

Self-Knowledge and Hume's Phenomenology of the Passions

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Abstract

Taxonomies of the passions have long claimed to serve a quest for self-knowledge, by specifying conditions under which certain passions arise, formal objects they possess, and qualities essential to their particular feelings. I argue that David Hume's theory of the passions provides resources for a different kind of self-knowledge – a sceptical self-knowledge depending on our ability to articulate how the passions feel rather than always identifying our passions as tokens of an identifiable passion-type. These resources are distinctions between four qualitative aspects that passions may possess – pleasantness or painfulness, calmness or violence, invigoration or softening, and directedness or lack thereof towards specific actions. Reflection on these aspects produces a more accurate understanding of the nature of our emotions and chastens our judgmental tendencies in ways that benefit both self and others.

1. Introduction

Passions are often mysterious. It is part of the self-reflective nature to question which passions we are experiencing and whether we are prone to particular passions. Do I love him? Is this anger, or fear in masquerade? Am I compassionate, or do I enjoy a sense of superiority in solicitude? It is no easy task to know one's own soul – 'the strangest creature in the world', as Virginia Woolf writes in her essay on Montaigne, 'so complex, so indefinite, corresponding so little to the version which does duty for her in public, that a man might spend his life merely in trying to run her to earth' (Woolf, 1925, p. 60).

Taxonomies of the passions have long claimed to serve this quest for self-knowledge, by specifying conditions under which certain passions arise, formal objects they possess, and qualities essential to their feelings. Naming the passions we experience, it seems, helps us achieve self-knowledge. To name something is to gain power over it, to take the first step in controlling or modifying it.

David Hume's theory of the passions, I will argue, also offers resources for self-knowledge. These resources, however, provide little guidance for the naming and improving quest. Instead, they offer a vocabulary for describing how passions feel. This vocabulary may answer some questions about which passions we experience, but it also

may help us realize that we have no names for some emotional experience, cannot be sure that such experience corresponds to a recognized passion-type, and cannot assume continuity in our experience of the same passion over time. This more Socratic self-knowledge – knowledge of our own ignorance – is more appropriate for the mitigated scepticism that Hume embraces.

The resources in question are distinctions between four qualitative aspects of passions – pleasantness or painfulness, calmness or violence, invigoration or softening, and directedness or lack thereof towards specific actions. The first two are well-recognized in the literature, though there are disputes over how to interpret the second.¹ The third aspect has gone unnoticed, and the fourth is rarely recognized as part of our qualitative experience of the passions. I do not claim to provide a full Humean phenomenology of passions, which would require discussion of passions' bodily manifestations, like the 'evident marks of pride' in 'port and gait' (T 2.1.12.4).² It would also require more discussion of the influence of social relations and especially the operations of sympathy.³ Finally, additional aspects might be consistent with Hume's theory although I have not found them in his work.

In section 2, I address a preliminary objection: that Humean passions, as simple impressions, cannot have multiple qualitative aspects. In sections 3–6, I explain each aspect in turn. I conclude by arguing for the advantages of the sceptical self-knowledge generated by reflection on these aspects: such reflection produces a more accurate understanding of the nature of our emotions and chastens our judgmental tendencies in ways that benefit both self and others.

¹ One dispute concerns whether the calm passions generate any feeling at all. If they do not, a phenomenological analysis of them would be a non-starter. I will argue that this objection misconstrues Hume's statements about the sensibility of these passions and that directedness can be part of their phenomenology.

² Hume is talking about non-human animals here but while arguing that we have much in common with them. References to Hume's works are as follows: *A Treatise of Human Nature* (Hume, 2011): 'T' followed by book, part, section and paragraph number; *Dissertation on the Passions* (Hume, 2007): 'DP' followed by section and paragraph number; *An Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals*, (Hume, 1998): 'EPM' followed by section and paragraph number; *Essays: Moral, Political, and Literary* (Hume, 1985): 'E' followed by page number.

³ I am grateful to Jacqueline Taylor for pointing out the importance of these aspects of Hume's phenomenology.

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2. Multiple Aspects of Simple Passions

As I have indicated, my account of Humean self-knowledge appeals to various qualitative aspects of the passions identifiable by introspection. But this appeal may appear vitiated by Hume's claim that the passions are simple. He writes that simple impressions 'admit of no distinction nor separation' (T 1.1.1.2) and that 'whatever objects are different are distinguishable, and whatever objects are distinguishable are separable by thought and imagination' (the 'Separability Principle') (T 1.1.7.3). If we can distinguish between qualitative aspects of passions, then those aspects appear to be separable, making passions complex.

Yet Hume says that we cannot define pride and humility 'or indeed any of the passions' because they are 'simple and uniform impressions'. The extension of indefinability to 'any of the passions' indicates that this is a problem for all Humean passions, at least when they are experienced alone.⁴ (As we will see, Hume describes compound experiences that constitute the whole 'character' of some passions.) Space precludes a full defense of this claim, but Hume construes even 'mixed' passions, such as hope and fear, as simple impressions. Mixed passions should not be confused with 'complex' impressions, which 'may be distinguish'd into parts' (T 1.1.1.2). As far as I see, Hume never refers to passions as 'complex'. He instead uses the language of 'compounds' or 'mixtures'.⁵ Hume compares impressions, 'especially reflective ones, to colours, tastes, smells'.⁶ Whereas ideas 'never admit of a total union, and are capable of forming a compound by their conjunction, not by their mixture', impressions are capable of both. The mixture creates a new impression whose elements are not experienced as distinct. 'Like colours', the passions 'may be blended so perfectly together, that each of them may lose itself, and contribute only to vary that

⁴ The text is not entirely clear: 'or indeed any of the passions' comes at the end of the sentence, directly modifying the indefinability of pride and humility rather than their simplicity. For an argument that Hume thinks that some complex ideas are indefinable, see Garrett (1997, pp. 102–103). But Hume's parallel explanation of the indefinability of love and hatred shows that it is the passions' simplicity that precludes their definition: 'Tis altogether impossible', he writes, 'to give any definition of the passions of *love* and *hatred*; and that is because they produce merely a simple impression, without any mixture or composition' (T 2.2.1.1).

⁵ This point, though suggestive, is not conclusive, since he also appears to use 'compound idea' to mean a complex one. See, e.g., T 1.4.4.8.

