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# Degrees of Altruism as Dependent Upon Degrees of Relations

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Degrees of Altruism as Dependent Upon Degrees of Relations

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A Thesis Submitted to The Graduate School at the University of Missouri-St. Louis  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree  
Master of Arts in Philosophy

Advisory Committee

Andrew Black, Ph.D.  
Chairperson

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### Degrees of Altruism as Dependent upon Degrees of Relations

In the *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1738), Hume asserts that the causes of all human actions are "the passions" and that *reason* cannot be the cause of any action, including any act of altruism.<sup>1</sup> And, motivations to altruistic action are most strongly stimulated by people most closely related to us in the world, e.g., in family membership, friendship, or other close acquaintance with us, and are somewhat more weakly engendered in our more distant relations with people who, for example, are fellow members of our community, share our ethnic heritage, nationality, and so on. In this arrangement, our tendency to act altruistically is naturally comparatively much less toward prospective beneficiaries who are farthest from us in these relevant ways, e.g., people in the most distant lands from us with whom we are in no such relations as listed above. I find no fault in Hume's more general theory<sup>2</sup> in the *Treatise* of the passions as the causes of human action. However, it appears to me that in his model of development of altruism, a model is contained within his general theory—the structure of which is that of the diminishing altruistic motivations in increasingly distant circles of relations I've outlined above—he does not account for vast numbers of real-world exceptions to that particular part of his general theory. I will offer empirical evidence that great multitudes of people appear to act more altruistically toward people in need who are in very distant relations to themselves than they do toward many in much closer relations. And, my enquiry herein will attempt to determine whether or not this discrepancy can be in any way accounted for in Hume's general theory as-is, or if it is more likely due to one or more contingencies he may have overlooked which can permit the exceptions to fit

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<sup>1</sup> Readers should be familiar with the *Treatise* and have some knowledge of this complicated part of Hume's theory.

<sup>2</sup> I use the term "theory" to refer to Hume's general theory of passions as motivations for actions, and the term "model" to refer to his sub-thesis regarding altruism and *its* group of supporting arguments existing *within* the larger theory.

consistently into his theory. Barring all of these contingencies—or some such needed additional inclusion(s), a number of which potential solutions I will suggest at natural points throughout the paper, and will label, for example, as (PS1)—my conclusion will be that the theory apparently cannot account for the discrepancy and that more investigation is needed to reconcile the adverse data with Hume's otherwise comparatively very robust general theory of human motivations.

**Outline:** After a brief introduction of Hume's essential concepts pertaining to the analysis to be done herein of the altruism model<sup>3</sup> (Section 1), I will present data evidence<sup>4</sup> of exceptions to Hume's conclusion on altruistic behavior (Section 2), and then a three-part analysis of Hume's Process of Altruistic Motivation (the name I've assigned to the model) (Section 3, Parts A, B, and C). Finally, in consideration of the eighteen potential solutions I suggest along the way, often as small points revealed by the examination, but possibly with significant implications, which Hume may have under-treated, I will offer my brief conclusion (Section 4).

## **Section 1. Introduction to Hume's Theory as it Leads to Altruistic Action**

*Altruism model:* The model is Hume's accounting for the particular strain<sup>5</sup> of internal developments. He believes it starts with the initial springing up of certain passions (to be discussed) from simple foundational generators (also to be discussed) then proceeds through forming associations between those passions, and between those associations and various other influences. These gathering tangles of contributors build

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<sup>3</sup> I use the term "model" throughout, to refer to Hume's sub-thesis regarding altruism and its own group of supporting arguments, all existing within his larger, general theory of passions as motivations for actions.

<sup>4</sup> an exploratory means which fits well with Hume's own empirical approach

<sup>5</sup> "a particular tendency as part of a person's character, i.e., susceptibility, propensity, proneness" (Google dictionary: [https://www.google.com/?gws\\_rd=ssl#q=strain+defin&spf=73](https://www.google.com/?gws_rd=ssl#q=strain+defin&spf=73)).

up an unfathomably dense complex of influences, from which emerges a sentiment of *sympathy*, and even further on, of *benevolence*, and ultimately, an act of altruism. The analysis focuses on these complex **associations of passions** and other influencers that are said together to yield the altruistic motivation.

*Closeness of relations:* Hume repeatedly claims that passions, not only those leading to acts of altruism, but all passions leading to any kind of action are most strongly excited by things closest to us in ways conducive to stimulating passions. As he applies this principle to *altruistic* motivations,<sup>6</sup> the further another person is from us in terms of such relations to us, the less intensely that person can stimulate passions that motivate us to altruistic action.<sup>7</sup>

every thing, that is contiguous to us, either in space or time, strikes upon us with such an idea, it has a proportional effect on the will and passions, and commonly

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<sup>6</sup> Hume recognizes "the two relations of kindred and contiguity. But as the persons are not the same, who are connected with me by those two relations" (Hume, 1738, SB, B2, P1, S9, p222). And, he explains his position that "'tis natural for us to consider with most attention such as lie contiguous to us" (Hume, 1738, SB, B2 P2 S2 p233). He goes further to assert, "sympathy depends on the relation of objects to ourselves; since we are most uneasy under the contempt of persons, who are both related to us by blood, and contiguous in place" (Hume, 1738, SB, B2, P1, S9, p221). And, he strengthens his stance, stating, "relations of kindred and contiguity both subsist; but not being united in the same persons, they contribute in a less degree to the sympathy" (Hume, 1738, SB, B , P , S , p221-222).

Hume clarifies the shape of outcomes of the influences of contiguousness and kindred relations, "double sympathy, and its tendency to cause love, may contribute to the production of the kindness, which we naturally bear our relations and acquaintance" (Hume, 1738, SB, B2, P2, S9, p264). Per Hume, when a would-be object of "pity and benevolence" is "remote from us, it engages not the imagination, nor is able to convey an equal concern" (Hume, 1738, SB, B2, P2, S9, p264). Most clearly, he reflects, "Men being naturally selfish, or endow'd only with a confin'd generosity, they are not easily induc'd to perform any action for the interest of strangers, except with a view to some reciprocal advantage, which they had no hope of obtaining but by such a performance" (Hume, 1738, SB, B3, P2, S5, p346).

<sup>7</sup> As, by virtue of this arrangement, all action is self-centric in the Humean model, altruism is *necessarily* self-centric in it. Nevertheless, Hume says, "we want the natural sentiments of humanity" (H1738, SB, B3, P2, S5, p346). Further, he says we develop a more general sort of altruistic overview of mankind. Yet, he assures us that the passions are the consistent dictators of our actions. In keeping with our understanding of his system, we can understand him to mean simply that the source of our desire for humanity must be in the use a sense of humanity may provide to serve our pleasure, perhaps, for example, by such as the passion of pride in possessing a sense of humanity. Note, if that motivation does obtain, I'm not suggesting that it does so universally. Pride in a sense of humanity is far from universal in the degree to which it obtains in individuals.

operates with more force than any object, that lies in a more distant and obscure light. (H1738, B3, P2, S7, p356)<sup>8</sup>

I include the above passage because it is important to the fullest understanding of the underpinning of Hume's conception of the character of motivations to altruistic action, as being such that mere physical proximity can be strongly stimulating. And, we will further see its direct relevance in the Section 2.3 discussion of motivations to altruistic actions that are based on physical locations of prospective beneficiaries.

**Universal altruism:** Hume does allude to a general moral view he thinks we may acquire of the world (but arguably does not appear to commit fully to the concept). This view is in the form of more "general notions" of approval and disapproval upon which our passions toward benevolent sentiments, and acts of altruism, develop in his system (H1738, DN, B3, P3, S3, p385). Even if he believes that it *is* such a general sense of altruism, which causes our desire to act altruistically toward people perhaps in the *farthest* relations to us, his altruism model remains internally consistent as long as our sense of altruism is *stronger* for those closer to us in the relevant relations,<sup>9</sup> showing that their influences on our passions are naturally stronger.

**Altruistic action:** Hume explains that an act of altruism as motivated by a desire to have pain alleviated. The object of the altruist's desire is the same as the object of the pain sufferer's desire—the *sufferer's* pain.<sup>10</sup> In other words, both the altruist and the

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<sup>8</sup> The several Hume texts referenced will be cited as: H, year, Book, Part, Section, page, for example, (H1738, B1, S2, P3, p127). Additional note: This point on proximity in space or time is emphasized multiple times in the *Treatise*. This appears dichotomous when juxtaposed to Shaw's interpretation of a related concept, in which he finds that Hume has it that "we learn automatically to make allowance for the action's spatio-temporal position, and we do not judge an action to be, for example, less virtuous just because, owing to its remoteness in time and/or space" (Shaw, 1993).

<sup>9</sup> "any peculiar similarity in our manners, or character, or country, or language", each of which is an aspect which "facilitates the sympathy" (H1738, SB, B2, P1, S9, p219).

<sup>10</sup> As Hume has his gradational sub-system applying to all human altruism, a rigid interpretation is that not to act *naturally* in accordance with this system of altruistic action is either not to be functioning properly as a human or not to be a human. Since we see that that won't do, we recognize that there must be a defect in his rationale for the system.

sufferer desire to have the sufferer's pain alleviated. The benevolent sentiment brings the altruist to do the altruistic act, according to Hume. And, again, we are *all* said by Hume to experience this motivation *naturally* more strongly toward those in closer relations to us and to be less motivated to act altruistically toward those in more distant relations.

## **Section 2: Statistical Evidence Contrary to Hume's Premise**

In reality, however, there is much data indicating that vast numbers of people act as, or more, altruistically toward people farther, even farthest, from them in terms of any of Hume's proposed relevant relations, than they do toward people much closer to them, even when all other factors appear reasonably equal, and very many do so routinely. Many allocate the largest percentages of their charitable giving to such far away people. And, apparently, remotely located complete strangers excite passions so strongly and frequently that hordes of altruists travel great distances to relocate for extended periods away from their own families, friends, homes, businesses, medical practices, etc., in order to perform predictably difficult, even emotionally painful and frustrating volunteer work to help people they're well aware are those in the most distant relations to them in every respect. In fact, in at least some cases (to be discussed), people appear to choose to help people farther away instead of those closer *because* they are so far away.<sup>11</sup> These are especially plain violations of the natural order proposed in Hume's system.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> This fact appears to be strong evidence against Hume's claim that our altruistic motivation is naturally diminished the more distant relations are—though it would not disprove that passions are the causes of our actions.

<sup>12</sup> We can observe that there are many exceptions to this proposed pattern. However, we can say Hume's general theory appears to provide a realistic overview of motivations, perhaps leaving just the question of *which* combinations of influences on passions individuals are actually being motivated by in given actions. For example, five men may seemingly instinctively fill lifeboats with wives of strangers and elderly strangers, and then wait to go down with the sinking ship. But, five other men may seize the lifeboats and row away, leaving the helpless strangers to die. Perhaps all ten men are motivated by passions, but different ones, with different combinations of influences involved.

*Sec 2.1: Growth of charitable organizations for foreign vs. domestic aid*

A 2016 [report](#) by Forbes shows that fifteen of the largest thirty US charities are international aid charities. Currently,<sup>13</sup> the two largest charities in the US are international aid charities. Combined total donations for those two largest alone were 56.63% of the combined total for the five largest US charities,<sup>14</sup> and those two accounted for a staggering 40.63% of the combined total donations for all thirty of the largest US charities. Total combined donations received by the fifteen largest international charities (included in the top thirty) were 52.35% of the total donations received by the thirty largest charities. This data suggests that US Americans are more altruistic toward people in foreign countries than toward people in need in the US.<sup>15</sup>

As the top listed organizations have not grown to their massive sizes in just one year, the comparative amounts of charitable giving to them by US citizens bear out the apparent fact that our donations through charities for international aid have for some time been surpassing our donations through charities to help people here in the US.<sup>16</sup> This is though US American altruists are presumably typically aware that among people in need in the US are potentially fellow citizens, members of their ethnic groups, neighbors, coworkers, or of their own relatives, or at least would-be fellow tax payers.

It appears that while Hume's system for altruism probably continues to hold very well within the particular relationship sphere of immediate family (as we have no data indicating that people are less helpful to their closest relatives than they are to people

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<sup>13</sup> Again, it appears totals refer to each organization's most recent annual accounting period (calendar or fiscal period).

<sup>14</sup> which totals presumably refer to each organization's most recent annual accounting period (calendar or fiscal)

<sup>15</sup> This accounting includes donations by private citizens and corporations. npr.org cites its expert report that the US government ranks lowest in the world in percentage of GNP donated for international assistance but among the highest in total dollars donated for that purpose. <http://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2015/02/10/383875581/guess-how-much-of-uncle-sams-money-goes-to-foreign-aid-guess-again>.

<sup>16</sup> Access the article through the in-line link or the URL provided in the Bibliography, and use the link for each organization cited in the attached data sheet to view details of the citation, including labeling of either "domestic" or "foreign aid" funds for total donations calculated in the data.

helped by their donations to international charities), we must admit that his gradational system for altruistic action does not match the way humans, at least US citizens, have generally historically operated altruistically toward people in or outside our very *closest* circle(s) of relations. When it comes to people we help through public donations, US Americans appear to be giving more to help people in other countries than to people with whom we are in much closer relations in the relevant ways.

