Feminist ethics and David Hume's concept of sympathy: Moving towards a new morality (Virginia Held).

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FEMINIST ETHICS AND DAVID HUME'S CONCEPT OF SYMPATHY:
MOVING TOWARDS A NEW MORALITY

by
P. Tamara Sugunasiri

A Thesis
submitted to the
Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
through the Department of
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of the requirements for the Degree
of Master of Arts at the
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ABSTRACT

This thesis is the culmination of two different areas of interests that I have had. First, I have long been interested in the progress feminist thinking has made in the field of ethics and morality. Secondly, having read *A Treatise on Human Nature* by David Hume, I was impressed with his insights into human nature and human morality. I appreciated its non-prescriptive nature and I was intrigued by his concept of sympathy. In my mind, it was a refreshing change from the typical male philosophers that I had studied at both the graduate and undergraduate levels.

The impetus for bringing together these two interests came from a work by Annette Baier which identified Hume as a women's moral theorist. Her comments were based on the findings of Carol Gilligan in *In a Different Voice*. One of Gilligan's main assertions was that while morality for men was a matter of justice, for women it was a matter of care. My criticism of Baier however was that she maintained the moral distinctions along gender lines that Gilligan had expressed. I was more interested in de-emphasizing these gender labels and searching for a moral system that would incorporate both perspectives.

I discovered that this in fact was one mode of feminist thought that had emerged in the past two years. The main proponent of this view and whose work I will largely refer to is Virginia Held. In a 1995 publication called *Justice and Care*, Held critiques Gilligan's justice/care dichotomy and argues that
justice and care are reconcilable. The focus shifts from showing how men and women think differently according to the justice/care dichotomy, to discovering how to use Gilligan's concepts to develop a human rather than a male or female morality. The idea is to intermingle rights, duties and autonomy, with caring, nurturing and 'relationality' as significant moral concepts. In this endeavour, feminists are willing to draw from all sources, including the formerly denigrated 'male' systems.

The aim of my thesis is to support and contribute to this more holistic approach. I attempt to show that Hume's concept of sympathy is a sound starting point for feminists like myself who are looking for universal moral concepts. For Hume, sympathy is the basis of moral judgments. Its value lies in the large degree of inclusivity that I see in the concept. It is a mechanism which pervades all of humanity. I also incorporate some of Baier's points and suggest that because sympathy is based on a fundamental interconnectedness and similarity among humans, it would satisfy the main components of the care requirement without precluding the inclusion of justice.

The thesis is divided into three chapters. The first discusses the development of feminist moral thought and Virginia Held's recent work on justice and care. The second chapter provides a general account of Hume's moral theory and gives an interpretation of his concept of sympathy as found in A Treatise on Human Nature. The final chapter will show how sympathy is a valuable concept in developing a human morality and how it would
mitigate concerns feminists may have about adequate representation of the care perspective.
I dedicate this to my parents who provided me with tremendous love and support throughout my entire academic career.

This is also dedicated to my brother who introduced me to philosophy. His contribution to my personal and academic growth will always be treasured.
Acknowledgments

I wish to thank my family for their love and support during the time I developed the thesis. I give special recognition to my father who often had the difficult task of encouraging me to finish the project and who was forced to silently witness the many roadblocks I encountered in the past two years. I appreciate the tremendous restraint he showed in allowing me to guide myself though I may not have taken the shortest route.

I also thank my supervisor, Dr. Wright, whose encouragement and stimulating discussion were much appreciated. I wish to further recognize Dr. Fisher for her helpful comments, and Dr. Feldman for her outside perspectives.
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INTRODUCTION

Recent history shows that a struggle exists between traditional moral frameworks and contemporary feminist ethics. Traditional frameworks have been repeatedly criticized by feminists for approaching morality from purely a male point of view. This criticism stems from several different underlying principles. Indeed, feminists are no more in agreement than are other philosophers on the nature of human morality. Some base their criticisms on the fact that traditional moralists completely exclude any consideration of women as moral entities. Others focus on the point that under the misguided auspice of presenting a universal moral scheme, most theories subsume women's moral interests within men's.

Answers to these criticisms were proposed in what came to be known as feminist ethics. According to Rosemarie Tong, one root of feminist ethics is what she identifies as women's morality.¹ Women's morality involved the creation of a moral framework specific and exclusive to women. From this, other thinkers developed frameworks that could apply to men but still embraced what had been identified as typically feminine perspectives. These perspectives emphasized the value of nurturing, community, emotion, and human interconnectedness in moral spheres. Feminist ethics also focused on the subordination of women and developed moral frameworks which were specifically aimed at eliminating inequality. Despite

¹Rosemarie Tong, Feminine and Feminist Ethics (Belmont: Wadsworth, 1993).
differences in approach among feminists, there appeared to be a
general recognition that on the whole, women think differently
than men on moral matters. There also was and continues to be a
basic agreement among the majority of feminists that moral
theories thus far have over-emphasized the role of justice in
informing our moral choices.

The existence of a justice/care dichotomy was first
enunciated by Carol Gilligan\textsuperscript{2} and became the foundation of many
of the feminist viewpoints. Through her psycho-sociological
studies, Gilligan argued that men think of morality in terms of
justice while women think of it in terms of care. Fundamentally,
justice involves the rights of a person and the appropriate and
inappropriate times for interference with these rights. Its
language is one of rights, duties, autonomy, abstraction and
rationality. The care perspective, on the other hand, focuses
on the reality of relationships and the denial of a wholly
autonomous self. It speaks of caring, nurturing,
interrelatedness, practicality and emotion. As a result of
Gilligan’s studies, the care perspective was developed in the
1980’s as a reaction to the dissatisfaction felt by feminists in
existing theories.

It is apparent, however, that a fourth strain of thought
has emerged. A certain school of feminists are now interested
in developing a holistic human morality. In her 1995

\textsuperscript{2}See Carol Gilligan, \textit{In a Different Voice} (Cambridge: Harvard University
Press, 1982).
publication, *Justice and Care*, Virginia Held articulates this point of view. Several focal shifts are involved. Primarily, there is a de-emphasis on the dichotomy between justice and care. Contemporary thinkers are beginning to see the reconcilability of the two frameworks. Secondly, this attempt at reconciliation involves the elimination of the corresponding gender associations with justice and care. The two perspectives come to be recognized as simply two ways of viewing morality. Thus the ideal moral system will include both men and women as moral agents. It will also incorporate what had at one time been considered typically male and female thinking. Specifically, such a system would highlight both rights and duties, and the importance of relationships in morality rather than the denial of it. In achieving this end, feminists are willing to draw from all sources including traditional moral theories.

The aim of this thesis is to both endorse this new mode of thought and to contribute to the attainment of its goal. If the idea is to recognize the reality of both sexes in the world and to provide an account of a truly human morality, Hume's moral description is a good place to start. In her book entitled *Moral Prejudices*, Annette Baier introduces the idea of Hume as a "women's" moral philosopher. Again, her arguments are based on Gilligan's findings about the differences between males and

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females in moral development and in mature versions of morality. Baier is impressed with Hume's understanding of morality because it rejects many of the notions that have been criticized by feminists and embraces what has been identified as typically feminine thinking. At the same time, Hume's account allows for abstraction at certain levels of moral thought and the idea of justice.

Baier's categorization was significant at the time since Hume's comments about women had until then, precluded him from having any credibility among feminist thinkers. In light of this new approach, however, the value of Hume's moral system goes beyond simply being somewhat acceptable to feminist sensibilities. Specifically, I would urge that Hume's concept of sympathy, which is central to his entire moral framework, is a sound starting point for the development of a truly human morality. The degree of inclusivity which sympathy offers is undeniable. Indeed Hume even extends it to the other species of the animal kingdom. The concept is also based on the fundamental interconnectedness of humans, a feature that is conspicuously absent in other male frameworks, and prevalent in many female ones. This concept of interrelation is likely to be one of the strongholds of most feminists as they negotiate their way through the maze of moral principles that are available.

Finally, the formation of general moral guidelines in a sympathy-based system emerges from a web of feelings rather than on reasoned, abstract principles. The transmission capabilities of the sympathetic mechanism allows for a broad range of
experiences and feelings beyond one's own and allows for general concepts which are grounded in reality rather than the abstract. At the same time, the variability in the strength of the communication leaves room for flexibility amidst the generality.

In my mind, the concept of sympathy would appease concerns feminists may have about losing the care perspective in this process of universalization. A moral outlook based on sympathy would facilitate and perpetuate the idea that there can be care in justice and justice in care. The aim of the thesis then is to explore and argue the idea that sympathy is an important concept for the development of a new morality.

Chapter one will provide a general overview of the development of feminist ethics. In this process, some insight will be given into different feminist authors in order to further illuminate the general points. While a brief description of Carol Gilligan's work will be provided, the focus of the first chapter is on the development of feminist ethics after Gilligan. The analysis ends with a discussion of a book edited by Virginia Held which captures the new approach to ethics which I target in this thesis. Justice and Care suggests that a new wave of feminists are turning to reconcile justice and care and to establish a moral framework or outlook which encompasses both care and justice. The idea is that there is care in justice and justice in care. The last portion of the chapter will focus on this approach and identify the types of things that some feminists will seek out in formulating a new morality.
In chapter two I will explain Hume's concept of sympathy. Part I provides a general overview of Hume's moral framework which is built upon the concept of sympathy. Hume's framework provides an example of what sorts of frameworks can exist where sympathy is used as a first principle. Part II discusses how passions are the source of moral distinctions for Hume. That passions are the source of moral distinctions is inextricably caught up in the sympathetic mechanism and is germane to understanding how sympathy works in moral spheres. Part III specifically discusses the concept of sympathy. It begins with a critique of the common definitions of sympathy and goes on to delineate the main features of the sympathetic mechanism. Part IV explains how sympathy works in relation to moral judgments. The explanation will be specific to the model enunciated by Hume. The purpose of the section is to provide, by way of example, insight into how sympathy functions.