⁶ Of course, colours, tastes, and smells are also impressions.

uniform impression, which arises from the whole' (T 2.2.6.1). Hope is not like an apple, whose color we can distinguish from its smell, but more like its particular color. The color of a uniformly orange apple may be a mixture of red and yellow, but we do not see it as composed of red and yellow parts.

Given this simplicity, how can passions have multiple qualitative aspects? I will not respond to this question at length because other commentators have already done so well. I will, however, outline two different, but related, treatments of Humean simple impressions that explain how those impressions can have multiple aspects, from Daniel A. Schmicking and Hsueh Qu. Each takes its cue from Hume's discussion of distinctions of reasons at T 1.1.7.17–18, with the famous example of a white marble globe. He says that we can view the 'perfectly inseparable' qualities of color and form 'in different aspects, according to the resemblances, of which they are susceptible'.

Schmicking reads these 'aspects' as Husserlian 'abstract moments' (Schmicking, 2004). Abstract moments are not temporal moments but reciprocally dependent parts of some whole, where these parts cannot exist apart from that whole. Although these moments cannot be sensed or imagined as distinct impressions, we can comprehend them by a distinction of reason. Hume's separability principle applies only to wholes with independent or proper parts, not to abstract moments or the 'different aspects' mentioned at T 1.1.7.18. After considering various sensory impressions, Schmicking argues that Humean passions can have abstract moments as well. This reading provides a theoretical apparatus for understanding passions as simple – viz., not separable into parts that could be imagined existing on their own – without denying that we can identify various aspects of those passions.

Unlike Schmicking, Qu frames his account as responding to a problem specific to Hume's theory of the passions. Qu is concerned with the 'duality' of Humean passions – their having both qualitative character and intentionality or directedness. Pride, for example, is both a pleasant feeling and has an object (the self). These two aspects, Qu argues, are distinguishable and separable as abstract ideas but not distinguishable in any particular instance of a passion. The intentionality of pride is not representational but consists in a directedness that is actually '*constitutively determined*' by the qualitative character of the passion – an 'inseparable aspect of its feeling' (Qu, 2012, p. 110).

To explain how simple passions can possess dual aspects, Qu draws on Don Garrett's explication of distinctions of reason. Garrett

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explains Humean abstract ideas as particular ideas that tend to bring to mind resembling ideas (the 'revival set') (Garrett, 1997, pp. 62–64). This tendency allows them to signify generally. We can distinguish the set of white things from the set of spherical things. But we can make no such distinction in a particular instance of sensing or imagining a white sphere, because we cannot imagine whiteness without shape or shape without color. Applying this analysis to the passions, Qu concludes that 'the abstract ideas of intrinsic intentionality and qualitative character are both distinguishable and separable, since these sets are not coextensive', but 'we can neither distinguish nor separate the intrinsic intentionality of a particular passion from its qualitative character' (Qu, 2012, p. 110). Again, intentionality is an inseparable aspect of how a particular passion feels.

Both Schmicking and Qu provide ways of articulating the distinction of reason between aspects of simple passions, and the outlines of their views may be compatible with one another. We have at least two plausible accounts of how simple impressions can have multiple aspects. What we do not yet have, I believe, is a thorough exploration of the aspects that Hume suggests contribute to passions' qualitative feel. The following sections begin that exploration.⁷

3. Pleasure/Pain

In searching for different qualities of simple impressions, we are looking for ways that those impressions resemble one another. Hume says that we recognize distinctions of reason because we see that even in simple impressions 'there might be contain'd many different resemblances and relations'. We notice that a white sphere might resemble a square's color but a ball's shape. Thus 'we find two separate resemblances, in what formerly seem'd, and really is, perfectly inseparable' (T 1.1.7.18). What resemblances does he mention among the passions?

Most salient is pleasantness or painfulness. Sometimes Hume seems even to identify them with the full phenomenological

⁷ One might also object that Hume's claim that our perceptions are perfectly known to ourselves leaves no room for problems with self-knowledge (see T 1.4.2.7 and 2.2.6.2). There are many other passages, however, where Hume acknowledges that we can be mistaken about our passions, including his claims that we can mistake calm passions for reason (T 2.3.3.8, 2.3.8.13) and that we can mistake interested passions for moral sentiments (T 3.1.2.4). For a helpful discussion of this problem that brings out the ambiguity in Hume's 'transparency' claims, see Qu (2017).

experience of the passions.⁸ The pleasing and displeasing qualities of pride and humility are central to his theory that a double relation of impressions and ideas produces these passions. Pride arises when we associate the idea of some attribute with the idea of ourselves – e.g., the idea of some virtue of our character, beauty we possess, riches at our command. These ideas would not produce pride without a corresponding relation of impressions. This relation is resemblance between the pleasure arising from the attribute and the passion of pride itself, which is also pleasing. A contrary resemblance produces humility: ‘The sensation of humility is uneasy, as that of pride is agreeable’, so we feel humility when qualities associated with us displease – vice instead of virtue, deformity instead of beauty, poverty instead of riches (T 2.1.5.9). Likewise, despite complications to account for the displeasure that others feel when they realize that we think well of ourselves, Hume insists that pride is a virtue in part because ‘tis always agreeable to ourselves’ (T 3.3.2.9). Humility, always disagreeable, is likewise a vice.

Pleasing passions resemble one another as well as other pleasant sensations. Thus, in explaining ‘the amorous passion’, Hume notes that the ‘appetite of generation, when confined to a certain degree, is evidently of the pleasant kind, and has a strong connexion with all the agreeable emotions. Joy, mirth, vanity, and kindness are all incentives to this desire’. When we feel one pleasant emotion, others follow because they resemble the first. Unpleasant emotions have the contrary effect; ‘sorrow, melancholy, poverty, [and] humility are destructive’ of the same appetite (T 2.2.11.2).

Hume appears to think that all passions are either pleasant or painful. But does pleasantness/painfulness exhaust their qualitative character? After explaining that pride and humility have self as object ‘by an original and natural instinct’, he identifies a ‘second quality’ of these passions – ‘their sensation, or the peculiar emotions they excite in the soul, and which constitute their very being and essence. Thus pride is a pleasant sensation, and humility a painful; and upon the removal of the pleasure and pain, there is in reality no pride nor humility’ (T 2.1.5.4). Likewise, he seems to identify ‘momentary pain or pleasure’ with ‘the present sensation’ of a

⁸ It is not surprising, then, that he has been interpreted this way. For instance, Robert Solomon says that ‘for Hume . . . an emotion was essentially a sensation (an ‘impression’) that had one of two qualities. It was pleasant (as in pride, for example) or it was unpleasant (as in hatred, for instance)’ (Solomon, 2007, p. 138).

