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## HUME'S GEOGRAPHY OF FEELING IN *A TREATISE OF HUMAN NATURE*

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David Hume states in *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* that it is

no inconsiderable part of science barely to know the different operations of the mind, to separate them from each other, to class them under their proper heads, and to correct all that seeming disorder, in which they lie involved, when made the object of reflection and enquiry. (EHU 1.13)

He calls this part of science “mental geography,” and he asserts both that it has considerable value in itself and that it facilitates the subsequent endeavor to “discover, at least in some degree, the secret springs and principles, by which the human mind is actuated in its operations.”<sup>1</sup>

It is not surprising, then, that in order to understand what Hume means by many of his most important claims about the springs and principles of *thought* in Book 1 of *A Treatise of Human Nature* (“Of the Understanding”), it is first necessary to understand the mental geography in which they are embedded. For example, it is impossible to understand his famous conclusion that the crucial mental transition in (what we call) inductive inference “is not determin'd by reason, but by certain principles, which associate together the ideas of these objects, and unite them in the imagination” (T 1.3.6.12) without understanding how he distinguishes the operations of reason from the operations of the imagination.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, in

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<sup>1</sup> In the first and second editions (1748 and 1750), a note to EHU 1.14 gives two specific examples of important recent contributions to mental geography: Hutcheson's distinction between “that Faculty, by which we discern Truth and Falshood, and that by which we perceive Vice and Virtue”; and Butler's proof of the impropriety of the common division of all passions into “the selfish and the benevolent.”

<sup>2</sup> For a full interpretation of this conclusion, see Garrett 2015: 172-86.

order to understand what Hume means by many of his most important conclusions about the springs and principles of *feeling* in Books 2 and 3 (“Of the Passions” and “Of Morals”), it is necessary to understand the mental geography in which they are embedded.

Yet there has been relatively little consensus about many of the contours of Hume’s geography of feeling in the *Treatise*,<sup>3</sup> with the result that there has been considerable puzzlement and disagreement about the meaning and grounds of many of his central theses about the passions, action, and morals. My present endeavor is simply to remove some common sources of perplexity about his classification of the operations of feeling “under their proper heads” in that work. I will begin by explaining his three highest-level distinctions bearing on this terrain: that between *impressions* and *ideas*; that between *original impressions* and *secondary impressions*; and that between the *passions* and the *other emotions*. In order to understand this third distinction, it will be necessary to explain his three different senses of the term ‘emotion’ and the relations among them. I will then examine five different kinds of secondary impressions that he recognizes. These are: (1) sensible agitations; (2) feelings of or from mental operations; (3) volitions; (4) the passions; and (5) sentiments of taste. The broad outlines of the resulting geography are mapped out in a chart at the end.

## **I. Three Main Distinctions**

Hume begins Book 2 by recapitulating two distinctions drawn at the outset of Book 1. The first is his division of perceptions into *impressions* and *ideas* on the basis of their greater or lesser “degrees of force and liveliness,” a distinction that he describes as corresponding to the

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<sup>3</sup> Among the most comprehensive interpretations are the long-influential ones developed in Kemp Smith, 1941 (chiefly Chapters 7–8) and Árdal, 1966; and the sophisticated recent ones developed in Merivale, 2018 (Chapters 1–4) and Radcliffe, 2018. Taylor (2015) is another important source for many topics concerning the passions throughout Hume’s works.

distinction between *feeling* and *thinking* (T 1.1.1.1). The second is his further division of impressions into those of *sensation* and those of *reflection*, which he now proposes to call *original* and *secondary* (or *reflective*) impressions, respectively:

As all the perceptions of the mind may be divided into *impressions* and *ideas*, so the impressions admit of another division into *original* and *secondary*. This division of the impressions is the same with that which I formerly made use of when I distinguish'd them into impressions of *sensation* and *reflection*. Original impressions or impressions of sensation are such as without any antecedent perception arise in the soul, from the constitution of the body, from the animal spirits, or from the application of objects to the external organs. Secondary, or reflective impressions are such as proceed from some of these original ones, either immediately or by the interposition of its idea. Of the first kind are all the impressions of the senses, and all bodily pains and pleasures: Of the second are the passions, and other emotions resembling them. (T 2.1.1.1; compare T 1.1.2.1)

While he draws the impression/idea distinction in terms of the phenomenal characteristic of “force and liveliness” or “vivacity,” he draws the original/secondary distinction in purely causal terms: impressions that do not result from previous perceptions (but instead from other causes) are original, and those that do result from previous perceptions are secondary. It has recently been proposed that some distinctive feelings discussed by Hume should be treated as *sui generis* impressions that are neither original nor secondary, but his division as stated seems clearly intended to be exhaustive (see also T 1.1.2.1: “Impressions may be divided into two kinds, those of SENSATION and those of REFLEXION.”).<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Merivale (2018: 10) makes this proposal specifically about impressions of necessary connection, belief, and volitions. However, Hume explicitly calls the impression of necessary connection an “impression of reflection” (T 1.3.14.22), while belief is not a distinct impression at all but merely a felt aspect of some ideas (T Appendix 4). Moreover, all three of these feelings are clearly caused by previous perceptions.

After indicating that the causes of original impressions are outside the scope of his enquiry, Hume goes on to make a further division of the secondary or reflective impressions:

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

It is common for commentators to treat *all* of Hume's secondary or reflective impressions as "passions"<sup>5</sup>; but, as Louis Loeb (2008) has rightly insisted (followed by Carlson 2014), that is not how Hume proposes to use the term. On the contrary, Hume indicates in T 2.1.1.1 that the category of secondary impressions also includes "other emotions" that are not passions but only "resemble" them.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, he positively asserts in T 2.1.1.3 that the *only* secondary impressions "properly call'd passions" are all those belonging to those species that are "in general ... more violent"—which include (among others) the species love, hatred, grief, joy, pride, and humility—while specifically excluding, among others, the secondary impressions arising from "the sense of beauty and deformity," which are in general calmer. He grants, and

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<sup>5</sup> These include Kemp Smith (1941: 11, 162), Árdal (1966), Hearn (1973), Bricke (2000), Cohon (2008), and Radcliffe (2018: 7n, 65). Fieser (1992) takes Hume to equivocate in his use of 'passion'.