The final chapter brings the two perspectives together. The aim of chapter three captures the purpose of the thesis as a whole; namely to suggest a starting point for the formulation of a new moral outlook which incorporates both justice and care. Chapter three seeks to show how sympathy would be a good principle for feminists such as Virginia Held and Marilyn Friedman to consider. Each section addresses the issues raised in chapter one against traditional moral paradigms. These issues relate to autonomy, the significance of reason, impartiality, universality and the genderization of moral virtue. The chapter will show how sympathy serves to bring the
moral marker closer to the middle of the justice/care spectrum, thus providing options for a moral outlook that incorporates both approaches.
CHAPTER ONE - FEMINISM AND THE JUSTICE/CARE
DICHOTOMY

INTRODUCTION

In 1982, Carol Gilligan published a groundbreaking book on her empirical findings of the moral development of men and women. Her studies were in response to Lawrence Kohlberg who established levels of moral development and concluded that the boys in the sample were generally able to achieve a higher level of moral development than the girls. Gilligan argued that the model of development was inherently male in its perspective. It approached morality from a 'justice' perspective. Gilligan's main claim was that women approach morality from a care perspective which emphasizes relationships, particularity and emotion. In contrast, the justice perspective focuses on the autonomous self, abstraction and rationality.

In response to Gilligan's findings, the justice/care dichotomy became the centre of debate in what has come to be considered feminist ethics. The eighties brought with it a surge of discussion which ranged from an exploration of what women want in a moral theory to a development of a viable and comprehensive care approach to morality. Despite the variation in approach to Gilligan's findings, the dissatisfaction with traditional theories remained a common thread. Feminist theorists criticized the traditional theories for their impersonal portrayals of human interaction and their neglect of
the natural relationships that exist between humans. The care perspective emphasized what feminists see as the fundamental interconnectedness of all humans. Throughout most of these discussions, feminists maintained the gendered morality introduced by Gilligan and sought ways for this feminine voice to be heard.

In contrast, more recent developments in the justice/care debate suggest that feminists are headed in a new direction. While some writers such as Annette Baier and Marilyn Friedman are attempting to remove the gender associations of the justice and care perspectives, others such as Virginia Held are proposing that principles be drawn from all sources in order to develop a truly human morality. Such a scheme would incorporate both justice and care considerations harmoniously. This suggests that the early discussions which placed justice and care at loggerheads are now being replaced with suggestions as to how they may be reconciled. To this end, feminists are searching for holistic human principles from which to start.

This new feminist approach is one that I readily adopt. While raising awareness of gender difference is a significant step in the goal for equality, the time has come to move towards a unified morality which includes both men and women as moral agents, each considering both justice and care issues. In the thesis I put forth Hume's concept of sympathy as a sound principle which can contribute to this new approach. While sympathy gives recognition to relatedness and other traditional
feminist concepts, it does not preclude notions of justice and individual rights.

In this chapter, I shall turn to an overview of the evolution of feminist ethics with a view to demonstrating later how Hume's concept of sympathy fits in. A focused discussion of what the concept has to offer in terms of feminist aims will come in chapter three.

This chapter will be divided into three parts. The first part will outline questions that were raised about women and morality and explain the insight that Carol Gilligan's findings provided in answering these question at an empirical level. Part two will identify the components of an ethic of care which will need to be addressed in developing a holistic moral framework which incorporates traditional notions of justice and newly developed concepts of care. The final part will discuss the critiques of Gilligan and the emergence of a new non-gendered approach to morality by feminists.

PART I.1 - "WOMEN'S MORALITY" AS THE PRECURSOR

According to much of the literature, feminist ethics has emerged in the latter part of the twentieth century, largely as a result of Carol Gilligan's empirical findings on the differences that exist in women's and men's conceptions of morality. Nevertheless, the idea of a "women's morality" has a long history. Early feminists such as Catherine Beecher
discussed what Rosemarie Tong identifies as "women's morality." Beecher was interested in morality as it pertained to women. Is there indeed such a thing as a "women's morality?" If so, how does it differ from men's morality? Rosemarie Tong's account suggests that "women's morality" raises questions that are absolutely specific to females.\(^5\) It questions morality from a purely female perspective.

Tong correctly points out that women's morality is unlikely to be a unitary moral point of view.\(^6\) If anything, a "women's morality" is more an exploration of how women perceive morality and what they want from a moral system. It is a specialized focus on the female moral point of view with the underlying assumption that such considerations may have been absent in traditional or "men's" morality. It most clearly tries to identify what women's moral intuitions and inclinations are, and what women want in a moral theory. However, Tong finds that the approaches such as Beecher's followed one of three streams: They either instructed women to maintain their distinct virtue, they directed women to join the male moral path, or they suggested that women follow some combination of the first two.\(^7\) Either way, we may observe that all three streams are directed specifically at a female audience. Let us briefly consider Beecher as an example of a woman's moralist.

\(^5\)Tong, 1.
\(^6\)Ibid., 4.
\(^7\)Ibid., 30.
Catherine Beecher and other nineteenth century thinkers denounced the idea of 'gender-free' virtue. Instead, they espoused a "separate-but-equal" theory where virtue, derived from male and female psychological traits, were different in substance but not in value. Some within this school of thought adopted the "separate-and-unequal" doctrine where typically female virtue was in fact superior to typically male virtue. It is to this particular strain that Beecher belongs. Beecher argued that while a woman's place is in the home, this did not render women of inferior body and mind, nor did it put them out of the running as candidates for moral agency (as for example Aristotle claimed). Indeed Beecher claimed that domesticity was considered more fundamental than public life as women had the crucial role of being moral exemplars for the family and society as a whole.\(^8\)

We thus have an example of a thinker who clearly proposed and endorsed a women's morality; a morality which was exclusive to women. In contrast, in *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*,\(^9\) Mary Wollstonecroft denied that women are naturally more pleasure seeking and pleasure giving than men. Much of her commentary was aimed at Rousseau who strongly advocated the position that morality is not the same in males and females and that this difference ought to be encouraged. In this sense,

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\(^8\)bid., 37.

Rousseau was one of the early proponents of a women's morality.\textsuperscript{10}

In his "classic" \textit{Emile}, Rousseau contends that "Rational Man" and "Emotional Woman" are perfect complements to each other. Rousseau's ideal male student, Emile, spends his time in cultivating the moral virtues of temperance and justice, while the ideal female, Sophie, is encouraged to cultivate patience, docility and good humour. The more men and women differ, the more they will need each other, thus leading to stronger bonds and long-lasting unions. Since men and women do not naturally occupy the opposite ends on the rational-emotional spectrum, education is required to achieve the requisite polarization.\textsuperscript{11}

Wollstonecroft argued that it was only because women were confined and restricted that they had "weak" characters. If men had been put in the same "cages", they too would develop the same weaknesses.\textsuperscript{12} "Women's morality" as Wollstonecroft saw it seemed to be an artificial social construct. Wollstonecroft's ultimate conclusion was that women should develop their male sides - that is to say, the psychological traits usually associated with men. This was the most expedient route to take in order to achieve moral recognition within a society of male domination.

\textsuperscript{10}I, and indeed Tong, use 'morality' here in a very broad sense since women's morality for Rousseau actually involves developing non-moral traits - I follow Tong’s use of the word in the sense of morality being the way one conducts oneself in society and the way one develops personally.


\textsuperscript{12}Wollstonecroft, \textit{Vindication of Rights}, 105.
Ironically, Rousseau may appear to be in line with Beecher's school of thought, with Wollstonecraft challenging both. Rousseau differs, however, in that he ascribes moral virtue only to those traits that are to be cultivated by men. He does not seem to place significant moral value on female qualities, as Beecher does. She does, however, resemble Rousseau in his theory of opposites; having believed that men and women must have different traits in order to adequately fit their predetermined social roles.

The sort of exploration undertaken by Beecher was something that was remarkably absent in most of the moral canons. While some traditional authors such as Rousseau included women in their moral discourses, such discussions were cursory to the main task of 'man's morality'. The main impetus of women's morality was the neglect of women in the writings of major moralists such as Aristotle, Kant and Locke. It is to be noted that Hume is already one step ahead of these theorists in that he did view women as moral creatures. He in fact described a women's morality by identifying traits that were not only particular to women but unsuitable for men. "An effeminate heaviour in a man, a rough manner in a woman; these are ugly because unsuitable to each character."13 However, Hume did not escape criticism by feminists for stereotyping and representing women as inherently inferior. Either way, what

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Tong identifies as 'women's morality' brought, and continues to bring women, into moral focus.

**PART I.2 - The Empirical Findings of Carol Gilligan**

The question of whether women have a unique moral outlook was studied empirically in the early 1980's by psychologist Carol Gilligan. Gilligan provided at least some empirical evidence that there is in fact such a thing as a woman's morality as implied by those early feminists who broached the idea. Whether this unique perspective is natural or socialized remains unclear, but this is unimportant for our purposes. Our main interest is to trace the evolution of what we have come to understand as feminist ethics. Gilligan's work has been repeatedly cited as being axiomatic in the exploration into women's morality. Let us take a brief look at these findings.

Gilligan's main target was her former mentor, Lawrence Kohlberg, who developed a six-staged process of moral development. Kohlberg's experiment seemed to be based on the assumption that there was a universal scale upon which to test moral capacity. Kohlberg found that most women checked out at stage three while most men made it to stage five.\(^\text{14}\) While stage three is characterized by a focus on relationships and the approval of others, stage five entails the adoption of a

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\(^\text{14}\) Gilligan, p. 76.
utilitarian orientation where the adult is allowed to do as he pleases as long as there is no harm to others. Stage six is the "universal ethical principle orientation" where the adult transcends self-interest, the opinions of others or the force of legal convention, and is guided by self-imposed self-legislated universal principles.\textsuperscript{15}

It is interesting to note that Kohlberg's stages of moral development which have been described as stages five and six have significant correlation to two of the dominant traditional moral philosophical perspectives of utilitarianism and deontology. Gilligan's criticisms of Kohlberg in the field of social psychology essentially targets the same traditional models that feminists seek to question in late twentieth century ethics.