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passion (T 2.2.9.2). To feel a passion seems to be to feel some kind of pleasure or pain, or perhaps a confusing mixture of the two.⁹

Despite the centrality of pleasure and pain to the qualitative experience of a passion, there are strong reasons for acknowledging other aspects of that experience. If there were no other aspects, the difference between the feel of agreeable passions would be a brute, ineffable fact. The only alternative to this unsatisfying conclusion would be the suggestion that all agreeable (or disagreeable) passions feel the same. There would be no phenomenological difference between pride and love. But Hume knows that these two sensations feel quite different from one another. The 'sensation' of pride¹⁰ does not have 'any thing in common with that tender emotion, which is excited by a friend or mistress' (T 2.2.1.2). To say it has nothing in common must be an overstatement, since Hume identifies both emotions as pleasant. Nonetheless, they feel different from one another. There are other aspects of their qualitative character. When he says that removal of pleasure and pain constitutes a removal of the passions, he therefore means that pleasure is an essential but not the sole attribute of pride.¹¹

4. Calmness/Violence

Hume highlights another aspect of the qualitative feel of passions in his introduction to *Treatise 2* – their calmness or violence. But this introduction has proved misleading. It appears to be a taxonomic divide akin to his distinction between direct and indirect passions; indeed, he begins his 'Division of the subject' by situating the passions in his taxonomy of perceptions from *Treatise 1*. Passions are not thoughts (ideas) but feelings (impressions), and they are not sensations or bodily pains/pleasures (original impressions) but secondary or reflective impressions. He then adds:

⁹ Hume recognizes that we experience bodily pains and pleasures that are not passions (but tend to generate them) as well as pains and pleasures from our own ideas and from interactions with others.

¹⁰ Hume uses the term 'self-love' here, but the context shows that he is talking about pride.

¹¹ The passions might also be multiple varieties of pleasures and pains. The additional qualitative aspects, then, would be ways of articulating the differences between one pleasure (or pain) and another. For Hume's acknowledgement of the variety among pleasures, see T 3.1.2.4. See also T 2.3.9.31 for his discussion of differences in sensation between different kinds of love.

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

Is Hume following, as James Fieser claims, the long tradition of distinguishing between a class of calm affections – variously understood as arising from adequate ideas, instincts, or rational apprehension – and a class of violent passions, arising from inadequate ideas, bodily disturbances, or confused sensations? (1992, p. 6). On the contrary, Hume actually subverts this tradition in important ways, as I have argued elsewhere (Watkins, 2019b). These traditional distinctions come with a general approval of calm affections and disapproval of violent passions. Although Hume notes that the virtue of strength of mind ‘implies the prevalence of the calm passions above the violent’, he does not identify calm passions with virtuous ones or violent passions with vicious ones (T 2.3.3.10).¹² The contrast is striking between his presentation of this distinction and that of his own contribution to the taxonomy of the passions – the indirect/direct distinction.¹³ The former is full of conditionals and passive voice: the impressions ‘may be divided’ and ‘have been commonly distinguish’d’; hence this ‘vulgar and specious division’, ‘far from exact’, for the sake of order. The latter distinction between direct and indirect ‘occurs’ ‘when we take a survey of the passions’, and it structures the intricate discussion that follows (T 2.1.1.4). Despite the reference to order, the calm/violent distinction does not structure Book 2 at all. The direct/indirect distinction captures, he believes, an important truth about the differences between passion-types. The calm/violent distinction, on the other hand, bears no such weight.

¹² On this point, see Watkins (2019a, pp. 131–32).

¹³ On the originality of this distinction, see McIntyre (2000, pp. 78–79).

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As Hume tells us immediately after introducing it, any type of passion can be calm or violent. We can experience calm anger and violent appreciation of beauty.

As the last possibility indicates, this distinction has nothing to do with violence as aggression. Nor does it indicate a passion's efficacy in motivating action. "Tis evident", Hume writes, 'passions influence not the will in proportion to their violence, or the disorder they occasion in the temper; but on the contrary, that when a passion has once become a settled principle of action, and is the predominant inclination of the soul, it commonly produces no longer any sensible agitation' (T 2.3.4.1). Hume calls the efficacy with which a passion motivates 'strength' (opposed to weakness). Violence, on the other hand, is the feeling of a passion as disturbing, agitating, or perhaps exciting or arousing.

Rather than being a distinction between kinds of passions, calmness/violence is another way that passions can resemble one another (or fail to do so). Evidence that Hume accepts this view comes from his discussion of some puzzles about love and hatred. He reminds the reader that, unlike ideas, passions 'are connected only by their resemblance, and . . . where any two passions place the mind in the same or in similar dispositions, it very naturally passes from the one to the other'. Dissimilar passions have the contrary effect. Among the dissimilarities that can produce this 'repugnance' is a difference in level of calmness/violence: 'A man, when calm or only moderately agitated, is so different, in every respect, from himself, when disturb'd with a violent passion, that no two persons can be more unlike; nor is it easy to pass from the one extreme to the other, without a considerable interval betwixt them' (T 2.2.2.22).

If 'disturb' or 'agitate' suggest unpleasantness, they are misleading. Hume describes many pleasing passions as violent (e.g., love, joy, and pride). In fact, he believes that excitement (to a point) is in itself pleasant. In explaining how custom strengthens passions while also making them calmer, he observes that the difficulty of trying to do or understand anything new creates arousal. 'As this difficulty excites the spirits, 'tis the source of wonder, surprize, and of all the emotions, which arise from novelty; and is in itself very agreeable, like every thing, which enlivens the mind to a moderate degree'.¹⁴ But this enlivening is not identical with pleasure, as the reference to moderation suggests. Calmness/violence cannot be reduced to

¹⁴ See also T 1.3.10.10's reference to the 'agreeable effect of exciting the spirits'.

the pleasure/painfulness of a passion. Beyond a certain degree, arousal becomes painful. Moreover, any agitation can become unpleasant if it accompanies an unpleasant passion. ‘Tho’ surprize be agreeable in itself, yet as it puts the spirits in agitation, it not only augments our agreeable affections, but also our painful’ (T 2.3.5.2). The idea here is not that the concomitance of surprise – a typically pleasant passion – with distinct, painful passions produces an overall feeling of pain. Instead, the agitation of surprise gets transferred to the painful passion. Although this interpretation is controversial,¹⁵ I take this to be what Hume means by his ‘conversion principle’, summarized in this same paragraph: *‘every emotion, which precedes or attends a passion, is easily converted into it’*. The emotion that is converted is of a subordinate passion; its violence is transferred to the ‘predominant’ passion (T 2.3.4.2).