***Sec 2.2: Possible exceptional reasons for disparity in foreign vs. domestic giving***

Perhaps potential solutions(PS), at this juncture, include that (PS1) Hume simply didn't consider that our passions might be more strongly stimulated by needs appearing to us *most dire*,<sup>17</sup> as those of emaciated African children with distended stomachs, making them either the most unpleasant for us to witness, or (PS2) the most stimulating of pride from helping those in the greatest need or from raising the awareness of our acquaintances about the uniquely dire needs of obscure peoples.<sup>18</sup> Or, (PS3) perhaps modern media has effectively *shortened the distance* between us and people perceived in Hume's time as much farther removed. (PS4) Or, the *combination* of the modern sense of nearness, and the direness, are especially stimulating.<sup>19</sup>

It is notable that the data additionally reveals that US Americans donated \$646 million to the Nature Conservancy organization in 2016, 27% more than the \$473 million

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<sup>17</sup> "degree of poverty produces contempt; but a degree beyond causes compassion and good-will" (H1786, B2, P2, S9, p263).

<sup>18</sup> Or, perhaps Hume has not fully accounted for possibly far greater strength of attractions to (approvals of) foreign lands and people than he had assessed, though he mentions factors which, today, in light of the modern data, I think can appear to us as useful indicators of some underestimated potentials for the very outcomes we see in the data, "when they are at home, and surrounded with their countrymen, that the strong relation betwixt them and their own nation is shar'd with so many, that 'tis in a manner lost to them; whereas their distant relation to a foreign country, which is form'd by their having seen it and liv'd in it, is augmented by their considering how few there are who have done the same. For this reason they always admire the beauty, utility and rarity of what is abroad, above what is at home" (T1738, B2, P1, S9, p212).

<sup>19</sup> Additionally, we know that in the US, overcoming homelessness, hunger, and sickness, is quite often a matter of obtaining guidance to access the various public welfare resources (except when mental illness prevents seeking resources).

donated to the Wounded Warrior Project. These two organizations are the only ones of their respective types with high enough contributions to appear on Forbes' list of top performing charitable organizations in 2016. The former supports environmental wellbeing, preserving plant life and waterways, while the latter supports human wellbeing, providing transitional housing, counseling, and other services for wounded military service people returning to civilian life.<sup>20</sup> The point here is that one of the largest US nonprofits supports nonhuman causes and, in donations collected, it outperforms the nation's top performer supporting humans who have sacrificed so deeply for US citizens.

None of these contributors to the discrepancy between the data and Hume's model appear to impact the viability of his basic claim that our acts of altruism, like all our other actions, are motivated by our passions. It merely appears to raise questions about what *kinds* of situations may *actually be more or less stimulating to our passions*.

***Sec 2.3: Foreign giving because of greater distance and unfamiliarity of recipient***

However, for a comprehensive examination, we need to consider one or two cases in which 1) individuals have opted to perform the most extreme acts of altruism toward people farthest from them in all relevant kinds of relations, and 2) in which they have done so in *preference* to helping those much closer to themselves in relations of every relevant kind, and 3) *in which those in need were substantially the same in all respects, including in their level of need, except that their relative locations and relationships to the altruist were extremely distant*.

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<sup>20</sup> Total of all donations by US citizens in 2016 is not available for calculation of ratio of US total donations / total donations to the top 15 foreign aid charities (Charities Data file, line H44). Additional note: Volunteer activities for religious groups were split among educational activities, collection, prep activities, and service of, sports teams coaching, supervising, general labor work for the organization, fundraising. Reference, US Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, URL: <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/volun.nr0.htm>.

Madonna, Angelina Jolie and Brad Pitt, and numerous other white celebrities and wealthy white altruists go to Africa and adopt black native African children. Thousands of other white US American couples go to Asian countries to adopt white infants instead of white American orphans. In the latter cases, arguments can be made about scarcity of white American orphans, red tape, or other obstacles making overseas adoption less problematic. But, in the former cases, such obstacles are incomparably fewer. Black American orphans are surely available in sufficient abundance for extremely wealthy Americans. Yet many adopt African children instead, even when the children are in secure orphanages or are otherwise already under adult care, but the altruist opts to remove the child instead of supporting it and the fostering adults, and leaving the child to live more abundantly in Africa, which can be done perhaps at less financial cost over the lifetime of the child and without going to economically blighted regions of Africa.

So, there appears to be quite different motivation than just comparative need, in each of the latter cases, or than just to help a black child *maximally*. There appears to be a motivation to help *a* child, or a *black* child *maximally*, who is the most physically remotely located and otherwise most *remotely* related. Whether the resulting action is due to greater stimulation of passions related to pity or to globalist's pride from helping the most remote in relation to the altruist—either way—it *is* apparently due to stimulation of passions that is increased by the greater remoteness of the child in relation to the altruist.

In even more extreme cases, which are numerous, altruists' beneficiaries are officially slotted by his/her society as undesirable recipients of aid. For example, it appears that by all accounts of the numerous reputable statistical resources, the US government has a long record of giving the lowest percentage of the nation's GDP (and

the lowest percent of GNI) for foreign aid than the rest of world's economically most well-established countries (Rutsch, 2015).<sup>21</sup> Despite this fact, and in preference to avoiding significant physical danger to themselves, and to their families' interests in having them return alive and well, great numbers of US volunteers go to distantly located countries, to reside in areas with rampant deadly epidemics and extreme deficiencies of normal resources, in famine-stricken areas of Ethiopia and Nigeria, Ebola regions of Guinea, HIV AIDS afflicted nations throughout Sub-Saharan Africa, war refugee camps of Uganda, Somalia, and Sudan. And, in east Asia, US volunteers descend on natural disaster regions and embark on rebuilding. In the *most* extraordinary cases, also numerous, people resolutely sacrifice their lives for complete strangers. For example, men around the world have filled lifeboats with the wives and children of other men, and with elderly strangers, then let themselves go down with sinking ships, or jumped into deadly cold, dark waters and perished.

### **Section 3: Analysis of Hume's Process of Altruistic Motivation**

#### **Part A: Sympathy and Benevolence**

In the effort to explain the inconsistencies between the above data and Hume's model, we must first look for a possibly missed critical detail in Hume's rationales for his proposed principles of sympathy, in terms of how these are involved with the essential passions that generate motivations leading to benevolence culminating in an altruistic action. And, we consider whether or not humans have evolved to *intuit a need for a*

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<sup>21</sup> About half of US voters vote for social programs and half vote against them, with the issue being a very strong plank in both political party platforms. Across districts in every state it is more rare to find an extremely lopsided vote for either position than to find a near even balance. In most districts, even rural ones where voters share relatively clearly defined interests ratios more closely balanced (though more imbalanced in some municipalities). And, the balance persists in the densest urban centers, where broad diversity of economic, educational, occupational, and living conditions arguably might be expected to result in less balanced red/blue ratios. This appears to indicate that moral sensibilities grow among groups significantly due to combinations of factors Hume may not have found as relevant as they now appear, including general social and civic influences that might tend them toward greater alignment of emerging social ideals or inclinations.

*strong global community* and, if so, how Hume's theory would account for consequences of such a far-reaching sensibility to our altruistic behaviors, if it can. We reflect on the conditions that may have evolved since Hume's time that have perhaps come to influence populations of people who appear to defy his claim about altruism (as reflected by the current data evidence), by helping people in the most distant relations to them, or even helping other species in preference to helping people in closer relations to them.<sup>22</sup> And, we look at notions of *duty*<sup>23</sup> to help and the deep desire to honor its principle<sup>24</sup>, which might supplant the kinds of motivations Hume associated with altruistic actions and have them believe and act less from self-interests and interests of those in their closest circles.

### ***Sec 3.1: Interpretations and opinions of Hume's position on altruistic motivation***

Accepting as a baseline for justification of Hume's theory, that passions are the roots of actions, motivated by pleasure and pain, we next need to examine just how Hume conceptualizes the components and their interrelations in the process of development of motivations from the point of engagement of relevant passions to the point of executing the altruistic action. First, there are opposing interpretations of Hume's position in the *Treatise* and in the *Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals* (1751) on what relation may exist between altruism and egoistic principles of action, i.e., whether Hume may

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<sup>22</sup> Also, to be considered is whether or not *false altruism* is a widespread counterexample to Hume's explanation for acts of altruism, for example, typical motivators in economic self-interest, public image, attracting mates or admired acquaintances, self-adulation, enhancing self-esteem (or other people-pleasing motivations), or any combination from the vast variety of manipulative ulterior motives, so many of which the pseudo-altruist may be consciously unaware.

<sup>23</sup> Duty, as a cause of action, seems to fit into Hume's moral philosophy only as duty may be said to appeal to same sentiment or sympathy rooted ultimately in a passion(s) and not from any reason alone about duty as a moral sentiment. Hume does believe there is a role for duty in his theory, which Cohon suggests amounts to the position "that we approve of a motivating form of the moral sentiment itself, the sense of duty" (Cohon, 2001) (though Hume applies this concept to close relations, vs. distant ones). This bit does serve as another, and integral, factor in the internal process of the emerging sense of a moral imperative for the agent. But, it is not controversial for my purposes, as it is well in keeping with Hume's general theory and does not appear to be the source of any friction I can discern that Hume might contemplate between pairing passions or emerging sentiments, and in fact seems a minor facilitator, if it has much natural force for him. So, I will forgo elaborating on this seemingly artificial stimulus, as it appears to be understood by Hume.

<sup>24</sup> Perhaps even when there are not faces put with causes, imagery associated with an *ideal* can be so strong that individuals' become motivated to help unidentified beneficiaries in preference to those closer to us who may be in even greater need.

view self-interest as the natural basis for morality. Some view Hume as asserting principles of egoism (Lechartier, 1902) and (Green and Grosse, 1882), despite some major discrepancies with that perspective in his works. Others, agree, but say the *Enquiry* allows for less self-centric motivations (Albee, 1902), and (Jodl, 1872). Albee, for example, finds the *Treatise* clearly egoistic, but not the *Enquiry*. This is though he reportedly complains of "exasperating ambiguity" in the *Treatise* (McGilvary, 1903).<sup>25</sup> (Gizycki, 1878) holds that Hume, in both works, writes from the position that altruism follows from disinterested sympathy and benevolence. And, McGilvary, after Gizycki, argues that in both, Hume fully accepts the reality of "an original altruism" (McGilvary, 1903).<sup>26</sup> We can see that there is range of opinions on what Hume holds as the nature of human motivation at its deepest level. It is in order to bring it up here. In a later discussion, in Section 5.2, we will see that Hume, in fact, remains far more conflicted on this point, even late in the development of his theory, than even these divergent interpretations might make it seem. And, we will see that he is then forced to confront it more directly, and work out the implications of choosing between differing directions for the theory, only then grappling with the dilemma to an extent that it appears early on that he may not have understood would eventually become necessary.

All of the above cited scholars writing on Hume's moral philosophy agree that it is **atomistic**. He has it that the self consists of "nothing but a bundle or collection of different perceptions, which succeed each other with an inconceivable rapidity, and are in a perpetual flux and movement" (H1738, SB, B1, P4, S6, p174). This has all perceptions

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<sup>25</sup> McGilvary used the Selby-Bigge edition, so I have quoted from it for all references McGilvary uses in his paper.

<sup>26</sup> McGilvary suggests that more egoistic descriptions in the *Treatise* were neglected by Hume in the *Enquiry*, in the latter of which some assertions from the earlier work were inserted without sufficient attention to ensure consistency.

as either simple, or reducible to simple ones, each of which Hume says exists either as an **impression** or an **idea**.

McGilvary discusses Hume's emphasis in the *Treatise* of the distinction between **passions based in pleasure and pain**, and **instinctive passions**,<sup>27</sup> the latter of which, per Hume, are not at all due to the former (H1738, SB, B2, P2, S9, p260-261). While McGilvary is right to be confident that Hume doesn't mean that pleasure and pain are the *only* influences on motivations for action,<sup>28</sup> Hume appears to me to settle any controversy about this.<sup>29</sup> To allow additional *primary* motivators would be to undermine his core premise that these, in fact, *are* the only primary motivations for action. Of humility and pride, he states that these are "only pure sensations, without any direction or tendency to action"<sup>30</sup> (H1738, SB, B2, P2, S9, p260).<sup>31</sup> In clear contrast, he states, "There is implanted in the human mind a perception of pain and pleasure, as the chief spring and actuating principle of *all* its actions" (H1738, SB, B1, P3, S10, p92) (emphasis mine). In the closing line of the *Treatise*, Hume calls these "*to us*, the cement of the universe" (H1738, Abstract) (Morris, 2017) (emphasis original).<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> In the class of instinctive passions, resentment is included (desire for our enemies to be punished), and private benevolence (desire for our friends to be happy, parental love for children), and desire to live, natural gentleness toward children, certain essential physical drives (appetites) like thirst for water, hunger for food, and sexual lust, and perhaps others. This is not to confuse Hume's clear distinction of the love of life (instinctive) from "general appetite to good, and aversion to evil, consider'd merely as such" (not instinctive) (H1738, SB, B2, P3, S3, p284). Burns (2014) seems to place all direct passions into this group.

<sup>28</sup> an especially significant difference in discussion of Hume's notion of *self-love*. Hume has it that, like one's instinctive hunger, one's instinct to preserve his own life does not stem from any conscious motive.

<sup>29</sup> As McGilvary notes, Hume did later express regret that "a hundred and a hundred times" he had neglected to ensure consistency of each part of the *Treatise* with every other part. This may afford an argument against the whole work to the extent it is affected by such a fault, however at least in McGilvary's view, it is nevertheless straightforward enough to discern coherence between the parts in terms of any significant ways this issue appears to him to pertain to them.

<sup>30</sup> These two indirect passions (to be later discussed), along with love and hatred, are not inert and without influence, but indirect.