<sup>6</sup> Hume does not specify exactly how "passions" and these "other emotions" resemble each other, but they resemble *at least* in being produced by other impressions, rather than being impressions of sensation. The resemblance need not, and indeed should not, be close enough to serve as what Hume calls a "principle of association."

indeed emphasizes for clarity, that some individual *instances* (i.e., *tokens*) of emotions resulting from the sense of beauty and deformity—which he more often calls just “the sense of beauty”—are violent, and that some individual *instances* of the generally more violent species are calm. Nevertheless, *all* and *only* instances of the *generally* violent species are passions in his classification; and those instances *are* passions precisely in virtue of their membership in a *species* that is generally violent.

One common source of unnecessary confusion about this classification lies in Hume’s use many sections later (T 2.3.3.8-9) of the terms ‘violent passions’ and ‘calm passions’<sup>7</sup> to draw a further distinction *within* the category of the passions between those *individual instances* that are violent (as, by definition, *most* individual instances of passions are) and those individual instances that are calm (as relatively *few* are). I will discuss this distinction further in Section VI. A second common source of confusion lies in his seemingly dismissive description of the distinction between passions and other emotions as “vulgar and specious.” In Hume’s usage, however, to call something “vulgar” means only that it is common, and to call something “specious” means only that it is appealing at first sight yet liable to being taken for more than it really is—not that it is improper or to be rejected as erroneous. In *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*, for example, he offers what he calls “specious arguments” that he nevertheless “is apt to suspect may be, the one as well as other, solid and satisfactory” (EPM 1.5-9). Although he suggests that these arguments may be misconstrued as showing even more than actually do, and thereby supposed to be in conflict, he subsequently refines and reconciles them in EPM Appendix 1. In a somewhat similar way, far from rejecting the “vulgar and specious”

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<sup>7</sup> I follow the convention of using single quotation marks to form names for words or terms, while using double quotation marks for other standard quotational purposes.

distinction between passions and other emotions as improper, Hume promises to “take advantage of it” just as formulated for its ability to provide “greater order”; we need only to avoid the easy further assumptions, corrected by a bit of reflection, that *all* individual instances of passions are violent and that *no* instances of other emotions are. In keeping with the title of Book 2 (“Of the Passions”), then, it is only those *generally* “violent emotions or [in other words] passions” whose “nature, origin, causes, and effects” he specifically sets out to explain in Book 2; he discusses other secondary impressions there only to the extent that they are relevant to the passions.

## II. Three Senses of ‘Emotion’

In order to fully understand Hume’s distinction between passions and the other emotions, it is essential to understand what he means by the terms ‘violent and ‘calm’. He explains the *violence* or *calmness* of secondary impressions as a difference in the degrees of “sensible agitation” or “disorder” they produce in the mind, and he regularly calls that sensible (i.e., felt or perceptible) agitation “emotion.” For example, in explaining how a once-violent passion may become calm over time even as its motivational dominance increases, he writes:

’Tis evident 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*. As repeated custom and its own force have made every thing yield to it, it directs the actions and conduct without that opposition and *emotion*, which so naturally attend every momentary gust of passion. (T 2.3.4.1, emphasis added; see also T 2.2.4.4, T 2.3.3.9, T 3.3.4.14, and EHU 1.3)

Yet on the other hand, he frequently describes various secondary impressions as *themselves being* “emotions.” This specifically includes the passions of pride, humility, love, hatred, anger, desire, aversion, and pity; but as we have already seen in T 2.1.1.1-3, he also refers to *other*

secondary impressions that are not passions, and hence are not typically violent, as “emotions” (see also T 1.3.5.5: “a passion, or an emotion of any kind”). In fact, he specifically designates the typically *calm* impressions resulting from the sense of beauty (T 2.1.5.9, T 2.2.5.3, and T 2.2.11.6) as “emotions,” and he later applies the designation to the impressions that result from the analogous “moral sense” as well (EHU 8.35; see also EPM 5.41).

To my knowledge, these two very different uses of ‘emotion’ have not been clearly distinguished in the secondary literature on Hume. The *Oxford English Dictionary*, however, gives the following revealing definition for ‘emotion’ (with a first cited use in 1602):

Originally: an agitation of mind; an excited mental state. Subsequently: any strong mental or instinctive feeling, as pleasure, grief, hope, fear, etc.<sup>8</sup>

Hume uses both the original and the subsequent meanings freely. Using the *original* meaning, he treats “emotion” as a “sensible agitation” that is typically possessed in a relatively high degree by passions but is typically not possessed to such a degree by other secondary impressions. For “emotion” in this sense, I will employ the term ‘**emotion<sub>sa</sub>**’ (for “sensible agitation”). Using the *subsequent* meaning, he classifies as “emotions” both the passions and at least some other secondary impressions. For “emotion” in this sense, I will employ the term ‘**emotion<sub>mf</sub>**’ (for “mental feeling”). Thus, the passions, for Hume, are **emotions<sub>mf</sub>** that typically produce a high degree of **emotion<sub>sa</sub>**.

The most natural reading of T 2.1.1.1 (and also of T 1.1.2.1) suggests that Hume’s distinction between the passions and “other emotions” is meant to be exhaustive of *all* secondary impressions. On this broad reading, which I will therefore adopt, all secondary impressions are **emotions<sub>mf</sub>**. As we shall see, however, there are some categories of secondary impressions that

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<sup>8</sup> Presumably, “mental or instinctive feeling” is meant to contrast with thought and sensation.

he does not specifically label as “emotions,” so it would be possible, if perhaps less natural, to read the distinction as non-exhaustive. No other issues turn on this, but for clarity I will generally use the term ‘secondary impression’ rather than ‘emotion<sub>mf</sub>’ except when glossing Hume’s own uses of the term ‘emotion’.

