3) When we consider a person's character, we will have a special

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[9] Simon Blackburn cautions interpreters of Hume against overemphasizing Hume's use of the term "moral sense." Blackburn claims that Hume only uses the phrase a handful of times throughout his corpus, and also suggests that Hume's usage of the phrase "moral sense" may have been because Hume was attempting to align his theory with Huthcheson's (in spite of Hume's rather deep disagreements with Hutcheson about where a moral sense comes from, and its proper functioning). "Hume on The Mezzanine Level" in *Hume Studies* XIX:2 (November 1993). p 275.

sentiment with a special feel (i.e., approbation or disapprobation). This, roughly, is Hume's account of virtue and vice.

Hume's explanation of how we make moral distinctions seems susceptible to the objectivist's charge, still. Treating virtue and vice as observer-dependent properties, an objector may complain, takes the normative force out of morality, as taste seems too arbitrary. What are we to say about a monstrous observer, who feels approbation for racism, or murder? Hume's strategy for addressing this sort of worry will be to specify how it is that one sentiment is more acceptable than another. As we shall see, not every observer's sentiments will count towards a trait's being virtuous or vicious. Selfish or prejudiced viewpoints are not to be considered when we try to determine a trait's virtuousness or viciousness. Only judgements made from a *moral point of view* will count as genuine moral judgments. Hume's sentimentalism is able to say that sentiments can be reflected upon and corrected. In this regard, not every sentiment will count as a genuine moral sentiment. This process of correction, I plan to show, allows Hume to explain his account of a stable sentimentalist moral theory.

C. General and Steady Points of View

Hume's brand of sentimentalism defends itself by specifying what sort of perspective will allow us to make moral judgments. In his last pass at giving definitions of virtue and vice in the *Treatise*, Hume wrote:

> 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* 614; 3.3.5.1, Hume's emphasis removed)

How did Hume arrive at this formulation? Throughout the *Treatise*, and also in the rest of Hume's moral philosophy, he emphasizes the importance of this "general survey or view"

of a person's character or action, in order for the moral spectator to correctly judge of virtue and vice. This general survey, many commentators think, is the crucial element for explaining how Hume is able to build up a stable system of morality. The General Point of View produces particular kinds of pain and pleasure: only the pleasures and pains which arise from the general survey are to count towards virtue and vice. As such, moral spectators meet a standard of judging virtue and vice when they take up the General Point of View. By introducing the General Point of View (hereafter, the GPoV), Hume is able to say that good moral judgment is based on feelings, while still holding that some feelings are to be favored over others.

Where do the feelings that constitute our moral sentiments come from, in Hume's account? Hume gives sympathy a central role in his moral psychology. The psychological mechanism of sympathy allows an observer to "catch" the passions and sentiments of others. Sympathetic spectators, by replicating the sentiments of those around them, engage in what Hume sometimes calls "fellow feeling." Hume writes that when we consider the psychological mechanisms that make moral judgment possible,

> [w]e may begin with considering a-new the nature and force of *sympathy*. The minds of all men are similar in their feelings and operations, nor can any one be actuated by any affection, of which all others are not, in some degree, susceptible. (*T* 576; 3.1.1.7)

Our susceptibility to the feelings of others, then, gives Hume a way of explaining why we praise even those virtues that have nothing to do with our own interests and projects. Given our sympathetic natures, we simply cannot help feeling the pains and pleasures of others. However, an objector well-versed in Hume's theory of the passions might be concerned about how this claim fits in with the rest of Hume's *Treatise*. Earlier in the *Treatise*, he tells us that the mechanism of sympathy produces variable sentiments: we sympathize more easily with those who are near to us, as well as our companions, family

members, and members of our own community. We even sympathize more easily with those who resemble us (see, for example *T* 369; 2.2.7-8). As such, sympathy appears to be highly idiosyncratic and variable. The objector might then press that the idiosyncratic mechanism of sympathy will hardly ground a theory of a stable system of morality.

How does Hume address the worries about the variability of sentiments generated by sympathy? For an answer to this question, we can look to the passage where Hume introduces the GPoV in order to show how his account of morality can be stable, in spite of sympathy's variability:

> Our situation, with regard to both persons and things, is in continual fluctuation; and a man, that lies at a distance from us, may, in a little time, become a familiar acquaintance. Besides, every particular man has a peculiar position with regard to others; and 'tis impossible we cou'd ever converse together on any reasonable terms, were each of us to consider characters and persons, only as they appear from his peculiar point of view. In order, therefore, to prevent those continual *contradictions*, and arrive at a more *stable* judgment of things, we fix on some *steady* and *general* points of view; and always in our thoughts, place ourselves in them, whatever may be our present situation. (*T* 581-2; 3.3.1.15, Hume's emphasis)

Moreover, Hume characterizes the GPoV as a perspective that is corrective of our personal, situated sentiments. He writes:

> Now in judging of characters, the only interest or pleasure, which appears the same to every spectator, is that of the person himself, whose character is examin'd; or that of persons, who have a connexion with him. And tho' such interests and pleasures touch us more faintly than our own, yet being more constant and universal, they counter-ballance the latter even in practice, and are alone admitted in speculation as the **standard of virtue and morality**. They alone produce that particular feeling or sentiment, on which moral distinctions depend. (*T* 591; 3.3.1.30, bold emphasis mine)

What makes a point of view general and steady? Hume explains the importance of *steady* viewpoints by pointing out that any individual observer will note that their own momentary impressions of things may change due to the "continual fluctuation" of their perspective relative to "both persons and things." When observing *things*, we understand

that some momentary perspectives should not alter our overall judgment of the real qualities of stable objects. Shape, color, and size may *seem* to vary as perspectives shift, but we deem the real existence of these qualities to be constant nonetheless. Likewise with *persons*, Hume notes that we know that a former stranger may later become a good friend, though our new friend had their laudable qualities of character even before we came to like them. By taking up a steady point of view - that is, one that a judge can refer to at many times - such a point of view will also be communicable to other people (or communicable to oneself through variety of times). This other mark of the GPoV is its generality - or in other words, shareability or general accessibility. It is that "which appears the same to every spectator." A failure to take up a viewpoint that is general will make it "impossible we could converse together on any reasonable terms." When I focus only on my own point of view which is *peculiar*, I cannot reasonably expect others to take it up. The marks of the GPoV - both *steadiness* and more broadly, *general accessibility* - gain much of their intuitive force through our understanding of the difference between appearances and reality. Hume, in the above passage, captures the idea that in our judgments of persons that momentary and personal seemings are subject to correction: how something feels *now*, or how something feels *to me* will not always be authoritative guides of how things *really are*. The standard set by the general point of view, then, tells us that not every sentiment will provide us with the final verdict for our moral judgment. Rather, sentiments felt from a stable point of view, which is shareable, will be the only sentiments that matter for our moral judgments.

So far in this section, I have explained some of the reasons why we take up the GPoV when we judge other people. I now want to make a few remarks to richen Hume's account of the moral perspective before moving to the next section. Taken as a general strategy for judging others, it is a very convenient strategy for avoiding pain, and

pursuing pleasure. Does Hume explain why we favor sentiments which conform to the standards of the GPoV in *our own conduct*? In the Hume scholarship, the most prevalent explanation of why the GPoV guides our own activity is explained with what is sometimes called the *reflective endorsement* view. The reflective endorsement view gives our sentiments not only steadiness and consistency, it also gives us a normative reason to take up the GPoV when evaluating of others and ourselves. Advocates of the reflective endorsement view tell us, broadly, that the reason we care about the GPoV (that is, that we care that everyone takes it up, including ourselves) depends upon how we feel when we reflect on both our natural dispositions, and our moral practices. The activity of making sentimental evaluations is subjected to its own scrutiny. In other words, we reflect on the way we feel about the way we feel about the character traits of others. Two advocates of this reading, Christine Korsgaard and Annette Baier,[10] give special attention to this passage which appears late in the *Treatise*:

> a sense of morals is a principle inherent in the soul, and one of the most powerful that enters into the composition. But this sense must certainly acquire new force, when reflecting on itself, it approves of those principles, from whence it is deriv'd, and finds nothing but what is great and good in its rise and origin. (*T* 619; 3.3.6.3)

As such, reflection about our own evaluative practices reinforces our tendency to praise and blame certain character traits in others and ourselves. While human beings in their natural state have many preferences, some of them social, and others selfish, only the social virtues survive the test of reflection; the sociable virtues are the only ones which pass the test of reflective endorsement. Selfishness and malice do not survive reflection, while impartiality and benevolence do. Hume writes:

> From these principles we may easily account for that merit, which is commonly ascrib'd to *generosity, humanity, compassion, gratitude,*

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[10] See Korsgaard's *The Sources of Normativity* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996), Chapter 3, and Baier's *A Progress of The Sentiments* (Cambridge: Harvard UP), Chapter 12.

> *friendship, fidelity, zeal, disinterestedness, liberality,* and all those other qualities, which form the character of good and benevolent. A propensity to the tender passions makes a man agreeable and useful in all the parts of life; and gives a just direction to all his other qualities, which may otherwise become prejudicial to society. Courage and ambition, when not regulated by benevolence, are fit only to make a tyrant and a public robber. They are indifferent in themselves to the interests of society, and have a tendency to the good or ill of mankind, according as they are directed by these other passions. (T 603-4; 3.3.3.3, Hume's emphasis)

The standard of general accessibility set by the GPoV allows us to give "just direction" to our sentiments through reflection, as only the sentiments that pass the test of reflective endorsement will be given the role of guiding and correcting other sentiments.

D. The Perceptual Analogy

By appealing to the idea of a "point of view," Hume invites his readers to think about how our sense impressions change when we move through physical space. Hume sometimes compares the corrections we make to our sympathetic sentiments to the corrections we make to sense-perceptions of size.[11] He writes of some cases where:

> our sympathy is proportionably weaker, and our praise or blame fainter and more doubtful. The case is here the same as in our judgments concerning external bodies. All objects seem to diminish by their distance: But tho' the appearance of objects to our senses be the original standard, by which we judge of them, yet we do not say, that they actually diminish by the distance; but correcting the appearance by reflexion, arrive at a more constant and establish'd judgment concerning them. (*T* 602-3; 3.3.3.2)

Using a perceptual analogy is perhaps a very risky move for Hume's theory. Consider the colour analogy: to be blue is to be a thing that will cause blue perceptions in normal observers, in normal viewing conditions. Likewise, tall things will cause tall perceptions,

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[11] To clarify: when I talk about perception, I am usually referring to the notion of *sense perception*. However, Hume's notion of perception is much broader, and includes memory, imagination and also passions. Basically, anything that passes through the theater of the mind would be called a "perception" by Hume (see, for example, *T* 1, 1.1.1.1). The idea "perceptual analogy" was introduced by commentators, and it clearly refers to sense-perception, as opposed to Hume's broader sense of the term "perception".

and round things will cause round perceptions for normal observers who are properly situated. As such, sense-perception falls within the category of empirical (or causal) reasoning. This might seem a bit strange, given that as I showed earlier, Hume denies that virtue and vice are matters of fact or real existences. Rachel Cohon, among other commentators, stresses that Hume does not treat our knowledge of virtue and vice as deliverances of empirical-causal reasoning.[12] If moral perceptions are not deliverances of empirically grounded reasoning, then what is it to have a perception of virtue or vice? Hume suggested that agents have a moral sense,[13] though he also claims that morality is not discovered by sense-perceiving some sort of "real existence." But, if moral perceptions are to be thought of as something very different from sense-perceptions, how are we to learn from the perceptual analogy that Hume appeals to in his explanation of the GPoV? Here, the metaphor of a "point of view" when applied to moral judgments, has some limitations. In spite of this apparent disanalogy between moral perception and sense perception, it is worth reflecting on where moral perception and sense-perception share similarities.