Is a passion’s violence then a separable impression, which can be detached and transferred from one passion to another? I do not think so. Imagine you are feeling pride from an accomplishment, and as you bask in that agreeable situation, meet your lover for a romantic evening. Let us stipulate that your love is greater than your pride at this moment; if so, Hume would predict that the ‘agitation’ of pride would get transferred to the love, making the latter passion more ‘violent’. But this does not mean that at any particular moment you could feel love – a simple impression – without any violence at all. We always experience the passion with a particular level of violence, even if that violence comes from a distinct passion through a causal process so instantaneous that we are unaware of it. The violence of a particular passion is thus inseparable from our experience of it; we cannot imagine experiencing a passion with no level of agitation whatsoever.

But do we always experience passions with a particular violence? Calmness and violence are poles of a continuum, and Hume sometimes seems to indicate that at one extreme of that continuum, we cease to feel a passion although we are still having it. Again, passions ‘may decay into so soft an emotion, as to become, in a manner imperceptible’ (T 2.1.1.3). Likewise, when he explains the confusion of reason with calm passion, he identifies their resemblance as a lack of feeling: ‘certain calm desires and tendencies, which, tho’ they be real passions, produce little emotion in the mind, and are more known by their effects than by the immediate feeling or sensation’

¹⁵ For a discussion of this controversy, see Watkins (2019a, pp. 148–50).

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are mistaken for reason 'because their sensations are not evidently different' (T 2.3.3.8).

I do not think we can take these passages to imply that Hume believes that we can have entirely unconscious passions, of which we have no sensation whatsoever. This view would conflict with his description of the impressions as feelings, his faith in the power of reflection to illuminate consciousness, and his insistence that the sensations of passions constitute their being and essence. There are helpful qualifiers in these passages: the calm passions become imperceptible *in a manner*;¹⁶ they are *more* known by their effects than their sensation. And as Qu points out, to say that the sensation of calm passions resembles that of reason is not to imply an absence of all sensation, as Hume describes the operations of reason as having a distinct phenomenology as well (Qu, 2018, pp. 451–54). But we can say more about how we feel such passions on Hume's theory – namely, we feel their aiming at ends. I explain this point in section 6.

5. Elevation/Softening

When considering a puzzle about respect and contempt, Hume explicitly distinguishes another quality of passions from their pleasantness or painfulness: they can be either elevating or softening. Respect and contempt are mixtures of love and humility, on the one hand, and pride and hatred, on the other. The pleasing qualities that produce love when observed in another also produce pride when we recognize them in ourselves. But as we compare ourselves to another person, we experience pain if we judge ourselves lacking in those same qualities. The resulting humility, mixed with love, produces respect. Likewise, recognizing pleasing qualities in ourselves, in comparison with others who lack them, produces the mixture of pride and hatred that constitutes contempt. The puzzle, then, is: why do we ever experience love without respect, or hatred without contempt?

Hume responds by arguing that some pleasing qualities are more consonant with pride than others, and some displeasing qualities more consonant with humility. After reminding the reader that love

¹⁶ Such sensations might be akin to chronic pain: being distracted, the sufferer might not always notice the pain; though when her attention is re-oriented to it, she experiences herself as noticing something that was continually present. Likewise, someone with tinnitus might get some relief by focusing on other sounds so she does not notice the always-present ringing in her ear.

and pride are 'always agreeable' and humility and hatred always 'painful', he adds:

But 'tho this be universally true, 'tis observable, that the two agreeable, as well as the two painful passions, have some differences, and even contrarieties, which distinguish them. Nothing invigorates and exalts the mind equally with pride and vanity; tho' at the same time love or tenderness is rather found to weaken and infeeble it. The same difference is observable between the uneasy passions. Anger and hatred bestow a new force on all our thoughts and actions; while humility and shame deject and discourage us. Of these qualities of the passions, 'twill be necessary to form a distinct idea. Let us remember, that pride and hatred invigorate the soul; and love and humility infeeble it. (T 2.2.10.6)

More elaboration here would be helpful: why does Hume claim that love or tenderness weaken or enfeeble the soul? And what does 'enfeebling the soul' mean anyway?

Note that this passage indicates that Hume distinguishes the invigorating quality of a passion from its pleasure: pride and love are both pleasant passions, but one is invigorating and the other enfeebling. Nor can we map this distinction onto the violent/calm distinction, although violence might seem akin to invigoration. Hume explicitly categorizes all of the passions listed here as typically violent, including enfeebling love and humility. Although any passion can be calm or violent, he would not identify a passion as both typically violent and typically *not* invigorating if these terms referred to the same quality. Moreover, a feeling of humility that is very violent in Hume's sense – viz., involving an intense agitation – can also be very discouraging or dejecting. In fact, the enfeebling aspect of humility would increase with its violence. So not only can we not identify violence with invigoration; in some cases, there will be an inverse relationship between them.

Hume also says that the invigorating passions of anger and hatred 'bestow a new force on all our thoughts and actions', which might suggest the passions becoming stronger in his technical sense – that is, more likely to motivate action. But he claims that pride is not a motive at all. It is among the 'pure emotions in the soul, unattended with any desire, and not immediately exciting us to action'. The quintessentially invigorating passion motivates no specific action at all. Love and hatred, in contrast, 'are not completed within themselves, nor rest in that emotion, which they produce, but carry the mind to something farther' (T 2.2.6.3). Hatred reliably produces

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anger, or a desire for the misery of our enemies. The production of this desire does not make hatred intrinsically motivating: hatred and anger are distinct passions, 'only conjoin'd . . . by the original constitution of the mind' (T 2.2.6.6). But as I will explain, we can think of anger as part of the 'character' of hatred. In this sense, hatred might be a strong passion leading to a specific action or actions. But an invigorating passion 'bestows a new force on *all* our thoughts and actions' (emphasis added). To be an invigorating passion is something other than being a strong one.