<sup>31</sup> Yet, the entire Book 2 of the *Treatise* focuses on these. But, as McGilvary notes, the amount of text Hume spends on any particular concept should not be viewed as indicating how much weight the matter held for the theory. He simply followed his theory regarding association as far as reason permitted, as with other points, and dropped pursuit of what wasn't *fitting* it.

<sup>32</sup> Book 2 is concerned primarily with the problem of the origin of the passions.

But, for Hume, any motivation to act, altruistically or otherwise, is *fully* explained only by identifying the relations between a perception and its immediately preceding one(s).<sup>33</sup> The passions of pride, humility, love, and hatred, and the associations of these, and the ultimate emergence of actions, are the central focus of the *Treatise*. Hume did not go the distance to explicate the subtler workings of private benevolence or parental affection by his theory of associations. Perhaps he did not believe he *could* explain them by it, so in our attempt to understand these, we must work from what he tells us about the ways the passions operate.<sup>34</sup>

### ***Sec 3.2: The nature and operations of passions***

In Book 3 of the *Treatise*, Hume discusses the various passions in terms of their values of influence on an individual's moral actions. Such actions, in his arrangement, involve comparatively very little of pride. As to passions based on pain and pleasure, Hume is less than clear about whether it is the immediate experience of pain or pleasure or the mere idea of it that is necessary to stimulate those passions.<sup>35</sup> Early in the *Treatise*, he states:

An impression first strikes upon the senses, and makes us perceive heat or cold, thirst or hunger, pleasure or pain of some kind or other. Of this impression there is a copy taken by the mind, which remains after the impression ceases; and this we call an idea. This idea of pleasure or pain, when it returns upon the soul, produces the new impressions of desire and aversion, hope and fear, which may properly be

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<sup>33</sup> However, because *instinctive passions* "arise from a natural impulse or instinct, they are perfectly unaccountable" (H1738, SB, B2, P3, S9, p300). They're basic, and therefore defy definition. So, Hume grants that it's fruitless to study or try to discuss them further and doesn't attempt to do so. But, there's contrast between this and his similar but apparently conflicting claim of *passions from pleasure and pain* as the moving principle of *all* its actions.

<sup>34</sup> His project in the area of the *Treatise* in question (Book 2) was to account for the origin of passions that *do* fit well within the theory. Beyond that, it appears he merely acknowledges the limits of his system in this regard.

<sup>35</sup> He later asserts that the strongest influence in these acts is benevolence, and he finds that it is a *basic instinct* (to be discussed).

called impressions of reflexion because derived from it. (H1738, SB, B1, P1, S2, p17)

However, he adds, "the impressions of reflexion, viz. passions, desires, and emotions ... arise mostly from ideas." This qualification of his prior claim, according to McGilvary (1903) "overstates Hume's objections to certain attempts at reducing all benevolent affections to self-love." Along the track that we're following of a developing motivation, conceptions of such fine nuances at play between the springs of passions and the passions and the *ideas*—as they mingle in increasingly compounded bundles of associations, into even more finely mediated emerging ideas and moods—serve as signposts, announcing what is possible along the way, as influences precipitously continue leading toward an attitude bearing on deliberation about acting.

In Hume's arrangement, "pain and pleasure have two ways of making their appearance in the mind" (H1738, SB, B1, P3, S10, p92). Each has its kind of effects, which emerge as an impression, i.e., a feeling, or merely as an idea. Feelings always stimulate passions, while merely some but not necessarily all ideas have such influence. Belief can escalate a mere *idea* to a state of influence on par with *impressions*, by intensifying its "force and vivacity"—the qualitative determinates of the efficacy of any stimulus or would-be stimulus to action, in Hume's system. A vivid enough idea of future pain or pleasure can escalate to become as affecting as an impression, can stimulate passions and motivate action now, perhaps in the interest of hastening to avoid the dreaded pain or bring about the anticipated pleasure.

***Acting for pain, vs. from pain:*** Hume clarifies that action (always) caused by experiencing pain is action *from* pain, whereas action (not always) caused by an idea of

pain is action *for* pain.<sup>36</sup> Avoidance of pain, or obtaining of pleasure are not necessarily ends for agents. When pleasure *is* an end, it is such due to the force and vivacity of the pleasantness of the immediate *idea* of such an end, which has escalated the idea to the level of efficacy that it actually becomes an efficient cause.<sup>37</sup>

**Ends:** For Hume, a passion arises from an *impression* (a sensation), whether it's an immediate one or one built up of an intense *idea*. In this arrangement, Hume can allow that "bodily pains and pleasures are the source of many passions, both when felt and *consider'd by the mind*" (H1738, SB, B2, P1, S1, p189) (emphasis mine). However, it is not feasible that all passions "founded on pain and pleasure" had pain or pleasure as their *ends* (objects). Such an arrangement would necessitate that all such passions arise *sequentially* in *ideas* of pain or pleasure. This is because ends do not exist as sensations. They're just ideas. Pain and pleasure, per se, are generators of passion. But, the key concept to grasp in order to fully appreciate their roles in motivating action is what *makes* them such generators. They generate passions by *being* sensations (or by being ideas whose force and vivacity are strong enough to be nearly as effective as actual physical sensations in generating passions). So, pain and pleasure don't generate passions by being their possessor's only contemplable ends for passions.

### ***Sec 3.3: Direct and indirect passions***<sup>38</sup>

***Direct passions:*** Depending upon how the passion connects to pain or pleasure, Hume identifies it as a direct or indirect passion. "By direct passions, I understand such as arise immediately from good or evil, from pain or pleasure" (H1738, SB, B2, P1, S1,

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<sup>36</sup> Ideas of pain and pleasure are encouragements, but immediate pain and pleasure are efficient causes.

<sup>37</sup> McGilvary finds Hume's view on this is not hedonistic, as it doesn't claim pleasure is the only rational aim of action.

<sup>38</sup> "under the indirect passions I comprehend pride, humility, ambition, vanity, love, hatred, envy, pity, malice, generosity, with their dependents. ...direct passions, desire, aversion, grief, joy, hope, fear, despair and security" (H1738, SB, B2, P1, S1, p190)

p190).<sup>39</sup> Hume identifies **good**, not as desire's necessary object, but merely as something to be identified with pleasure, while he identifies **evil** with pain. He doesn't base either evaluation on the connection between **desire** and either pleasure or pain.

we have no right to assume that the passions "which arise from good and evil" arise *because* good and the avoidance of evil are the only possible *objects* of these passions. *Desire* proceeds from good and evil only in the sense that good (pleasure) when sufficiently intense is constantly followed by desire for it, and that evil (pain) under like conditions is followed by aversion to it. (McGilvary, 1903) (emphasis original)

Hume takes into account that desire may be generated by good, or good by desire. Ideas of pleasure and pain, as he has it, are built up by the **principles of association**. This is the first connection made between passions newly sprung from the bedrock stimuli, and the first step in the process they will now undergo in joining with various influences, some of which may trigger yet other passions, and all together lead ultimately to an action. What is responsible for the disparate sentiments yielded of the associations is the divergence of associations, i.e., their respective establishment of conjunction with *other* motivational characteristics (qualities).<sup>40</sup> Intense enough pain and pleasure stimulate passions. The nature of direct passions is not understood in terms of associations, because they're *simple*, i.e., as McGilvary well puts it, "perceptions are just what to feeling they seem to be" (McGilvary, 1903). However, fear and hope, though they are direct passions, are *not* in the category of simples.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Per Hume, there are direct passions not sprung from pleasure or pain, but this is not necessary to my discussion.

<sup>40</sup> McGilvary notes Book 2 discusses origins, and little is covered there regarding passions without associations.

<sup>41</sup> Hume explains the arrangements of their constituents; spending almost all of text that regards *direct passions*.

***Instincts:*** Hume additionally states that some *direct passions* do not have their foundations in pain and pleasure, "They arise from a natural impulse or instinct, which is perfectly unaccountable" (H1738, SB, B2, P3, S9, p300-301). They're direct, inexplicable in terms of association, but not direct in terms of emerging immediately from evil or good. Hume stresses, "These passions, properly speaking, produce good and evil, and proceed not from them, like the other affections" (H1738, SB, B2, P3, S9, p300-301). These instinctive passions include our natural appetites, as well as our desire for happiness of loved ones and harm to enemies.

For Hume, though we are constituted of perceptions that are independent and distinct from all others, and "from everything else in the universe" (H1738, SB, B1, P4, S5, p163) there are, nevertheless, very significant relationships between perceptions. Some are linked through ideas in conjunctions that cause ideas to naturally follow from others. Hume calls such connections **constant conjunctions**, "a gentle force, which commonly prevails" (H1738, SB, B1, P1, S4, p20). As McGilvary points out, "These relations are then accepted as an explanation of the conjunction, simply because it is not possible to push the matter further" (McGilvary, 1903).

***Indirect passions:*** Hume identifies passions that are generated from pleasure or pain and operate "by the conjunction of other qualities" as indirect passions (H1738, SB, B2, P1, S1, p190). Some indirect passions, like direct passions, are simple and not reducible. These, he says, are "simple and uniform impressions" (H1738, SB, B2, P1, S2, p191). Hume asserts that indirect passions can be explained in terms of their relations to perceptions that precede them, i.e., by **association of ideas**.<sup>42</sup> McGilvary believes this accounts for their origins, but notes that it does not explain their nature. "When one idea

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<sup>42</sup> A primary emphasis of the *Treatise*, Book I

is present to the imagination, any other, united by these relations, naturally follows it, and enters with more facility by means of that introduction" (H1738, SB, B2, P1, S4, p195).

Hume believes he has identified an associative property of the mind—"a like **association of impressions**" (emphasis mine). Here's how this sequence proceeds:

All resembling impressions are connected together, and no sooner one arises than the rest immediately follow. Grief and disappointment give rise to anger, anger to envy, envy to malice, and malice to grief again, till the whole circle be compleated. In like manner our temper, when elevated with joy, naturally throws itself into love, *generosity*, *pity*, courage, pride, and the other resembling affections. (H1738, SB, B2, P, 1, S4, p195) (emphasis mine)

So, it is in and among the indirect passions—where the grades and strengths of the notes and shades of passions and effects of additional multifarious influences that associate with them—that motivations take full shape and ultimately manifest in action.

*Principle of parallel direction:* So, when, for example, an unpleasant impression becomes present in the consciousness, it randomly triggers various other unpleasant impressions to the consciousness. Hume says, however, that it's possible that some such impressions (whose sensations are not necessarily resembling) may be related by what McGilvary calls "affective tone" (McGilvary, 1903) (an ideally fitting expression which we will appropriate for our purposes here). This can also occur, per Hume, "when their impulses or directions are similar and correspondent"—a property which Hume has named the "principle of a **parallel direction**" (H1738, SB, B2, P2, S9, p261). In other words, a passion with a particular object that comes into the agent's consciousness triggers emergence of passions with the same or similar ends into her consciousness as

well. Both are kinds of "association of impressions by resemblance." Hume has it that though this **resemblance** principle serves to connect impression in this way, this associative phenomenon is not dependent upon any former such association, and is happening in a way unrelated to any prior such mental instances.<sup>43</sup>

### *Sec 3.4: Sensations*

McGilvary assesses that Hume's explanations are of associations, which cannot be extended to account for the origins and natures of simple, original, physical sensations that are not caused by any preceding perceptions. Hume's project is not meant to explicate the nature of basic sensory phenomena. But, his theory allows for **reflective impressions** (passions), i.e., understood as secondary impressions that can exist only as members of a sequence following from either a sensation, or at least from an idea of one. Some reflective impressions become present in sequence from certain perceptions (sensations). Hume does not find that there is a *constant* association between reflective impressions and any preceding perceptions.

*Relations of sensations and passions:* What have been described in the paragraph above *are* either *instinctive passions* (which means preceding perceptions are *not* necessarily of pain or pleasure), or they're *direct passions based on pain and pleasure* (which means preceding perceptions *are* of pain or pleasure). Beside these, there are the *indirect passions*, which, as previously explained, exist in relations which serve to mediate between themselves and their preceding perceptions. Despite their relations with others, these passions remain otherwise unanalyzable (H1738, SB, B2, P1, Sec, 2, p191).

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<sup>43</sup> Book 1 of the *Treatise* addresses understanding, and doesn't discuss his law of association, which regards passions. McGilvary notes that Hume tends to mention a new principle when he reaches the point at which he wants to start employing it (which approach makes sense). He does this also with his "principle of a parallel direction". It would make sense for Hume to bring it up in this area of discussion, but he waits until he's ready to address phenomena that he wants to use the concept to explain. McGilvary finds this to be a confusing, "unsystematic" explanatory method, which he suggests has "laid him open to the charge of making up laws to fit every occasion" (McGilvary, 1903)

These relations, as they are constant, can be understood as uniting the passions with the sensory perceptions that precede them. The relations (Hume's uniting principles) are understood as accounting only for the instances of the above discussed passions, but cannot reveal any insights into their nature (the problem to which I alluded in 3.1, which we do not further investigate until 5.2).

***Sec 3.5: Process—from passion to altruistic action***

***Conjunction:*** Hume has it that indirect passions advance from pleasure or pain only by their relations of conjunction (with direct passions)—which is either the relation Hume refers to as an association of impressions by resemblance, perhaps of affective tone, or resemblance of parallel direction. The agent's experience of a pleasant passion triggers *all* of her pleasant passions. Beside pleasantness, one of her passions possibly has an added quality, which serves as a ground of operations for a second principle of association to bring it into conjunction with this starting bundle of perceptions.