Finally, Hume occasionally uses ‘emotion’ in a third and now-obsolete sense that is purely physical. The *Oxford English Dictionary* provides this definition (with a last cited use of 1822):

movement; disturbance, perturbation; an instance of this.

For “emotion” in this sense, I will employ the term ‘**emotion<sub>pm</sub>**’ (for “physical movement”).

### **III. Sensible Agitations (Emotions<sub>sa</sub>)**

Although physiology lies outside the official scope of the *Treatise*, in Book 1 Hume frequently invokes operations or conditions of the “animal spirits” of the brain or nervous system in the causal explanation of sensation (T 1.4.2.45, T 1.4.4.13; see also T 2.1.1.1) and of multiple aspects of thought, including recollection (T 1.2.5.20), attention (T 1.3.8.2, T 1.3.10.10, T 1.4.1.10), changes in vivacity (T 1.3.10.9, T 1.4.1.10), smoothness of mental transition (T 1.4.2.33), and mental indolence (T 1.4.7.10).<sup>9</sup> Similarly in Book 2, Hume treats emotion<sub>sa</sub> as being produced, at least in part and perhaps entirely, by the physical agitation of animal spirits. Thus, over the course of Book 2, he writes of “the spirits” as “agitated” (T 2.2.4.4, T 2.2.8.4, T 2.3.5.2), “excited” (T 2.1.5.11, T 2.2.4.4, T 2.3.4.2, T 2.3.4.6, T 2.3.5.2), having “movement” (T 2.2.8.4, T 2.3.5.5), “receiving a change of direction” (T 2.3.4.2), “rouzed” (T 2.3.4.9), “hurried” (T 2.3.5.2), in “ferment” (T 2.3.5.3), and “fluttering” or “unsettled” (T 2.3.9.29). In three passages, he also attributes “emotion” in the sense of emotion<sub>pm</sub> to the spirits themselves, as a

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<sup>9</sup> He also mentions animal spirits at T 1.2.1.5 and T 1.3.12.13.



cause of emotion<sub>sa</sub> (T 2.2.4.7, T 2.2.8.4. T 2.3.4.5). Although all emotions<sub>sa</sub> are felt sensible agitations, they may still differ considerably in their particular phenomenal character, depending (presumably) at least in part on the character, degree, and surroundings of the emotion<sub>pm</sub> that produces them. Some can be pleasurable, for example, while others are painful.

While it is their occasioning of emotion<sub>sa</sub> that renders some secondary impressions *violent*, emotion<sub>sa</sub>—caused (at least in part) by emotion<sub>pm</sub>—also occurs *apart* from secondary impressions in Hume’s view. Indeed, he writes:

I believe it may safely be establish’d for a general maxim, that no object is presented to the senses, nor image form’d in the fancy [i.e., idea in the imagination], but what is accompany’d with some emotion or movement of spirits proportion’d to it. (T 2.2.8.4)

He then observes that large or numerous objects (such as oceans and fleets, respectively) produce “in the mind” considerable “sensible emotion” (i.e., emotion<sub>sa</sub>), and he argues that this must be understood as a “compound” effect resulting from the combination of the many small emotions<sub>sa</sub> accompanying the sensation or conception of their parts. Thus, he concludes:

Every object is attended with some emotion proportion’d to it; a great object with a great emotion, a small object with a small emotion. (T 2.2.8.6)

At least some emotion<sub>sa</sub>, moreover, accompanies not only “every part of extension and every unite of number” but also “virtue and vice, wit and folly, riches and poverty, happiness and misery, and other objects of that kind” (THN 2.2.8.4). Thus, he claims to have made the “new discovery of an *impression*, that secretly attends every idea” (T 2.2.8.7; emphasis added).<sup>10</sup>

Although Hume explicitly identifies the emotion<sub>sa</sub> “that secretly attends every idea” as an *impression*, he does not specify whether it is an original impression (that is, an impression of

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<sup>10</sup> T 2.2.10.9 hedges to “almost every idea.”

sensation) or a secondary impression (that is, an impression of reflection). Thus, it might be suggested that it should be regarded not as a *secondary* impression but rather as an *original* impression of the state of the animal spirits that causes it. In at least two passages, however, he implies that the passions themselves are among the causes of the physical agitation (emotion<sub>pm</sub>) that then causes the emotion<sub>sa</sub> that comes to attend those passions (T 2.3.4.5, T 2.3.9.3; T 2.3.3.8-9, although not explicit, is also relevant). By analogy, then, it seems reasonable to assume that perceptions more generally are *always* among the causes of whatever emotion<sub>sa</sub> may come to “attend” them. And since any impression caused by other perceptions is by definition secondary, I will assume that *all* emotions<sub>sa</sub> are secondary impressions, rather than original impressions. If we further grant, as previously proposed, that Hume classifies all secondary impressions as emotions<sub>mf</sub>, then it follows (pleasingly) that emotion<sub>sa</sub> is itself a category of emotion<sub>mf</sub>.

Given that an idea is a *cause* of the impression of emotion<sub>sa</sub> that then “always attends” the idea, the idea and the impression must be two distinct perceptions for Hume, in much the way that a passion (such as desire, or pride) and the idea of its object (such as fame, or the self) are distinct perceptions (T App 4). This is notably *unlike* the way in which the “force and liveliness” that constitutes belief is an integral aspect of the believed idea itself (T 1.3.7); thus, although emotion<sub>sa</sub> is often *conducive* to the felt force and liveliness that constitutes belief in an idea, it is not the *same thing* as that force and liveliness.<sup>11</sup>

Importantly, however, Hume draws a sharp contrast between ideas and impressions—and especially *secondary* impressions—with respect to their susceptibility to subsequent “mixture” or “blending”:

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<sup>11</sup> Hume’s use of ‘violence’ at T 1.1.1.1 to characterize the distinguishing feature of all impressions is presumably just a stylistic alternative to ‘force’, rather than an early reference to emotion<sub>sa</sub>.