How is Hume's model of correcting moral judgment similar to the standard model of correcting perceptual judgments? Our moral sentiments are prone to variation as an effect of the observer's particular standpoint and moods; in like manner, our raw perceptions of colour, sweetness, size, and shape can be distorted by the peculiar standpoints and dispositions of particular observers. Bad lighting might make a white object appear orange, and from many angles, a round coin will appear to have an oval

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[12] See Cohon's "The Common Point of View in Hume's Ethics" in *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* (57:4 Dec. 1997), p. 833-834.

[13] Though, as I noted before, to suggest that Hume believes wholeheartedly in a 'moral sense' may misleading, as it suggests that it is something akin to a visual sense, or a tactile sense. Rather, we might think of a moral sense merely as the ability to form moral impressions, or to have moral experience.

shape. How is it that we correct against our distorted perceptions? In cases such as color and shape, we are able to correct our judgments about these sorts of problems. We say an object is white because it would appear white to a normal observer in daylight. We say an object is round because it would appear round if we viewed the object straight-on and from the right distance. These sorts of perceptual judgments, then, favour some viewpoints over others. A favoured viewpoint allow us to perceive an object correctly (or "as it really is") by removing those circumstances that distort our impressions. Twilight is bad lighting for colour judgments, and strange angles will cause difficulty in getting a good sense of an object's shape.

Oftentimes, we are able to correct our perceptual judgments without actually removing ourselves from our situated (and even distorted) perspectives. The top of my coffee mug, and the coins laying flat on the other end of the table do not appear perfectly round from my perspective. In spite of this, I still *judge* that those objects are round. This is partly because I have observed these objects straight-on, and from the right distance in the past. I know that these objects would look round if I viewed them from that perspective. Moreover, for other objects, I can judge that they are round *without* having ever taken up the favoured perspective. I have never viewed the pitcher's mound at my local baseball stadium straight-on and from directly above (and I never will), but I have viewed it many times from several oblique angles. I can imagine what it would look like straight-on, and my imagining of my impressions from that hypothetical perspective warrants my judging that the pitcher's mound is round. Perceptual judgments can be corrected by imagining an undistorted perspective, and from which I make my judgments according to the impressions that the hypothetical perspective would enliven.

Hume makes a similar move in his account of moral judgment. Roughly, sentiments are corrected by appeal to some non-distorted perspective, where this ideal

perspective can be favoured even in those cases where the moral judge is unable to take up the favored perspective. So when we inquire about a person's virtue, we trust the judgment of those who have gotten the best "look" at a person's character. But, talk about moral "perspectives" is a matter of metaphor, and the moral point of view is not *literally* some point in physical space. Two important questions arise: 1) what is a moral perspective? (After all, it would seem that it is not an actual physical *distance* at which we view moral agents), and 2) what are the specific qualities of the moral perspective?

I think that Geoffrey Sayre-McCord makes a good start of answering the first question about Hume's concept of a *moral* perspective when he writes: "Hume's appeals to "points of view," not just in ethics but elsewhere, suggest that he sees a point of view as a way of seeing something or thinking of something, and not as the occupying of a particular position in the viewing of something." [14]Rather than emphasizing a particular stance (i.e., access to a particular set of facts), Hume's idea of the moral perspective emphasizes a particular *way* of thinking of matters of fact. When we take up a moral perspective, we gather facts, indeed. But additionally, we also treat these facts as salient in the right ways and for the right reasons. According to the perceptual analogy, a good perceiver will aim to remove all distorting factors from the circumstances of perception (bad lighting, oblique angles, or jaundice, to name a few). We then become acquainted with correct perceptions in the non-distorted context, and treat those perceptions in the non-distorted context as the standard for correct perception, which will also guide other perceptions. We learn to tell red from green, purple and orange in plain daylight rather than in twilight. It may be that later on we can tell the difference between red objects and purple objects in twilight, but it will be largely because we first learned the difference in

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[14] see his "On Why Hume's 'General Point of View' Isn't Ideal – and Shouldn't Be" in *Social Philosophy and Policy* (11:1 Winter 1994), p 209fn.

plain daylight. The moral parallel, then, is that we learn to make moral distinctions by taking up the right perspective before we treat our sentiments as counting towards a person's virtue or vice. Later on, relying on habit and memory, we can make moral judgments even when we do not directly feel moral sentiments about some circumstance, because we know how they *would* make us feel. Just as we can judge that the pitcher's mound would look round were we to view it from above, we can also judge that virtuous behaviors on the other side of the world would excite sentiments of approbation were we to view them from the right perspective.

What is the right perspective? So far, we can see that a moral perspective is a *way of thinking* where judges enlarge their scope of considerations, engaging in what Hume calls "extended sympathy." [15] The moral way to think about any particular person's character, Hume thinks, is to conceive of those virtues as character traits that have an effect on the happiness and well-being agent's nearby companions. In making moral judgments, according to Hume:

> we expect not any impossibilities from him; but confine our view to that **narrow circle**, in which any person moves, in order to form a judgment of his moral character. When the natural tendency of his passions leads him to be serviceable and useful within his sphere, we approve of his character, and love his person, by a sympathy with the sentiments of those, who have a more particular connexion with him. (*T* 602; 3.3.3.2, my emphasis in bold)

By appealing to a narrow circle, Hume suggests that the best perspective for judging a person's character is a perspective that focuses on an agent's tendency to be helpful and

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[15] Expanding on the idea of extensive sympathy, Abramson writes:

> Extensive sympathy is a two-stage imaginative exercise. In the first stage, we form an idea of the usual effects of a trait on those who have commerce with the agent. In forming that idea, we restrict our deliberations to usual effects and to the general point of view. In the second stage, ideas of the usual effects of a trait are transformed into impressions by the principle of sympathy. The impressions that are thereby produced are moral sentiments, i.e., sentiments of moral approval or disapproval.

in her "Correcting *Our* Sentiments About Hume's Moral Point of View" in *The Southern Journal of Philosophy* XXXVII (1999), p. 343.

pleasing to his or her companions and associates.[16] It is the close companions, after all, who are affected by a person's character traits most directly. Thus, a person's qualities of character matter the most to his or her close companions. This second-personal standpoint felt by the recipient of a virtue, in Hume's model, produces the sentiments that matter in moral judgments. The job of the judge in the third-person standpoint is to pick up on, and judge according to the effects of a person's character on his or her companions. In such a model, we come to understand a person's moral character by sympathizing with that person's narrow circle, because members of a person's narrow circle, after all will have the best "view" of a person's character traits, setting the standard for how we feel about a person's virtue or vice.

E. A Model for Correcting Sentiments?

Let us take stock of where we have gotten so far: Hume's moral theory if we want to take it seriously, must give us an account of morality that is stable across times and places, as well as between persons. Hume rejects the idea that morality can be grounded in either demonstrative truths, or as beliefs about matters of fact, or real existences in the external world. Hume then claims that morality finds its basis in sentiments, more specifically, in sympathy-generated sentiments corrected according to the GPoV. I then looked at the perceptual analogy as one way of explaining what a moral judge is up to when taking up the GPoV.

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[16] I say tendency towards helping members of the narrow circle, because it may be a matter of bad luck that the actual members of one's narrow circle may be unreceptive to an agent's pleasing qualities. Kate Abramson, in "Correcting *Our* Sentiments about Hume's Moral Point of View" notes that David's wit might not be appreciated by the companions in his actual narrow circle because they are too dull. This does not imply that David is not witty, it simply means his friends do not understand him. As such, sympathy with a narrow circle will actually involve sympathizing with an idealized, non-defective narrow circle, one that will actually be receptive to a person's good qualities of character. p. 344-345.

If we are trying to tell whether or not a sentiment is an appropriate response to a person's character, the perceptual analogy suggests that a judge get the right "look" at a person's character, and such a viewpoint will allow a judge to generate sentiments of approbation and disapprobation. Consider this model of correcting sentiments presented by Kathleen Wallace:

> But just what does the mind do when it creates this general point of view? I suggest that it is a kind of imaginative act of focusing. An apt analogy might be to a photographer selecting and focusing and in doing so creating a subject matter, which when viewed arouses moral sentiments of approbation or disapprobation.[17]

Concluding her paper, she writes:

> Hume's "reasonable" person, the "judicious spectator," would be the person who, in adopting the general point of view, exemplifies the moral and cognitive virtues of focusing on the relevant social and agential facts, of putting oneself in the point of view that will allow the moral sentiments of approbation to be enlivened, of engaging in communication and social intercourse at least some of the time from this point of view, and so on.[18]

The idea Wallace seems to be getting at is that taking up the right perspective will "allow the moral sentiments of approbation to be enlivened," and that social intercourse will be a useful practice in terms of how it equips us to take up the right perspective for ourselves. Once the right viewpoint is taken up, the proper sentiments are "aroused" or "enlivened."

Earlier, I noted that Hume thinks because passions are not truth-evaluable (*T* 415; 2.3.3.5), it can be puzzling to think about how it is that sentiments can be "corrected." By considering the perceptual analogy, we can see that while a sentiment itself is not truth-evaluable, sentiments can be trusted when they are evoked from a spectator who is considering true facts considered from the GPoV. The judicious moral spectator is one whose judgment we take seriously, and we take her seriously because we recognize she is

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[17] Kathleen Wallace, "Hume on Regulating Belief and Moral Sentiment" in *Hume Studies* XXVIII, Number 1 (April, 2002) p. 94-5.