Through her own study of a sample of women, Gilligan disputed Kohlberg's scale on the grounds that it was gender biased. Gilligan's main claim was that men and women see morality differently. Her conclusions were the culmination of a study Gilligan conducted on women and the issue of abortion. While men see morality as a matter of ranking individual rights, women see it as a matter of developing meaningful relationships. In turn, these differences arise from moral fundamental discrepancies in men and women's ontological and epistemological approaches. These we shall discuss in the next section. Thus

Kohlberg's scale reflected a male morality characterized by a "formal logic of fairness", while women's morality is a "psychological logic of relationships".\(^{16}\) This does not mean, however, one outlook should reign over the other. In Gilligan's words:

My research suggests that men and women may speak different languages that they assume are the same, using similar words to encode disparate experiences of self and social relationships. Because these languages share an overlapping moral vocabulary, they contain a propensity for systematic mistranslation, creating misunderstandings which impede communication and limit the potential for cooperation and care in relationships.\(^{17}\)

While Gilligan's findings have since then been controversial in terms of their validity, they are still valuable in terms of stimulating thought on morality and its traditional constructs. If women tend to focus on care when dealing with morality, traditional moral frameworks need remodelling to accommodate half the population. This is not to say of course that all women approach morality exactly how Gilligan has charted it; they are no more uniform than men in their moral approach. However, Gilligan's findings show that at least a substantial number of women show these tendencies, and that there are likely to be some men who will tend to approach morality in this way. Care needs to be considered.

\(^{16}\)Gilligan, \textit{Different Voice}, 73.

\(^{17}\)Tbid., 173.
PART II - An Ethic of Care

As we shall see below, there are many versions of an ethic of care. However, all of the accounts have a few main underlying principles in common. I would argue that the main thread which characterizes an ethic of care is the idea of the interconnectedness of humans. An ethic of care stresses the idea that humans do not make decisions as wholly independent selves. At the very least, their decisions are affected by those closest to them, or those people they care for the most. Many care theories articulate this principle by claiming that the sentiment of care is the foundation of morality. In Nel Noddings' estimation, for example, there can be no ethical sentiment without the initial enabling sentiment of care.\(^{18}\)

So what is it that is so problematic in traditional ethics that there is this apparent need for reform? When I say traditional ethics, I mean Kantian deontology and consequentialism. These moral canons represent what is known as an ethic of justice, which emphasizes "detachment, impersonality, objectivity, and individual autonomy at the expense of attachment, particularity, emotion, and intersubjectivity."\(^{19}\) If we accept Gilligan's findings, we see that women tend to be relational and contextual in their moral


approach, and thus cannot relate as well to purely justice-based frameworks.

It seems from her findings then, that the problem is in the concepts of autonomy, impartiality, and rationality. These concepts, as Gilligan discovered, do not mesh with women's moral intuitions and thus exclude women from equal access to moral personhood. Gilligan's point was that the apparent deficiency in women's scores on Kohlberg's moral scale was in fact a deficiency in the theoretical norms against which the subjects were measured.

Let us consider each problem area in turn. This will provide for criticism of the justice perspective while at the same time highlighting the main features of the care perspective.

Autonomy

Many traditional frameworks embrace autonomy as a fundamental precept in their moral frameworks. Moral decision-making is at its best when one is autonomous; that is, completely independent of external influences and certainly devoid of emotion. For feminist thinkers, the problem with the concept of autonomy stems from a more fundamental ontological one. Concepts such as the Cartesian self suppose an "excessively individualistic" self.\(^{20}\) As Tong puts it, this

self delights in separating himself (this is a deliberate use of himself as the concept of an autonomous woman was subsumed within the concept of autonomous man or was disregarded altogether) from others.\textsuperscript{21} He is ever vigilant of any threat from the 'other' and of any diffusion of what the other feels and believes, lest these alien views infiltrate the purity of self and take advantage of him. According to Code, the Cartesian declaration, "Cogito ergo sum," is counterintuitive, since the 'I' cannot exist without the 'you'.\textsuperscript{22} To use Baier's concept of the 'second person', a person who has never been anyone's 'you' cannot meaningfully use the term 'I'. To be a person's 'you' is to be their 'second person'.\textsuperscript{23}

I think the point here is that 'I' is a relative term with other humans being the relatum. This corresponds with Caroline Whitbeck's assertion that people come to understand themselves through others rather than in a vacuum. She further contends that the traditional antagonism between self and other is over-emphasized. Whitbeck states that "one becomes a person in and through relationships with other people; being a person requires that one have a history of relationships with other people and the realization of self can be achieved only through relationships and practices."\textsuperscript{24}

\textsuperscript{21}Tong, Feminine and Feminist Ethics, 50.
\textsuperscript{23}Annette Baier, Postures of the Mind: Essays on Mind and Morals, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985), 84.
As many feminist thinkers point out, the antagonistic relation with the 'other' is better replaced with a more relational ontology. Sherwin claims:

"The general consensus of female theorists is that such theories [that is, moral theory that will be useful to women] should involve models of human interaction that parallel the rich complexity of actual ties that bind people in their various relationships and should recognize the moral significance of the actual ties that bind people in their various relationships."\(^{25}\)

As Code, Baier and several others add, the idea is to improve human interaction rather than transcend it. In Code's estimation, we can view human interdependence as a curse or we may view it as a blessing and strive to grow further in that direction. Either way, the fact remains that humans are fundamentally interconnected.\(^{26}\)

Due to this emphasis, many thinkers have tried to centre moral theory around the family unit, the basic premise being that the mother-child relationship is our first exposure to human interconnectedness and that it is within the family context each individual first develops as humans. Feminists such as Virginia Held and Sara Ruddick suggests that we explore the relationships between mothering persons and their children as an alternative model for moral thought.\(^{27}\)


\(^{26}\)Code, Second Persons, 367.

Others like Diane Meyers and Jean Grimshaw hold a more integrationist attitude. They believe that some of the concepts of traditional ontology should be maintained. In the context of our discussion here, they say that autonomy is not necessarily a negative concept if one perceives of autonomy in a broader way. Grimshaw and Meyers adopt an Aristotelian concept of autonomy, where to be autonomous is to have one's actions originate from within rather than without. As Grimshaw outlines in her article, "Autonomy and Identity in Feminist Thinking":

...actions which originate from "inside" the self are those which are seen as in accordance with conscious desires or intentions, and those which originate from "outside" the self are those which one would not do if one were not coerced.28

Autonomy in this sense is undoubtedly as valuable to women as it is to men. In their estimation, autonomy is valuable to all human beings since one must be free to develop morally. To have this freedom, however, does not necessarily entail solipsism. One can be autonomous while at the same time cooperative.

Meyers and Grimshaw's point seems to link autonomy to awareness. As an autonomous being an individual can feel connected to other people while at the same time having principal control over his/her actions. He/she may also be influenced by others. As long as he/she is aware of the reality of these influences as much as possible, the individual does not concede his/her autonomy. In this regard, Meyers asserts that

the challenge for women is two-fold. While they must realize that women have been oppressed and by in large, ignored in ethical spheres, they must also admit that women are not completely heteronomous. Certain trends in their socialization does not render them totally incapable of directing their own actions and thoughts.29

Regardless of which particular approach one takes in critiquing the deification of autonomy in traditional ethics, the fact remains that the concept has been identified as a problematic area for women. Whether it needs to be less emphasized, re-defined or scrapped altogether is a question that is answered in different feminist approaches, some of which have been outlined here. The aim has been, however, to bring out some of the problems which feminist thinkers have had, with some brief glimpses of their solutions. The crux of the objection seems to be this: traditional principles of autonomy fail to recognize the reality of human interconnection. Interconnection, then, is an ontological condition for a viable feminist ethic. The unitary self is better replaced by the social self. In Marilyn Friedman's words: "Relationships to others are intrinsic to identity, preferences and so on, and the self can reason only as the social being she is."30

Related to these ontological conditions are what Tong identifies as epistemological conditions. The issue of

30Marilyn Friedman, What are Friends For? (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 68.
rationality is part and parcel of any discussion of autonomy. Therefore, those who criticize traditional ontology will also criticize traditional epistemology on the same grounds that they exclude the feminist perspective. Tong claims:

Specifically, critics attack traditional epistemology's (supposed) emphasis on rationality in general and on abstraction, universality, and impartiality in particular. They claim that such emphases contribute to the formation of a distorted worldview that inhibits proper moral development. 31

Rationality

Another criticism that is hurled against traditional theorists, and especially Kant, focuses on the reason/emotion dichotomy. Feminists thinkers share with some non-feminist colleagues, the objection to the championing of reason over the passions. Generally, the supremacy of rationality in concepts such as the Categorical Imperative brings with it an entourage of other dichotomies and hierarchies. Reason is associated with the impartial, the mental, the public, the objective, the factual, the male. In contrast, emotion has been associated with the partial, the physical, the private, the subjective, the opinionated, the female. Furthermore, this dichotomization is hardly balanced. While reason and all of its associates, are glorified, emotion and its auxiliaries are denigrated.

31Tong, Feminine and Feminist Ethics, 63.
Feminists depart from their colleagues in their reasons why this is problematic. First and most obviously, it has lead to the conclusions that men are morally more capable than women. This, of course, was something Kohlberg 'verified' in his studies which were based on tests of the candidate's mastery of the 'reason' group. Second, it ignores what many feminists believe are basic realities of moral thought, especially for women.

For Allison Jaggar, emotions are not simply a way of feeling but also of knowing. Jaggar makes the point that it is the passions that direct our interests, and draw us to study certain matters and not others. Many traditional theories nevertheless depict knowledge as factual and untarnished by subjective values. Defining knowledge in this way leads to two problems. First, there is the reality that it is simply a false definition, given experiential evidence. An individual's values direct what that individual is interested in knowing. Similarly, how one perceives a fact depends, at least to some extent, on one's subjective values and personality. This criticism Jaggar shares with her non-feminist colleagues, Hume being one of them. Secondly, and more importantly for our purposes here, it discredits women who have always been associated with emotionality. As I understand Jaggar's position, the premise that emotions and subjectivity retard
moral development automatically leads to a justification for the silencing of women in moral spheres.\textsuperscript{32}

This of course is not the extent of the reason/emotion debate. My aim, however, is only to provide a window into feminist critique. It seems to me that the essential point is this: the idea that the key to moral enlightenment is the development of one's rationality has necessarily excluded women from morality, since they have always been categorized as primarily emotional creatures. This needs to be addressed in the development of any moral theory that purports to speak to, and about, all human beings.