Ideas may be compar'd to the extension and solidity of matter, and impressions, especially reflective ones, to colours, tastes, smells and other sensible qualities. Ideas never admit of a total union, but are endow'd with a kind of impenetrability, by which they exclude each other, and are capable of forming a compound by their conjunction, not by their mixture. On the other hand, impressions and passions are susceptible of an entire union; and like colours, may be blended so perfectly together, that each of them may lose itself, and contribute only to vary that uniform impression, which arises from the whole. (T 2.2.6.1)

Hume invokes this blending of “reflective impressions” frequently (for example, that of benevolence with love, and of anger with hatred), and he observes that when love and humility blend to make respect, or hatred and pride blend to make contempt, the resulting simple impression clearly resembles in immediate feeling both of the impressions that were blended to produce it (T 2.2.10.1-3). Since  $\text{emotion}_{\text{sa}}$  is a reflective (i.e., secondary) impression, it is possible, and even quite likely, that he regards  $\text{emotions}_{\text{sa}}$  as sometimes or always coming quickly to *blend with* those secondary impressions that originally produced them—even though the  $\text{emotions}_{\text{sa}}$  that result from and accompany *ideas* (and, at least typically, those that result from and accompany *original impressions*) remain distinct from the perceptions they accompany. When this blending occurs,  $\text{emotion}_{\text{sa}}$  will become a recognizable *aspect* of a simple instance of a passion or other secondary impression. Nevertheless, it is important to observe that Hume never describes or classifies impressions of sensible agitation—that is,  $\text{emotions}_{\text{sa}}$ —as themselves being “passions,” or as “violent,” regardless of their particular relation to other perceptions and even when their felt degree of agitation is high.

#### **IV. Feelings of or from Mental Operations**

Feelings of or from mental operations constitute a second kind of secondary impression that Hume clearly recognizes, although he does not explicitly label them as “emotions.” Perhaps the

most obvious example is the “impression of necessary connection” to which he devotes so much attention in Part 3 of Book 1. This impression proves to be a feeling of “determination” that occurs in making the mental transition that is essential to causal inference—from an impression or memory to an idea—and he explicitly characterizes it as an “internal impression, or impression of reflection” rather than as an “impression convey’d by the senses” (T 1.3.14.22). In his discussion of “liberty and necessity” in Book 2, he also mentions, by way of contrast, “a certain looseness, which we feel” in *deliberation*—as contrasted with inference—that misleads us into attributing a false “liberty” to the will (T 2.3.2.2; see also T 2.1.10.9).<sup>12</sup>

Although Hume does not describe the impressions of determination and looseness as pleasures or pains, he indicates that other impressions of or from mental operations can at least “convey” or “be the occasion” of pleasure or pain, evidently in virtue of their effects on the animal spirits. Thus, he mentions a “pleasure of facility,” felt either in the performance of some actions or in the conception of some objects, “that does not so much consist in any ferment of the spirits, as in their orderly motion” (T 2.3.5.2-3). And although he emphasizes that reason “exerts itself without producing any sensible emotion” (emotion<sub>sa</sub>), its operations can “convey pleasure” in “the more sublime disquisitions of philosophy” and convey “uneasiness” in “the frivolous subtilties of the schools” (T 2.3.3.8).

More generally, Hume claims, we enjoy pursuits of knowledge that require us to “fix our attention or exert our genius; which of all other exercises of the mind is the most pleasant and agreeable” (T 2.3.10.3), especially when the pursuit attains (by our lights) “a measure of success” (T 2.3.10.7). Furthermore, the steady enlivening of the mind that occurs in maintaining

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<sup>12</sup> The first *Enquiry* adds a further “impression” of “animal *nisus*” or “strong endeavor” felt when struggling against physical resistance (EHU 7.15n), although it might be debated whether this impression is original or secondary.

a settled belief “produce[s] pleasure,” whereas the vacillation of doubt is often painful (T 2.3.10.12). These two kinds of pleasure, which he largely ascribes to different kinds of enquiry, can both contribute to the production of “curiosity, or love of truth.” Although he clearly identifies this effect as a passion, there is no suggestion that the two kinds of pleasure leading to it are themselves passions. On the contrary, he describes the pleasure of mind-enlivening belief as “in a lesser degree, the pleasure, which *arises from* a moderate passion” (T 2.3.10.12; emphasis added). This suggests that, while many passions (such as pride, love, joy, and security) are themselves pleasures, the enlivening mental operation of having a passion can sometimes produce a distinct further pleasure, which need not itself be another passion—that is, not a secondary impression of a typically violent species—although of course it may well subsequently blend with the passion that produces it.

## V. Volitions

Hume writes at the outset of Part 3 of Book 2:

I desire it may be observ'd, that by the *will*, I mean nothing but *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; italics in original)

He calls individual instances of this kind of secondary impression “impressions of volition” (T 2.3.9.4, EHU 7.9, EHU 7.20) or more often simply “volitions.” Yet he immediately goes on to assert that the will is “properly speaking ... not comprehended among the passions” (T.2.3.1.2). Confirming this classification, Hume immediately goes on to explain that he is nonetheless devoting space to a discussion of the will in a book of the *Treatise* devoted to the passions only because “the full understanding of its nature and properties, is necessary to the explanation of them.”

It is not surprising, then, that volitions are not included in Hume’s initial list of direct passions (T 2.1.1.4). Kemp Smith (1941: 165, 168), however, argues that they must after all be direct passions, citing the following passage from later in Book 2:

The impressions, which arise from good and evil most naturally, and with the least preparation are the *direct* passions of desire and aversion, grief and joy, hope and fear, along with volition. (T 2.3.9.2; italics in original).

However, I take Hume to state here not that volition *is* a direct passion, but rather that the *impressions arising from good and evil most naturally, and with the least preparation* comprise (1) the various direct passions listed, “*along with*” (2) volition. Presumably this is because volitions themselves arise directly and naturally from direct passions such as desire and aversion.