[18] ibid., p. 102.

drawing on common sentiments which follow a shared, accessible standard (and the perceptual analogy tells us that the shared standard is constituted by a certain set of relevant facts about how someone's character affects their companions). Consider where Hume writes in the second *Enquiry*:

> If any false opinion, embraced by appearances, has been found to prevail; as soon as farther experience and sounder reasoning have given us juster notions of human affairs, **we retract our first sentiment**, and adjust anew the boundaries of moral good and evil. (*EPM* 180)

It is not clear, however, how sentiments are to be *retracted* in Hume's programme.[19] In such a model, good moral judgment is largely connected with getting the facts right, using good information as the "input" for our mechanism of sympathy. Yet, simply because a person feels pleasure upon the contemplation of a character trait is not enough to qualify it as a virtue. Consider one of Hume's more memorable examples from the *Enquiry*, Hume critiques conceptions of virtue grounded in religious superstitions:

> Celibacy, fasting, penance, mortification, self-denial, humility, silence, solitude, and the whole train of monkish virtues; for what reason are they everywhere rejected by men of sense, but because they serve to no manner of purpose; neither advance a man's fortune in the world, nor render him a more valuable member of society; neither qualify him for the entertainment of company, nor increase his power of self-enjoyment? 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; nor has any superstition force sufficient among men of the world, to pervert entirely these natural sentiments. (*EPM* 270)

The monkish virtues should be considered vices, according to Hume, because they do not "advance a man's fortune in the world, nor render him a more valuable member of society." Those who endorse the monkish virtues, Hume thinks, hold mistaken beliefs. Principally, Hume thinks they are mistaken when they believe that the monkish virtues will please anyone who takes a well-informed, unprejudiced viewpoint. These supposed

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[19] the above claim, from the *Enquiry*, may be an an example of Hume's less systematic writing. I won't be trying to give a systematic account of "retraction."

virtues, in Hume's view, fail to be virtues because such character traits are not generally beneficial to society.[20]

As we have considered it, the perceptual analogy tells us that we can judge the "reasonability" of a sentiment by determining the truth-values about the objects of our sentiments and passions. Determining whether a character trait is truly virtuous depends on whether the trait is really useful or agreeable, upon a general survey, keeping in mind the effects a person's character will have on his or her narrow circle of companions.

F. Limits of The Perceptual Analogy

Does the perceptual analogy give Hume an answer to Hume's objectivist critics? While no analogy is ever perfect, I think that there are important places where the analogy between judging of external objects and judging of morals breaks down. Judging the quality of the analogy, then, will be a matter of how far we can carry the analogy, and for our case, seeing how well Hume's perceptual analogy can explain Hume's account of morality against objectivist critiques. In this section, I will explain some disanalogies between sense-perceptions and moral sentiments, which show why the perceptual analogy does not provide us with a fully satisfactory answer to the objectivist complaints we considered earlier.

Consider an apparent disanalogy in the comparison between moral judgment and perceptual judgment, involving how reflection affects our actual experience and feelings. While reflection about situated sense perceptions may change one's assertions, it does not change one's actual phenomenological experience. Differently, in the moral case

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[20] In the second Enquiry, Hume gives a four possible ways for a character trait to be a virtue: it is useful to the self, agreeable to the self, useful to others, and agreeable to others. See, for example, *EPM* 268.

reflection on how character traits bear on members of the narrow circle will change one's assertions (i.e., judgments of virtue and vice), yet often, reflection will also change the phenomenology of how we experience those character traits.[21] Reflection about a character trait's effects on its narrow circle will actually make us *feel* differently about that person's character. Sense-perceptually, when I correct my oval experience of the pitcher's mound and judge it round, it still *looks* oval from my perspective. However, when I correct my sentiments about Harry's character by thinking about the effects of his attentiveness to his family, my heart is often warmed when I think about the resulting positive effects his family enjoys. The reason why the phenomenology of moral perception is changed by reflection, whereas sense-percepts stay the same (in spite of reflection) is a matter of what it means to change one's perspective. By thinking about the positive effects of a person's virtue on his or her narrow circle, judges use their imagination to extend the scope of who they sympathize with, and the mechanism of sympathy will generate new impressions.

What changes in thinking constitute a change in moral perspective, and how does thinking about an agent's narrow circle clarify what it is to take a moral perspective? Character traits, when they qualify as genuine virtues, matter to someone. The virtues will make us suited to the company of others, and will even help us to love ourselves. Hume notes that

> when we enumerate the good qualities of any person, we always mention those parts of his character, which render him a safe companion, an easy friend, a gentle master, an agreeable husband, or an indulgent father. We consider him with all his relations in society; and love or hate him, according as he affects those, who have any immediate intercourse with him. And 'tis a most certain rule, that if there be no relation of life, in which I cou'd not wish to stand to a particular person, his character must so far be allow'd to be perfect. If he be as little wanting to himself as to others, his character is entirely perfect. This is the ultimate test of merit and virtue. (*T* 606; 3.3.3.9)

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[21] Geoff Sayre-McCord pointed out this disanalogy to me in conversation.

Because virtues function to make us agreeable to the company of others, the "test of virtue" will be to determine how effective a character trait pleases others. The scope and membership of the narrow circle for any person, then, will actually vary from virtue to virtue. For example, my wit will be evaluated in terms of the laughter I can cleverly excite from friends, my benevolence will be evaluated by how well I bring about well-being in my companions, and my trustworthiness will be measured in terms of how well I meet the expectations of my promisees. To understand that virtues matter, for Hume's account, is to understand that virtues matter *to* those people that bear a moral agent's company, and this group of people will vary across times, places, and contexts.

In this regard, it is important to note how the concepts of virtue and vice are inherently social concepts, and the process of learning about virtue and vice is an inherently social practice. This social aspect of morality is not captured well by the perceptual analogy, because an account of a fully informed and sympathetic spectator is still only an account of one spectator, and is therefore unable to highlight the important social aspects of moral judgment that Hume emphasizes.[22] Because the perceptual analogy appeals to the idea of a single observer, it misses the important fact that virtues and vices will only have meaning in the setting of a community of moral spectators.

Hume's appeal to the narrow circle leads us to some difficult questions. We are to get an impression of a person's virtue by sympathizing with members of that agent's narrow circle. But if we are very distant from the narrow circle itself, such sympathizing will generate very weak sentiments. For example, when I judge a character trait in China

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[22] Jacqueline Taylor, arguing in favour of a "social" reading of the standard of virtue, writes:

> Moral appraisal is not an individual endeavor for which we have a built-in faculty such as a moral sense. By locating the standard of virtue in the joint responses of those with whom we sympathize when we take up the common point of view Hume construes moral appraisal fundamentally as a social process.

in "Hume on the Standard of Virtue" in *The Journal of Ethics*, 6:1 (2002). p. 49-50.

virtuous from another continent, I will judge it virtuous by thinking about and sympathizing with those who are near and dear to the agent. But because I am very distant from the members of that very distant narrow circle, the sentiment generated by such concern will be a very weak sentiment. This problem, some commentators think, points to a rather serious deficiency in Hume's *Treatise* account of morality.[23] According to this account, it would appear that taking the moral point of view is to take up the general point of view, and to take up the general point of view is to sympathize with an actor's narrow circle of companions, but such sympathy will vary depending on the sympathizer's position in space and time. The untrustworthiness of sympathy and the emotions it produces, to the critic of Hume, remains even after the account of the GPoV and the narrow circle is given.

As noted earlier, uncorrected sympathy is variable for two reasons. Sympathy can vary along with contiguity, and it can also vary along with resemblance between the sympathizer and the people they sympathize with. One reason why a Scot of Hume's times will have a hard time sympathizing with a virtuous character in China is because that person is *really far away*. Yet another reason why the would Scot have trouble sympathizing with a virtuous character in China is due to a lack of resemblance between the two. We sympathize more easily with those who live lives similar to our own, and who hold similar things to be important, and with those who express their emotions in similar ways. Therefore, the Scot may have trouble sympathizing with a virtuous character in China because that person may enjoy different particular goods, and may also express emotions in very different ways. Hume suggests in one place that our sense of sympathy will bring us pleasure upon the perusal of a well-ploughed field, because we associate the field with being the cause of pleasure for others (*T* 576; 3.1.1.7). A Scot of

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[23] See Taylor's "Hume and The Standard of Virtue", p. 53.

the eighteenth century who is given a clear, direct view of a well-kept slope of rice-paddies will probably have difficulty deriving pleasure from its perusal, because he has not yet made the connection between that sort of landscape in China and its being the cause of someone's pleasure. A lack of resemblance is a potential cause of failing to sympathize with others properly, as it makes it harder for for a sympathizer to "step into the shoes" of another. It is not, however, corrected with changes in physical space; failures to sympathize as a result of differences of resemblance are to be changed through education, and by learning about what sorts of different things matter to different people as contexts change. This sort of contextualism, I feel, is not adequately captured through the perceptual analogy, as sympathizing with the narrow circle . This is because sense-perceptual variations caused by changes in spatial contiguity are corrected in importantly different ways than the variations caused by a lack of resemblance.

Another way the analogy between moral judgment and sense-perceptual judgments comes apart becomes clear when we think about the relationship between descriptive concepts and how they guide action. Korsgaard takes note of the perceptual analogy's limits in terms of its action-guidingness. She worries that the normativity of judging colours does not work in the same way as the normativity of judging virtue and vice. She writes:

> All we need is to establish some convention about the point of view we will use for making these [colour] judgments; and the fact that sunlight enables us to make the most discriminations seems sufficient reason to favor it. But in this case, *all* that we are determining is how it is best to *talk*. [....] Yet in moral and aesthetic cases, more seems to be at stake, at least if the normative claims involved are to be taken seriously. Presumably we are determining the direction in which we should cultivate our tastes, who is entitled to our love and services, and what we ourselves ought to try to be like.[24]

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[24] Korsgaard "The General Point of View: Love and Moral Appraisal in Hume's Ethics" in *Hume Studies* Volume XXV, Number 1 and 2 (April/November, 1999)" p. 16. The emphases are Korsgaard's.

In comparison with colour perception, then, Korsgaard sees more at stake when we distinguish between virtue and vice. When we settle on a standard that picks out what is blue and what is not blue, the fact that we are able to pick out the same objects as blue will be enough to demonstrate that we really do share the concept. When we share the concept of virtue and vice, however, we must additionally share certain feelings about virtue and vice. Vice should give a person a certain kind of pain upon contemplation, we must try to cultivate virtues in ourselves, and so forth. If we do not have these sorts of affective responses to virtue and vice, then it would appear that we do not actually share the same standard for virtue and vice. In this sense, it seems that we are demanding more of our moral concepts than our descriptive concepts. A concept like "blue" can be used effectively just so long as we can share a sufficiently available and convenient concept. Moral concepts seem to demand more - that not only can we share them, but also they will also have the normative force of being, in some way, a convention that allows us to best guide our action, allowing us to live amongst one another peaceably.