Impartiality

Part of rationality is impartiality. Traditional theories have made it imperative that moral decision-making is done from a detached standpoint, the objective being to remove undue bias and prejudice from moral judgments. Treating things impartially means giving everything equal consideration, including one's own wants, needs etc. We are able to take into account our own particularities, but only insofar as they provide factual, contextual information. We must never reason morally from these particularities.

Impartialist theories are charged with failing to take into account the inherently social nature of humans. The aggregation of persons into a general calculus in utilitarianism is criticized for failing to recognize the separateness of people and the personal integrity brought to them through relationships and projects of their own. For Kantians, the crime is overlooking the moral value of motivations such as loving concern which are essential to successful relationships. The locus of debate seems to be relationships.

What is of particular interest for us, however, is what makes these impartialist theories peculiarly objectionable to feminist thinkers. One reason that we have seen repeatedly emerge is the impact of such theories on women. The traditional role of women as caregivers has raised questions about the moral worth of relationships. Sara Ruddick endorses partiality as part of an overall project to promote esteem and a better
understanding of the relational activities of caring and nurturing that women have traditionally undertaken. In Marilyn Friedman's words, 'Those caring activities have essentially involved moral attention and responsiveness to the specific wants and needs of particular persons.' The failure then, of impartialist theories to account for the worth of these activities has essentially removed women from the moral sphere, a common theme that has prevailed throughout this chapter.

Another concern particular to feminists is that impartialists have tended to focus on moral matters of justice and rights, both of which primarily pertain to the public world where people interact as equal but mutually disinterested individuals. Friedman contends that for many feminist thinkers, the emphasis on justice is inappropriate for close personal relationships. The problem with a concept of individual rights goes back to my section on the ontological conditions for a feminist ethic, for it supposes an atomistic self. Such a self was seen to be inimical to the reality of interconnectedness and the importance of personal relationships.

Finally, Friedman identifies the significance of global moral concern as a point of departure between feminist and non-feminist partialists. Feminists tend to side with impartialists whose detached schemes allow them to have global moral concern. Friedman argues that to be partial does not mean that one need

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34Friedman, What are Friends For?, 66.
be parochial. In fact, parochialism is not what partiality is all about for authors like Friedman. Feminist partialists do give philosophical weight to global moral concern. But as Friedman points out, "There are an indeterminate number of proportions in which to combine concern for the world's needy with devotion to 'one's own'."\textsuperscript{36} It comes down to degree between hoarding all of one's moral concern for one's own and distributing it evenly among all those in need in the global village. Feminists won't go as far as the infamous Godwin, who would choose to rescue the archbishop of Cambray rather than his mother, a poor chambermaid,\textsuperscript{37} but they would insist upon cross-cultural connection and other sorts of networking.\textsuperscript{38}

Virginia Held suggests that we can acquire concern for starving children elsewhere through empathy. As one learns what it is like for children close to home to starve, one can then recognize that distant children are like those close to home. "One's empathetic capacities, developed in relationships with persons known closely, are engaged by more distant people through the recognition of their similarity to those we know."\textsuperscript{39}

From the foregoing discussion, the elements of the care perspective have become clear. Most significantly, humans are seen as fundamentally interconnected. From this foundation other features easily flow. If humans are interconnected, then

\textsuperscript{36}Ibid., 84.
\textsuperscript{37}Ibid., 80.
\textsuperscript{39}Friedman, What are Friends For?, 87.
the care perspective embraces at least controlled partiality and appropriate emotions. For some feminists, morality should begin with the idea that the most basic human relation is one of caring. For others, the goal is to offset the centuries of what they perceive as an over-emphasis of autonomy and rationality.

PART III - THE DE-GENDERIZING OF MORALITY AND A RECONCILIATION BETWEEN JUSTICE AND CARE

While Gilligan's work is still valuable in that it was the impetus for what is now a well developed care perspective, feminist thinkers are simultaneously moving in two new directions. Recent literature in feminist ethics indicates a dissatisfaction with maintaining gender associations with the justice/care dichotomy. Secondly, these feminists are searching for ways in which to unify justice and care. Marilyn Friedman, Nel Noddings, and Annette Baier are three feminists who belong to this school of thought.

Friedman's main hypothesis is that Gilligan's gender associations really represented the symbolically female moral voice and the symbolically male moral voice. It is what we think about how men and women reason morally, rather than how in

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fact they statistically do. In turn these perceptions are a result of what Friedman calls a division of moral labour which is tied up with the historical developments of family, state and economy.\footnote{Friedman, "Beyond Caring," 64.} Friedman argues that historically, men and women have been placed in different arenas, each with its own set of distinctive moral projects. Since men dominated the managing of the public domain, they were naturally associated with the moral issues of justice and rights. Since women were limited to the private sphere, care and relationality were seen to shape female norms, values, and virtues. Friedman points to literature in social science which demonstrates that popular perception of gender differences in morality is alive and well. Giligan's findings were based on the experiences of women which were necessarily shaped by popular perception of male and female morality.\footnote{Ibid., 64-5.}

Friedman, and indeed Baier's approach then is to point out that justice and care are simply two perspectives on morality. The focus then shifts from their association with men and women to recognizing the importance of accommodating both perspectives. This suggests, however, that the two perspectives are not mutually exclusive. From the traditional feminist criticisms of justice ethics, it would seem that they are. The justice principles of autonomy, impartiality, universality, and rationality have always been at odds with care principles of relationality, partiality, particularity and emotionality.
In Friedman's estimation, justice and care need to be reconceptualized from Gilligan's initial description. There can be justice in care. If one considers personal relationships as a miniature social system, justice plays an important role. The maintenance of this system which sets up mutual support requires effort by the participants. Some will bear a greater burden than others for sustaining the relationship and still receive less support. In Friedman's view, justice places restraints on such relationships by canvassing for proper sharing of the benefits and burdens which characterize the relationship.\(^\text{45}\)

Thus, while care considerations may limit the universalizability of duties to others, it does not mean that questions of rights and duties do not come into play in personal relationships. Even for those who claim that care should be the primary concern in the public domain, Friedman states that "if untempered by justice in the public domain, care degenerates precipitously."\(^\text{46}\)

Friedman points out that Gilligan herself admits that mature reasoning about care involves justice and rights.\(^\text{47}\)

At the same time, justice involves care as well. At the most basic level, justice involves considerations of how people should be treated. It inherently considers relationships which are the focus of the care perspective.\(^\text{48}\)

Justice in traditional systems has also served to combat the negative reality of human relationships, namely the potential for violence. Thus within

\(^{45}\)Ibid., 67.
\(^{46}\)Ibid., 69.
\(^{47}\)Ibid., 67.
\(^{48}\)Ibid., 66.
justice is involved a care for the safety of humans. At the heart of many justice perspectives is the idea that the best way to care for everyone is to respect individual rights. Unlike the care perspective however, whose primary moral obligation is to be responsive and committed to particular persons, justice manifests care by setting up a system of general rules to follow. Nevertheless, Friedman's main point is that justice and care both consider human relationships at some level. They also both recognize human individuality. Both aim to alleviate harm to others and to self. It is Friedman's contention that within everyone's moral outlook is the intermingling of both justice and care considerations.49

A similar focus on denying the mutual exclusivity of justice and care comes in Nel Noddings' account of an ethic of care. In her framework, Noddings shows how the reality of moral thinking locates itself closer to the centre of the justice/care spectrum. For example, an ethic of care need not completely deny rationality as a basis for forming moral judgment. Rather, it aims to temper the supremacy of rationality by the inclusion of emotion as well. Noddings argues that the moral view is a rational attitude built upon caring.50 She also suggests that an ethic of care can include abstract principles as long as they are built upon particular experience. For Noddings, the goal of moral life is to strive towards an ethical ideal. This ideal is a commitment to caring. Again, there is an interplay between

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49Ibid., 70.
50Noddings, "Caring," 22.
concepts that have traditionally been identified as justice-oriented and care-oriented.

Noddings' framework and Friedman's arguments both lead to the same end result. Feminists seem to be showing interest in establishing a human morality which brings together justice and care. In her introduction to *Justice and Care*, Virginia Held attests to the fact that feminists are beginning to explore the interplay between justice and care. One suggestion is that justice be relevant in the public sphere and care in the private. This satisfies the general contention that a good moral theory should account for moral life in all contexts. However, we have already seen that justice is needed in the household and care is needed in the public arena. In the household, justice concerns prevent domestic violence for example. In the public arena, positive rights such as welfare rights reflect care principles.\(^{51}\)

Perhaps then, the focus should be on searching for principles which incorporate and or moderate the concepts which underlie justice and care as Nel Noddings does. This would mean finding a middle path between autonomy and interconnection, rationality and emotion, universality and particularity and impartiality and partiality. In Baier's words, "It is clear I think that the best moral theory has to be a cooperative product of women and men, has to harmonize justice and care."\(^{52}\)

\(^{51}\)Held, *Justice and Care*, 1-3.

\(^{52}\)Baier, "More than Justice," p. 57.
Rosemarie Tong indicates that in this endeavour, feminists are willing to draw from all sources. This includes the moral theories of the traditional male thinkers. In my mind, the main tenet of care that will be a feminist stronghold in negotiating a new morality will be the interconnectedness of humans. It appears to be the principle which underlies all of the other features of care. We care because we are connected to other humans who are like us. We need to be responsive to others' particular situations because we are connected to them and they rely on us.

It is my aim to offer Hume's concept of sympathy as a good place to start in developing the all-encompassing moral scheme. With this concept, feminist concerns about having the care perspective heard can be alleviated since I will show that sympathy is a concept which is very amenable to even the strictest type of care framework. Furthermore, Hume's concept allows for the interplay between justice and care. I will show that it recognizes the reality of human interconnectedness without precluding the significance or the functioning of justice issues in moral thinking. The next chapter will explain Hume's concept of sympathy.
CHAPTER 2 - HUME'S MORAL ACCOUNT AND THE CONCEPT
OF SYMPATHY

INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, I offered sympathy as a good concept for feminists to consider in developing a human morality that reconciles and includes both justice and care. In order to fully appreciate Hume's concept of sympathy, it is first necessary to be knowledgeable about the overall framework within which the concept lies. Hume's moral account outlines the principles upon which the concept of sympathy is built. Thus the aim of the first part of the chapter is to highlight the parts of Hume's moral account which are relevant for an understanding of the concept of sympathy as described in the latter part.