Other commentators, perhaps because they regard *all* secondary impressions as passions, have interpreted Hume as holding that volitions should not be regarded as a *distinct* category of secondary impressions at all, proposing instead that he regards every volition as identical with some motivating passion such as a desire or an aversion.<sup>13</sup> Yet it seems that in such a case impressions of volition *should* “properly speaking” be “comprehended among the passions,” since they would be identical with some of them. In fact, however, Hume seems to follow Locke in treating volitions not as passions but as causal intermediaries between passions and new bodily motions or new perceptions—motions and perceptions that are properly described as “voluntary” precisely because they are caused not *just* by passions (as many involuntary thoughts and involuntary motions are) but by *volitions* (1689/1975: Book II, Chapter xxi). Thus, for example, Hume writes of the “impulse of passion” as that which—unlike reason—is “able to *produce* volition” (T 2.3.3.4; emphasis added), and he describes as a series of causally “united

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<sup>13</sup> See Magri, 2008: 189, and Radcliffe, 2018: 27.

objects ... motives, volitions *and* actions” (T 2.3.1.17, emphasis added; see also T 2.3.3.4). Similarly in the first *Enquiry*, he agrees with an imagined Lockean that “an *act of volition* produces motion in our limbs, or raises a new idea in our imagination” (EHU 7.9-10; emphasis added).

Given Hume’s official explanation of which secondary impressions *are* “properly call’d passions” (T 2.1.1.3), volitions can be excluded from the passions *only* on the grounds that they are not *typically violent*. Indeed, he never says that *any* impressions of volition are violent or produce *any* emotion<sub>sa</sub>, although volitions are of course often *caused by* violent passions. He also does not specifically describe impressions of volition as “emotions” (that is, emotion<sub>mf</sub>), although he also does not say that they are not.

## VI. The Passions

As we have seen, the passions—that is, the typically violent secondary impressions, which Hume also calls “affections”—are the primary topic of Book 2. Like volitions, they have conceived *objects*, at which they are directed, according to Hume, by means of an associated idea. His main division of the passions is into the *direct* and the *indirect* and is based on causal origin rather than phenomenal character:

By direct passions I understand such as arise immediately from good or evil, from pain or pleasure. By indirect such as proceed from the same principles, but by the conjunction of other qualities. This distinction I cannot at present justify or explain any farther. I can only observe in general, that under the indirect passions I comprehend pride, humility, ambition, vanity, love, hatred, envy, pity, malice, generosity, with their dependants [sic]. And under the direct passions, desire, aversion, grief, joy, hope, fear, despair and security. (T 2.1.1.4)

The “other qualities” whose conjunction is required for the indirect passions later prove to include the three associative natural relations (explicitly labeled as “qualities” at T 2.1.9.4) of resemblance, contiguity, and causation. Hume describes three passion-generating operations dependent on these relations. The first is *the double relation of impressions and ideas*, through which a pleasure-giving or pain-giving *quality* possessed by a *subject* that is associatively related to a person<sup>14</sup> causes a separate pleasurable or painful passion having that person as its *object*; this operation is the source of pride, humility, love, and hatred. The second operation is *sympathy*, through which a lively *idea* of the pleasure or pain felt by a person who is associatively related to oneself becomes enlivened to the point of being an *impression*; this operation is the source of pity (i.e., compassion) and generosity. The third operation is “comparison,” by which a lively idea of the pleasure or pain of another person who is associatively related to oneself produces the opposite feeling (i.e., of pain or pleasure, respectively); this is the source of envy and malice.

The direct passions, for Hume, arise not from these association-involving operations but solely from “original instincts,” by which he means causal principles of the mind that are not derived from any other. The predominant such instinct is what we may call the *hedonic instinct*: the mind’s “*original* instinct to unite itself with the good, and to avoid the evil, tho’ they be conceiv’d merely in idea” (T 2.3.9.2; italics in original). He explains *good* and *evil* as being “in other words, pain and pleasure” (T 2.3.9.8). It is important to emphasize, however, that he applies the terms ‘good’ and ‘evil’ not only to pleasure and pain themselves but also to the pleasurable and painful “objects”—that is, things, qualities, and events—that produce or provide them, and it is most commonly these objects, rather than pleasures and pains as such, at which

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<sup>14</sup> Although Hume often uses ‘person’ in this context, he makes it clear that the first two operations, at least, occur in the minds of all “sensible creatures,” including animals, and can have animals as well as humans as their objects.



the passions are psychologically directed by ideas (see also DP 1.2; 4, in Beauchamp, ed.). It is by means of this instinct that the consideration of an object as pleasurable directly produces a *desire* for the object (which may then be extended also to other things conceived as leading to its acquisition), and the consideration of an object as painful directly produces *aversion* to it (which may then be extended also to other things conceived as leading to its acquisition). By the same instinct, considering a pleasurable or painful object as “certain or probable” produces joy or grief (T 2.3.9.5), while hope and fear arise from the mixture of joy and grief that occurs when a pleasurable or painful object is considered as uncertain, “according to the degrees of uncertainty on one side or the other” (T 2.3.9.6). Security and despair appear to be counterparts of joy and grief that arise when the avoidance of a painful object and the non-attainment of a pleasurable one, respectively, are considered as certain (T 2.3.4.8).

In an often-misunderstood passage, Hume mentions a notably calm desire and a correlative calm aversion that are produced by this hedonic instinct: “the general appetite to good, and aversion to evil, consider’d merely as such”:

Now ’tis certain, there are 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. These desires are of two kinds; either certain instincts originally implanted in our natures, such as 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)

A detailed example he gives at T 2.3.6.3-4, concerning Themistocles and the Athenians, shows that he regards instances of this desire and aversion as “not violent,” and hence calm, because—unlike the various more particular desires and aversions produced by the hedonic instinct—their objects are conceived *solely* through the *abstract ideas* of good and evil (see T 1.1.1.7 for his theory of abstract ideas).