I'll raise one final worry about the perceptual analogy. Objectivist objectors to Hume's theory raise the problem that the perceptual analogy does not provide us with enough avenues for explaining how moral disagreements can be resolved, because variation in sentimental disposition might cause different sentiments in similarly situated spectators. It might be that once Tim and Tom agree about the facts of the matter, Tim might approve even while Tom disapproves. The fact that they are differently disposed for sentimental responses causes the disagreement, rather than any fact. Suppose a person happens to hold a prejudice, where they simply prefer one ethnicity's pleasure over another's. Suppose, moreover, that this person is informed of all of the same facts as someone without any prejudices. This person's prejudices would not arise as a result of their knowledge; rather, the prejudice might be better explained in terms of that person's

taste. How are we to condemn this person's racism, supposing that this person holds such prejudices, even in spite of knowing the same facts as someone else? This question is supposed to make sentimentalists very uncomfortable. Objectivist moral theorists will say this is the problem at the heart of sentimentalism: if we ground sentiments in taste, we cannot say much about other people whose taste in morals we find abhorrent. I think sentimentalism does have avenues for answering this concern (which I will come to in the next chapter), but I do not think that appeals to the perceptual analogy, as a method of getting our facts right, will get us far enough in answering the objectivist's concern.

In spite of the helpful aspects of Hume's appeal to the perceptual analogy, it is important to also note the analogy's limits. I'll summarize the limits of the analogy here. 1) A sense-perceptual perspective is taken up to discover "real existences", but moral evaluations do not make judgments about matters of fact in Hume's programme. If we treat virtue and vice as properties inherent in objects that can be discovered through careful observation from the right point of view, then we are treating virtue and vice as matters of fact. As we have already seen, Hume does not think virtue and vice are matters of fact. This raises serious concerns about how far the perceptual analogy can be taken. Taken too far, the perceptual analogy makes us give up on sentimentalism, as it begins to look like Foot's claim that we can be shown moral facts, just as a voyage around the globe proves the earth is round. 2) While we can think our way into having moral impressions, we cannot think our way into having a sense-perception, and 3) Sense-perceptions taken alone do not guide our actions, whereas moral perceptions of virtue and vice promote certain actions and attitudes. 4) The variations in sympathy caused by differences in resemblance between ourselves and those we sympathize with cannot easily be explained with the perceptual analogy. No analogy will ever be perfect; so no matter how enlightening an analogy may be, it will break down when it comes to some

other aspects. As I have shown, there are several strong reasons to think that the perceptual analogy cannot be used to give a completely satisfactory reply to the objectivist complaints that I have introduced.

Another important analogy that Hume appeals to in a number of places is the one he makes between beauty and virtue. I will now turn to the analogy Hume draws between moral beauty and aesthetic beauty. It can do work to explain and justify Hume's moral theory in a way that the perceptual analogy cannot. Moreover, I will show that Hume's appeal to aesthetics captures the important elements of the perceptual analogy, but additionally, it also incorporates important social aspects and normative aspects that are beyond the perceptual analogy's scope.

Chapter 2: Hume's Theory of Good Taste

A. A Biographical Note on Hume's Aesthetics

Before explicating Hume's theory of taste, I think it will be helpful to make some brief remarks about how aesthetics were addressed in the course of Hume's career, in order to show the role Hume's theory of beauty plays in the context of his philosophical project.

In the Advertisement to the *Treatise*, Hume suggests that his study of human nature will begin with volumes on the understanding and the passions. "If I have the good fortune to meet with success," he wrote, "I shall proceed to the examination of Morals, Politics and Criticism." [25]In 1739, the first and second books were published, and the third book, "Of Morals" was published the next year. Hume, it seems, was disappointed with the *Treatise's* reception. In his short autobiography, Hume remarks that after its publication the *Treatise* "fell dead-born from the press." [26] The books on politics and criticism never saw publication.

These unpublished (and probably unwritten) books leave some gaps in Hume's ambitious account of human nature. Midway through the third book, stressing his observer-dependent account of virtue, Hume writes:

> the opinions of men, in this case, carry with them a peculiar authority, and are, in a great measure, infallible. The distinction of moral good and evil is founded on the pleasure or pain, which results from the view of any sentiment, or character; and as that pleasure or pain cannot be unknown to the person who feels it, it follows, that there is just so much vice or virtue in any character, as every one places in it, and that 'tis impossible in this particular we can ever be mistaken. (*T* 546-7; 3.2.8.8)

At the end of the above passage, Hume inserts a footnote, which reads:

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[25] The Advertisment can be found at the beginning of the Selby-Bigge and Nidditch edition of the *Treatise*.

[26] Footnote "My Own Life" in *Essays: Moral, Political and Literary,* Revised edition. (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1987), p. xxxiv

> This proposition must hold strictly true, with regard to every quality, that is determin'd merely by sentiment. **In what sense we can talk either of a right or a wrong taste in morals, eloquence, or beauty, shall be consider'd afterwards**. In the mean time, it may be observ'd, that there is such an uniformity in the general sentiments of mankind, as to render such questions of but small importance. (ibid., my emphasis in bold)

Here, we can see that Hume sets aside the question of how we can speak of "a right or wrong taste in morals, eloquence, or beauty." This question, which likely would have been answered in Hume's book on criticism, is an important one for answering the objectivist's complaint. Abhorrent preferences, such as those for murder or racism, will fall outside "the general sentiments of mankind," but Hume does not fully explain away these sorts of worries in his third book of the *Treatise*. While the last part of the third book gives a rough account of the difference between a right and wrong moral taste, the matter is not addressed directly.

While we do not have an answer to the question of how to distinguish a right taste from a wrong taste in the *Treatise*, Hume eventually developed an answer to this question in his essay "Of The Standard of Taste," [27] which was originally published in 1757.[28] "Of The Standard" likely contains much of the content of Hume's book on criticism which was never published, the book which would have given Hume's explanation of how we can distinguish good and bad tastes. While Book Three gives some hints of how to distinguish a good moral taste from a bad moral taste, "Of The Standard of Taste" gives a clearer account of Hume's theory of taste, answering questions that were left unanswered in the *Treatise*. Importantly, and unlike Hume's *Treatise*

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[27] The version of "Of The Standard of Taste" that I refer to is in *Essays: Moral, Political and Literary* (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1987) Revised edition, p. 226-249. When citing the essay in my text, I will follow "OST" with the page number.

[28] For an interesting discussion on the circumstances of the essay's publication, see Ernest Campbell Mossner, *The Life of David Hume* (Edinburgh: Nelson, 1954), p 325.

account, "Of The Standard" addresses the issue of how we can establish standards of sentiments amidst a variety of apparently conflicting opinions.

B. Moral and Aesthetic Evaluation

In many places in throughout Hume's writing, he treats the virtues as very similar to aesthetic beauty. In the *Treatise*, Hume writes:

> To have the sense of virtue, is nothing but to feel a satisfaction of a particular kind from the contemplation of a character. The very feeling constitutes our praise or admiration. We go no farther; nor do we enquire into the cause of the satisfaction. [...] The case is the same as in our judgments concerning all kinds of beauty, and tastes, and sensations. Our approbation is imply'd in the immediate pleasure they convey to us. (*T* 471; 3.1.2.3)

In this passage, as well as several others, it sometimes appears that Hume is saying more than that virtue is merely *like* beauty: he seems to imply that virtue *is one type* of beauty, that is, moral beauty.[29] Much in the way that when a character trait is pleasing it is therefore a virtue, when a quality of an artwork is pleasing, it is therefore a beautiful quality. Comparisons of this sort are made frequently throughout Hume's canon.[30]

In addition to the fact that Hume treats our sentiments of beauty as perceptions that derive from the same type of impressions as our sentiments of approbation, he also recognizes that we correct moral sentiments and sentiments of beauty through similar procedures. In the second *Enquiry*, Hume writes:

> in many orders of beauty, particularly those of the finer arts, it is requisite to employ much reasoning, in order to feel the proper sentiment; and a false relish may frequently be corrected by argument and reflection. There are just grounds to conclude, that moral beauty partakes much of this latter species,

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[29] Hume uses the phrase "moral beauty" at five places in the *Treatise*: T 300, 2.1.8.3; T 465, 3.1.1.21; T 479, 3.2.1.8; T 484, 3.2.2.1; T 528, 3.2.6.4. The second *Enquiry* mentions "moral beauty" in two places: EPM 173 and EPM 291.

[30] Timothy Costelloe compiles several more of Hume's comparisons analogies in "Aesthetic Beauty and Moral Beauty", a chapter in Costelloe's *Aesthetics and Morals in the Philosophy of David Hume* (New York: Routledge, 2007).

> and demands the assistance of our intellectual faculties, in order to give it a suitable influence on the human mind. (*EPM* 173)

My task for this chapter will be to explore Hume's theory of how we correct aesthetic sentiments, in order to show how his model of judging aesthetic beauty might inform our understanding of how Hume can reply to objectivist critiques, in developing an account of a stable moral system, as an explanation that is more informative and helpful than the perceptual analogy. Hume, in both the *Treatise* and also the second *Enquiry*, explicitly claims that good moral judgment depends on the interplay of sentiment and reasoning in the same way that good aesthetic judgment depends on both sentiment and reason (see *T* 590; 3.3.1.27 and also *EPM* 173, which I quote above). I will demonstrate how the intermixture of reasoning and sentiment can play its role in Hume's theory of evaluative judgment, in how such reflection can establish a standard of taste, even in the context of differing opinions.

C. The Good Aesthetic Judge

As I have already shown, reason has some role to play in Hume's sentimentalist account of making evaluative judgments. The task of this section will be to show how and why reasoning and reflection are able to correct our judgments of beauty. With this idea that good aesthetic judgment is similar to good moral judgment insofar as they both use sentiment and reason as resources, we can look to Hume's essay "Of The Standard of Taste" for Hume's account of good aesthetic judgment and good aesthetic judges. Broadly speaking, "Of The Standard of Taste" aims to answer the question of how it could possibly be that, amidst a variety of opinions, some evaluative judgments are better than others. One of the difficulties Hume encounters in his account of aesthetic judgment arises from the great variety of opinions about what counts as good art. "The great variety

of taste, as well as of opinion" Hume writes, "is too obvious not to have fallen under every one's observation." (OST 226) It would seem that no artworks are universally loved in the way we love benevolence, and no artworks are universally despised in the way we hate malice.