Nonetheless, the distinction Hume makes here does relate to action and motivation. To see this, let us examine another passage referring to the invigorating quality. In 'Of the Will and Direct Passions', he considers various factors that affect the passions, including that 'a very great distance [in time or space] increases our esteem and admiration for an object' (T 2.3.8.1). Central to his explanation of this effect is the idea that opposition can produce invigoration or elevation of soul: he uses the same language as when talking about pride and anger's common quality: 'Any opposition which does not entirely discourage and intimidate us, has rather a contrary effect, and inspires us with a more than ordinary grandeur and magnanimity. In collecting our force to overcome the opposition, we *invigorate the soul, and give it an elevation* with which otherwise it wou'd never have been acquainted' (T 2.3.8.4, italics added). Conversely, 'the soul, *when elevated with joy and courage*, in a manner seeks opposition, and *throws itself with alacrity into any scene of thought or action*, where its courage meets with matter to nourish and employ it' (T 2.3.8.9, italics added).

Hume thus recognizes that certain passions, even if they do not directly motivate a particular action, prime us to perform actions in general, especially ones that appear challenging or difficult. The claim is plausible: these passions provide not only energy, but a sense that one's actions can be effective. Some recent psychological research supports this idea, at least with respect to pride.¹⁷ These emotions make it more likely for us to act on desires that occur to us while feeling them. They may even make us likely to seek out desires – to look about us for something to work on, perform, or overcome. They create a sense of agency rather than passivity. This effect is more than the mere production of energy. Fear or anxiety might

¹⁷ For a summary of this research, see Williams (2018, pp. 238–39). This sense of empowerment may be mistaken. An angry person may believe that her anger gives her power even if it actually makes her actions less effective.

produce energy but be paralyzing, so that the energy cannot be spent in action.

‘Elevating the soul’ suggests the metaphor of ‘greatness of soul’, long associated with a kind of pride. Thus Hume writes in the section on greatness of mind that ‘a well-regulated pride . . . secretly animates our conduct’ (T 3.3.2.13). Is the quality of being invigorating just a quality of pride, rather than of multiple passions? Hume does say in this same paragraph that ‘whatever we call *heroic virtue*, and admire under the character of greatness and elevation of mind, is either nothing but a steady and well-established pride and self-esteem, or partakes largely of that passion’ and then counts courage among the heroic virtues. But while pride is the quintessentially invigorating passion, it is not the only one.

We have seen that Hume identifies other passions that have the quality. Even if courage¹⁸ is a form of pride or a mixed passion including pride, joy and anger are not, and Hume says that they are invigorating. It may seem that anger always carries a tincture of pride, if we conceive anger as a response to feeling slighted or wronged. We can only feel wronged if we conceive ourselves as worthy of better treatment, which is to possess some pride. This conception of anger has deep roots in traditional theories – for instance, in Aristotle, Cicero, and Aquinas.¹⁹ It remains popular in contemporary emotion theory.²⁰ It is not, however, Hume’s view. Again, he believes that hatred reliably produces anger. But any enduring quality of a person that produces pain or aversion in others can produce hatred. ‘One that is disagreeable by his deformity or folly is the object of our aversion’, he writes, ‘tho’ nothing be more certain, than that he has not the least intention of displeasing us by these qualities’

¹⁸ Hume consistently treats courage as a passion. See T 2.2.12.6, DP 2.7, and EPM 7.26.

¹⁹ In the *Rhetoric*, Aristotle says that ‘anger may be defined as a desire accompanied by pain, for a conspicuous revenge for a conspicuous slight at the hands of men who have no call to slight oneself or one’s friends’ (1984, 1378a31–3, p. 2195). In the *Tusculan Disputations*, Cicero defines anger as a ‘desire to punish a person who is thought to have harmed one unjustly’ (2002, p. 46). For Aquinas, anger is ‘the desire to hurt another for the purpose of just vengeance’ (Aquinas 2020, ST I–II 47, 1).

²⁰ For instance, Richard Lazarus proposes that anger depends on an appraisal that ‘one’s ego identity’ has been threatened, and that ‘someone is accountable and has full control over the demeaning action’ (Lazarus, 1991, p. 828). Solomon argues that ‘anger is basically a judgment that one has been wronged or offended’ – that it ‘involves the perception and judgment of a setback or an offense’ (Solomon, 2007, pp. 18, 20).

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(T 2.2.3.4). We might try to justify hatred or its consequent anger by imputing vice to people who annoy us for morally innocent reasons, but we need not actually feel slighted, since 'independent of the opinion of iniquity, any harm or uneasiness has a natural tendency to excite our hatred' (T 2.2.3.9). Humean anger, then, as the natural result of Humean hatred, implies no necessary sense of injury and therefore no necessary underlying pride.

Does anger have an elevating effect? It is difficult to know how to begin answering this question, although the feminist reclaiming of anger in the service of power is suggestive.²¹ I find some evidence, however, in the greatest novel of the great nineteenth-century psychologist, George Eliot. The heroine of *Middlemarch* has discovered the man she loves and respects in a compromising position with another woman. She hastily leaves, and the narrator describes the 'fire of Dorothea's anger' thus:

Any one looking at her might have thought that though she was paler than usual she was never animated by a more self-possessed energy. And that was really her experience. It was as if she had drunk a great draught of scorn that stimulated her beyond the susceptibility to other feelings. She had seen something so far below her belief, that her emotions rushed back from it and made an excited throng without an object. She needed something active to turn her excitement out upon. She felt power to walk and work for a day, without meat or drink. (Eliot, 2003, pp. 787, 775–76)

Being 'animated by a more self-possessed energy' and needing 'something active to turn [one's] excitement out upon' strikes me as an apt description of what Hume means when he says that such passions invigorate the soul.

What of 'enfeebling' passions? Hume names humility and love; it is safe to add joy's opposite, sorrow, to this list. Not all forms of sorrow have this effect. After all, there is much sorrow in Dorothea's anger. And Hume acknowledges that grief can lead to anger.²² But then there is the sorrow that remains when anger is gone, leaving Dorothea crying all night on a cold floor. A gentler melancholy enfeebles too.

²¹ For applications of closely related points to Hume's treatment of resentment, see Baier (1980) and Taylor (2015, pp. 172–79). For Hume, resentment is anger that arises from a sense of injury. See T 2.3.3.9.