As the often-misunderstood passage just quoted demonstrates, Hume also recognizes several *other* original instincts, of narrower scope than the hedonic instinct, by which certain object-specific passions are generated.<sup>15</sup> This particular list is limited by its purpose in context to “calm” desires, but a few sections later in Book 2, he lists the following as examples of passions that arise from “other instincts”: the “desire of punishment to our enemies, and of happiness to our friends; hunger, lust, and a few other bodily appetites” (T 2.3.9.8). The first two of these are clearly applications of “resentment” (a kind of anger) and “benevolence” as Hume has explained them, but the “bodily appetites” clearly add to the previous list.<sup>16</sup> In each of these cases, the desire cannot be traced to the hedonic instinct because it does not depend on any prior experience of pleasure or pain from its object. For this reason, he states that the direct passions resulting from other instincts “properly speaking” only “produce good and evil” through the pleasure and pain of their satisfaction or non-satisfaction “and proceed not from them, like the other affections” (T 2.3.9.8).<sup>17</sup> Of course, once one *has* experienced pleasure or pain from the

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<sup>15</sup> It is common for commentators to identify the “general appetite to good and aversion to evil” as itself an “instinct”—leaving its relation to the broader hedonic instinct unclear—but the punctuation of the passage makes it evident that this general appetite is not an instinct but simply a “desire,” and that it is only the *other* desires in the list that are each being attributed to a separate and object-specific instinct.

Loeb (1997: 399) and Merivale (2018: 72) both read Hume as treating all of the items on this list as original impressions (i.e., impressions of sensation). However, this conflates the sense in which *impressions* are original (as not being derived from other perceptions) with the sense in which *instincts* are original (as not being derived from other instincts). T 2.3.8 explicitly describes all of the items on the list as being both “desires” and “passions.” Instincts, as causal principles governing impressions and ideas (and their causal interrelations) are not themselves either impressions or ideas.

<sup>16</sup> In Book 3, Hume also mentions an instinctive “natural affection” specifically for one’s *own* children (T 3.2.1.5, T 3.2.2.4-5; see also E “Of the Dignity and Meanness of Human Nature,” 84-85 and E “The Sceptic,” 262-63, both in Miller).

<sup>17</sup> In several passages (including notably T 2.1.1.4 and T 2.3.1.1), Hume seems to ignore the other passion-generating instincts, and in one passage (T 2.2.9.15) he seems to derive benevolence as a desire from the hedonic instinct. Merivale (2018, Chapter 4) offers the plausible explanation that the other instincts, while certainly a part of Hume’s final view in the *Treatise*, were a late addition to Book 2 prompted by Hume’s reading of Butler’s *Sermons*. Millican (2020: 285-89) offers a different developmental hypothesis not dependent on Butler. In any case, the hedonic instinct loses prominence in Hume’s second *Enquiry*, while other original principles of desire come to the fore.

satisfaction or non-satisfaction of these other desires, the hedonic instinct may easily become a further contributing cause of particular instances of them.

Although his distinction among different passion-generating instincts is causal—like his distinction between direct and indirect passions itself—Hume’s distinction among different *species* of passions is phenomenal.<sup>18</sup> Thus, he writes:

The passions of PRIDE and HUMILITY being simple and uniform impressions, ’tis impossible we can ever, by a multitude of words, give a just definition of them, or indeed *of any of the passions*. The utmost we can pretend to is a description of them, by an enumeration of such circumstances, as attend them. (T 2.1.2.1; emphasis added)

Accordingly, his many claims about the sources and consequences of the various species of passions are intended as informative causal theses supported by experience and observation, not as contributions to an analytic functional definition specifying what is *constitutive* of membership in the species.<sup>19</sup> Similarly, although he allows that “under the term *pleasure*, we comprehend sensations [i.e., feelings], which are very different from each other, and have only ... a distant resemblance,” it is nevertheless precisely that resemblance, he continues, that is “requisite to make them be express’d by the same abstract term” (THN 3.1.2.4).<sup>20</sup>

After providing his examples of calm desires at T 2.3.3.8, Hume goes on to say that they are often mistaken for operations of reason because they “produce little emotion [that is, emotion<sub>sa</sub>] in the mind, and are more known by their effects than by the immediate feeling or sensation.”

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<sup>18</sup> Hume’s counterfactual claims at T 2.2.6.6, prompted by the consideration of benevolence and anger, do not contradict this claim. There he is arguing not that the passions of *benevolence* and *anger* could have had different phenomenal characters but rather that there could have been a pair of phenomenally different desires having similar objects but reversed causes.

<sup>19</sup> Merivale (2009) takes this view of the *Treatise*, but holds that Hume changed his approach in the *Dissertation on the Passions*. I am skeptical about a change but will not argue that point here.

<sup>20</sup> Radcliffe (2018: 130), in contrast, proposes that “the identity of pleasure and pain is necessarily tied to their motivational effects.”

But this is not to say that they cannot be known *at all* by their immediate feeling or sensation; rather, his point is evidently that the absence of emotion<sub>sa</sub> renders the mind relatively less conscious of these perceptions and less able to remember them once they have passed, even as it is often relatively easy to infer their past existence from observed voluntary actions.

Having discussed these calm desires, Hume immediately goes on to observe that “there are certain violent emotions [emotions<sub>mf</sub>] *of the same kind*” (T 3.2.2.9; emphasis added). It should not be surprising, however, that passions of a common species should resemble each other phenomenally even while differing greatly in the degrees of emotion<sub>sa</sub> that accompany or even are *blended with* them; for as we have observed, secondary impressions that result from blending still retain resemblances to both of their ingredient impressions. It might be objected that the listed desires should not qualify as “real passions” at all for Hume if they are *usually* calm—as at least the “general appetite to good, and aversion to evil, consider’d as such” evidently is. But this would be a misunderstanding: *all* desires qualify as passions precisely in virtue of their membership in the generally violent species *desire*, regardless of their distinctive objects or causes.