According to John Mackie, the account of morality in Hume's Treatise can be systematically divided into five sections\textsuperscript{53}.

These sections are:

II iii 3: Psychology of Action
III i 1-2: Moral Epistemology
III ii 1-12: The Artificial Virtues
III iii 1-5: The Natural Virtues
III iii 6: Conclusion

While all of these sections are not necessary for our purposes here, it is a good way of systematizing Hume's theory. The main

principles I will focus on can be found in the "Moral Epistemology" and "Conclusion" sections. These provide a framework for the concept of sympathy and also mirror the focal points of feminist discussion.

The reason vs. emotion debate is at the forefront of Hume's thought. Hume contends that reason is not the source of moral thought though it does have a role to play. If we recall from chapter one, this squares nicely with the care perspective. Tied up with this idea is the idea that morality arises as a result of some particularity. Specifically, moral norms arise through the experience of a broad range of feelings transmitted by sympathy, and through discourse with others. These are the aspects of Hume's moral theory which I will describe in order to provide a backdrop for the more detailed account of sympathy in the third part.

I aim to show that sympathy is an innate and universal psychological process through which emotions and opinions are transferred from person to person. It is characterized by certain relations of resemblance and contiguity. The process itself is dependant on the idea that all humans are connected to each other at some level. In Hume's more technical terms, sympathy involves a conversion of ideas to impressions. It is an involuntary process which occurs in all human beings and even in animals.
PART I - A GENERAL OVERVIEW OF HUME'S MORAL FRAMEWORK

Most of Hume's moral account can be found in Book III of the Treatise. To put the Book in its historical context, Book III reflects Hume's identification with empiricism. This association is not surprising if we consider that the leading notions of the universe at the time that Hume left the University of Edinburgh to pursue philosophy had emerged from the "new philosophy" of Newton. This "new philosophy" set itself apart from the previously prevailing paradigm of Cartesianism by introducing the experimental method. The method rejected the a priori reasoning which started from a set of first principles attained through what came to be considered speculation.

Hume's ethics identifies with this eighteenth century turn to empiricism in two ways. First, Hume's fundamental basis of morality is found in the nature of humans without any theological presupposition. As Pall Ardal explains, "Hume, in the second two books of the Treatise, is concerned with an attempt to discover those psychological laws that explain human emotions (including moral emotions) and the behaviour of people

54 Quotations from David Hume's work are cited in the text with the abbreviation listed below:


55 See Mary Shaw Kuypers, Studies in the Eighteenth Century Background of Hume's Empiricism (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1930), 1, 14, 16.
in society."\textsuperscript{56} Thus Hume's inquiry is based on observations of what in fact exists. From these observations he develops general trends by an inductive process. In feminist terms, Hume's focus is on the particular. Repeated instances of these particulars lead to conclusions about the more general. In this way, Hume recognizes the value of particularity without losing the ability to have some measure of universality.

Secondly, Hume's objective in Book III of the \textit{Treatise} is to provide an explanation for human morality rather than to dictate to us a prescriptive ethic which asserts obligations, duties or how we ought to act. Hume's approach becomes clear in his comments on other systems of morality:

\begin{quote}
In every system of morality which I have hitherto met with, I have always remarked, that the author proceeds for some time in the ordinary way of reasoning, and establishes the being of God, or makes some observations concerning human affairs; when I am surprised to find that instead of the usual copulation of propositions, \textit{is} and \textit{is not}, I meet with no proposition that is not connected with an \textit{ought}, or an \textit{ought not}... For as this \textit{ought}, or \textit{ought not}, expresses some new relation or affirmation, it is necessary that it should be observed and explained; and at the same time, that a reason should be given, for what seems altogether inconceivable, how this new relation can be a deduction from others, which are entirely different from it." (THN 469)
\end{quote}

Hume questions how thinkers move from the 'is' to the 'ought'. If one is to move from an 'is' to an 'ought', he argues that we need to explain how the transition is made. His hunch is that it is not through reason. Generally, Hume places morality in the

human sphere and purports to merely describe what morality is. The description is then given a psychological and/or sociological analysis in an attempt to explain what he describes. The concept of sympathy is one result of this attempt. In this way Hume provides a moral 'system' or 'theory' but his methods are always empirical and non-prescriptive. It is important to note that what Hume is mainly concerned with is characters and qualities as opposed to actions. Actions for Hume are merely indicators of character (THN 477-8). Furthermore, it is disinterested reflection which gives rise to moral judgments. This does not suggest that reason is the ultimate arbiter as one would expect. All Hume means is that judgments are made upon viewing a character without reference to oneself. Reference is only to others whom the character affects (THN 582).

At first glance, Hume's general view of morality is not far from what many feminists would say. Given that the concept of sympathy arises from this general framework, it is not surprising that the concept may be useful in developing a holistic moral understanding that takes feminist concerns into account without excluding traditional male perspectives. Let us turn to a closer look at the principles in Hume's moral epistemology which sets the stage for sympathy.

PART II - PASSIONS (EMOTION) AS THE SOURCE OF MORAL DISTINCTIONS
Book III of the Treatise is divided up into three parts. The first discussion focuses on the role of reason, if any, in formulating moral distinctions. According to Hume, moral distinctions are derived not from reason but from sentiment. Reason, Hume argues, is the discovery of truth or falsehood. Truth or falsehood in turn consists in an agreement or disagreement with the 'real' relations of ideas or with 'real' existence and matter of fact (THN 458). Along the same lines, reasoning is a process of comparison. As Hume states, "All kinds of reasoning consist in nothing but a comparison, and a discovery of those relations, either constant or inconstant, which two or more objects bear to each other." (THN 73) If moral judgments are to be derived from reason, they must be matters which are subject to truth of falsehood, agreement or disagreement in terms of the relation of ideas or actual existence and matters of fact. Hume argues that passions, volitions and actions are not susceptible to this agreement, since they are original facts and realities which are complete in themselves. In other words, they have no reference to anything else, which suggests that they do not fall into either category outlined above; they do not involve the relation of ideas nor do they pertain to 'real' existence and matters of fact. Thus they cannot be a matter of truth or falsity. By the same token, they cannot be contrary to or in conformity with reason (THN 458). Hume writes:
"a passion is an original existence, or if you will, modification of existence, and contains not any representative quality, which renders it a copy of any other existence or modification. When I am angry, I am actually possess with the passion, and in that emotion have no more a reference to any other object, than when I am thirsty, or sick, or more than five foot high."(THN 415)

Moral distinctions arise when we feel a sense of approbation or disapproval within ourselves. While it is indeed some perceived quality of the object which invokes a sentiment, it is this sentiment which drives our subsequent judgment. This can be contrasted with for example, a Kantian system which posits certain immutable and incorrigible laws which we necessarily and always follow in making our judgments. These types of judgments then are driven by reason and are based on our unique rationality.

When an object invokes in us a prospect of pain, we have an emotion of aversion which draws us away from that which will cause us this uneasiness. The aversion also, according to Hume, leads us to inquire into all sides of whatever objects are connected to the original cause, such that we know of all the possible effects of this object of pain. This process of drawing causal links is an act of reasoning. However, it can be seen that the impulse of aversion is not derived by reason but only directed by it. In so far as reason determines cause and effect our actions may be varied, but it is passion which gave rise to the situation in the first place. Hume's point is that if we were indifferent to pleasure and pain, there would be no reason to reason, and no notion of morality at all (THN 414). Reason does not play any role in opposing or favouring a course
of action or the original passion; it simply provides inert data.

Along these lines, Hume asserts that if reason does in fact give rise to moral judgements, all events of the same relation must be of the same character and must warrant the same moral judgment. If judgments are to be merely a matter of reason, they ought to be eternal and universal, for what is being judged is not in ourselves but in the object of our perception. Thus the same process of scrutiny of the same object must produce the same judgment and the same connection between relations and the will, despite the vast differences between individual minds (THN 465).

Consider, Hume suggests, the crime of parricide. Such a crime has been acknowledged by all humankind as the most reprehensible and horrid of all crimes. Incidentally, it is important to point out that this is an example of Hume's recognition of universality. Nevertheless, the key point to remember is that universal principles for him are derived from experience and discourse among individuals of their experiences. Returning to Hume's example, consider next an oak tree, that produces a sapling by the dropping of its seeds. This sapling grows until finally it overtops its parent and kills it from lack of sunlight. The relation between Nero and Agrippina is the same as the relation between the sapling and its parent. Just as Agrippina gave Nero his existence, so too did the parent tree give the sapling its existence. Furthermore, in both instances, the one who gave existence was destroyed by the one
who received it. Hume points out that some may argue that Nero's act was different to the sapling's due to a consideration of will. Hume replies however that will only alters the cause from which the action derived rather than showing a difference in the relations. In other words, while the will caused Nero to kill his mother, laws of matter and motion caused the sapling to destroy its parent. The relations here have different causes, yet the relations remain the same. Given this fact, it would seem that both situations ought to be met with the same moral disapproval, if morality is indeed derived from reason.

It is ludicrous to contend, Hume argues, that the sapling was immoral for destroying its parent just as Nero was immoral for killing Agrippina. The difference arises then in the fact that we are indifferent towards the sapling and its parent. The destruction of the parent by the sapling fails to invoke any passion in us and thus we have no judgement of vice or virtue. The reason for this difference will become more evident later when I discuss the mechanism of sympathy. For the time being, this example serves to show that reason provided us with the relations yet it fails to move us into the judgment (THN 466-7).

Hume's argument demonstrates that actions, as manifestations of character, do not derive their merit from a conformity to reason. "Reason is, and ought only to be, the slave of the passions." (THN 415) It is the passions which give value to the objects of our perception. Judgment comes from sentiment. To have a sense of virtue is to feel a satisfaction of a particular kind (THN 471). In this regard, Hume writes:
Take any action allowed to be vicious: Wilful murder, for instance. Examine it in all lights, and see if you can find that matter of fact, or real existence, which you call vice. In which-ever way you take it, you find only certain passions, motives, volitions and thoughts. There is no other matter of fact in the case. The vice entirely escapes you, as long as you consider the object. You never can find it, till you turn your reflection into your own breast, and find a sentiment of disapprobation, which arises in you, towards this action. Here is a matter of fact; but 'tis the object of feeling, not of reason. It lies in yourself, not in the object. So that when you pronounce any action or character to be vicious, you mean nothing, but that from the constitution of your nature you have a feeling or sentiment of blame...
Vice and virtue, therefore, may be compar'd to sound, colours, heat and cold, which according to modern philosophy, are not qualities in the object, but perceptions in the mind. (THN 468-9)

Hume also maintains that the same pleasure which causes us to appreciate beauty also leads to moral judgments. What is particular to moral judgments then is the focus on character or mental attributes and the functioning of sympathy. In this regard, Hume notes: "The pain and pleasure which arises from a general survey or view of any action of quality of the mind, constitutes its vice or virtue..." (THN 614).