***Double association:*** In such a case as the above, a single passion has two relations (two connectors between a given perception and perhaps a compound of perceptions). Hume asserts that all other passions have only one such relation, meaning it will precede its competitors (other passions). This dual relation establishes itself to the exclusion of any other passions competing in the consciousness. It is the dominance afforded by the doubling of its connective force that brings it to emerge as the prominent passion of the moment. This Hume's basic process for his double association principle.

***Sec 3.6: Love***

***Emerging passions:*** The agent encounters (or just has an idea about) someone whom he perceives to exhibit a pleasing feature or quality. The agent is now brought to

an attitude lent to the emergence of *all* pleasant passions. Remember, in Hume's arrangement, pleasantness is not the sole relation being established among pleasant passions at this point. If that were the case, *all* such passions would occur successively, according to Hume.<sup>44</sup> Love, as *one* of the pleasant passions, naturally would be one of the passions to emerge. But, though love would be among the passions instanced, it wouldn't necessarily connect with the agent's passions, in his consciousness of the person stimulating his passions, to yield a sentiment of love. Other pleasure sentiments, such as pride, for example, would be just as likely to emerge in that arrangement.

**Connections:** What happens instead, according to Hume, is that love has that *second* connection associating it with the pleasure the agent is experiencing due to the person whom he perceives as pleasing. The second connection in the emergent passion of love exists because love is one of the passions directed at an *object*, which object is, in the case of love, another person. Love is initiated by instinct—a simple, natural instinct. What happens next is a connection, a **resemblance association** (involving the resembling impressions mentioned in 3.3). The object of the agent's love—which must be a human, per the particular instinct involved—provides the connection of the instinct to the pleasant sense. What then occurs is development of an association of ideas, according to Hume. The agent's *idea* about the other person (the object his love) resembles the agent's perception of the object (the other person) that is presently pleasing him. It is this particular resemblance association which causes love to become the prevalent passion among the competing pleasant passions. The natural consequence is that the agent's sentiment is love toward a person whom he finds pleasing to him, instead of, for example, a sentiment of pride in that person.

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<sup>44</sup> "till the whole circle be completed" (H1738, SB, B2, P1, S4, p195)

To further illustrate, by contrast, if the agent recognizes that he possesses in himself the very same quality which he finds pleasing in the other person, his passions will connect to stimulate in him that very sentiment of pride in himself that was overpowered by the force gathered in associations of resemblances that yielded the sentiment of love when a human object of passion was a primary factor. Hume is very clear that the kind of association that yields a sentiment of *self-love* naturally cannot connect any of even its weakest resembling constituents with the natural constituents of associations that yield a sentiment of love for another person. The possibility of merely the occurrence of the double association yielding love is rooted in properties of love that are *primary*. One of those basic traits, per Hume, *is* that love is "always directed to some sensible being external to us" (H1738, SB, B2, P2, Sec, 1, p226).

***Regular Mechanism:*** Hume evaluates his accomplishment in his conception of the double association involving ideas and impressions as follows, "It is sufficient for my purpose, if I have made it appear, that in the production and conduct of the passions, there is a certain regular mechanism" (H1777).<sup>45</sup> But, he clarifies that it is not a function of that mechanism to adopt *objects* toward which the passions will be directed.

### ***Sec 3.7: Resemblance associations yielding altruism***

This, then, is the point in the development where a prevalent sentiment of altruism can emerge. The basic, consistent connections of pleasant passions of the kind that emerge in response to an object—not to a trait of the self—which are those that yield the sentiment of love, are the connections in which additional relations that yield the sentiment of altruism are entwined. The foundational point is that, as with love more basically, the resemblance associations cannot yield altruism, strictly speaking. The

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<sup>45</sup> Dissertation on the Passions, final paragraph

process happens the other way around. Altruism is actually responsible for the development of the associations. The latter develop from the fundamental altruistic trait in the agent.<sup>46</sup> As McGilvary puts it,

Hume's associationistic psychology of the passions therefore does not concern in any way the nature of the passions, but is merely a mechanical device for explaining the occurrence of the passions. And this device works only on the supposition that love is originally and always altruistic. Pleasure plays a part in the mechanism by which the passion is "introduced". But this part is not that of an end or an object of the passion, but simply the part of cause. To put it succinctly, we love others because for some reason they please us; but we do not love them in order to get pleasure either from them or from our love for them. But because not every one pleases us, we do not love every one. (McGilvary, 1903)

***Extensive benevolence:*** Per Hume, "In general, it may be affirmed, that there is no such passion in human minds, as the love of mankind, merely as such, independent of personal qualities, of services, or of relation to ourself" (H1738, SB, B3, P, 2, S1, p326). McGilvary emphasizes, however, that this declaration by Hume should not be interpreted as a denial that there exists "an extensive benevolence." Such a sentiment is understood as desiring happiness for people (or other living objects of benevolent sentiments, like animals) whom we have not had an experience of being pleased by because of some particular personal characteristic(s) they may convey, or of any relationship we may be aware that we have with them, or because of some act they have performed of which we have approved. In fact, Hume strictly separates the components and processes of benevolence from those of love (though not the essential principles of operations in the

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<sup>46</sup> The *Treatise* (B2, S1, p198) elaborates on the double relation between impressions and ideas operates.

differing processes). Per Hume, our *capacities* for benevolence and love are different, with the bounds of love much more limited than those of benevolence. Benevolence, in his model, is a much more expansive passion-driven sentiment than love.

### *Sec 3.8: Sympathy*

At this stage, sympathy can be coherently defined as it pertains to Hume's system. First, **pity** is understood as **sympathy** with an individual who is experiencing pain. More specifically, it is sympathy with that person's *desire* to be free from his pain. The sentiment of sympathy, for Hume, is generally applicable to any of the various perceptions, if it is lively, and if it emerges and progresses in its development along a particular line of connections of passions. Hume has it that a perception of sympathy is generated by a mechanism which includes the agent's idea of self among its constitutive parts. But, Hume makes clear that when sympathy is generated, it doesn't emerge with any embedded traces of the mechanisms by which it is yielded. Further, as McGilvary emphasizes, per his interpretation, Hume maintains in the *Treatise* that

all simple perceptions are original existences in the sense that they do not admit of any analysis. If, therefore, we sympathize with a simple perception in another person, the perception we experience by sympathy is as simple as its prototype. If that prototype has no reference to us, neither does the sympathetic perception have any reference to us. This lack of reference to ourselves in such a sympathetic perception is not due to the fact that it has been worn away by custom. It was never there to begin with. (McGilvary, 1903)

From McGilvary's perspective,<sup>47</sup> understanding the explanation in the above passage is essential to appreciating the constitution of sympathetic perceptions as laid out in the *Treatise* and avoiding the mistake of interpreting Hume as presenting an egoistic version of sympathy. His interpretation is consistent with my own of both the *Treatise* and the *Enquiry* in this regard.

On the above interpretation, Hume's arrangement plays out between agents as follows. Agent *a* experiences an affection. Agent *b*, by exposure to some indicator(s) of agent *a*'s affection, acquires an *idea* of agent *a*'s affection. It happens that agent *a*'s affection is a desire to have his own suffering alleviated. Agent *b* acquires—from the indicators conveyed to him from agent *a*—an idea of agent *a*'s desire to be free of agent *a*'s pain. This is to say that agent *b* does not acquire an idea of eliminating his *own* pain. The idea agent *b* acquires is of eliminating agent *a*'s pain. Per Hume, "the ideas of the affections of others are converted into the very impressions they represent, and that the passions arise in conformity to the images we form of them" (H1738, SB, B2, P1, S9, p220). So, agent *b*'s idea of agent *a*'s pain is of a nature that is entirely different from an idea of (much less an impression of) agent *b*'s his *own* pain.

So, in the case of *a* and *b*, *b*'s increasingly lively idea of desire appears clearly enough *not* egoistic, i.e., not an idea personal to *b* in terms of being an idea about any self-centric sort of desire. Nevertheless, the process of acquiring that idea of desire is the full process of yielding a sentiment of pity/sympathy for *a*. McGilvary notes that those who interpret Hume's version of sympathy as egoistic cite comments by Hume such as, "so lively a conception of our own person, that 'tis not possible to imagine, that anything can in this particular go beyond it" (H1738, B2, P1, SB, S9, p218). Such assertions of

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<sup>47</sup> This position follows from McGilvary's objective, which is to interpret Hume's as a non-egoistic theory.

Hume's all-encompassing idea of the self may appear to render, by extension, his explanation of sympathy ("sympathetic desire", as McGilvary puts it) an egoistic account. I agree with McGilvary that it does not.<sup>48</sup>

Hume asserts that the resemblance, in that both *a* and *b* are *people*, is sufficient, on Hume's terms, "to make us enter into the sentiments of others" (H1738, SB, B2, P1, S9, p219). But, there simply does not appear to be any allusion in the *Treatise* or to a notion that Hume may have had that in agent *b*, agent *a*'s idea of *self* is somehow conveyed into *b*'s emergent passion so that any associations form to yield in *b* a desire for relief from his own pain. In Hume's arrangement, what happens is that *b* internally conveys some degree of its lively idea to *a*'s passion. What is acquired by *b*'s idea of *a*'s passion is not the substance of *a*'s personal idea of his own *self*. What *b* does receive from *a* is limited to a stimulation which generates a measure of the vivacity of *a*'s perception into *b*'s idea of *a*'s perception. Granted, it is the vivacity of *b*'s idea of his personal *self* that does make him able to receive *a*'s (another individual's) passion. But, in the arrangement of Hume's broader system, what obtains in *b*'s consciousness is merely a vague facsimile of *a*'s passion. Though *b* picks up a vague copy of *a*'s passion, in so doing, *b* does not somehow convert *a*'s personal object of his passion—which object is alleviation of *a*'s own suffering—into a *different* object. That conversion is what would be necessary in order for *a*'s object to be transformed into an egoistic object in *b*, i.e., a desire in *b* to alleviate *b*'s own suffering, vs. a desire in *b* to alleviate *a*'s suffering.

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<sup>48</sup> McGilvary notes that he is not trying to defend Hume's explanation of sympathy, but is only trying to convey what it is, and "to show that it has absolutely no egoistic implications" (McGilvary, 1903).

### *Sec 3.9: Benevolence*

The starting point of understanding the broader concept of benevolence is to be clear on Hume's position that it is not *a*'s conception that is conveyed to *b*, but the *liveliness* of it. Next, it should be appreciated that in Hume's *Treatise*, *benevolence* is viewed as an *active* affection, whereas *love* is a *passive* one.

***Private benevolence:*** Benevolence, of the form most relevant to altruistic action, is further distinguished from love in that the emotion of love, per Hume, cannot be defined beyond insufficient descriptions of it as a certain pleasure we experience from another person that is "attended with a certain appetite or desire" (H1738, SB, B2, P2, S9, p260). Hume identifies *that* appetite as **private benevolence**,<sup>49</sup> which he describes (as mentioned in 3.3) as "desire of the happiness of the person below'd, and an aversion to his misery" (H1738, SB, B2, P2, S9, p260).

As discussed in Section 3.6, private benevolence (love) is, per Hume, an "arbitrary and original instinct implanted in our nature" (H1738, SB, B1, P2, S7, p252), which means private benevolence is inexplicable. Or, as McGilvary puts it, "he (Hume) cannot account for its appearance in the conjunction in which it appears" (McGilvary, 1903). Hume has benevolence existing in conjunction with love. "This order of things, abstractly consider'd, is not *necessary*" (H1738, SB, B2, P2, Sec, 6, p251) (emphasis mine). And, McGilvary, "There is no discoverable mechanism of association, which calls up benevolence when once love has been aroused" (McGilvary, 1903). Yet, Hume put the benevolence-love conjunction as a yield from association, "an original pleasure arising from the pleasure of the person below'd, and a pain proceeding from his pain: From

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<sup>49</sup> *Treatise*, Book 3, see "limited generosity" and "confin'd generosity".

which correspondence of impressions there arises a subsequent desire of his pleasure, and aversion to his pain" (H1738, SB, B2, P2, S9, p263).<sup>50</sup>

**Public benevolence:** Also called extensive benevolence, or extensive generosity, this stage of motivational development in Hume's model was introduced in 3.7, in our discussion of resemblance relations in order to place it in its position in the process juxtaposed to sympathy and explain its role in that regard. Here we look at additional features of this concept in its relevance to the current discussion, which is merely to further define it, detailing its properties as its particular kind of benevolence as opposed to private benevolence. Hume has **public benevolence** as being distinct from private benevolence due to a difference in the *object* of the agent's passion, which, in the former instance, is not toward a person we *love*, but toward one with whom we merely *sympathize*. This form of benevolence, per Hume, is a sentiment that extends even to other species (H1738, SB, B2, P2, S1, p326). It is a desire for the happiness and a revulsion to the suffering of people we do *not* love, according to Hume. This essential form of desire for happiness and revulsion to suffering of another is from *sympathy*. According to Hume, "there is no human, and indeed no sensible, creature, whose happiness or misery does not, in some measure, affect us, when brought near to us, and represented in lively colours: But this proceeds merely from sympathy" (H1738, SB, B2, P2, S1, p326). And "the original frame of our mind" has our strongest attention given to

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<sup>50</sup> "But even if it were the prevailing doctrine of the *Treatise*, that doctrine still would not be egoistic. For Hume does not say that my desire for the pleasure of the person beloved is due to my desire of my own pleasure which would follow upon my knowledge of his pleasure. In other words, my original pleasure in his pleasure is here a cause of my desire of his pleasure; its repetition is not said to be the end of that desire" (McGilvary, 1903).

the self, and the "weakest which reaches to strangers and indifferent persons (H1738, SB, B3, P2, S2, p331).<sup>51</sup>