How, then, are we to give an account of beauty given such a wide variety of opinion? Hume identifies two possible approaches for navigating and dealing with such a massive variety of feelings about artworks. The first view tells us that because a passion cannot be true or false, sentiments that we feel about art are not accountable to evaluation or correction. Hume explains the view as follows:

> a species of philosophy, which cuts off all hopes of success in such an attempt, and represents the impossibility of ever attaining any standard of taste. The difference, it is said, is very wide between judgment and sentiment. All sentiment is right; because sentiment has a reference to nothing beyond itself, and is always real, wherever a man is conscious of it. [...]. [A] thousand different sentiments, excited by the same object, are all right: Because no sentiment represents what is really in the object. [...] Beauty is no quality in things themselves: It exists merely in the mind which contemplates them; and each mind perceives a different beauty. One person may even perceive deformity, where another is sensible of beauty; and every individual ought to acquiesce in his own sentiment, without pretending to regulate those of others. To seek the real beauty, or real deformity, is as fruitless an enquiry, as to pretend to ascertain the real sweet or real bitter. (OST 229-30)

This passage strikingly mirrors some of the same concerns about Hume's claim that passions do not correspond to, or resemble any real existence and are therefore not truth-apt (see again, *T* 415; 2.3.3.5). Beauty is in the eye of the beholder, as the saying goes, and from this, some will conclude that the inherently subjective nature of beauty makes all judgments of taste and preference a matter of individual inclinations. From this, they claim that no art critic can be wrong, *whatever* they might think. We are making an enormous leap, however, when we move from observer-dependance to a full-blown relativism, and I highly doubt that anyone would buy into such a view. I suspect that this

sort of view is one that objectivists use to criticize sentimentalism. If value is subjective, they say, then anything goes. And if you *don't* believe that anything goes, objectivists charge, then you don't really believe that value is grounded in sentiment.

Importantly, Hume does not accept the view that every judgement is a qualified judgement simply because beauty is an observer-dependent quality. Sometimes, Hume thinks, a judge is simply mistaken in his or her aesthetic evaluations. Of such a view, he writes:

> there is certainly a species of common sense which opposes it, at least serves to modify and restrain it. Whoever would assert an equality of genius and elegance between OGILBY and MILTON, or BUNYAN and ADDISON, would be thought to defend no less an extravagance, than if he had maintained a mole-hill to be as high as TENERIFFE, or a pond as extensive as the ocean. Though there may be found persons, who give the preference to the former authors; no one pays attention to such a taste; and we pronounce without scruple the sentiment of these pretended critics to be absurd and ridiculous. (OST 230-1)

Hume, as we can see, rejects an "anything goes" approach to the wide variety of tastes we encounter; instead, some tastes are simply more worthy of our respect. Hume recognizes that although we judge the goodness of artworks in terms of the sentiments that they produce, only bad judges will assert that awful art is equivalent to other works of genius. Hume emphasizes his point by saying that some pronouncements of beauty can be just as ridiculous as some judgments of size, reviving the perceptual analogy: just as obviously that Milton is better than Ogilby, we can see that mountains and the ocean are larger than mole-hills and ponds. Much as we can apply standards of size, which can help us to make obvious distinctions, we can also apply standards of beauty, which are also clearly at play when we make obvious distinctions. Although Hume revives the perceptual analogy by comparing sense-perception and aesthetic perception, I will go on to show how Hume's aesthetic theory can inform our understanding of morality in ways that the perceptual analogy cannot.

Amongst a variety of opinions and sentiments, which ones are we to trust, and which are we to disregard? Hume, rejecting the idea that every opinion will be right, recognizes that there must be some standard of taste being appealed to when we deem one judge's opinion to be more worthy than another's. What is the criteria that distinguishes a good judge from the others? Hume identifies a handful of traits: strong sense (233-4), delicacy of taste (234-7), practice in making judgments and comparisons (237-8), freedom from prejudice (239-40), and good sense (which is otherwise characterized as "sound understanding"). (240-1)

The question might be asked: why am I to trust the opinion of some judge about some artwork? By listing the factors that make judges good judges, we can also see that a critic may lack credibility because they fail to meet certain minimal qualifications. Moreover, we can clearly understand that some reasons why a person fails to perceive something as beautiful will be understood as a defect of the observer, and not of the artwork. If strong sense fails, then we might say that the judge did not sense a quality that might make the difference in our judgment. For example, Hume tells us, we do not trust a man with a fever about the taste of wine and we do not trust a man suffering from jaundice when he tries to give verdicts about the true colour of objects. A person can fail if they lack delicacy of taste; if the judge does not perceive the finest of details which would make a difference in the judgment, then the judgment is disqualified for a lack of discernment.[31] As Hume tells us, Sancho's kinsmen in *Don Quixote* are to be trusted in their judgment of the wine, as only they were able to taste hints of leather and iron in the wine, caused by a key with a leathern thong that had been dropped at the bottom of the

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[31] Delicacy, in Hume's sense of the term, has two important features. Part of delicacy is about discernment; that of being able to identify small details. The other mark of delicacy is the intensity of the sentiments produced: as compared to the lay-person, those with delicate taste will get more pleasure from truly good works, and will get more discomfort from bad works.

hogshead. A judge can fail due to lack of practice or comparison; otherwise, the judge may fail to focus their attention on the artwork correctly, and without practice, may deem a mere mediocre work to be at the same level of quality as a work of genius. A judge may fail due to his or her prejudices: if we understand prejudices as pre-judging, this makes sense: when we dismiss works created by enemies, or works from other places and eras, we do not give them due attention. Likewise, if we give our friends unearned praise, we again fail because our judgments about the works do not track what actually makes the artwork worthy of praise or blame. A good critic must "place himself in the same situation as the audience, in order to form a true judgment of the oration," Hume writes (OST 239). A prejudiced critic, on the other hand, "rashly condemns what seemed admirable in the eyes of those for whom alone the discourse was calculated." (ibid.) Finally, Hume tells us that *good sense* (or sound understanding) will make a difference in whether the art critic's judgment is to count. He writes:

> Every work of art has a certain end or purpose, for which it is calculated; and it is to be deemed more or less perfect, as it is more or less fitted to attain this end.[...] [i]t seldom, or never happens, that a man of sense, who has experience in any art, cannot judge of its beauty; and it is no less rare to meet with a man who has a just taste without a sound understanding. (OST 240-1)

Good understanding is crucially important for judges because it helps the judge to understand the artwork's intended effects, in order to evaluate how well the artwork expresses such an idea. Here, Hume points out that not only will a good critic get a good look at an artwork, the good critic will also understand the artwork, getting a clear sense of its meaning and how it affects its target audience.

Noting all of the marks of a good judge, Hume shows us how we can identify a true judge with good taste while also giving us an explanation of how some other judge might fail to give a credible judgment. If a judge does not meet the standards of criticism, then judgments based on that judge's taste need not be taken seriously; conversely, if a

judge is taken seriously, that judge needs to have conformed his or her character to the model of the true judge. After Hume explains the various ways of how judges fail to appreciate artworks, he sums up the first section of "Of The Standard" as follows:

> a true judge in the finer arts is observed, even during the most polished ages, to be so rare a character: Strong sense, united to a delicate sentiment, improved by practice, perfected by comparison, and cleared of all prejudice, can alone entitle critics to this valuable character; and the joint verdict of such, wherever they are to be found, is the true standard of taste and beauty. (OST 241).

As such, beauty is to be identified by a qualified judge, whose character is best suited to judging of the artworks properly, and a group of such judges will set the standard for how to appreciate artworks. If we say that a judge is better qualified to judge of beauty, as opposed to some other less qualified judge, it is because the false critic suffers from one of the defects explained above. Hume then tells us that a "joint verdict" of true judges will help us to see that their consensus comes about as a result of the one standard that all of the judges share. As such, the joint praise of judges following the same standard explains why those works of art are truly great.

D. Evaluation as a Speech Act

I want to emphasize how Hume characterizes good judgment as guided by norms of assertion. When we call an artwork beautiful, we imply that any careful and well-situated judge will also be able to come to appreciate the same artwork. In making such judgments, norms of assertion guide judges in how they should act on their *sentiments* of praise or blame by performing *acts* of praising and blaming. "Of The Standard of Taste," I think, helps us understand this distinction better, and moreover, gives us evidence that this distinction is helpful for our explanation of Hume's approach to evaluative judgments. Throughout the essay, there are numerous passages that strongly suggest that a good

judge checks his or her own sentiment against the sort of assertions he or she is qualified to make in the company of others. Consider how Hume treats praise and blame as sorts of speech acts, a practice that a good judge engages in conscientiously (my emphases in bold):

> the highest arrogance and self-conceit is at last startled, on observing an equal assurance on all sides, and scruples, amidst such a contest of sentiment, to **pronounce positively** in its own favour. (OST 227)
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> If the work be addressed to persons of a different age or nation, [a prejudiced judge] **makes no allowance** for their peculiar views and prejudices; but, full of the manners of his own age and country, **rashly condemns** what seemed admirable in the eyes of those for whom alone the discourse was calculated. (OST 239)
>
> yet few are **qualified to give judgment** on any work of art, or **establish their own sentiment** as the standard of beauty. (OST 241)
>
> It is plainly an error in a critic, to **confine his approbation** to one species or style of writing, and **condemn** all the rest, (OST 244)

To pronounce, to make allowances, to rashly condemn, to establish a sentiment as a standard, to qualifiedly discern, and to confine one's approbation, in my view, are *activities* that a judge participates in. And just as artworks and stage performances are subject to criticism, criticism itself as an activity can itself be subject to evaluation according to normative standards. Hume's approach to solving aesthetic disagreements is very much a matter of evaluating the judges that produce the judgments, as this is how we identify a good judgment, among a variety of conflicting opinions. Does the judge view the work carefully, with non-defective sense organs? Does the judge approach the work non-prejudicially? Is the judge careful to withhold judgment on those works which are beyond the purview of his own expertise? Does the judge take care to point out the relevant qualities of the artwork to other audience members? Questions of these sorts can allow us to find out which judges are to be trusted. The joint verdict of true judges will

converge on the standard of taste, because all sources of error and idiosyncrasy have been removed.

Although passions and sentiments cannot be strictly true or false, understanding praise and blame as speech acts points to how such activities can be rightly considered either reasonable or unreasonable. Here, we return to the worry that a sentiment cannot be considered "reasonable" because a passion can never be true or false, given that passions are not representational impressions. While Hume indeed claims that a passion can never follow reason when considered only in terms of itself, he does allow for some instances in our talk where a passion's reasonability can be assessed. He makes a caveat in the next paragraph after he claims that passions originate in the mind, saying, "passions can be contrary to reason only so far as they are *accompany'd* with some judgment or opinion" (*T* 416). Hume sees two ways in which a judgment accompanying a passion, sentiment, or emotion could be unreasonable: 1) the object of the passion does not exist, or does not correspond to reality, and 2) when passions are accompanied with faulty judgments about how to pursue the passion. For instance, we can say that a child's fear of a monster under his or her bed is unreasonable because the child's belief that a monster exists is *false*. An example of the latter sort is that when Sally is hungry for Greek food, it is unreasonable for her to get off of the trolleycar in Chinatown, given that such an act would be a bad way for her to pursue Greek food. This model for correcting the judgments that accompany passions, I think, can provide us with the building blocks for a plausible explanation of how sentiments and the evaluative judgments that we issue are to be corrected in Hume's theory of evaluative judgment.