²² See, T 2.1.4.3, T 2.1.12.8 and DP 2.7.

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When we turn to love, we confront a problem with Hume's terminology. First, he must have in mind only specific kinds of love. Some love rivals pride for invigoration and elevation. He hints at the variety of love he has in mind, referring to 'love or *tenderness*' (italics added). Later, listing qualities that he thinks well-suited to produce love but not pride, he includes 'good nature, good humour, facility,²³ generosity, [and] beauty' (T 2.2.10.8). The relevant form of love would be that generated by these gentle traits. I imagine the love one feels for sweet children, or the woman in my mother's hometown whom everyone called 'Aunt Billie', regardless of relation. But I can also imagine that Hume has in mind something like the friendship love he describes in 'Of Polygamy and Divorces' – 'a calm and sedate affection, conducted by reason and cemented by habit' (E 189). It would be difficult to maintain a spirit of invigorated pride if suddenly confronted with the object of such loves.²⁴

Second, even if we understand love to refer only to these tender feelings, 'enfeebling' connotes a negativity Hume cannot intend for a passion so pleasurable and with such good effects. It is calming or tempering, not debilitating. I therefore propose the term 'softening' to refer to this quality of the passions. If the invigorating passions prime us to perform actions in general, the softening ones coax us to slow down.

6. Direction

Finally, Hume identifies one other quality in which passions can resemble one another – their 'impulses or directions'. Surprisingly, he treats the tendency of passions to motivate actions or even produce desires that motivate actions as part of their qualitative character.²⁵ That such tendencies are part of some passions' feel helps him explain why pity or communicated sorrow tends to produce something like love rather than something like hate. This is a problem

²³ 'Facility' here must be in this sense: 'The quality of being agreeable, courteous, or accommodating; easy-going nature; affability, pleasantness, kindness, courtesy'. OED online 3rd edition.

²⁴ Cf. Somerset Maugham in *The Moon and Sixpence*: 'There is in love a sense of weakness, a desire to protect, an eagerness to do good and to give pleasure – if not unselfishness, at all events a selfishness which marvelously conceals itself; it has a certain diffidence' (Maugham, 1944, p. 112).

²⁵ Although our analysis of this quality differs slightly, I am here influenced by and indebted to Qu, who also argues that Humean passions' intentionality is part of their qualitative character (Qu, 2012).

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for Hume because pity arises when we feel someone else's sorrow by sympathy, or the adoption by contagion of others' passions.²⁶ According to Hume's theory of the double relation of impressions and ideas, pain received from another person should generally produce hatred. Some quality of the other person causes one pain, and pain resembles hatred in its painfulness. Yet 'there is always a mixture of love or tenderness with pity' (T 2.2.9.1). To explain this apparent anomaly, Hume writes that 'tis not the present sensation alone or momentary pain or pleasure, which determines the character of any passion, but the whole bent or tendency of it from the beginning to the end. One impression may be related to another, not only when their sensations are resembling, as we have all along supposed in the preceding cases; but also when their impulses or directions are similar and correspondent' (T 2.2.9.2).

The chain here is somewhat tangled: pity, like benevolence, 'is a desire of happiness to another, and aversion to his misery' (T 2.2.9.3). It therefore resembles benevolence in its 'bent and tendency'. But benevolence, Hume believes, has a natural tie to love: love reliably produces benevolence, although they are distinct passions. Thus pity tends to produce love as well.

The 'bent or tendency' of passions is another way in which passions can resemble one another. It is a quality of those passions that either are desires (like anger, a desire for the misery or another) or reliably produce desires (like hatred, which generates anger).²⁷ For this resemblance to obtain, the 'character' of love or hatred must be determined partly by what are strictly speaking effects of these passions. Hume insists that benevolence is distinct from love because he believes that one may feel love without the desire for well-being arising until 'the ideas of the happiness . . . of our friend' occur to us (T 2.2.6.5). Once we consider that happiness for some reason, we desire it, but meanwhile love might not express itself this way.

²⁶ Sympathy is not a passion, nor a moralized concept in itself, but a mechanism of the human mind by which affections and opinions pass from one person to another. See T 2.1.11.

²⁷ Radcliffe argues that Hume's theory of motivation does not imply that motives are belief-desire complexes as in contemporary 'Humean' theories. See Radcliffe (2018, pp. 15–17). Qu applies Hume's analysis of parallel direction to pride (Qu, 2012, p. 105). But Hume cautions that we should 'look for instances of this peculiar relation of impressions only in such affections, as are attended with a certain appetite or desire; such as those of love and hatred', excluding the application of the concept to pride and humility (T 2.2.9.2).

Yet when Hume introduces the relation between love/hatred and benevolence/anger, he writes that the former passions ‘are always follow’d by, or *rather conjoin’d with* benevolence and anger’ (T 2.2.6.3, italics added). He continues to refer to the relation as a conjunction in the following.²⁸ What he seems to be suggesting (inchoately) here is that we commonly experience love and hatred as an anticipation – a reaching toward another feeling, itself a motive that goes beyond the immediate sensation of these passions in isolation. Love is naturally the beginning of benevolence: when the requisite ideas occur to the lover, desire for the well-being of the beloved becomes part of her experience of love. This suggestion helps explain why people believe such a desire to be an essential part of love, although on Hume’s analysis this belief is mistaken.

If the above account is correct, passions that reliably generate desires share the quality of directedness toward some object and, though they are not desires, resemble desires in this respect. A desire, for Hume, is a motive to action: to experience a passion with this quality, then, is to experience oneself as motivated to a particular action. This feeling is part of the phenomenological experience of the relevant passions. In cases of love/hatred and benevolence/anger, this experience, unlike that of a single passion, is not simple. It is the experience of a compound passion. But just as we rarely dissect our impression of an apple into distinct impressions of color, taste, and smell, we do not typically dissect our experience of love into the pleasant feeling directed toward another person and our desire to benefit her. Both are part of the ‘character’ of our typical experience of love.²⁹

The feeling of directedness is not identical to the will, which Hume defines in the *Treatise* as ‘*the internal impression we feel and are conscious of, when we knowingly give rise to any new motion of our body, or new perception of our mind*’ (T 2.3.1.2). Directedness, in contrast,

²⁸ Hume distinguishes a conjunction from a mixture of passions at the beginning of this section. Ideas only form conjunctions, not mixtures. Yet in the section on the ‘amorous passion’, he describes sexual desire as proceeding ‘from a mixture of love and hatred with other affections’ and as derived from ‘the conjunction of three different impressions or passions’ (T 2.2.11.1). He also describes the combination of love with pity and hatred with malice as mixtures (T 2.2.9.1).