In the above we do see that a curious likeness exists between formative principles of public and private benevolence, along with the problematic conjunction discussed. Altogether, it may appear to some readers as if the *Treatise* presents public benevolence "as the result of artificial conditions" according to McGilvary. Here, the term "artificial conditions" refers to virtues developed within the context of civilized society. But, I agree with his argument that this is not the case. He asserts that extensive benevolence is not missing "in uncultivated nature", but that it lacks sufficient strength in that context. "Benevolence to strangers is too weak", per Hume, "to counter-balance the love of gain," but attention to strangers is yet admitted by Hume into the "original frame of our mind" (H1738, SB, B3, P2, S2, p331).<sup>52</sup>

As we move through the next set of nuanced factors to be discussed as part of the development of motivation to an action, we will come to see how the introduction here of the concept of justice becomes part of the process. So, here, it is enough to say that it makes sense that, as the weakest of the relevant primary forces, public benevolence cannot be the motivation from which "justice sprang", because, as McGilvary explains,

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<sup>51</sup> "Being weak as compared with other principles of action, it cannot be regarded as the principle from which Interpreters frequently assert that in the *Treatise* Hume is concerned to prove that justice is ultimately based on practically egoistic principles. Such an assertion sounds strange inasmuch as Hume in the Section, "Of the Origin of Justice and Property," seldom mentions self-love without also mentioning private benevolence as contributing to that origin. The egoistic interpretation of the origin of justice is difficult to understand, especially in view of the fact that one part of the argument of this Section closes with this summary, italicized by Hume himself" (McGilvary, 1903). And, "Here then is a proposition, which, I think, may be regarded as certain, that 'tis only from the selfishness and cont'd generosity of men, along with the scanty provision nature has made for his wants, that justice derives its origin" (H1738, SB, B3, P. 2, p335). And, as McGilvary accurately interprets Hume, "Though this extensive benevolence does not proceed from love, it may love, by the principle of parallel direction. For it works toward the happiness of its object, as does private benevolence." (McGilvary, 1903). Vanterpool (1998) speaks of justice as creation of a system: "system of justice is, in some respect, society's way of translating human 'needs' into 'shared interests," which carries implications to Hume's concept of self-centric motivations to action, hence to the notion that benevolence is self-centric in that passions that motivate benevolent actions are stronger when the target is in closer relation to the benefactor.

<sup>52</sup> Per McGilvary, sympathy as a primary mental constituent doesn't conflict with Hume's claims that it is a derivative.

"for the immediate effect of justice is to control these stronger principles" (McGilvary, 1903). Naturally, a weaker principle cannot generate "immediate" effects that overpower a stronger one. However, he reasons, "once the stronger principles have been made to control themselves and thus give rise to a general regard to the property of others, then extensive benevolence can begin to act, for then it is no longer opposed to the promptings of selfishness and private benevolence" (McGilvary). He quotes Hume regarding the contribution of benevolence to moral consciousness since the advent of its escalation as a moral force, as moral consciousness, more generally has advanced along with increasing civility across the species. He says benevolence now consists in the "moral approbation which attends that virtue [of justice]" (H1738, SB, B3, P2, Sec2, p337).

It is well to accept, "It is needless to push our researches so far as to ask, why we have humanity or a fellow-feeling with others. ... It is not probable, that these principles can be resolved into principles more simple and universal, whatever attempts may have been made to that purpose" (McGilvary, 1903). Per McGilvary, Hume appears to revert to his previous position regarding the nature of *compassion*—that "it seems to spring from the intimate and strong conception of 'another's sufferings', and our imagination proceeds by degrees, from the lively idea, to the real feeling of another's misery" (McGilvary, 1903).

McGilvary notes that the *Treatise* explains the passions and how they operate in associations, whereas the *Enquiry* talks about the same passions, but doesn't approach the problem of altruism. He speculates that this omission in the *Enquiry* is due in part to Hume's wavering toward skepticism about his account of it in the *Treatise* and wasn't

confident a resolution could be accomplished.<sup>53</sup> But, McGilvary finds from his examination that Hume did not change his positioning of the relative predominance of essentially altruistic over essentially egoistic principles in human actions. As McGilvary further notices, Hume acknowledged, in both books, the existence of the two different "springs of action" (McGilvary, 1903), quoting from the *Treatise*, he highlights Hume's assertion that it is "rare to meet with one, in whom all the kind affections, taken together, do not over-balance all the selfish" (H1738, SB, B3, P2, S2, p330).

### **Analysis of Hume's Process of Altruistic Motivation Part B: "the common point of view"**

Everything that we've discussed so far that happens between the passions as they join in associations with other passions and influences to develop toward a sentiment of public benevolence is ultimately filtered through the densely complex screen of influences of **the common point of view**. Hence, thirteen of the eighteen suggestions I offer as possible solutions (PSs) to the central problem that is the subject of the paper are discovered in the following examination of the elements and processes involved in the "common point of view". Hume makes *sentiment* fundamental in morality, specifically, in moral judgment, as Cohon (1997) observes.<sup>54</sup> She concedes to critics that Hume's addition of the principle of "the common point of view" onto his layout of moral judgments (evaluations) is a surprising and "famous wrinkle", appearing late in the *Treatise*. Hume explains his belief that our moral judgments do not manifest our approval or disapproval of character traits and persons "only as they appear from his [i.e., our]

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<sup>53</sup> Hume had also learned by that period, that obscure philosophic works were not popular with the public.

<sup>54</sup> Cohon argues that Hume is consistent in his moral philosophy.

peculiar point of view..."<sup>55</sup> But, rather, "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" (H1738, SB, B3, P3, S1, p581-582) (Cohon, 1997) (emphasis mine). This, we do in order to "correct" our **situated sentiments**. (Cohon, 1997).

Cohon believes that Hume's introduction of the common point of view appears to present two important problems for Hume's theory. 1) It has moral evaluations as *inductive*. This notion of moral evaluations stemming from empirical beliefs on what our feelings would be if we *actually* held the **common point of view** that we *imagine* ourselves holding. To those who disagree with Cohon, the modified arrangement of Hume's model, in contrast to the way he had explained it up to the point of introducing the common point of view principle into it, now amounts to one in which moral evaluations are products of causal reason. And, that, of course, is a contradiction of Hume's fundamental principle—agents' moral evaluations are due to sentiment, not reason.<sup>56</sup> And, 2) because Hume claims that the passions don't represent anything other than what we identify in our feelings from them at a given moment, he can't rightly claim that our moral evaluations would be any more accurate in representing the object of our judgment as a result of our taking the common point of view into the equation. So, as Cohon sees it, it doesn't appear there is a compelling reason for us to take such an approach instead of making our own judgments from our actual position. Cohon says she doesn't see why it should be expected that, as Hume claims, if we were left to act utterly

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<sup>55</sup> Dr. Cohon used the Selby-Bigge (SB) edition of the Treatise. For consistency, I have used that edition for all inclusions of cited text regarding her comments. I've used the online copy of the SB edition, at the URL listed in the Reference section herein.

<sup>56</sup> Cohon doesn't seem to allow for any rational inclusion in associations with passions, though Hume does allow it.

dependently on our *own* view of such matters, we would run into a chaos of contradictions that would disable us from communicating.

Cohon attempts to resolve the two seeming potential conflicts. She argues, every time we reflect upon someone's character from the common point of view, we feel an actual sentiment of approbation or disapprobation, which may alter and merge with the situated sentiment or may fail to do so, leaving *two different feelings about the same character*. Furthermore, whenever we make moral evaluations we also simultaneously make objective, causal judgments about the love and hatred, pride and humility that the *trait* will produce. We routinely take up the common point of view in order to achieve truth and consistency in our judgments, to avoid practical problems.

I suggest that perhaps we are drawn by the power of what the majority of those around us think and feel morally, due to the lively impression that their *sympathies* make on our own sentiments. (PS5) Our benevolent sentiment develops in us just in the way that Hume has laid out in his system. Additionally, we can acquire the sentiment of our surrounding fellows (Pitson, 1996).<sup>57</sup> If by no other associative means, we can do so just by the sheer force of their numbers challenging our sensibilities<sup>58</sup> (so to speak) Such numbers could stimulate our passions with a gathering density of redundant resemblances in associations under the psychological, emotional, and instinctive weight of these passion pressures that a natural association comes to *bond* the bundle of associations bringing about development of a desire to help another person *with* the bundle of associations bringing about development of a very vivacious idea conforming to public

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<sup>57</sup> Pitson (1996) discusses physical cues received and interpreted as indicating the passions of others (Cohon, 1997).

<sup>58</sup> "So close and intimate is the correspondence of human souls, that no sooner any person approaches me, than he diffuses on me all his opinions, and draws along my judgment in a greater or lesser degree. And tho', on many occasions, my sympathy with him goes not so far as entirely to change my sentiments, and way of thinking; yet it seldom is so weak as not to disturb the easy course of my thought, and give an authority to that opinion" (T1738, B3, P3, S2, p392).

sentiment about *who* to help. More clearly, possibly awareness of the common opinion is itself made especially lively by triggering emotions from deep level(s) of sense of self as reflected by society, by the sense of *belonging* to society, i.e., to the grand society beyond our closer group(s). Perhaps in this way are captured so many kinds of associations among the passions that, though its influence seems very subtle, it overpowers generation of competing natural motivators, in many ways even out-motivating the attraction to people in closest relations to us.<sup>59</sup>

Cohon asks if Hume sufficiently accounts for "why we *should* take up a steady and general point of view at all" (Cohon, 1997) (emphasis mine). I can only venture to speculate that this may be because surely nature favors it, and provides a stop-gap at this point, or at least a mechanism of mediation between the passions and the practical requirements of functioning in reality, to buffer the functional system against passions exceeding reasonable limits. Perhaps nature does this by imposing on us the lively impression of the group around us, by landing their ideas on us to steer our passions, sympathies, sentiments, actions, in a way that is regulated conducively for our more successful assimilation and functioning within a group of human others, as necessary for a group animal animated by passions. In other words, it prevents unrestrained individual existence, i.e., prevents a condition of all-passion-all-the-time, by capping potential for acceleration or escalation to extremes in any given direction toward action.

#### ***Sec 4.1: Correcting sentiments***

Cohon highlights Hume's explanation that it is necessary for us to "use the common point of view to "correct" the sentiments we experience from our "peculiar

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<sup>59</sup> This solution arguably makes some room for straightforward solutions to Lipkin's (1987) objection to Hume's theory, which is that his claim that altruism is a universal trait in humans doesn't account for *why* it is naturally desirable for us to have it.

station" (Cohon, 1997). Cohon's description of Hume as "a noncognitivist or descriptive subjectivist", and as an "antirationalist sentimentalist" is accurate, in my view. And, I believe she is also correct in her articulation of what appear at first look to be conflicting positions by Hume, "Hume claims both that moral judgments are (in the relevant sense) manifestations of our sentiments, *and* that people make moral judgments in a way that keeps each individual's judgments consistent over time, and coordinated with the moral judgments of nearly everyone else" (Cohon, 1997) (emphasis mine).

One rationale Hume offers for a need in his theory to account for our relative consistency from judgment to judgment on various kinds of circumstances in which we come to expect to find any particular occurrence, thing, or person advises us to consider the necessity of acquiring a sense of *steadiness* in our responses to inputs, '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" (H1738, SB, B3, P3, S1, p383).

For Hume and Cohon, as Cohon puts it, when we are confronted with the matter of how to respond to "the differential workings of sympathy over different distances", our processing of the inputs is mitigated, "We evaluate character traits from a steady point of view, rather than from the vantage point of the traits' actual effects." It seems to me that it would also fit reasonably with Hume's view to allow that this is due to a sense of familiarity with how we have responded to reactions of (perhaps many) others we know who have made their responses to this input known to us. So, our response to it is a

mixture of the inputs' effect on us as it would be without our awareness of our familiarity with others' responses to it, *combined* with our awareness of that familiarity we have with their responses. All together, we then react, quite understandably, in terms Hume should permit, to this combination of awarenesses, if you will. We build associations between our feelings in pure response to the input of the person in distress and *our feelings about our awareness* of how other people we know, or even just know *of*, have reacted to this very input, and this association then yields for us a net feeling about the input.

It seems simplistic to believe that we react exclusively to the input immediately at hand, as if we do not have a capacity to draw from our reservoir of past feelings that have gained their own muscle-memory, metaphorically speaking (and not to be confused with conscious memories). Associations surely can include associations between our feelings about present inputs and our feelings about what else we are aware of as a relevant input regarding the present input. And, such relevant inputs surely can include *a strong sense of our previously felt feelings about the feelings others* we know have exhibited in reactions to this particular kind of input.

This rationale seems to provide plausible support for the good fit of Hume's inclusion of the common opinion principle into his theory of passions motivating behavior. And, if so, then it doesn't appear that introduction of the principle could adversely impact Hume's primary premise for the altruism model. Nor does it appear that it could exacerbate the problematic relationship of that premise and the current statistical data reflecting which inputs *actually* most strongly motivate altruistic actions. In fact, it does seem to lend potential help to that relationship, by opening a view onto yet another (PS6) nuance in the compounds of associations of passions, ideas, impressions,

subconscious memories—perhaps even reason, which Hume *allows*<sup>60</sup>—along with myriad other internal factors that together mitigate a sense that his model shouldn't be permitted modifications that can (not just patch and prolong its use, but) make it, and hence, the entire general theory even more robust. Next, we see how Hume and Cohon support the idea of consistency between the added *common opinion* component and the theory of the passions in the *Treatise*.