When discussing the purported “combat of passion and reason,” Hume argues that “reason alone can never be a motive to any action of the will” (T 2.3.3.1), and he concludes that voluntary action always requires that some object “affects”—that is, produces a passion (“affection”) in—us. He emphasizes that reason may be “the mediate cause of an action, by prompting, or by directing a passion” (T 3.1.1.16), but he insists that only a passion can provide the needed motivational “impulse” itself (T 2.3.3.3-4). Although he frequently appeals specifically to desires and aversions in explaining volition, he does not go so far in the *Treatise* as to state that volition always requires a passion of one of these two particular species; and in

fact, he describes as “motives” a number of passions that do not appear to be desires or aversions, including “shame,” “self-hatred,” “hope,” “fear,” and “despair.” In his later *Dissertation on the Passions*, however, he strongly implies that either a desire or an aversion is necessary for voluntary action (DP 5.1; 24, in Beauchamp) and also that a passion can qualify as a “motive” in virtue of generating some *other* passion that, in turn, results in volition (DP 3.9; 19, in Beauchamp).<sup>21</sup>

Actions themselves, Hume holds, are not sufficiently “durable” to serve as “*qualities in a subject*” for the operation of the double relation of impressions and ideas to occur; enduring mental qualities that are *expressed* in action can be, however, and these include—but are not limited to—their *motives*:

If that quality in another, which pleases or displeases, be constant and inherent in his person and character, it will cause love or hatred independent of the intention; But otherwise a knowledge and design is requisite, in order to give rise to these passions. (T 2.2.3.4)

Thus, in Hume’s example, “folly” (foolishness) is sufficiently constant and “inherent” that it can give rise to hatred even though foolishness is not a passion and is not a motive for any of the actions that express it. In contrast, even a single injurious action can give rise to hatred if it is judged to be the result of a motive of malice or contempt.

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<sup>21</sup> The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines one sense of ‘motive’ as “a desire, emotion, reason, argument, etc., influencing or tending to influence a person's volition.” This is Hume’s sense in these passages, although of course he denies that “reason” or “argument” alone can be motives. He sometimes uses the term in two other senses, however: “a circumstance or external factor inducing a person to act in a certain way”; and “a contemplated end the desire for which influences or tends to influence a person's actions Using the first sense, he refers to “rewards and punishments” as motives; using the second, he refers to “safety” and “public good” as motives.

## VI. Sentiments of Taste

In the course of Books 2 and 3, Hume distinguishes at least two internal “senses” of the mind that produce pleasurable and painful secondary impressions of a kind that he consistently calls “sentiments.”<sup>22</sup> The first is the *sense of beauty*, which produces pleasing “sentiments of beauty” and displeasing “sentiments of deformity.” As described in T 2.1.1.3, these sentiments are calmer in type than passions and arise from (among other things) “action, composition, and external objects.”<sup>23</sup> In the case of external objects, at least, they often but not always arise from sympathy with possessors or users. The second is the *moral sense*, which produces pleasing “sentiments of virtue” and painful “sentiments of vice”—which he also calls “moral sentiments,” “sentiments of morals,” “sentiments of approbation and disapprobation,” and “sentiments of approbation and blame.” The moral sentiments differ in phenomenal character from the aesthetic sentiments of beauty and deformity, and from all other pleasures and pains as well (T 3.1.2.4); they depend *almost* always on sympathy with those affected (T 3.3.1.27); and they arise *only* from considering traits of character or other mental qualities “in general, without a reference to our particular interest” (T 3.1.2.4). In contrast, considering mental qualities *with* a reference to our particular interest—for example, by considering the dangerous effects on *oneself* of a competitor’s courage—results in feelings (presumably various passions) that are phenomenally

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<sup>22</sup> Hume also mentions a “sense” of “wit” that produces feelings of “pleasure” and “unease” (T 3.3.4.11), feelings that, like the sentiments of the other two inner “senses,” he attributes to “taste” (T 2.2.6.6).

<sup>23</sup> Noting that Hume sometimes applies the term ‘moral beauty’ to virtue, Carlson (2014: 74) and Merivale (2018:10) interpret ‘action’ in this phrase as referencing objects of the moral sense. This seems unlikely, however, for several reasons. First, the *primary* objects of the moral sense are mental qualities, not actions. Second, throughout the rest of Book 2 Hume alludes only once even to the possibility of distinctively moral sentiments (T 2.1.7.2-5), and there he makes a point of not committing himself to their existence (so as to keep his argument at that stage more general in application). Finally, once he does introduce the moral sense in Book 3, he always distinguishes it from the (analogous) sense of beauty, rather than conflating them. It seems more likely that his use of ‘action’ here refers to artistic performances such as dancing, singing, acting, and oration.

different from moral sentiments, even if sometimes mistaken for them because of their shared object and frequent concurrence.

Just as it is the aesthetic sentiments that “denominate” objects as beautiful or deformed, so the moral sentiments “denominate” a character trait or mental quality as “morally good or evil” (T 3.1.2.4), virtuous or vicious. All virtuous qualities, Hume argues, are either useful or agreeable to their possessor or others, while vicious qualities are the opposite. He fully allows that some *actions* may also be denominated as “virtuous” or “vicious,” but only through the moral sentiments elicited by a mental quality that is their *motive* (T 3.2.1.4); actions that express a mental quality that is *not* itself a motivating passion—as witty remarks express the virtuous quality of wit, which is not a motive—are not *themselves* denominated “virtuous” or “vicious.”