The important insight which I see Hume providing us with in this model is that passions are always felt in the midst of our making judgments, and thus, sentiments are liable to correction by judgment both *before* and *after* those sentiments are felt. Judgment

and impressions, in this model, constantly intermingle in the midst of one another. Judgments that occur both before and after a passion will have a bearing on whether the passion, overall, is to be considered reasonable. The method of correcting judgment before we feel a passion is simple: this treats judgments as "inputs" for our mechanism of sympathy, and a sentiment of disapprobation is cranked out of the mechanism (think of how earlier, Wallace characterized sentiments of approbation and disapprobation as affective states which perceptions can "arouse" or "evoke"). Similarly, in the aesthetic case, taking up the right stance towards the object will allow a judge to respond to a work using delicate taste, as in the case of Sancho's kinsmen, tasting the using wine careful attention. This gets us as far as the perceptual analogy got us, as the standard for the reasonability of sentiments is ultimately determined by having true judgments about the objects of our passions.

The problem, that even once we correct our "inputs" we might still have different sentiments, has yet to be addressed. I want to argue that the second way passions might be called reasonable - correctly pursuing passions by choosing reasonable means - plays an important role in Hume's model of correcting sentiments. Here is Hume's claim about the second way a sentiment can be called unreasonable: "[w]hen in exerting any passion in action, we choose means insufficient for the design'd end, and deceive ourselves in our judgment of causes and effects." (*T* 416; 2.3.3.6) Hume does not provide any examples of what sort of bad judgment might accompany a passion that has already set our ends, but the idea seems clear enough. We can easily think of someone who is unreasonable even when they are justifiably angry: rather than solving a problem, or taking steps to alleviate the grievance, they instead do things that exacerbate the problem. In this regard, we say the person was unreasonably angry in terms of how they used practical reasoning to pursue the ends set that passion. In this model, "reasonable" judges are the ones who

choose the means to their ends wisely. What does this model tell us about Hume's idea of correcting aesthetic sentiments? If the structure involves first feeling a passion which gives us our "design'd end", and then reflecting about how to pursue that end, there is evidence that Hume has an idea like this underlying his theory of good evaluative judgment.

We have also seen that Hume's theory of proper aesthetic judgment cannot be wholly focused on a judge's flawless sense-perceptual skills. Indeed, if your friend does not appreciate a work of art in the same way as you, to say "look *harder*" would be useless advice. Instead, sensible conversation about shared standards and the artist's intent (along with the preferences of the intended audience), will quite often facilitate discussions about the praise and blame that the artwork actually merits. So while the process begins with the judge carefully sense-perceiving, sentiments are liable to further correction when the judge reflects on how personal sentiments are best asserted as public speech-acts of praise or blame. These assertions are public insofar as they recommend, as well as make the judge's own feeling public to others.

Within this framework of a standard constituted through the consensus of conscientious judges, Hume sees much potential for further consensus in aesthetic judgment through dialogue between two critics. For example, in cases where two people disagree about whether a work of art is good, they are not necessarily left at an impasse. Given that aesthetic judgment is based on an appeal to a shared standard, many aesthetic disagreements can be resolved. Conversation about what meets the standard, along with explanations about why something meets the standard will facilitate consensus and can change an observer's mind. Imagine that Harry dislikes a movie that Sally thinks is excellent. In such a case, Hume suggests that:

> [w]e show him an avowed principle of art; when we illustrate this principle by examples, whose operation, from his own particular taste, he acknowledges to be comfortable to the principle; when we prove, that the same principle may be applied to the present case, where he did not perceive or feel its influence: He must conclude, that the fault lies in himself, and that he wants in delicacy which is requisite to make him sensible of every beauty and every blemish, in any composition or discourse. (OST 236)

Very clearly, Hume's schematic for encouraging aesthetic agreement is one that ensures that two interlocutors judge a work by the same consistent standards of praise and blame. Rather than trying to deny that Harry has good taste at all, we instead appeal to "examples [...] from his own particular taste", which encourage Harry to get a rough idea about what makes his favorite works of art worthy of praise. Once Harry uses a general rule to reflect on what qualities make a work of art good, he can then go back to the disputed case. Was his practice of judgment consistent with the principles of judgment that he claims to endorse? Did the judge's initial perusal of the work disregard a praise-meriting (or blame-meriting) quality? Did the judge disregard a defect that would blemish the work? Oftentimes when we reflect on our practices of judging in this way, we will realize our initial judgments were careless or idiosyncratic, giving us a reason to reconsider our judgments. Moreover, having a work's finer qualities delicately explained in detail will often have the effect of changing how we feel about the work of art in question, as we discover new, salient features of the work. However, it is not as if we judge things good or bad by checking whether or not they follow certain rules. It goes the other way around: we develop general rules by coming to understand why we liked some work of art in the past. In that sense, then, Hume's idea about the "rules" of criticism is that through experience, we can develop strategies for appreciating art. Such an approach can function as a guide for reflection about what we like, whether we have good reasons praise it.

A skilled critic's job will often be a matter of changing the interlocutor's mind through ostensive methods.[32] Ostension, roughly, is a method of teaching through the pointing out of examples. The critic might point out to her friend, "Lo, exquisite brushwork!", as they appreciate a painting.[33] This sort of methodology, in my own personal experience, does work. I have in some instances come to better appreciate an album of music, simply because someone else pointed out how well the drums were played. Works of poetry have improved, in my experience, after clever double-meanings and allusions which I had first missed were pointed out. In those cases, the true judges (my expert interlocutors) helped someone with less expertise (me) to look at artworks in different ways. When amateurs change their perspective, and take up the perspective of the critic, these other judges will come to better appreciate the work, and may also change their feelings. Ostensive methods, then, are about showing and telling others about good art. By imploring others to look at, and experience the art in the same way ("What interesting rhythms!", "Larkin very cleverly chose "Aubade" as the poem's title!"), the judge then guides an interlocutor to share similar feelings. Ostensive learning in art criticism helps a budding critic to apply the same standards to art, and the critic will become acquainted with the practice of judging well by experiencing good artwork as good artwork. It is worth highlighting again the point which I emphasized in the last chapter: taking up another's perspective is not always about changing one's physical standpoint. Taking another's perspective is often a matter of gathering the same facts, but

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[32] For an excellent contemporary discussion on the pragmatics of ostensive utterances see Rebecca Kukla and Mark Lance's *'Yo!' and 'Lo!': The Pragmatic Topography of Reasons* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2009). They write: "Notice that Lo-claims do more than just express recognition; they also *ostend*. That is to say, they call upon some others to attend to and recognize that which I am currently recognizing." p. 47

[33] They wouldn't actually say "Lo!", but to say "Wow, what exquisite brushwork!" pretty much amounts to the same thing.

additionally it is about responding to a state of affairs with the right attitude, responding in the right amount, and in the right way to those things that are salient. It may be the case that we do not realize someone is funny until we are within earshot of them, but the funniness of the jokes is not a matter of physical distance. Being the right distance from a funny person makes it possible for you to appreciate her jokes, though the funniness lies in the content of what that person says.[34] In like manner, our communication of aesthetic sentiments depends on sharing ways of thinking with other spectators. A good critic that properly ostends, picking out relevant qualities of artworks, invites others to think about artworks in a similar way.

My characterization of the good judge, as someone who guides other viewers through a work with ostensive practices, might smack of elitism or paternalism. How is it that the true judge gets to tell me *how to look at* an artwork?, some may ask. It seems, however, that Hume's aesthetic theory has an answer to the charge of elitism. In another light, it might be argued that Hume's approach for correction of sentiments through conversation and ostention is an *inclusive* theory. After all, one of the first steps in Hume's conversational method of correcting sentiments involves an establishment of common ground between the interlocutors; and this appeal to common ground shows how both judges must work with a shared standard. For example, if you and I disagree as to whether a recent movie was any good or not, we might turn our conversation to films that we both like. If we cannot agree for now whether *this* movie is any good, we may benefit

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[34] When introducing the GPoV, Hume also appeals to physical distance and its relation to beauty, writing,

> external beauty is determin'd merely by pleasure; and 'tis evident, a beautiful countenance cannot give so much pleasure, when seen at a distance of twenty paces, as when it is brought nearer us. We say not, however, that it appears to be less beautiful: Because we know what effect it will have in such a position, and by reflection we correct its momentary appearance. (*T* 582)

While a proper distance allows to see *that* something is beautiful, the distance itself does not constitute what *makes* the thing beautiful.

by turning our discussion to why we both enjoy films such as *Citizen Kane* or *Psycho*. While such a turn in the conversation may at first seem to be a digression, many such cases help us to understand whether our praise or blame is merited, through reflection on how aesthetic judgment works for all of us when it goes right. As a method of solving disagreement, Hume's suggests that any person has the potential to be an expert critic, if they correctly cultivate their natural sense of taste.[35] Moreover, good critics will not only be able to experience good art as good: true judges will also be accountable to explain to others why they enjoy the artworks they enjoy. In this sense, Hume's approach can be seen as egalitarian.

While Hume does believe that aesthetic disagreements can be resolved by appeal to a standard of taste, he stops short of claiming that the standards of taste provide universal or absolute guides of what to like and dislike. While a preference for the poetry of Ogilby over all others would be ridiculous, Hume tells us that in some cases we may reach an "innocent disagreement" about which artworks we prefer. He writes:

> But notwithstanding all our endeavours to fix a standard of taste [...] where there is such a diversity in the internal frame or external situation as is entirely blameless on both sides, and leaves no room to give one the preference above the other; in that case a certain degree of diversity in judgment is unavoidable, and we seek in vain for a standard, by which we can reconcile the contrary sentiments.
>
> A young man, whose passions are warm, will be more sensibly touched with amorous and tender images, than a man more advanced in years, who takes pleasure in wise, philosophical reflections concerning the conduct of life and moderation of the passions. At twenty, OVID may be the favourite author; HORACE at forty; and perhaps TACITUS at fifty. Vainly would we, in such cases, endeavour to enter into the sentiments of others, and divest ourselves of those propensities, which are natural to us. We choose our favourite author as we do our friend, from a conformity of humour and disposition. Mirth or passion, sentiment or reflection; whichever

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[35] We might have natural dispositions of taste, in the sense that we might be naturally inclined to get pleasure from sweet foods, or from certain hearing a musical intervals like octaves and perfect fifths. Learning to appreciate certain foods and certain music, however, requires judges to further cultivate their basic dispositions, in order to fully appreciate more complex works.

> of these most predominates in our temper, it gives us a peculiar sympathy with the writer who resembles us. (OST 244)

Where different artworks are meant to evoke different sorts of sentiments, they cannot be evaluated according to the same set of criteria. Arguments about what type of artistic sentiments are to be preferred, Hume thinks, cannot be adjudicated, and differences in personal inclinations "can never reasonably be the object of dispute, because there is no standard, by which they can be decided." (OST 244) And though Hume admits that it might be a vain and pointless exercise to convince someone else to change their current preferences in favour of some different genre, Hume still tells us that "[i]t is plainly an error in a critic, to confine his approbation to one species of writing, and condemn all the rest." (244) Within such a framework, then, a good critic will be especially sensitive to those artworks that are within his or her preferred genre; however, the good critics will be undogmatic and will thus not condemn each and every work that falls outside their own preferred style. A young critic, no matter how enthralled they are with the poetry of Ovid, must still grant that Tacitus and Horace might be preferable to other audiences with different sensibilities. While the true judge will take his or her own feelings as a good rough guide of whether or not an artwork is truly good, the importance of checking one's own feelings against the opinions of others plays a crucial role in making the standard of taste less idiosyncratic than the taste of any particular judge.