It is clear that for Hume, moral judgments arise from sentiment which is internal to humans. Vice and virtue are felt rather than reasoned. The significance of sympathy as a moral concept can be attributed to Hume's general notion that morality is a matter of sentiment. In turn, the significance of sympathy, at least to Hume, is immeasurable. In Hume's words, "...sympathy is the chief source of moral distinctions." (THN 618)
Aside from sympathy, Hume also acknowledges the presence of certain utility considerations as well where reason can serve to provide information on the tendencies of characters. While it is a feeling of pleasure which gives rise to approbation, this feeling of pleasure can arise in two different ways:

Moral good and evil are certainly distinguish'd by our sentiments, not by reason: But these sentiments may arise either from the mere species or appearance of characters and passions, or reflexions on their tendency to the happiness of mankind, and of particular persons. My opinion is that both these causes are intermix'd in our judgments of morals; (THN 589-90)

More specifically, humans feel satisfaction because the qualities viewed are found to be agreeable to the possessor, to those around him/her or to humankind generally. This is the case even where the praiseworthy quality is of no particular benefit to the person making the judgment.

Even at the heart of utility considerations is Hume's concept of sympathy. Sympathy answers why we feel pleasure when a quality of a person seems to benefit humanity. Hume makes the clear point that he does not believe that humans have a general sense of benevolence towards humankind as a natural and original principle (THN 481). In other words, it is not an innate characteristic in and of itself. It is a result of a more primary mechanism labelled sympathy. Any concern we have for the benefit of others or humankind in general is a result of this mechanism. In Hume's estimation, there would be no interest in the public good without sympathy.⁵⁷

⁵⁷For a more detailed account, see the Treatise, 618-19.
For Hume, morality is a matter of sentiment. Virtue is nothing but a feeling of pleasure while vice a feeling of pain. However, morality is based on feelings of a particular kind. Moral feelings differ from other feelings in that they are a result of a general survey of character or quality of the mind. Sympathy underlies this entire process and leads to moral judgments. The importance of this concept is evident in Hume's introduction to the principle of sympathy in Book II of the Treatise entitled, "Of the Love of Fame":

No quality of human nature is more remarkable, both in itself and in its consequences, than that propensity we have to sympathize with others, and to receive by communication their inclinations and sentiments, however different from, or even contrary to, our own. (THN 316)

In the next section, I will explain the concept of sympathy as it is found within Hume's general moral framework.

PART III - HUME'S CONCEPT OF SYMPATHY

III.1 The Inadequacy of Common Definitions of Sympathy

The term 'sympathy' is not a term foreign to our everyday experience. People often talk about 'sympathizing' with a friend who has to face a difficult task, or being sympathetic to a particular cause. It is important to distinguish lay concepts of sympathy with Hume's since there are so many forms and since we have internalized these to such a great extent. Making
distinctions will assist us in ridding ourselves of these solidified notions, so that we may do justice to Hume's concept.

The Oxford Dictionary of Current English\textsuperscript{58} defines sympathy in similar ways:

(1) being simultaneously affected with the same feeling as another

(2) sharing (with person etc.) in emotion or sensation or condition

(3) compassion or approval

(4) in agreement with an opinion or desire

Nowhere in the \textit{Treatise}, however, does Hume provide us with a formal definition of sympathy; that is to say, nowhere does Hume say, "The definition of sympathy is ...," as he does with, for example, ideas and impressions. The term does come up enough in the \textit{Treatise} however, to extract a meaningful and useful definition. The challenge will be one of synthesis given that at least some mention of sympathy pervades the whole of the \textit{Treatise}. Unfortunately, there is no neat account of it from which we can formulate a definition. Nevertheless, let us forge ahead.

Most of the common definitions can be ruled out. First, while Hume's sympathy explains the occurrence of pity, it is not synonymous with pity. For Hume, sympathy is a mechanism which allows for the transference of passions and opinion, and for the purposes of our study here, it is the mechanism which underlies

moral evaluation. Pity is considered by Hume to be one such "indirect passion" (THN 277) which arises because of sympathy. It is "a concern for...the misery of others" (THN 369). Hume claims:

'Twill be easy to explain the passion of pity, from the precedent reasoning concerning sympathy. We have a lively idea of everything related to us. All human creatures are related to us by resemblance. Their persons, therefore, their interests, their passions, their pains and pleasures must strike upon us in a lively manner, and produce an emotion similar to the original one; since a lively idea is easily converted into an impression. If this be true in general, it must be more so of affliction and sorrow. These have always stronger and more lasting influence than any pleasure or enjoyment. (THN 369)

The passage suggests that the concept of sympathy is being used to explain pity. Pity arises because we have a lively idea of another person's affliction and sorrow. Through the mechanism of sympathy, the idea is converted into an impression which produces an emotion similar to the original one. This emotion which is produced is pity.\(^{59}\)

The key point is that if sympathy were synonymous with 'pity', it would be difficult to understand how pleasant emotions can arise through sympathy. Indeed, Hume does not restrict sympathy to explain only those passions which are painful. Sympathy is no more a mere concern or a sense of compassion for others than is 'pity' a mechanism for the transference of passions and opinions.

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\(^{59}\)The actual emotion of pity which involves what Hume would describe as love for the person being pitied arises as a result of what is called a double relation of impressions and ideas. However, this occurs after the sympathetic mechanism takes place and is therefore not important for showing that pity and sympathy are distinct for Hume.
The distinction that I claim exists between sympathy and pity also seems to exist in Ardal's analysis of sympathy although Ardal makes the claim with some reservations. Ardal writes: "Although Hume clearly distinguishes compassion and pity from sympathy, he hardly makes out a wholly satisfactory case for his claim that sympathy is a source of pity or compassion."\(^{60}\) Regardless of this flaw, our focus remains on the claim that Hume does not equate sympathy and pity. Similarly, other Hume scholars such as Philip Mercer distinguish between the two terms. "It is important to distinguish 'sympathy' from 'pity' and 'feeling sorry for'."\(^{61}\) His point is that pity does not entail a concern for the welfare of the other person. This point of differentiation, however, is debatable as it implies that sympathy necessarily involves a concern for the other person. I am not sure if this is an accurate depiction of Hume's concept of sympathy given that the idea of a concern for others is tied up in benevolence. In turn, benevolence is only one of the many passions that arise as a result of sympathy. It is no more a part of sympathy per se than pity is. Hume makes it clear that such a concern for others is not an innate human quality (THN 481). If it does arise, it is only as a result of our more basic sense of commonality with other human beings, a factor that is key in the mechanism of sympathy. In my view then, a concern for others is not at the same level as sympathy. It is not an original principle though it may be natural.

\(^{60}\)Ardal, *Passion and Value*, 54.  
Sympathy is more basic and is a first principle upon which a concern for others is built. In Hume's account, to say that sympathy is simply a matter of feeling concern for someone, would be to unduly constrict his entire account of sympathy.

By the same token, we may also rule out the idea of sympathy as merely having some partiality towards another person's particular viewpoint. For example, I may say that I have 'sympathy' for a particular cause. This necessarily suggests of course, that while I myself have not adopted that cause, I at least support it to some degree. If the cause were fully my own, it would be unintelligible to say that I sympathize with it. This notion of sympathy again differs with that of Hume's in at least two fundamental ways. First, this common sense of sympathy is a secondary and not an 'original' principle. In other words, we can ask why it is that I sympathize with a certain cause. Explanations can include considerations of childhood influences, socialization or simply some sort of feeling of affinity towards the other person. Hume's concept of sympathy, however, is more primary than this. Indeed, his notion is presupposed in the common sense definition as it provides a possible explanation as to why I sympathize with another's cause. I 'sympathize' with John's cause (in the first sense) because of a transference of feeling that has occurred between myself and John conjoined with a conversion of an idea to an impression. This transference of opinions is well within the scope of the sympathetic mechanism (THN 316, 320). In this regard, Mercer claims that sympathy is the principle
which explains how feelings AND OPINIONS can be transferred from one individual to another.\textsuperscript{62} We cannot ask why does sympathy exist in Hume's sense because it is an original psychological mechanism. To restrict sympathy to one particular secondary manifestation would again unduly constrain Hume's principle.

The second point of differentiation lies in the fact that sympathy taken in the common sense that we have been discussing appears to be something we choose to do consciously. While there may be unconscious factors which contribute to my being sympathetic towards John's cause, it is still something that I have some conscious control over. Some thing I am sympathetic towards, other things I am not. In contrast, it seems that Hume's sympathy is both unconscious and unpreventable. It is a mechanism which naturally occurs just as blood circulates through the body. We don't choose to have sympathy, it is simply something that occurs because of our natural affiliation with others and our strong sense of ourselves. In this regard, Mercer describes the sympathetic mechanism as an "involuntary process"\textsuperscript{63}. From this we see a third point of departure. Hume's concept of sympathy has a mechanistic element to it, it is a process rather than an actual feeling which can be freeze framed at a particular moment in time, only to fade away as the moment passes. This sense of process is absent in the common usage that we have be investigating here.