***Sec 4.2: Causal efficacy of the common point of view***

Hume does not allow that the existences of virtue and vice are matters of fact and is very clear on his position that they are *not* ascertainable by inference, but, he does say, "Experience soon teaches us this method of correcting our sentiments, or at least, of correcting our language, where the sentiments are more stubborn and inalterable." (H1738, SB, B3, P3, S1, p385). "The passions do not always follow our corrections; but these corrections serve sufficiently to regulate our abstract notions, and are alone regarded, when we pronounce in general concerning the degrees of vice and virtue" (H1738, SB, B3, P3, S1, p387).

Cohon observes that Hume's incorporation of the common-point-of-view function may initially appear to run into an insurmountable obstacle. If the agent's passions are not alterable, then when the agent employs the common point of view—thereby regulating her abstract thoughts as well as her evaluative comments—it does not appear that, by imagining herself as holding the common point of view, she ends up having a passion generated within her. The agent seems to end up with an end effect of no more than a belief about the feeling she *would* have if she actually held the point of view she is imagining that she holds. Cohon questions how the agent can know *what* she would feel,

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<sup>60</sup> which he allows for development of an informed action.

and she suggests that perhaps the only apparent answer is that she could know by employing *induction* from her own past experience. (Cohon, 1997). In reflecting on the would-be obvious and fundamental conflict Cohon sets us up for at the launch of her investigation, i.e., Hume's use of the common point of view and his rejection of rationalism as the nature of the motivational process, we at first may suspect that Hume, in fact, does not seem to be able to escape at least more significant involvement of rationalism in this area of motivation than he admits.

Cohon's footnote #12 identifies the following passages in the *Treatise* as the only ones she finds in which Hume mentions the notion that the passions may not permit correction by the operation of the principle of common point of view.<sup>61</sup> So, in cases in which two passions are fixed (inalterable), "these emotions are so different in their feeling, that they may often be contrary, without destroying each other" (H1738, SB, B3, P3, S1, p388). If the agent's felt sentiment due to adopting the common point of view *is*, in fact, the moral sentiment, then it's essential to understand why Hume writes about correcting "the general principle of our blame or praise" (H1738, SB, B3, P3, S1, p386).

Cohon's solution is that *two* sentiments are involved—one which she calls "the situated sentiment", (the one to be corrected), and the sentiment which the imagination manufactures (*the* moral sentiment). Cohon admits that it appears that Hume unnecessarily creates confusion, making it seem as if the situated sentiment is actually the moral sentiment, by his calling it "the general principle of blame or praise." Additionally, of course, Hume claims that even if sympathy, as he has explained it, is not really the cause of moral sentiment, nevertheless, moral sentiment, or "moral taste... whence-ever [it is] deriv'd, must vary according to the distance or contiguity of the objects" (H1738,

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<sup>61</sup> See *Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals* (E2, p227 and 229) as well.

SB, B3, P3, S1, p385). This may seem to suggest that the moral sentiments vary and are not really steady (Cohon, 1997).

Cohon resolves this by considering one way Hume classes passions—which occurs in the text following his assertion that the motivations of "the calm passions" are tangled with processes of reason—he isolates passions that arise in pairs, "Of the influencing motives of the will," he says that these are "of the same kind," one of which is calm and the other violent. (H1738, SB, B2, P3, S3, p282-283). For example, there is a calm (instinctive), and a violent passion of resentment (Cohon, 1997). Hume applies this feature of his theory regarding passions to overcome the objection to his so-called "virtue in rags" feature of it. This is his explanation that an agent's moral sentiments are triggered just by *imagining* those feelings a given trait would generate for her (if permitted by surrounding conditions). And, she imagines she has those feelings when she assumes the common point of view. "The imagination has a set of passions belonging to it..." (H1738, SB, B3, P3, S1, p387). Cohon asserts that, as necessary, the steady sentiment will actually alter the situated one, so that "the general principle of our blame or praise" is corrected by this "other principle" (Cohon, 1997).

#### ***Sec 4.3: Natural usefulness of a common point of view***

Hume presupposes that we all assume everyone else agrees with our moral judgments. Cohon suggests that one explanation for Hume's addition of the common-point-of-view component is merely as a measure to make his theory accommodate this natural attitude. She acknowledges that he must be alluding to a more substantive function for our employment of the common point of view—that it appears more likely that we *desire* to fit our current moral judgments with other moral judgments we hold of a

particular individual. And, most significantly, we *desire* to fit our current judgments with the moral judgments we are aware that other people possess regarding that individual.

Neither Hume nor Cohon suggests that there exist objectively correct moral judgments. The reality is that all our moral judgments are influenced by other judgments we hold that *are* objective. And, causal judgments, sometimes in the form of our presumptions or predictions about how other people will respond to the given morally evaluable trait, do serve a necessary purpose in social cohesion. When we employ the common point of view in moral evaluation, Hume says that it is "from the influence of characters and qualities upon those who have an intercourse with any person, that we blame or praise him" (H1738, SB, B3, P3, S1, p386).

I might loosen that tenet to include (PS7) stronger influence of judgments by people who are merely aware of the judgments of those people who have dealt with the person directly, and even to include influence of judgments by people who are merely familiar with the judgment of the people who are familiar with the judgments of people who have dealt directly with the person, and even of the judgment of others whose relations are possibly many more times removed from direct dealing with the person under evaluation. Alternatively, Cohon's perspective on this point, is that it "gives us not a wide panorama, but an intimate glimpse" (Cohon, 1997). But, (PS8) a morally judged person very often takes on a larger-than-life magnitude and quality of influence on the feelings/moral judgments by people who are much farther removed from the person and events that spawned the wider reputation than for those directly exposed to that person and those events.

Still, Cohon's point is well taken—that the common point of view is remote to us only in that we are directly present with the subject of our moral evaluations in our imaginations instead of our bodies. It's notable here that, as Hume has discussed, we have the capacity to have our ideas enlivened to various levels depending on vast varieties of influences, so it follows that we can feel strongly about people who are located remotely from us, depending upon circumstances in which either real or ideative contributors to the liveliness impose their potential influences by becoming drawn into the relevant associations to further strengthen them.

So, though Cohon modestly limits her own claim to saying that the common point of view "is general or common not in the sense of being a broad view, but rather in the sense that it is a view available to every reflective person and the same for all who adopt it", I suggest that, predicated on the case of reputation, as I've discussed above, the common point of view is arguably a more robust active principle than Cohon allows. This conclusion seems especially defensible considering the actual magnitude of its mitigating influence in daily life. "Reality is perception" and countless other relevant clichés highlight the ubiquitous influence on our passions from the stimuli we receive by virtue of our sense of expectation of others' impressions and ideas, and perhaps especially as those regard the human objects of moral judgment.

To pull the concepts together, Cohon reminds us that we're talking about two naturally related things—a sentiment of approval or disapproval and a causal judgment. The latter refers, of course, to the agent's judgment of what kind and degree of influence the given person or trait under evaluation can be expected to have on people she knows (or knows *of*, per my expanded version of her point). In considering moral judgments,

which are normally judgments about the degree of power possessed by the person or trait under evaluation to *cause* in agents some degree of feeling love or pride, hatred or humility. *These*, as Cohon emphasizes, are the judgments that must be constant, in order for Hume's principle of common point of view to obtain (Cohon, 1997). As she reminds us of Hume's point, "We are never *merely* having, describing or expressing our own feelings, but always also judging that the *trait* in question has the *power* to cause pride or love, humility or hatred (perhaps, specifically, when it is disinterestedly surveyed)" (Cohon, 1997) (emphases mine). Causal judgments of this nature necessarily involve certain empirical predictions, such as that if I were personally in a position to become familiar with the traits of the person whom I'm judging, I would come to love or hate her.

Cohon finds that if our causal judgments regarding love and hatred simply *changed* with every change in our proximal or interpersonal relation to other individuals, we would be without means to form reliable expectations of which ones can cause us feelings of love or hatred, and to what degrees they can do so. She applies this to consequences in sensorially blind choices we would naturally make of those with whom we must associate ourselves in life, e.g., mates, employers, leaders, and so on across the gamut of associates we must acquire to function in life.

***Sec 4.4: "the common point of view" conveyed to benevolence***

***Natural and artificial virtues:*** Natural virtues, for Hume, are those which constitute the human, and which render immediate feelings of pleasure—such as meekness, generosity, benevolence, and charity. **Artificial virtues** are held as virtues entirely on the basis of their usefulness and are only derived from the agent's habitual intentional conformance to a rule—such as justice, honesty, and social custom. The kinds

of judgments discussed in Part B of the analysis are moral judgments, which are sentiments the agent acquires from inputs she receives. Those sentiments reflect her supposition of causal efficacy of either the direct presence, or her lively ideas of another person's artificial virtue. In all of our judgments of artificial virtues or vices, we assume a point of view that is the same for other agents. As Cohen puts it, "There is no differential working of sympathy for which we must compensate" (Cohon, 1997).

Cohon describes her interpretation of the common point of view in two parts.<sup>62</sup> In the first case, every time the agent evaluates another person's virtue from the common point of view, she (the agent) can be expected to feel a *calm* sentiment of approval or disapproval. This is although the sentiment she feels may not be strong enough to change (correct) passions already established in her. In the other case, in making a moral judgment, the agent is also making an objective (causal) judgment. The latter is a judgment about the feeling of love or hatred, pride or humility which the person or trait under evaluation can be expected to cause the agent. Of course, false judgments of these can be seriously problematic. That's why it's so useful to humans to ensure that such judgments are as consistent and correct as possible. The processing of the common point of view promotes such consistency across groups and avoidance of earlier discussed internal contradictions among the individual's judgments. So, on Cohon's view, by assuming the common point of view, our moral sentiments *are* what we imagine. The feeling of pleasure or uneasiness we experience in response to a given person or trait, which feeling amounts to our moral approval or disapproval, *is* the telling sensory

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<sup>62</sup> Cohon notes that Hume examines natural and artificial virtues, e.g., benevolence and justice, in the second *Enquiry* without much note of differences between them. And regarding the common point of view, he merely stresses "finding a point of view that will be the same for all evaluators and will apply to all persons as potential valuees. What he says, though, on this topic is perfectly consistent with his holding the view that with respect to the natural virtues, the common point of view is that of the person evaluated and those who have direct dealings with him" (Cohon, 1997).

property that exposes the onset of a feeling (of love, hatred, etc.) that the agent and her acquaintances will experience in response to that person or trait.

I agree with Cohon's interpretation of Hume's principle, and would only suggest that (PS9) variances in the vivacity of instances involving it may be accounted for by including the influences of more and more remote acquaintances of the agent. I will add here that (PS10) other external factors that might mitigate the potency of the benefits, or of the potential detriments, of the agent's natural employment of the common point of view should be recognized as potentials with mild to extreme consequences to the agent's particular judgments. Cohon has it that the common point of view is a "privileged position from which to make moral evaluations because it is a privileged position from which to make causal judgments about pride, humility, love and hatred, and moral evaluations are inseparable from these" (Cohon, 1997).

My suggested loosening of her terms might arguably (PS11) strengthen the influence of the common point of view to an extent that makes it perhaps more naturally justifiable than she has it in the arrangement yielded by her interpretation of Hume on this point. Though this point is not my primary interest in the matter, it does contribute to it. So, it is well to take any inch here that may be gained by arguability of existence of such additional degrees of mitigating influence in this regard and others as might occur from what I will call the (PS12) greater redundancy of the associations made in the process of the passions bringing the agent ultimately to perform an altruistic act. I'm suggesting, as earlier, that of the relations to others whom she is aware subscribe to the common point of view that is in her interest to employ, the further out from her immediate sphere that these are said to be a factor in the particular common point of view

she employs in a given judgment, and the more effectiveness these can be said to have, perhaps due to their (PS13) greater numbers than those of her limited intimate acquaintances, the more causal efficacy they can be said to have by that pressure of numbers bearing on the idea of the agent and enlivening it. This would seem to diverge from Hume, and from Cohon's (1997) interpretation, in a way that may account for the discrepancy between Hume's premise that there is a natural connection between the agent's capacity to be motivated and the measure of relative closeness to the agent in the relevant respects, and the statistical data appearing to disprove his premise that we are more altruistic toward those more closely related than to those more distant.

Of course, the point is not lost on the genius Hume that if the agent makes her moral judgments from a perspective that did not account for her personal interest, the sentiment yielded would be completely wrong at the basic level. However, in a general habit of evaluating a person or trait from her established sentiments, from her uniquely personal point of view, disregarding the common point of view, the judgment yielded isn't false, strictly speaking. Nor is it missing any foundational provision or warrant for its process. But, it is extremely "inconvenient, and she will soon learn not to do this," as Cohon reflects. So, the agent learns to correct her feelings as much as she can to align them with her own prior feelings and those of other people.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> "In the *Treatise*, the entire discussion of the common point of view is a six-page digression from the account of the origin of the moral sentiments in sympathy, near the end of Book 3; the *Enquiry* passages are even shorter... Hume seems to have seen the addition of the common point of view as a mere fine-tuning of his moral theory, not an overhaul. ... The distinction between artificial and natural virtues that dominates the virtue ethics of the *Treatise* is almost entirely absent from the moral *Enquiry*; the term 'artificial' occurs in the latter only once in a footnote. Gone are the paradoxes of property and promises intended to prove that particular virtues are devised on purpose.... (Cohon, 2010) Next prgh: "By the time of the *Enquiry* (1751), the push down of "sympathy" behind compassion and taste is complete. The reactive aspects of "sympathy" get split off and migrate in the direction of compassion. Compassion takes on the content of qualities useful to mankind as benevolence. Taste dominates the field of fine-grained distinctions in the communicability of feelings between persons ("friends") as well as in the appreciation of beauty. ... Taste gives us an enjoyment of the qualities of the characters of persons in conversation, humor, and friendship that are a super-set of what *empathy* does today in our current usage ... The prospect of "delicacy of sympathy" in the social realm of human interrelations is left without further development... " (Cohon, 2010).