²⁹ Interpreting the bent and tendency of a passion as a feature of that passion’s phenomenological character does not eliminate the possibility that passions also have the kind of causal intentionality that others have proposed – that is, that Humean passions are intentional insofar as they have causal links to ideas. On this point, see Qu (2012, p. 111).

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can be felt before acting or without the motive leading to action at all. Although love and hatred have the quality of directedness, they do not always lead to action. And even desires can fail to do so; they may be frustrated by external circumstances, awareness of one's incapacities, or conflicting motives. They nonetheless possess the character of directedness.

We can now return to the puzzling claims Hume makes about calm passions being 'more known by their effects than by the immediate feeling or sensation' (T 2.3.3.8). Given his definition of passions as reflective impressions, the suggestion that passions might be known by their effects rather than by their sensations is problematic. Impressions are feelings,³⁰ and he claims that the sensations of pride and humility 'constitute their very being and essence'. It cannot be, therefore, that we have passions without feeling them at all. But Hume does not say that we feel nothing in experiencing calm passions; they are only 'more known' by their effects.³¹ These effects might be the impression of the will, actions themselves, or perhaps desires in the case of a compound of love and benevolence, for instance. In this case, the feeling of the effect would count as part of the character of the passion, though not an 'immediate feeling', as it is mediated by another passion we can separate in the abstract.

Introducing the possibility of calm passions, Hume names a set of 'desires and tendencies' that are 'readily taken for the determinations of reason'—'benevolence and resentment, the love of life, and kindness to children; or the general appetite to good, and aversion to evil consider'd merely as such' (T 2.3.3.8). But he later suggests that any passion that becomes 'a settled principle of action' can be calm (T 2.3.4.1). ('Principle' refers here to a source, not a rule.) Any desire experienced often, through the force of custom, can become a more efficacious motive at the same time as it becomes a less agitating emotion. There is a sense, then, in which we feel such passions less. But we still feel them, in part because to feel ourselves motivated *is* to feel the motivating passion, and sometimes the passion it is typically compounded with as well.

What would such a feeling be like? It cannot be a compound of a passion-feeling with an idea of some desire's object. The idea of such an object would be separable from the feeling (since we could have the same idea without feeling any passion about it, or while

³⁰ See T 1.1.1.1.

³¹ But see T 2.2.8.4, where Hume refers to our being 'insensible' of a sensation.

feeling a different passion about it). According to Hume's separability principle, then, desiring passions would all be complex because they would be made up of two separable components. But as a single passion, desire is simple. The feeling of love plus benevolence may be a compound, but Hume cannot say that the feeling of benevolence alone is.

Instead, such passions would include what Peter Goldie calls 'feeling towards'— an 'unreflective emotional engagement with the world beyond the body' (2002, p. 241).³² (It is 'unreflective' because it does not require consciousness of the emotion, although humans acquire the capacity for such consciousness as they move away from infancy.) Goldie thinks that the nature of this essentially personal feeling cannot be adequately characterized from an impersonal, theoretical perspective. But he uses the example of Irene, 'an icy-cool ice scientist', to illustrate the difference between a judgment without feeling about a danger and a fearful feeling-toward the object of that danger. Irene, cognizant of the dangers of falling on ice but never having experienced such a fall, will have a transformed phenomenological experience of ice after falling. She now thinks of the ice '*with fear*', and this new way of thinking has effects throughout her mental economy (Goldie, 2002, p. 245). Before she recognized that she should try to avoid falling on the ice; now she desires to avoid the ice-as-fearful-object. She can empathize with others' fear, imagine fearful experiences she has not yet had, and re-imagine her own past experiences of danger.

To bring this analysis to Hume's theory of the passions, consider a standard instance of Humean benevolence, a father caring for his child. The father habitually prepares dinner for his daughter every evening. This habit grows out of his love for her, which produces a desire for her well-being, including an aversion to her hunger. We can consider a Humean desire as a feeling-toward an object, which involves attraction to the object's attainment and aversion to its not being attained. Assuming that father and daughter are food secure and in affluent enough circumstances to rarely encounter obstacles to meals, the father's feelings will be calm. His desire to feed his daughter will not agitate him positively or negatively, yet he will feel himself desiring that she eat insofar as he experiences himself as motivated to prepare dinner.

Suppose circumstances were to change and he struggled to find food for his daughter. He would then experience his desire as more

³² Qu indicates the similarity between Goldie's account and his own (Qu, 2012, p. 114n25).

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agitating: the prospect of his daughter's going hungry confronts him with horror. Because it is a prospect for a future event, it presupposes an idea: he must imagine her experiencing the pain of progressively stronger hunger.³³ But the desire does not contain the idea; it is not itself a representation of the hunger. It is instead a way of feeling-toward that hunger, much as Irene feels-toward the ice after her fall. In other words, the desire is not an idea; it is a way of experiencing the idea.

If there is a real danger that the father will be unable to feed his daughter, he experiences the idea of her hunger with fear or, in more extreme cases, grief. The pain of this emotion may be the most salient aspect of his experience, but if the situation is not hopeless, he may feel the direction of his benevolence most strongly, as he tries harder to find her sustenance. In the everyday situation where he has no trouble providing this sustenance, however, all he may feel is his directedness toward the end of providing for her welfare. But this feeling too is an aspect of his experience of benevolence.

7. Conclusion

'The root function of language', James Baldwin writes, 'is to control the universe by describing it' (Baldwin, 1998, p. 122). Taxonomies of the passions have often been tools for attempting to control the universe within. An examination of conscience can begin by naming our emotions and measuring them against what we believe it is appropriate for us to feel. My analysis of the qualities of Humean passions offers few provisions for this kind of quest for self-knowledge. Any passion may be calm or violent. Some are typically elevating and some softening. But even here there is ambiguity: pride is reliably elevating and humility softening, but love can be either. The pleasantness or painfulness of a passion is essential to it, but every passion is one or the other. These qualities of the passions might offer a clue about which emotion one is feeling, but that emotion in this particular instance might not resemble the members of the revival set called to mind by the term in more neutral circumstances. What good, then, is such an inconclusive phenomenology of the passions?