It is important to distinguish the consideration of a character “in general, without reference to our particular interest” from the subsequent adoption of “*steady and general* points of view” (T 3.1.1.15; italics in original), which Hume describes as a means of reconciling *differences in felt degree* of moral sentiments due to differences in degree of sympathy that result from different relations and moods. The adoption of these points of views “corrects our sentiments” for differences of individual perspectives in a way that has analogues for “all of the senses” (T 3.3.1.16). Their use as a standard is essential to generating objective moral judgments from subjective moral sentiments, giving them a crucial role in the institution of morality; but the sentiments to be corrected in this fashion are already “moral sentiments” in Hume’s terminology. To classify sentiments as “moral” only *after* this process of correction has occurred, as commentators often do,<sup>24</sup> is in effect to define the category of moral sentiments in causal rather

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<sup>24</sup> Among those who interpret Hume as claiming that adoption of “steady and general points of view” is necessary for feeling moral sentiments are Korsgaard (1999), Brown (2001), and Radcliffe (2018: 112). For further discussion, see Garrett (2001).

than phenomenal terms and hence to leave the proper classification of the initial *uncorrected* sentiments obscure.

In Book 1, Hume treats the senses of *sight* and *touch* as divisions or sub-faculties within the faculty that he calls *the senses*, and which he contrasts with the faculties of *memory*, *reason*, and the *imagination*. Similarly in Book 3, he treats the *moral sense* and the *sense of beauty* as divisions or sub-faculties within a faculty that he calls *taste* (T 3.2.2.24, T 3.3.1.10, T 3.3.1.15, T 3.3.1.23); and he contrasts this faculty with those of *the passions* (productive of passions) and *the will* (productive of volitions), as well as with the faculties already introduced in Book 1. Among his writings after the *Treatise*, the faculty of taste, as distinguished from that of the passions, plays a central role in “Of the Delicacy of Passion and Taste,” and it is also especially evident in “The Sceptic” and “Of the Standard of Taste.”

Although Hume uses a broad sense of ‘sentiment’ that extends beyond the sentiments of taste to other impressions and even to belief, he never, in any of his writings, calls any of the aesthetic or moral sentiments “passions.” Nor does he ever describe any of the aesthetic or moral sentiments as either “direct” or “indirect.” This is because, as he originally indicated in T 2.1.1.3, they are not passions at all; they are instead among the “other emotions.” Nevertheless, one passage has very naturally suggested to commentators<sup>25</sup> that he *must* regard the moral sentiments as passions after all. In explaining why those mental qualities that are virtues or vices are the *same* mental qualities that cause the indirect passions of love and hatred, he writes:

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

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<sup>25</sup> These include Korsgaard (1999) and Brown (2001).



The confusion arises from the fact that Hume sometimes uses ‘sentiment of approbation’ and ‘sentiment of blame’ as names for the products of the moral sense. But he also uses the terms ‘approbation’ and ‘blame’, when detached from the terms ‘sentiment of’ and ‘moral’, much more broadly, to apply to many different kinds of favorable or unfavorable attitudes, including doxastic agreement or disagreement (T 1.2.4.32, T 1.4.7.2) and forms of love or hatred (T 2.1.12.4, T 2.2.1.9). In the present passage, “the general survey or view of any action or quality of the *mind*” refers to a consideration of them *in general, without reference to our particular interest*, and it is the “pleasure or pain arising from” that survey that constitutes the *moral sentiment*. This is not *identical with* but instead and in turn “*gives rise to*” an “approbation or blame” that is itself *constituted by* “fainter and more imperceptible” passions of love or hatred. He calls this love and hatred “fainter and more imperceptible” presumably because, as products of typically calm moral sentiments, they are themselves usually calmer than much of the love or hatred that arises from other causes.

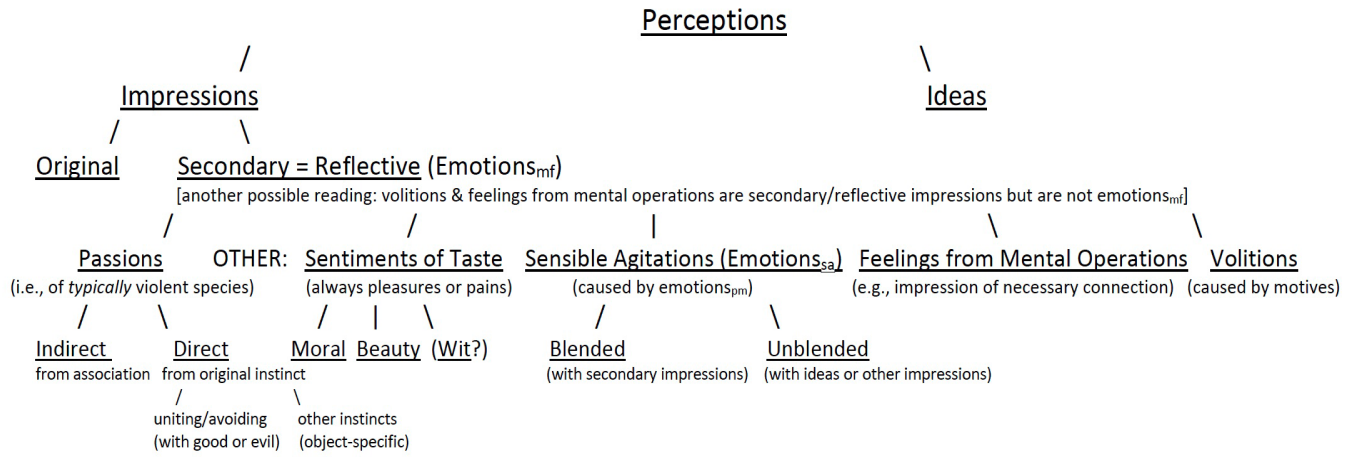
## VII. Conclusion

In this essay, I have not tried to defend interpretations of any of Hume’s most central arguments or conclusions about the causal springs and principles of feeling in the *Treatise*. Each of these could easily require an essay, or even a book, of its own. My only hope—a direct passion arising from the hedonic instinct, in his view—is to have contributed something that others might find useful in clarifying the mental geography, outlined below, in which he intended those springs and principles to operate.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> I thank Elizabeth Radcliffe, Peter Millican, and Remy Debes for valuable comments on an earlier version of this essay.

Outline Map of Hume's Mental Geography of Feeling



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