\textsuperscript{62}Ibid., 20.
\textsuperscript{63}Ibid., 36.
Another definition that can be rejected is the one which describes sympathy as being simultaneously affected with the same feeling as another. At first this seems to be close to Hume's concept as it sounds like this type of sympathy entails being involved with another's feeling in a significant way. However, some subtle points of distinction arise. The term 'as' suggests not a sort of transference effect but rather that A and B both see a wounded person suffering and are both independently and simultaneously moved by the sight. For Hume, sympathy would be brought in as part of an explanation as to why each of them are moved - in other words, to explain more the relationship between each observer and their object rather than between the observers themselves. Certainly sympathy may also be brought in to explain any sort of emotional relationship between the two observers but to say that sympathy is the simultaneous affectation of the same feeling in two individuals is only to scratch the surface. This definition fails also on the same grounds as the others have - namely in the fact that it describes a secondary state of affairs which arises as a result of the sympathetic mechanism as Hume sees it. In the Treatise, Hume describes several such passions which arise as a result of sympathy. "Whatever other passions we may be actuated by; pride, ambition, avarice, curiosity, revenge, lust; the soul or animating principle is sympathy." (THN 363). "Hatred, resentment, love, courage, mirth, and melancholy; all these passions I feel more from communication than from my own natural temper and disposition." (THN 317)
As far as the Oxford Dictionary goes, we are left with the idea of sympathy as compassion or approval. Here we see an element of moral judgment if we identify approval with morality. At the outset this definition would seem particularly attractive since I aim to show how sympathy is an integral part of morality for Hume. Yet closer scrutiny reveals that it is flawed in much the same ways as the others have been, namely that it is too narrow. Sympathy does give rise to approval but it is not synonymous with it. It is also interesting to note that sympathy, within this definition, is associated with more 'positive' feelings. It is hard to imagine compassion as anything but a positive feeling that is projected onto another person. The positive nature of approval is self-evident. We may see pity in the same light. It is true that pity can arise out of malevolence towards a person, yet it is clear that when synonymous with sympathy, pity can only be understood, within the context of common usage, to be a positive feeling. The point then is that in all of the definitions including the present one being considered, sympathy is associated to something which is positive. For Hume, however, sympathy gives rise to a plethora of feelings that cover the full range of human emotions, judgments and reactions. Indeed we will see that sympathy gives rise not only to approval but also disapproval.

The closest definition then, is the one we have yet to consider from our list; namely, the idea of a 'fellow-feeling'. This definition is provided by Mercer who puts it forth as one
of the many common understandings of the word sympathy. Consider an example: a sense of sympathy pervaded the whole crowd. One can see that in this context, sympathy is a sort of fellow-feeling in the sense that each member of the crowd feels a certain intangible affinity towards the other members. This notion of an intangible affinity hits closer to the mark of what Hume intends to be understood. But this suggests that sympathy is simply a special sort of passion, a conclusion that remains dubious as we shall see. I would propose that it is more accurate to depict sympathy as being dependent on a fellow-feeling rather than being a fellow-feeling itself. My reasons will become more clear in the next section.
III.2 - The Essence of Hume's Concept of Sympathy

From the above discussions, it appears that sympathy is not a passion as it may be commonly perceived.\textsuperscript{64} The essence of Hume's concept of sympathy can be found in the following passage:

When any affection is infus'd by sympathy, it is at first known only by its effects, and by those external signs in the countenance and conversation, which convey an idea of it. This idea is presently converted into an impression, and acquires such a degree of force and vivacity, as to become the very passion itself, and produce an equal emotion, as any original affection... 'Tis evident that the idea, or rather the impression of ourselves is always intimately present with us, and that our consciousness gives us so lively a conception of our own person, that 'tis not possible to imagine, that anything can in particular go beyond it. Whatever object, therefore, is related to ourselves must be conceived with a like vivacity of conception... (THN 317)

Sympathy for Hume is a process or a mechanism which allows for a transference of emotion, passion or opinion between individuals. Several basic facts about sympathy are revealed in the above passage. First, sympathy involves a conversion of 'idea' to 'impression', two terms that will be explained later. Second, the conversion occurs as a result of some strong feeling of self-consciousness that every human being possesses. Finally, there is a suggestion that the relatedness of human beings facilitated the process. These will be treated more thoroughly in later sections. One thing that does not come from the

\textsuperscript{64}Tbid., 40. See also D.G.C. McNabb, David Hume: His Theory of Knowledge and Morality (Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1966).
passage is the idea that sympathy is something innate in all humans. This can be broken down into two main points. First that sympathy for Hume is a universal process and second, that it is an original principle. Hume is sure to note "the force of sympathy thro' the whole animal creation." (THN 363). Elsewhere in the Treatise, Hume includes animals other than humans in this group (THN 398). The importance of this will become clear in chapter three when I discuss the value of sympathy as a holistic moral starting point.

**Ideas and Impressions**

It is certain from the numerous references that exist in the Treatise, that sympathy is a principle of communication that involves a certain process. For example, Hume writes: "...the principle of sympathy or communication... is nothing but the conversion of an idea into an impression by the force of imagination."[emphasis added] (THN 427) I will now explain these terms as Hume describes them in the Treatise.

No clearer account of the nature of these two concepts can be given than Hume's own account at the beginning of Book I:

All the perceptions of the human mind resolve themselves into two distinct kinds, which I shall call IMPRESSIONS and IDEAS. The difference betwixt these consists in degrees of force and liveliness, with which they strike upon the mind, and make their way into our thought or consciousness. Those perceptions, which enter with most force and violence, we may name impressions; under this name I comprehend all our sensations, passions and emotions,... By ideas I mean the faint images of these in thinking and reasoning...(THN 1)
Hume's concept of sympathy depends largely on the relation between impressions and ideas. An idea which becomes more lively is transferred into the corresponding impression. According to Mercer, Hume argues that this enlivening source is our self-consciousness. We always have a strong impression of ourselves. This conception is so lively that we cannot perceive of anything more strongly. Hume therefore explains that anything which is related to ourselves must also be perceived in a lively manner. Given that we share a relation with other humans, the idea of another's passion becomes enlivened and subsequently transformed into an impression such that we experience the passion as if it were our own. Consider this process in Hume's own words:

'Tis evident, that the idea, or rather impression of ourselves is always intimately present with us, and that our consciousness gives us so lively a conception of our own person, that 'tis not possible to imagine, that any thing can in this particular go beyond it. Whatever the object, therefore, is related to ourselves must be conceived with a like vivacity of conception...and tho' this relation shou'd not be so strong as that of causation, it must still have considerable influence. (THN 317)

As Hume states elsewhere, we have a lively idea of everything that is related to us and thus move from idea to impression easily (THN 369). This is the basic sympathetic mechanism.

**Relatedness**

By the same token, Hume observes that we have a connection with all humans. It this fundamental connection which drives
the sympathetic mechanism. Several passages reflect this analysis of Hume's position: "Every human creature resembles ourselves, and by that means had an advantage above any other object, in operating on the imagination." (THN 359) He further claims that, "The minds of men are like mirrors to one another..."; and again, "There is a very remarkable resemblance, which preserves itself amidst all their variety; and this resemblance must very much contribute to make us enter into the sentiments of others..." (THN 318) The conclusion then is that humans feel a connection to one another due to their resemblance. In turn, this resemblance contributes to the vivacity which leads to a conversion from idea to impression.

Hume also recognizes that the strength of the mechanism can vary according to how much resemblance there is or how close a person is. Consider the following passages:

Now 'tis obvious, that nature has preserv'd a great resemblance among all human creatures, and that we never remark any passion or principle in others, of which to some degree or other, we may not find parallel in ourselves... this resemblance must very much contribute to make us enter into the sentiments of others, and embrace them with facility and pleasure. Accordingly, we find, that where, besides the general resemblance of our natures, there is any peculiar similarity in our manners, or character, our country, or language, it facilitates the sympathy. (THN 318)

The sentiments of others have little influence, when far remov'd from us, and require the relation of contiguity to make them communicate themselves entirely. (THN 318)

Resemblance and the basic similarity amongst humans is what allows for the transference of passions and opinions from one individual to the next. Through this process, sympathy allows
one to feel another person's passion as if it were originally one's own. Indeed, this is how sympathy drives moral judgments. I view person X helping an old man carry his groceries to the car. Because all humans have a basic connection to one another, the idea of his gratitude towards X becomes enlivened to form an impression and I feel pleasure as if the gratitude had originally been experienced by me. This pleasure that I feel is synonymous with virtue and I judge X to be virtuous. This is a simple example of the sympathetic mechanism which Hume describes when he writes:

[The] idea is presently converted into an impression, and acquires such a degree of force and vivacity, as to become the very passion itself, and produce an equal emotion, as any original affection. (THN 317)

Having explained the nature of ideas and impressions and the fundamental connectedness that the sympathetic mechanism is based on, the question remains of how the idea of another's passion is formed in the first place in order for it to become converted. As Mercer points out, to experience an emotion or a passion consists in perceiving or recognizing some inner mental event. Part of understanding the sympathetic mechanism then is grasping how Hume explains how the idea of another's passion is formed.

The Significance of the Relation of Cause and Effect

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65 Mercer, Sympathy and Ethics, 24.
According to Hume, it is "external signs in the countenance and conversation," (THN 317) that first conveys the idea. In other words, the idea comes to us in the first place through inference. Hume writes, "No passion of another discovers itself immediately to the mind. We are only sensible of its causes and effects. From these we infer the passion: And consequently these give rise to our sympathy." (THN 576) In essence, Hume is claiming that humans minds are not accessible to others. To know what another is feeling is to infer it from external indicators such as speech and gesture. If we, for example see on several occasions that crying is associated with sadness, then we may infer in a later case that a person we see crying is sad. Here the passion is sadness and crying is one of its external effects. It becomes clear then that the causal relationship is very important for the sympathetic mechanism. Without it, we would have no way of forming an idea of another person's mental state since we cannot read people's minds.

As a result of this causal requirement, it also follows that we cannot 'sympathize' with feelings that we have not already experienced. Let us think back to our distinction between idea and impression. A passion is classified by Hume as a 'simple impression' (see THN Book I, Part I, Sect. I). An idea of a passion is then a weaker copy of the impression. It follows from this that my idea of another person's passion must be a weaker copy of an impression that I've already had before. Hume states, however, that our basic humanness doesn't leave room for much unfamiliar diversity of feeling. In one passage
he writes: "...we never remark any passion or principle in others, of which, in some degree or other, we may not find parallel in ourselves." (THN 318) According to Mercer, this thinking reflects Hume's Cartesianism.66

Sympathy as an Involuntary Process

What also emerges from Hume's discussions is the fact that the sympathetic mechanism is an involuntary process, a point we touched on earlier. It is involuntary in the sense that we do not make a conscious decision whether we shall enter into another's mental state or not. It is something which simply happens to a greater or lesser degree depending on how close the object is to us. But given the general resemblance of humankind, there is no occasion when sympathy is not at play. Let us briefly turn to the factors which affect the degree of sympathy before continuing the discussion.