The good is three-fold: the analysis above coheres with compelling developments in contemporary emotion theory and science, which is a sign of Hume's insight into the passions and the promise of a Humean theory as a viable framework for our understanding of the

³³ On imagination as a faculty that forms ideas, see T 1.1.3.1.

emotions. More significantly for those not interested in the historical development of emotion theory: pursuing self-knowledge informed by this kind of phenomenological analysis enables us to be more charitable to both ourselves and others. I will explain each point in turn.

The argument that emotions are not natural kinds is by now familiar. Paul Griffiths, for instance, argues that ‘there is no such thing as a typical emotion. Instead, there are different kinds of emotion, or of emotional processes, each of which should be treated in its own terms and whose various possible interactions should be studied’ (2004, p. 248). Andrea Scarantino goes further, claiming that what is true of emotion as a whole applies also to specific emotions: ‘anger’, ‘fear’, etc. do not name natural kinds either. He also argues that, for scientific purposes, we should redefine these terms for the sake of ‘increasing precision and testability, and individuating a category more suitable for induction and explanation’ (2012, p. 365).

Rather than redefining terms for emotions, we might take the proper objects of scientific study to be not emotions themselves, but elements that underlie them. Lisa Feldman Barrett identifies ‘strong evidence that reports of experience are multidimensional – that is, a report of *anger* or *sadness* or *fear* can be broken down into more fundamental psychological properties’ (2006, p. 36). Candidates for these properties include qualities that seem to overlap with Hume’s – e.g., valence (pleasantness/painfulness) and arousal.³⁴ The language of ‘breaking down’ emotions may seem to contravene the simplicity that Hume ascribes to our passions, but as we have seen, we can distinguish aspects of a passion without pretending that we could experience any particular passion with only one of those aspects. Likewise, the ‘fundamental psychological properties’ may have distinct neurological bases, but we may still experience them as phenomenologically inseparable unities.

Contemporary philosophers of emotion do not unanimously accept that ‘emotion’ or specific emotion terms fail to refer to natural kinds.³⁵ We do, however, have strong reasons to believe that the underlying biological and psychological roots of our emotions do not produce a set of neatly defined categories of feelings with homogeneity within those categories. Seeking to understand our emotional lives does not require understanding the neurobiology behind it.

³⁴ Arousal could be related to Humean invigoration or violence.

³⁵ See, e.g., Charland (2002). Nor do they agree on the relevant definition of ‘natural kind’, or whether ‘natural kind’ is the best term to use in the domain of emotion science.

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But what lies beneath does suggest that Hume was on to something in recognizing the variance within emotion types.

For different reasons, this recognition is as important for charitable self-knowledge as it is for scientific research. We can keep our folk emotion category terms; all parties recognize that we can deploy these without confusion for useful purposes. Among those useful purposes for Hume is the interpersonal evaluation of emotional patterns that he believes constitutes our moral judgments.³⁶ Indeed, for Hume, self-knowledge is always a social enterprise: only under the gaze of others do we learn how to see ourselves.³⁷ Dependence on that gaze can be oppressive and distorting, however.

Failure to recognize the variation between emotions can hurt. Consider emotions that we feel obliged to feel, such as grief at the loss of a close family member. If one's grief does not fit the typical profile, unnecessary guilt can add to the stress and confusion that accompanies the loss itself. If my grief manifests itself as exhaustion rather than intense emotional pain, I may chastise myself for not feeling what I ought, when I am only feeling it differently. This kind of mistake can allow us to indulge in unwarranted self-satisfaction as well. Can we be honest with ourselves by attempting to isolate anger from aspects of it that feel more like sorrow, fear, or pride, or by insisting that, for example, I cannot be feeling hatred because I am perfectly calm? Attempts to replace the messiness of our emotional lives with tidy taxonomies may do more harm than good, insofar as they allow us to dismiss feelings that fail to satisfy a set of predetermined criteria.

Recognizing this variation and messiness, however, need not leave us mute. For Hume, any emotion type, such as grief, is an abstract idea, understood as a term that calls to mind a 'revival set' of instances. It may be helpful to reflect on this revival set to understand one's emotions: does this feeling resemble other episodes of sorrow that I have felt or heard about? But any one instance of grief will be experienced with a set of qualities that I may be able to identify but cannot separate from this instance of a passion. Hume's distinctions between qualitative aspects of passions provides a vocabulary with which we can articulate that experience. We can move beyond the notion of brute, ineffable differences between varied emotional experiences.

³⁶ Humean virtues and vices are at least partly constituted by passions or dispositions to passions. See EPM 7.2n. On the importance of common language for moral judgment, see T 3.3.1.16 and EPM 9.6.

³⁷ See Taylor (2015, pp. 65–69).

We need not abandon the hope of naming our passions. I may determine that my grief does not look much like typical grief but shares enough in common with it for me to understand it through that term. This itself is important self-knowledge: it teaches me something about the particular way that I am feeling, naturally leads to further questioning about why that passion does not seem more similar to what others report in similar situations, and may provide a clue to understanding future passions I experience. Research in psychological science provides some evidence for the hypothesis that emotional responses follow idiographic patterns – that although a particular person’s anger responses differ from her sadness responses in a particular way, we cannot assume that other peoples’ responses will follow this pattern.³⁸ A search for emotional self-knowledge might seek such idiosyncratic responses, in ways that Montaigne anticipated. In doing so, it may also allow us to abandon a frustrating quest for answers that are not there to be had.

The benefits of this sceptical self-knowledge are not limited to the self. Without recognizing the variety among tendencies that get subsumed under the same name, we are liable to faulty inferences from external behavior to internal motives and character, leading to faulty judgments of others’ characters. It is natural to extend the caution we learn in interpreting ourselves to others, and for such caution to make us more compassionate and more respectful of the differences between persons. To say that it is natural is not, of course, to say that it is inevitable. But careful attention to the qualities of our emotional experience is one way of cultivating the delicacy of taste that Hume finds to be essential for competent moral judgment.³⁹ This attention is a search for self-knowledge in the observing, seeking mode – more sceptical than stoic. Such self-knowledge is neither easy, nor simple, nor definite. And this is precisely what we should expect.⁴⁰

³⁸ See Barrett (2006, p. 34). Barrett acknowledges that the initial evidence needs to be confirmed with directed research.

³⁹ On this point, see Watkins (2009) and Watkins (2021).

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