The thrust of this bit of the process of generating a motivation to perform an altruistic action is its transitional role of conveyance in that, as Cohon remarks, "Of course, once we have the useful habit of considering people's character traits from the common point of view, we can make use of it to overcome the difficulties we face in distinguishing our moral sentiment from our more selfish reactions to qualities of mind" (Cohon, 1997). As Hume has it, "the moral sentiment is caused by a special sort of act of contemplation of the trait or person, a contemplative act in which we do not attend to the person's impact on our interested affections but only consider his trait 'in general'" (Cohon, 1997). As Cohon points out, by the time he is working on Book 3 of the *Treatise*, "Hume can offer the common point of view as a ready way for even an ordinary [non-self-examining] person to distinguish the moral sentiment from his interested reactions... interested reactions will be different for different individuals, but the sentiment felt from the common point of view will be the same for all" (Cohon, 1997).

The above account strikes a chord reminiscent of the discussion at the end of Section 1, of Hume's principle of sympathy, in which it is made clear that the agent does not acquire a different object of sympathy than the object of sympathy targeted by the person for whom the sympathy is felt by the agent. The agent doesn't feel the desire to alleviate her own pain. She desires to alleviate the pain of the person for whom she feels sympathy. Of course, our current discussion is about a very different part of the general process of moral evaluation that is taking place, with different operative principles in force. But, arguably, there is a parallel aspect between the two sub-processes in the respect that in both, the agent separates interests and does so on terms of sentiments. In the earlier case, she separates her interest in a desire for herself to be helped from her

interest in a desire for another person to be helped. Here, she separates a desire that she actually has from a desire that she merely habitually accepts that she should have. Both capacities for separations perhaps bode well for an eventual argument that (PS14) the agent can separate her self-considerations from other motivations (common perspectives) toward action in yet other ways, under some conditions, some of which might shape her sensibilities and responses to stimuli in ways that are exceptionally other-directing. This prospect opens a range of possibilities (perhaps related to expansion of modern means in the underclasses who've moved up to the middle class, and/or evolving social attitudes) for slightly inclining the process in ways and directions Hume may not have considered.

We're now reaching a discussion of how the findings on the roles of the stimuli of passions, formation of associations, constituents of sympathy, and the common point of view all converge in the process of emerging passions, along with the introduction of contingencies, and additional formations of associations, to culminate in an act of altruism. From that point, we must finally either be satisfied that we have uncovered at least one plausible possible solution (PS) for the altruism model to be retrofit with some sort of update to enable consistency with the adverse data. Or, we must admit that, based on this analysis, there does not appear to be a detectible space in the model for adjustment(s) permitting the new data *and* allowing the model to remain substantially intact. There is encouragement, in my view, in Hume's statements in the *Treatise*,<sup>64</sup> as discussed in this section, and in Cohon's even stronger version of those, in which a "calm and faint moral sentiment, albeit originally weak (little able to move to action), is

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<sup>64</sup> which he elaborates a bit more on in the *Enquiry* (E2 275-76)

reinforced by sympathy with others all around one who have the same sentiment, until finally its force can exceed that of the interested affections" (Cohon, 1997).<sup>65</sup>

In her closing remarks, Cohon admits there is room for expanded allowance in her view. She estimates, "Hume's view may be that we not only have motives to pursue the virtues but we endorse those motives, or that *we not only approve of the virtues but endorse that very approval*. Hume does say that the moral sentiment "approves of itself as well as of its origin in sympathy" (Cohon, 1997). However, she reminds us that, for Hume, this just means when we think of our approval of a virtue, we feel more pleasure. But, such are only our concerns in that they arguably strengthen the concept of broadened stimulation of passions in the cause of acts of altruism.

And, the above discussion has served to draw out the point that Hume does sufficiently express his position that our approvals can redouble—therefore perhaps allowing that (PS15) these can even further compound themselves into even denser (stronger) layers upon layers of approvals of approvals, that surely stand to enliven an idea of approval. If under some conditions, perhaps stimuli present themselves in conjunction with sources of strong approvals, i.e., strong approvers, representing the common point of view, though in that instance it may appear to an objective observer as a relatively extreme proposition, (PS16) the agent's idea of the approver's representation of the common point of view amounts to an extraordinarily strong stimulus in and of itself for the agent. Perhaps it can be so strong that it so intensifies the vivacity of the idea for the agent that its association with even the most firmly situated triggers of passions can find it increasingly dominant among the relevant sentiments.

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<sup>65</sup> Critics believe Hume forfeits his antirationalist position by adding the common point of view. But, it is "of very great importance; it is the heart of Hume's metaethics" and compatible with his earlier [Book 3] position per Cohon, (2010).

For example, perhaps during the agent's favorite daily TV programs there are frequently broadcasted personal pleas by the agent's idolized superstar entertainer imploring viewers to help starving children of the world's most remote nations, and due to this experiential influence, the agent comes to feel even more strongly approving of *the idea of the desire* to help the remotely located children than of the idea of desire to help children closer. Perhaps Hume could not have anticipated such richness and frequency of visual and auditory influences brought directly the agent's attention.

After Cohon's series of cogent arguments, it remains that this issue in the *Treatise* appears to allow room to make my thesis yet more persuasive—even if I accept that Hume's position on the common point of view is firm and that it is not resolvable along the lines that Cohon has pursued. It opens to countless potential contingent impactors as well as to over-particularization of the model, perhaps to unrealistic extent. It has agents operating in dynamics of individual motivations *and* conformances to common opinion. That would seem to explain sustained widespread movement in altruistic actions. And, perhaps it can account for how the apparently growing tendency of motivation has gained sufficient force to produce the particular kind of altruistic activity that has swept across populations (in both the US and other wealthy nations).

### **Analysis of Hume's Process of Altruistic Motivation Part C: Associations and Alignments**

Passions, newly occurring impressions and ideas, and "*the common point of view*," among other inputs, are all elements meeting in associations, and in associations of associations of perhaps countless finely nuanced influences of varying weaker and stronger degrees, building up in the mind to emergence of a sentiment of sympathy, and on up to benevolence, at the climax of which great density of excited passions and

myriad influences is the motivation to execute an act of altruism. Organizing the primary insights gleaned from the first two parts of the analysis, we consider the concepts that have connected along a line that leads reasonably enough to account for that motivation, and also possibly to reveal any more clear potential explanations for the data discrepancies, discussed in Section 2, with the altruism model.

It makes sense that we constantly have the most "vivid and forceful" possible impression of *ourselves*, as Hume tells us (H1738, B2, P1, S9, p218). And, per his principle of association, the vivacity of a perception transfers to those related to it, i.e., resembling and/or contiguous with it, (and also those related to it by cause and effect). Differences aside, all people share general similarity of bodily structure and kinds of passions. Added resemblances, such as family, ethnic, or national ones, are said by Hume to vivify one's impressions or ideas of certain other people. Further, we've seen in Part 2 how *others'* passions can become associated in *our own* minds with our passions, impressions, ideas, and so on, so that exceptional vivacity is generated that continues to gather force as inputs to its strength continue to contribute to it. So powerful is the ability of the mind to process abstract senses with specifics that an idea—which, per Hume, differs from an impression only in vivacity—can, if vivacity is sufficiently intensified, actually *become* an impression. That is, the agent can "actually experience the passion" (Cohon, 2010).

We also see that, per Hume, we take on the "affections of strangers, and feel pleasure because they are pleased, ...that pleasure of mine can only be caused by sympathy" (H1738, SB, B2, S2, p2-8, and B3, SP3, S1, p7-8). In Cohon's discussion of sympathy "as a mechanism of vivacity-transferal from the impression of the self to the

ideas of the sentiments of others", she distinguishes sympathy's role in Hume's explanation of it as "the origin of all moral approval and disapproval," in contrast to his finding of "our sympathy with others simply as a manifestation of the **sentiment of humanity**" (Cohon, 2010).

On Hume's view, any sentiment-based theory of ethical evaluation is vulnerable to the same objections that concerned him in the *Treatise* (that sentiments vary with spatial and temporal distance from the object of evaluation, yet moral assessments are not altered by these differences alone). He addresses them in the moral *Enquiry* as well, and resolves them by appealing once again to the common point of view. In the *Enquiry* he places more emphasis on the phenomenon of sympathy with the whole of society, which is in part achieved by conversation, as the means to correcting our initial sentiments. (Cohon, 2010).

What happens then appears to be a deeper inclination, in Hume's arrangement, of sympathy toward a social implication for the significance of sympathy and its definition based on the motivations that generate it. The strong influence of the common point of view—though I have accounted for in Part B in a way that appears to me to enhance its fit with Hume's larger theory—does as easily lend itself to speculations about a counter-example to account for its role. That role would be as a more strictly social pleasure-based phenomenon, of which pleasure the agent partakes, than a passion which attaches itself to another person as its object. "Tis true, when the cause is compleat, and a good disposition is attended with good fortune, which renders it really beneficial to society, it gives a stronger pleasure to the spectator, and is attended with a more lively sympathy" (H1738, SB, B3, P3, S1, p21, p585) (Agosta, No Date). And, this sort of comment by

Hume reinforces his connection of motive in personal pleasure to the vivacity of the sentiment of sympathy, so it is ideally in keeping with his larger theory.

### *5.1 Aesthetic motivations*

But, here, it appears the direction we've been led in acquiring insights into associations takes an unexpected turn. Agosta reflects, on "a remarkable development in Hume's thinking,"

Hume moves sympathy from the center to the periphery of his account of human judgments (approbation and disapproval). ... The social advantages of sympathy in forming human relationships—friendship, enjoyment of the “characters of men,” fellow feeling, and sensitivity to how one’s actions have an impact on others—are shifted... amazingly enough in the direction of the aesthetic sense of taste

(Agosta, No Date)

What stands out, for my purposes, from Agosta's above observation is the point about the social advantages of Hume reining in his concept of sympathy to ground it more firmly in his original principles—having it, after all, emerging from the base in the fundamental feelings that stimulate passions, and progressing in its buildup of increasingly enlivening associations that increase its intensity to the point that the strength of its idea is enough actually to motivate action. By this "shift", sympathy is brought more in line with Hume's core assumptions about pleasure for the agent in the act, as is appropriate for best fit into his (Hume's) larger theory.

It had seemed that Hume's concept of sympathy had strayed a bit from that more natural course when it led ultimately to a definition of benevolence in his altruism model that has had it as a much more self-detached concept than the pleasure/pain foundational

premise of his larger theory of human action. In this realignment, Hume imbues his sympathy construct with a stronger character of personal pleasure, via his increased emphasis on an aspect of social group reward as the backdrop for associations generating a sympathetic sentiment.

In this move, as outlined above, which may be fair to call an apparent walk-back by Hume, he goes further, as underscored in Agosta's above remark. In fact, in the sequence of shifts along which we have followed Hume, by this analysis, as he meanders his way through his *Treatise* (which has really proven to be an enquiry more than an exposition) he makes the series of attempts we've observed, in order to position more ideally the altruism component, which he finds most problematic for his general theory. Finally, he goes all the way to placing his concept of the moral sentiment of sympathy along the line of **aesthetics**. This is a turn that understandably shocks Agosta, but, it is certainly a practical move by Hume. After a circuitous exploration, at last, he stably grounds his grand theory of motivation to action on the principle of pleasure and pain as the bedrock stimuli of passions, which essential was, of course, underlying the system.

Hume writes, "the distinct boundaries and offices of reason and of taste are easily ascertained. The former conveys the knowledge of truth and falsehood; the latter give the sentiment of beauty and deformity, vice and virtue" (H1751, A1, S5). As Agosta puts it, Hume is on "a journey back from morality to its foundation and infrastructure in taste. By 1751, "sympathy" [fellow feeling] has been reduced ... to "natural sympathy," And, "The merit of benevolence and its utility in promoting the good of mankind through attributes useful and agreeable to oneself and others looms large in founding morality". (Agosta, No Date)

So, it's clear enough that Hume means to have it that, in the case of altruism, certain passions are generated from pleasure, and under conducive conditions, approval of sympathy is generated, and in sympathy the seed of benevolence is fertilized, and in the generative force of benevolence (i.e., in the enlivening of its idea) that benevolence blossoms into an act of altruism.

### *Sec 5.2 Altruism as Basic*

But, alas, yet another shift—Hume turns to entertain a conception of altruism as *basic*—which would seem to violate his essential concept that a base of nebulous feelings that he has said fundamentally operate by indiscriminately triggering any and all vaguely related sorts of passions, which then compound, coalescing into increasingly complex compounds, with the stronger one's rise in intensity (which particularization is generally dependent on the nuances of the external matter(s) to which the agent is reacting). In this original mix, one or another sentiment eventually starts to take on an attitudinal shape, if you will, to emerge as the agent's dominant internal experience of the moment. But, this introduction of altruism as one of the *basics* from which passions spring would instead have passions springing from the very base while *already having* their own unique, indeed quite specific developmental direction. Such outcomes, as they would be, in effect, relatively precisely directed, are contrary to a fundamental principle in Hume's system, by which base feelings are not otherwise contoured in such a way.