An undogmatic approach will prepare a judge to make good judgments about artworks. The cautious critic of the arts will realize that a) one's own perspective and feelings will not always track an artwork's goodness and that b) a reasonable judge will avoid passing judgment on artworks that the judge herself does not fully understand. Judges will develop an undogmatic approach when they reflect upon their own personal likes and dislikes through other times: what we initially disregard can later give us a great

deal of pleasure. When we are underwhelmed by an artwork, we realize that it might give a judge a great deal of pleasure when viewed in different ways. As such, we realize that our own situated perspective does not constitute the whole perspective; and we also realize that we should avoid quarelling with those who hold differing opinions, especially when we are viewing artwork that falls outside the bounds of our own expertise.

Here, I want to pull together the threads in my discussion of Hume's aesthetics. We come to trust the "true critics" of the arts because they embody the standard of taste by praising and blaming artworks with care and understanding. Assertions of praise and blame, as speech acts, can be evaluated in terms of how reasonably they pursue the goals of art criticism. What are the goals of art critics? Appreciating the arts in a non-dogmatic spirit among other conscientious critics, in my view, is the point of art criticism. Sympathy will reinforce a critic's sentiments when they are echoed in the sentiments of others, and when the community's sentiments do not agree with the critic, the project of art criticism functions to allow the critic to reflect further on such a difference of opinion. Good criticism is essentially connected to sharing one's own sentiments with others, while at the same time being receptive to the sentiments of the community's other critics.

E. The Standard of Moral Taste

In the last section, I characterized the good aesthetic judge as the sort of person who demonstrates diffidence towards their own sentiments, displaying a sort of epistemic modesty in their acts of judgment. The good judge demonstrates openmindedness by withholding judgment (that is, withholding to making actual assertions of praise or blame) on topics that he or she knows very little about. This was the point of the passage on Ovid, Horace, and Tacitus: our differences in taste do not merit an outright dismissal of those other works. Good judges will use their feelings as a rough guide of how they

appreciate the work, but once they get into the business of recommending, blaming, and praising, these judges will show restraint. This sort of restraint is especially important in those cases where the judge is considering a work that falls outside their own field of expertise - when a wise judge considers a work in a new medium, a different genre, or from another time period, he or she will not judge these unfamiliar works hastily. Similarly, a wise moral judge will also show restraint in judgment when contemplating the character of a person in a very different cultural context. Good criticism, as in the arts, requires reasonable judges to defer judgment in cases of disagreement with other sensible judges, especially in those cases where the judge's interlocutor is better informed about a work's cultural context.

Using such diffidence, Hume's judge is able to use reflection to understand the difference between personal sentiments and genuinely moral sentiments. What does this model of the diffident, reflective judge tell us about Hume's idea of correcting sentiments in ethics? My reading, as I showed before, treats praising and blaming as *activities*. Praise and blame, then, are to be held as distinct from *sentiments of* praise and blame. Hume relies on a distinction between the feelings we have, and the praising and blaming that we actually do. He writes:

> The intercourse of sentiments, therefore, in society and conversation, makes us form an inalterable standard, by which we may approve or disapprove of characters and manners. And tho' the *heart* does not always take part with those general notions, or regulate its love or hatred by them, yet they are sufficient for discourse, and serve all our purposes in company, in the pulpit, on the theater, and in the schools. (*T* 603; 3.3.3.2, Hume's emphasis)

This model has judges participating in the discourse of sentiments in a manner where passions (felt in "the heart") are further corrected before assertions are made in the company of other members of society. Consider the perceptual model of sentimental correction, whereby the judge simply gets all of her facts right, uses them as inputs to the

mechanism of sympathy, and then takes those resultant passions to be the moral judgments themselves. I take it that such a view cannot be Hume's, given that it is not consistent with the above passage. Passions and sentiments are liable to further correction *after* they are felt, given that different ways of praising and blaming can be more and less reasonable ways to "serve our purposes in company, in the pulpit, on the theater, and in the schools." Here, we can see that Hume thinks of praising and blaming as activities liable to reflection and improvement.

What role does reflection play when we make assertions of moral praise and blame? Just as Hume noted that passions can be reasonable insofar as we choose the correct means for pursuing ends set by our passions (*T* 416), he also notes in the passage on the pulpit, theater and school that we are able to correct against our own personal feelings by reflecting on how standards are exemplified in a community of judges. The standards for praising and blaming are constituted socially, and they are maintained by their repeated use in a functioning society. We value these social conventions because we see how they function to help us and the rest of humanity. Most importantly, praise and blame are activities that shape social standards, and which encourage virtue while discouraging vice. Moral approbation and disapprobation set ends, where we understand virtues as character traits that ought to be encouraged or discouraged because of the way that they function in society. Virtue and vice along with their accompanying acts of praise and blame, Hume thinks, have social meanings which can only be understood through reflection about the ends that we share with fellow members of our communities. Very much in the way that there is a difference between seeing an artwork and understanding it, there is a difference between observing a person's actions and understanding that person's character traits as virtues. Such understanding, I believe, can only be reached

when moral judges are able to understand how our acts of praising and blaming serve their social functions.

Previously, I noted that the narrow circle is a difficult concept in Hume's ethics. Because sympathy with members of an actor's narrow circle seems to be variable in the same way as other types of sympathy, it seems at first that Hume's strategy does not adequately address how sympathizing is corrected by enlivening thoughts about an act's effects on an agent's narrow circle. We can better understand the function of Hume's appeal to the narrow circle when we consider the role of the unprejudiced art appreciator. Judging without prejudice allows judges to take up the standpoint of the artwork's intended audience. The moral case is similar - being unprejudiced is to readily employ ways of thinking that allow us to sympathize with those who benefit from a person's virtues, and who are harmed by a person's vices. As with the aesthetic judge, a good moral judge will also have a grasp of his or her cognitive limitations. Just as good judges of the arts know that they may not be able to recognize the goodness of an artwork from another culture, good moral judges will recognize the limitations of sympathizing with other people in different times and places. A distant character may only excite very mild sentiments of approval from a judge, yet a good judge will defer judgment to other people whose sentiments are better attuned to a certain type of virtuous character, though in some other cases, judges may even feel a moral sentiment by enlivening thoughts about the effects of a virtuous, though distant character.

Earlier, I emphasized the idea that the end to which an artwork is fitted is a publicly accessible end. Much in the same way that an artwork has an intended audience, a virtue has its intended beneficiaries. A virtue's audience will often appreciate a virtue for its utility; but Hume thinks that virtues can become virtues for being either useful or

agreeable, so some virtuous traits are not to be accounted for in terms of their utility. Hume writes:

> 'Tis remarkable, that nothing touches a man of humanity more than any instance of extraordinary delicacy in love or friendship, where a person is attentive to the smallest concerns of his friend, and is willing to sacrifice to them the most considerable interest of his own. Such delicacies have little influence on society; because they make us regard the greatest trifles: But they are the more engaging, the more minute the concern is, and are a proof of the highest merit in any one, who is capable of them. (*T* 604-5; 3.3.3.5)

While the virtues of friendship may not be particularly useful, Hume recognizes that they count as virtues because of the pleasure they excite. In such an interpretation of virtue, Hume's understanding of the ends of virtue is pluralistic and contextually sensitive. Wit, courage, benevolence, determination, and fidelity are all virtues according to Hume, but each virtue will be fitted to solving different problems. The scope, or reach, of each virtue varies and will be determined by how it functions in society, and how it benefits particular people. Those who benefit from my trustworthiness may not be the same people who benefit from my wit. The virtues, in this light, derive their value from how they can be appreciated, and such capacities for being valuable will be of many sorts, and such valuability will vary from context to context. In "A Dialogue,"[36] Hume clearly has in mind the way that the value of certain virtues will change according to the varying ends held by different societies. He writes,

> during a period of war and disorder, the military virtues should be more celebrated than the pacific, and attract more the admiration and attention of mankind. [...] So different is even the same virtue of courage among warlike or peaceful nations! And indeed, we may observe, that, as the difference between war and peace is the greatest that arises among nations and public societies, it produces also the greatest variations in moral sentiment, and diversifies the most our ideas of virtue and personal merit. (EPM 337)

Hume points out that the military virtues are more useful to a society that is actually fighting wars, and moral judges will not value such virtues correctly unless they are

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[36] "A Dialogue" is included in the Selby-Bigge and Nidditch edition of Hume's *Enquiries*.

cognizant of the trait's actual importance in its particular environment. By taking care to consider the "audience" of a virtue as Hume does here, we can see that our standards of sentiments are established through reflection about who is the virtue's beneficiary, and why these virtues matter to the beneficiaries.

An important goal of praise and blame in the moral sphere, as in the aesthetic, is to communicate sentiments to the community of judges who are also making evaluative judgments. And in those cases where we cannot share the very same sentiment with another judge, there is still the possibility that we will come to understand that person's sentiments. One of the most important parts of Hume's account of aesthetic evaluation is his account of innocent disagreement. We may disagree about whether Ovid is to be preferred over Horace, and these differences in opinion may simply be a matter of taste. We have already noted the importance of the non-dogmatic judge, who does not expect the sentiments of others to come into perfect accord with her own. Rather than saying "Ovid is wonderful, while Horace has no merit whatsoever," cautious and diffident judges will say "I prefer Ovid, but you prefer Horace." Innocent disagreements among such cautious judges are not such deep disagreements, as the judges are not saying that their poets of choice are *essentially* the best.[37] According to shared standards, no work can be considered absolutely preferable over and above all other artworks. Any given judge will have preferences that favour particular types of art, and even subgenres. One judge's preference for artwork A over artwork B does not necessarily make artwork A absolutely better; it may be that another judge could justifiably prefer B. This allows for a variety of opinions, though not such a great variety that a judge could justifiably defend poor

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[37] Jacqueline Taylor remarks that just as no artwork is essentially good, no moral virtue is to be considered essentially virtuous. In Taylor's interpretation, Hume's theory implies that the value of a virtue can be determined through a process of negotiation. See her "Hume on the Standard of Virtue" in *The Journal of Ethics* 6:1 (2002). p. 59

artwork, such as Ogilby's. This emphasis on shared standards in the arts gives us an important clue as to why Hume said that the standard of taste is to be set by the joint verdict of expert judges, rather than simply envisioning one perfect judge, an ideal observer. While taste can be idiosyncratic, standards will emerge through consensus over time.