Association does not begin with self-love and change it into a love for another, neither does it introduce the very least element of self-love into the nature of my love for another. On the contrary, it is the original qualities of love which make it possible for the double association to work. And one of these original qualities is

the fact that love is always directed to some sensible being external to us "that is, the original and invariable altruism of love is presupposed by Hume's associational explanation; the associations do not produce the altruism. Without the altruism the associations could never begin to exert themselves. (McGlivary, 1903)

This conception of the moral sentiment of sympathy as a net effect of approbation now appears unstable even in Hume's more expected arrangements of outcomes in sentiments that lead to some action or another. It seems we have an incomplete rationale, then, for an act of altruism as an outcome of sympathetic sentiment, as, after all, we also are alternatively given to comprehend it as a primary stimulus of passions *itself*. Further, that arrangement perhaps comes with the strange consequence of *having it be the cause of itself as its effect* (which question I cannot pursue herein).

We have now nearly run the gamut of relations from passion to altruistic action. Throughout, what has been notably consistent is that in Hume's endeavor to account for the observable consistency of common moral evaluations, he has it that we habitually exploit the convenience of tapping our imaginative resource to render evaluations that are uniform, grounded in natural awareness of self-interest. He comes to it down various avenues of trying the concept, but again and again he does find, "the stronger the relation is betwixt ourselves and any object, the more easily does the imagination make the transition, and convey to the related idea the vivacity of conception, with which we always form the idea of our own person" (H1738, B2, P1, S11, p218). In every instance of association of any (indirect) passion, the idea of the self is especially vivid—powerful, in terms of interactions of passions.

So, in the end, is the inevitable return to the discussion of ethical egoism, introduced early on, in Part A of the analysis. And, as it has turned out, it may not be as easy as Hume seems to entertain as possible in this configuration of altruism as basic, to extricate the *self* as the object of one's beneficence, at least on some latent level, despite his position that it is wrong to think that acquisition of pleasure or avoidance of pain is necessarily an end that passions have in any given instance. At least, we can certainly imagine the agent's passions not having such ends in cases where her own pain or pleasure is *not* at all imminent. But, if we subscribe to Hume's model, it is exceedingly challenging to imagine a deflation of "the idea of our own person." So intense is its vivacity in contrast to all other ideas, to accept that there could be such absence or any notable diminishment would contradict a fundamental of his system (H1738, SB, B2, P1, S9, p219).

(PS17) Perhaps this concept of the continuously lively idea of self is really an impression, as, after all, arguably we are not *merely* an idea to ourselves. We see ourselves in reflective surfaces, feel ourselves in our bodily sensations. But, if the *idea* of ourselves is really just an idea, yet permitted to be so vivid an idea as to compete with the force of an impression, then it seems less than perfect a speculation that this exceptionally lively idea is utterly overpowered as a candidate for object of any action by the agent. But, to subdue it in this manner does not seem to me necessary in order for Hume to make room for the altruistic act. It seems to fit as well as a consequence of the standard progressions of passions, which *all* necessarily have self-welfare at their core, if not as their *conscious* object. After all, to have that self-sense at its core is what it is to *be* a passion, by the terms of Hume's general theory. It appears the notion of a separate

avenue of passions grafted onto the general theory conflicts with its essential theoretical effect, as below:

According to Hume's observation, we are both selfish and humane.<sup>66</sup> We possess greed, and also "limited generosity"—dispositions to kindness and liberality which are more powerfully directed toward kin and friends and less aroused by strangers. ...for Hume...in the absence of organized society...we would care for our friends and cooperate with them, but...self-interest and preference for friends over strangers would make any wider cooperation impossible. (Cohon, 2010)

The above passage tidily reconciles Hume's position on passions rooted in pleasure and pain, from which he claims, on the one hand, that *all* actions spring. On the other hand, Batson's remark on the influence of Hume more ideally reflects my current impression of others' impression of a struggle Hume may be in to position altruism into his larger theory of action, as elaborated by scholars cited herein. Though my own reading of the *Treatise* and the *Enquiry* finds Hume as a nonnormative moral theorist, authors cited herein as well as other readers with whom I've discussed this, differ in perspective.

***Doctrine of Necessity:*** Ultimately, Hume's core premise, that his system operates on his unshakable foundational **Doctrine of Necessity**, persists in holding that *the* cause of *all* human action is the source of stimuli for passions—which source is his pleasure and pain set. Between the works of some authors cited herein, there is a collectively thorough tracking record of at least *some* of the apparent shifting we've discussed in strength of Hume's commitment to his proposition of how altruism was to fit and operate

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<sup>66</sup> In Batson's attempt to agree with Hume he pushes his own empirical conclusion beyond Hume's, claiming that "common sense and obviousness" most reasonably lead us to infer that in *all* cases "selfishness" is our core motivation, "self-interest should underlie friendship for a dependent other" (Batson, 1991, Chp 2, p30).

in his system, and of indicators that Hume was working out his account of altruism *as* he was writing the *Treatise* and that the problem was not fully resolved during the writing of the *Enquiry*. Perhaps even on his fixed primary principles for the phenomenon's existence, he was not fully settled, hence much less so on developmental operations necessary for emergent benevolence to be founded on those. Hume's possible struggle with his own ambivalence on this component of his theory may expose yet another possible solution to the conflicting data, (PS18) in that in going through the process of his own evolving concepts, he neglected the need to provide adequately for typical fluxing social positions on the right thing to do, which is now perhaps better understood as a predictable phenomenon signaling that a moral evolution of a society is in progress.

In addition to the importance of understanding the process in this critical component of the theory, as it is meant by Hume to flow—the value of this assessment of this critical concept in Hume's theory is in its contribution to fuller appreciation of the altruism model as something of a work in progress, even at completion of the *Treatise*. That status ostensibly licenses us to suggest the kinds of structural modifications I have herein posited as potential solutions, which allow adjustments of degrees or other changes to outcomes in attitudes of agents as they pertain to altruistic priorities.<sup>67</sup>

## Section 4: Conclusion

Some scholars accuse Hume of tacking on altruism at a point untenably late in his explication of his system in the *Treatise*, wrenching it in as a parallel operation, and of

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<sup>67</sup> I reject the notion that this self-licensing may be classified as the advent of a "neo-Humean account of altruism, because it is not a modification of the substance of the *Treatise* that I am suggesting in any degree. I'm only suggesting possibilities for either Hume's potential failure to predict what was not predictable during his time, or some miscalculation(s) by what would be tiny degrees, of the amount of actual influence by one or more of the factors he has included in his process may actually have under certain circumstances due to evolving conditions in the world, changes in social direction, etc. Nor am I offering an interpretation of the altruism model of Hume's general theory in the *Treatise*. I am offering no more or less than an analysis of his account in an attempt to understand how it may be said to account, or not, for data that is adverse to its premise.

making other confusing deviations, as we have seen. It does appear he isn't entirely confident in his move to incorporate altruism as a *basic* stimulus of passions, alongside his established set of bedrock stimuli, to account for ubiquitous altruism. And, the confusion upsets the attempt to determine most straightforwardly if there is anything in Hume's general theory, as it is presented in the *Treatise* and essentially reiterated in short in the *Enquiry*, that can be understood as permitting consistency between an essential premise that constitutes the structure of his altruism model—that humans are naturally more altruistic toward people in certain kinds of closer relations with them—and the concrete statistical data I've submitted, which appears to contradict this premise strongly. I have offered suggested potential solutions (PSs) throughout the paper in attempt to allow the adverse data to be understood as consistent with the altruism model.

We can accept that Hume's is a model of altruism which holds that acts of altruism spring from passions rooted in a basic natural principle of altruism itself—though the stimuli of pleasure and pain would relate to altruistic feelings somehow in a more lateral way than if altruism was a result of passions sprung from these bedrock feelings, and was not now classed together with and alongside them. But, if there does exist, for Hume, as well appears he may prefer, that sort of separate strain along which passions rise and associate from a core altruistic stimulus, it seems arguable that these passions, in principle, lead to the same array of alternatives for associations with factors lent to by the common point of view as well as to other external influences on an altruistic agent's priorities, though along a narrower developmental track.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> That said, clarification (revision) of the theory was in order, for Hume to have made comprehensible that the core of his theory really was or was not rooted in the exclusive pleasure/pain set.

In either case, Hume's basic premise for the altruism model as-is appears, based on our examination of its components and series of processes involving them, to remain without any plain rationale, or even any detectible logical connections, or contextual consideration(s) that can be reasoned as allowing for the differential between the model and the evidence of the modern data showing that, in fact, a majority of altruists consistently perform altruistically in the interests of those farthest from them in terms of Hume's proposed relevant relations. However, it does appear that the model may be flexible enough to tolerate at least one creative solution I have proposed in PS18, which would not require Hume to admit any concession. In that solution, it would merely be granted that people's sensibilities are prone to shifting, and when they shift, they frequently become contagious as exciting ideas catch on across populations, so it isn't necessarily unacceptable that for any number of socio-political-economic-cultural reasons, even persisting over a period spanning multiple generations, a tidal wave of otherwise anomalous altruistic leanings overran otherwise more normal influences across populations, pushing sentiments in a direction away from what is normally predictable. He could reason that the sea of sentiment could yet be well predicted to eventually find its level.

If the above solution is permitted, we are left only the task of drawing a conclusion on what outcomes might be possible if we accept that Hume's model is *not* really intended to have altruism as a *primary* stimulus for passions (that lead to altruistic action) in its own right, but means to stick with the claim that *all* actions are rooted somewhere in the standard set of pleasure/pain stimuli. This arrangement entails that altruism originates in these stimuli and develops through associations of passions sprung

from these, as other sentiments do. In this case, I have offered potential solutions PS5 and PS6 which may promise to fit altruism more seamlessly into the larger theory. These would have humans as more rigidly bound behaviorally to Hume's natural hierarchy of interpersonal attachments and its descending degrees of benevolent motivations.

Extrapolating from Hume's proposed internal processes, we can suggest more complex associations, such as in proposed solutions PS4 and PS18, which Hume might have judged as reasonably fitting; and include PS3, effects of advanced technology as bringing people closer in the relevant relations; an evolving social concept, per suggested PS4; or processes of associations of elements evolving in ways Hume had not predicted, as proposed in PS1. Perhaps even subtle disruptions of these internal processes of individuals, submitted in PS18, such as Hume conceptualized the processes, may manifest in ways and magnitudes across entire populations of socially interconnected individuals that can be recognized as living out his theory, but in ways and variations of his vision that are slightly different than he anticipated, or are merely not quite recognizable to him. For example, things or people who may have seemed we would experience as closest to us or more significant to us in ways that are more stimulating to those of our passions from which arise inclinations toward sentiments of benevolence may be superseded in our feelings by competing stimuli we experience as more compelling due to a wide variety of converging social, economic, political, cultural, religious, and communications variables in the increasingly economically close, hence *socially close* corners of the world. This could, for example, include the shift in attitudes about globalization since the end of World War II.

Barring such alternatives as PS1-18, it would appear too difficult to account for such a tremendous discrepancy as exists between Hume's premise regarding the hierarchy of human attachments as they pertain to altruistic action and the conflicting modern data. Left unresolved, the problem negates a significant body of Hume's support for his altruism model in terms of causes of variance in the strengths of passions and of the very triggers for their origination and compound development. That would mean that the natural law of motivation Hume has proposed in his theory appears to fail in the majority of cases. Even if merely a much smaller percentage of acts of altruism were directed at people farthest from us in the relevant relations—for example, if only 10% of charitable contributions were for foreign aid, instead of the actual glaring discrepancy that exists, or if volunteer hours for foreign assistance were far fewer—that should be enough to make the point, on Hume's own terms. And, if many, or even a few, altruists are providing foreign assistance *because* of the greater remoteness of their beneficiaries,<sup>69</sup> as appears to happen in at least some famous cases, this is significant evidence of a discrepancy with the model as-is. But, I have suggested potential solutions herein, some of which are merely minor adjustments in degrees of influence Hume appears to contemplate from one or more stimuli.

On a more general point, of course, arguments supporting a false thesis are adverse to their own conclusion. So, when a premise is proven false, we typically need not address its supporting arguments in order to conclude safely the matter of its falsity. Nor need we undertake to uncover possible reasons the theory might yet in some way *allow* for the falseness of its own essential premise by investigating whether or not the

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<sup>69</sup> i.e., remoteness in terms of the relevant relations expressed by Hume

arguments can remain valid though their existence is only as support for a premise that is proven invalid.

However, with all that said, in the case at hand, despite the contradictory data, we cannot know Hume's premise is false until we're sure there is truly nothing in the *Treatise* that might allow the adverse data to assimilate into the model in some way. Also, Hume's larger theory can be viewed as generally unaffected by the particular problem with the altruism sub-premise. Even if the model must be adapted to permit that some arrangements of stimuli overcome triggers of passions by people closer to us in relevant respects, such an adaptation would not appear to me to overturn or substantially affect the integrity of the general theory of passions as the motivators of human actions, but to offer opportunity for adding a small but critical correction to a sub-system of it.

Hume's revolutionary arrangement of the operations of impressions and ideas of pain and pleasure as efficient causes is a monumental contribution to the field of philosophy and remains perhaps the most intuitively attractive philosophic model of natural human motivation for action. However, the current lack of accounting by the theory's altruism model for the data I've presented appears to disprove the premise of the model. Therefore, although I suggest that problem may not undermine the larger theory, it does grossly impact the plausibility of the model. Therefore, it seems to me that the most appropriate course is to persist, through broader analysis with more abundant and detailed data, in pursuit of the best explanation for the discrepancy and proper modification(s) for the model, just as Hume clearly enough appears to have been doing as he was probing the theory for the best way to insert the model.

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