Differences in our preferences for character traits may be acceptable, when we act on our sentiments reasonably. Notably, Hume tells us that we pick artworks in much the same way that we pick our friends: "from a conformity of humour and disposition." (OST 244) What is it that makes an aesthetic disagreement innocent? Importantly, when I innocently disagree with you, I entitle you to your different preferences by recognizing that a difference in disposition and circumstance will make a real difference (and a justifiable difference) in how we evaluate things. Likewise in the moral case, I can recognize that differences in circumstances and temperament may make a difference in what virtues we will hold dearest. The GPoV, though it will exclude some traits from the list of virtues, it will not provide a formula for ranking virtues. Multiple commentators have pointed out that the GPoV will generate *rough* agreement about whether a trait is virtuous, but it will not generate any definite evidence about the *extent* to which a trait is virtuous.[38] The ordinal ranking of virtues will be a matter of context, social negotiation, and to a lesser degree, personal inclinations. Once I admit that my particular ways of caring about virtue are not absolutely universalisable, I will not try to enforce my particular preferences on others. And so long as they are not trying enforce

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[38] See Sayre-McCord "On Why Hume's 'General Point of View' Isn't Ideal – and Shouldn't Be" in *Social Philosophy and Policy* (11:1 Winter 1994) p. 226, and Abramson's "Correcting *Our* Sentiments About Hume's Moral Point of View" in *The Southern Journal of Philosophy* XXXVII (1999) p. 342.

their contingent preferences and values on me, we may disagree in some way, though those disagreements will be of the innocent variety.

After reflecting with others about our standards and after working to share one another's perspectives, we can come to share many of the same sentiments. In the second *Enquiry*, Hume foreshadowed his claim in "Of The Standard" when he wrote:

> When I was twenty, says a French poet, Ovid was my favourite: Now I am forty, I declare for Horace. We enter, to be sure, more readily into sentiments, which resemble those we feel every day: But no passion, when well represented, can be entirely indifferent to us; because there is none, of which every man has not, within him, at least the seeds and first principles. (*EPM* 222)

Here, Hume shows that superficial disagreements about preferences need not be irreconcilable disagreements. Indeed, individual differences in favourite poets will be determined largely by the circumstances and sentiments that pervade an individual's daily life. However, Hume also says that a person will have basic capacities to feel sentiments about very many different things, and with some effort, will be able to understand the differing preferences of others. These are the "seeds" and "first principles" of preferring Ovid or Horace, though of course, it is not as if any person will have an fully-formed inborn love for Ovid or Tacitus. Our aesthetic taste, much like our sense of humanity, is something that a person will cultivate over time, in conversation with others. As I hinted earlier, we might have some inborn aesthetic tastes, but such taste will be very crude, and a true critic will go through a great deal of practice and reflection to attain the status of being a true critic. We might say that almost all people possess a minimal set of innate moral sentiments, perhaps something like revulsion at cruelty, or strong benevolent feelings towards our close kin. Such innate inclinations will be further cultivated by the mechanism of sympathy, habit, and moral discourse within communities of other valuing agents. When inborn taste is socialized, we can actually develop a substantiative set of

moral standards. Murder, racism, or cruelty towards children, under such a model, will not be at all hard to condemn. And whether or not a dislike of murder is innate or socialized is not really that important of a matter, given that for Hume's view, disapproval of murder is basically inevitable. While its *possible* that an entire society could be mistaken about the standards of virtue, Hume sees the combination of the principles of human nature along with social negotiation of standards as a very strong way of preventing bad standards from prevailing, or from persisting for any extended period of time. In this regard, a stable moral system is not simply a coherent system: it is a system of standards that we can actually live with and endorse for ourselves.

Shared standards will do much of the important work in leading us to a plausible explanation in explaining when moral disagreements will be non-innocent. If I cannot share a standard with another judge, even after adopting the same perspective, then it would seem that there is something wrong with the other judge. Unwarranted prejudices such as racism can be ruled out upon reflection, as prejudices fail to apply a standard that is commonly shareable amongst conscientious interlocutors. Prejudices fail the test of reflective endorsement, because there is something *inhumane* about reflectively endorsing malice, and antithetical to the goal of living peaceably with others.

This account of non-innocent moral disagreement does not appeal to some special observer-independent fact about those things that we blame. Rather, it construes vice in terms of what such a character trait means to moral spectators, moral actors, and moral communities who share standards of virtue and vice. What truly matters will ultimately be determined by sentiments and desires; not simply *any one person's* desires, but rather by the shared sentiments and desires of a community. Strikingly for Hume's account, we can develop a substantiative set of moral claims, simply by reflecting and conversing on our passions and desires with others. This will take us a pretty long way in establishing an

extensive set of standards that we *cannot* innocently disagree about. By establishing standards through conversation in the community, moral sentiments, by their nature, cannot be merely personal feelings. Hume writes:

> moral sentiments are found of such influence in life; though springing from principles, which may appear, at first sight, somewhat small and delicate? But these principles, we must remark, are social and universal; they form, in a manner, the *party* of humankind against vice or disorder, its common enemy. And as the benevolent concern for others is diffused, in a greater or less degree, over all men, and is the same in all, it occurs more frequently in discourse, is cherished by society and conversation, and the blame and approbation, consequent on it, are thereby roused from that lethargy into which they are probably lulled, in solitary and uncultivated nature. (*EPM* 275)

By entering into what Hume calls "the party of humankind against vice and disorder", idiosyncratic personal preferences can be ruled out, especially those preferences that are harmful to others. Because society and conversation will converge on those things that matter, the sentiments of a community will be able to establish standards of blame and approbation that guide our lives in a non-arbitrary way. Moreover, we could not arrive at such standards if left to our "solitary and uncultivated nature." It is in this sense that I think the aesthetic analogy captures how we arrive at moral standards in a way that is very different from the practice of sense-perception. While sense-perception can be modeled on the solitary observer (and perhaps in a relatively uncultivated state), our moral evaluation is more accuraltely characterized as something like aesthetic evaluation. Getting it right takes practice and comparison, and the activity itself takes place in a community of judges that work together to establish standards of sentimental responses.

Chapter 3: Conclusions

I have considered two important analogies, which are sometimes appealed to as ways of explaining Hume's moral theory against objectivist critiques. The perceptual analogy, in my view, can explain how moral evaluation involves more than simply having feelings; we reflect on our impressions and correct them against what we take to be idealized (but accessible) viewpoints. The aesthetic analogy does even more than this: it shows that not only do we have to reflect what a correct perspective is, but that we must also reflect on our impressions in a community of other people who are also capable of making evaluative judgments. The aesthetic analogy shows how perceptual skills are important, yet it also shows that reflection with others about community standards is an essential element of establishing a stable system of evaluative standards. Because the ends of character traits lie in a narrow circle of companions (or art appreciators), only by engaging our communities of evaluating spectators can we actually establish our standards for valuing character traits and artworks.

"Of The Standard of Taste" proves to be a useful tool in developing a defense of Hume's sentimentalist theory. Hume's *Treatise* account of moral standards does not directly answer the question of how we are to adjudicate between differences in taste, especially between persons, who though given the same information, respond with wildly different sentiments. Indeed, Hume's *Treatise* works out the idea that moral facts are not real existences, which could be discovered empirically. Hume shows that passions are peculiar perceptions, insofar as they do not represent or copy anything in the external world of real existences. In "Of The Standard," Hume explains how we arrive at a standard of taste by giving a model of a good judge, showing us how aesthetic criticism functions in the process. While Hume's *Treatise* claim that moral discourse will "serve all our purposes in company, in the pulpit, on the theatre, and in the schools," (*T* 603,

3.3.3.2) makes a start toward the idea that evaluative standards have functions or ends in our communities, the full implications of Hume's insight are made more clear in his later work. Stable systems of evaluative standards, as systems that function well, are not simply internally coherent systems: stable moral systems for Hume are systems of morality that we can actually endorse, and live with. My project has seen "Of The Standard of Taste" as an elaboration on the *Treatise* account of evaluative judgment and shared standards. By looking to Hume's aesthetics, we richen Hume's theory of value, giving followers of Hume more ways to explain Hume's theory against objectivist critiques.

Consider the complaint I introduced at the beginning of this project: sentiments cannot be trusted as a basis for a stable account of morality. Sentiments were characterized as idiosyncratic, and unacceptably subjective to the point of being private to each individual. The fact that moral disagreements can be resolved, according to Foot and Reid, shows that a set of moral facts that are intrinsically true of the world will do the work of bringing us to agreement. To quote Foot again:

> We are not inclined to think that when a man says that an action is virtuous or vicious, he is talking about his own feelings rather than a quality which he must show really to belong to what is to be done. It seems strange to suggest that he does not have to bring forward any special *fact about the action* in order to maintain what he says. [39]

In developing Hume's answer to Foot's worry, I showed that when a person engages in moral judgment, it is not as if "he is talking about his own feelings" as opposed to what is actually important. First of all, moral sentiments cannot be reduced to one's own mere feelings; the fact that they must adhere to a shared standard shows the way in which sentiments are to be understood as communicable amongst communities of valuers, and

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[39] Phillipa Foot, "Hume on Moral Judgment" in *Virtues and Vices, and other Essays in Moral Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2002), p 76-7.

moreover, sentiments are *about* the world. Secondly, we might allow that certain character traits and actions bear certain "special facts" which make them virtuous or vicious. Importantly, however, the special fact about these character traits is the fact that they evoke sentiments from spectators who have taken up a standpoint that is at once sympathetic, unprejudiced, and reflective about the ends of virtues.

Hume's sentimentalist approach to value is not susceptible to the objectivist complaints that I have considered throughout this project. While at first it may seem that Hume makes morality "just a matter of taste," I explained how Hume's aesthetic theory shows that matters of taste need not be trivial or unpalatably relativistic. Matters of taste need not be *mere* matters of taste, and taste need not lead us toward instability and irreconcilable disagreements. Passions will be the guide to what we care about, and the sorts of lives we will try to lead. Hume's model of the good judge is one that treats sentiments as the source of moral distinctions, while at the same time allows that sentiments are guided by reflection. Moreover, evaluative judgment - the act of evaluating - is a social activity. The good judge will recommend and teach things to fellow members of his or her community. In this sense, we do not discover moral standards, so much as we create them. Learning about virtue or beauty is not the act of a solitary expert, but instead, it is an ongoing activity undertaken by a community of conscientious judges, where evaluation and reflection are always undertaken within society and conversation. The fact that our evaluative standards are situated within our communities of conscientious judges prevents our sentiments from being wholly idiosyncratic, and gives sentiments stability that grounds an account of a stable system of morality which is worthy of our endorsement. Happily for Hume's theory, engaging with our community about what to value is an activity that we find to be both virtuous and beautiful.

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