Resemblance, Contiguity and Causation

"The minds of men are all similar in their feelings and operations, nor can any one be actuated be any affection, of which all others are not, on some degree, susceptible. As in string wound up, the motion of one communicates itself to the rest; so all the affections readily pass from one person to another, and beget correspondent movement in every human creature." (THN 575)

66Ibid., 31.
I have already stressed the significance of resemblance to the sympathetic function. The above quote gives us a clear indication of how the resemblance between humans is the reason that sympathy works the way that it does. This of course speaks to the general resemblance between all humans. There is also, of course, the particular resemblances which arise within each nation. This additional factor caters even more to the sympathetic mechanism.

This is tied in with the idea of contiguity. In essence, the closer one is to an object, either in physical proximity or emotionally, the more readily and completely the sympathetic mechanism occurs. The reason for this effect is clear in light of our earlier discussion of impressions and ideas. Our self is always intimately present to us. Anything that has a relation to ourselves is conceived in like vivacity. It would make sense then that those things which are closest to us would affect us most readily. Thus I enter into the passions of a countryman more easily than those of a foreigner. I enter into the passion of my brother more easily than that of my professor. Here we have examples of two difference types of relations. While the first shows that spatial contiguity affects the sympathetic mechanism, the latter reflects what Hume regards as causation.

Causation is the third way in which associations arise in the mind. Two objects can be connected together in the imagination where one is the cause of the other. This causal relation extends even when a third object is interposed between the two which is connected to both of the objects by
resemblance, contiguity or cause and effect. Two brothers are connected causally, for example, because they are both related to the same mother who relates to each of them causally. By giving birth to each of them, the mother 'caused' their existence. In such a scheme, the more interposing there is, the weaker the relation. Hume uses the example of a fourth cousin. He writes, "Cousins in the fourth degree are connected by causation... but not so closely as brothers, much less as child and parent." (THN 11)

Now to return for a moment to a further point about consciousness. At a certain point in the process, we may not be conscious of the fact that what we are experiencing is someone else's emotion. We are conscious at the idea stage but not later.

"'Tis indeed evident, that when we sympathize with the passions and sentiments of others, these movements appear at first in our mind as mere ideas, and are conceiv'd to belong to another person, as we conceive any matter of fact. 'Tis also evident that the ideas of the affections of others are converted into the very impressions they represent." [emphasis added] (THN 319)

Hume does say on several occasions that when we sympathize we feel a passion as if it had originally been our own. "The idea", Hume claims, "is presently converted into an impression, and acquires such a degree of force and vivacity, as to become the very passion itself, and produce an equal emotion, as any original affection." (THN 317) In other words, when I sympathize with someone's grief, I actually feel the same grief. As Mercer points out, nowhere does Hume state that we are
conscious of this fact that sympathetic feelings are not really our own. 67

The basic points about sympathy have now been discussed. First, it involves a conversion of idea into impression and applies to passions, emotions and opinions. Second, it is affected by certain relations: cause and effect, resemblance and contiguity, which determine to ease with which the conversion takes place. It is also an involuntary process. Thirdly, it is universal. In certain passages Hume even extends the sympathetic mechanism to the rest of the animal kingdom. Two passages come to mind:

... observe the force of sympathy thro' the whole animal creation, and the easy communication of sentiments from one thinking being to another. (THN 363)

every one has observ'd how much more dogs are animated in a pack when they pursue their game apart; and 'tis evident that this can proceed from nothing but sympathy. (THN 398)

This sort of group behaviour is also found in humans as a result of sympathy: "A good natur'd man finds himself in an instant of the same humour with his company..."(THN 317)

Having come to this basic understanding of sympathy and how it functions, we can now look at its particular role in the realm of moral judgments.

67Ibid., 35.
PART IV - SYMPATHY AND MORAL JUDGMENT

Earlier in the chapter, we discovered that moral sentiments were feelings of pleasure and pain of a particular kind. Hume makes it clear that not all feelings of pleasure are of that peculiar kind that brings about approval or disapproval. Hume is interested in showing the causal relations that bring about these special feelings:

... in all enquiries concerning these moral distinctions, it will be sufficient to shew principles, which make us feel a satisfaction or uneasiness from the survey of any character, in order to satisfy us why the character is laudable or blameable. An action or sentiment, or character is virtuous or vicious; why? because its view gives pleasure or uneasiness of a particular kind. In giving a reason, therefore, for pleasure and uneasiness, we sufficiently explain the vice and virtue. (THN 471)

What is striking in this passage is that Hume appears to be searching for some sort of psychological explanation. Hume's concept of sympathy solves his problem.

Let us quickly review what we know so far about moral judgment according to Hume. First and foremost, moral judgment is based on sentiment. Things are virtuous or vicious when accompanied by a feeling of a particular kind. This peculiar feeling is a result of reflection upon character or qualities of the mind from a point of view that only regards the effects of that character on others rather than on oneself.

To my mind, this point of view is not the typical objective standard that one is normally used to. Mercer often uses the term 'disinterested' to describe the type of sympathy which
gives rise to moral judgments. However, I would argue that 'disinterested' suggests a level of objectivity and detachment that is contrary to the fundamental nature of the sympathetic mechanism. My point is that the spectator always maintains some level of attachment when judging a character. What does happen is that he/she reflects on the effects of a character on persons other than themselves.

The idea that some attachment remains does not preclude the formation of general rules of principles. General standards are formed through interaction with others. Hume states:

The intercourse of sentiments, in society and conversation, makes us from some general inalterable standard, by which we may approve or disapprove of character and manners. And tho' the heart does not always take part with those general notions, or regulate its love and hatred by them, yet are they sufficient for discourse and serve all our purposes in company...(THN 603)

Three points are important. First, universalization remains a matter of emotion. It is an intercourse of sentiment and not an overriding of reason which leads to general rules. Second, the sentiments which are the subject of discourse were felt by the agents in the first place, as a result of the sympathetic mechanism. They are in other words, grounded in reality. Finally, Hume indicates that these standards are not always binding on an individual's moral view. The moral point of view still remains affected by relations of resemblance, contiguity and causation. This is part if the differentiation between extensive and immediate sympathy.
Extensive and Limited Sympathy

In Mercer's view, limited sympathy functions to make the spectator aware of another person's feelings at that particular instance. Extensive sympathy, on the other hand, makes the spectator aware of both the other person's feeling at that particular time and what might happen beyond that time. It would appear from certain passages of the Treatise that the limited sympathy does not involve reflection of a character without regard for its effects on oneself or one's own interests. Included in the mechanism of extensive sympathy is a consideration of the general frameworks that individuals develop of character tendencies.

Hume argues that moral judgments are a result of extensive sympathy where not only the immediate effect of a character is considered, but also its general tendency to be agreeable to itself, to others or to society. Consider the following passages:

'Tis therefore from the influence of characters and qualities upon those who have an intercourse with any person, that we blame or praise. We consider not whether the persons, affected by the qualities, be our acquaintance or strangers, countrymen or foreigners... We make allowance for a certain degree of selfishness in men; (THN 582-3)

The imagination adheres to the general view of things, and distinguish as betwixt feelings they produce, and those which arise from our particular and momentary situation. (THN 587)

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68 Ibid., 39.
As discussed earlier, the general view of things is formed through a mutual exchange of sentiment. Through discourse with others, a general view of character is formed. Thus when a spectator comes upon a character, immediate sympathy allows the spectator to experience the immediate pleasure or pain or the recipient and form an immediate judgment. Extensive sympathy seems to override this immediate reaction and provides the more solidified judgment. The idea that becomes converted to an impression in the mechanism of extensive sympathy seems to come from a more sophisticated web of moral feelings which has led to a generalized idea of character tendencies.

It is important to note however that this generalized thought is not inflexible. For Hume, general rules only create a "species of probability" (THN 585). Elsewhere Hume writes that "these rules are not perfectly inflexible, but allow of many exceptions..." (THN 531).

It would seem then that the sympathetic mechanism which gives rise to moral judgments is simply a more sophisticated version of the sympathetic mechanism that gives rise to other passions. In either case, the fact remains that the basic components of the sympathetic mechanism remain intact. For the purposes of discussing sympathy in the next chapter, the following aspects of sympathy should be kept in mind. First, it is a mechanism which allows for the transference of emotion and opinion amongst persons. Second, it is involuntary and universal. Third, it is based on a fundamental idea of human interconnectedness. Finally, general standards are formed
through discourse of sentiments though not always binding on one's moral point of view.
CHAPTER THREE - SYMPATHY AND FEMINIST ETHICS: A NEW BEGINNING

INTRODUCTION

Thus far I have outlined the concerns expressed by feminists who seek to develop a new moral outlook and have provided a basic description of Hume's concept of sympathy. In this chapter, I aim to show that sympathy is a good concept to begin with in developing this new moral outlook that is to include both justice and care.

Thinkers such as Virginia Held and Marilyn Friedman believe that a good moral framework must include both rights, duties and autonomy along with caring, sharing and community. It is my contention that all of these concepts can be captured in a framework which is based on sympathy. Since Hume's moral framework is one which incorporates the concept of sympathy, his framework will be used at times to exemplify the types of moral thinking that can emerge with the use of sympathy.

The chapter will be organized to mirror the criticisms of traditional frameworks posited by feminists in Chapter one. Part I will address the concept of autonomy as contrasted with the social self. Part II will address the reason/emotion debate. Part III will discuss sympathy and the feminist concept of partiality. Part IV will more specifically relate to the role of sympathy in mediating between universals and
particulars. Finally, Part V will briefly discuss how sympathy allows for a degenderization of moral virtue.

PART I - AUTONOMY AND THE SOCIAL SELF

Autonomy was not really an issue for Hume. He never speaks of autonomy per se, within the book "Of Morals". His main discussion of the 'self' comes in Section VI of Book I, entitled "Of Personal Identity" (THN 251-263), but this is the book entitled "Of the Understanding". Nevertheless, in "Of Morals", Hume speaks of self when discussing sympathy, stating that our "self is always intimately present to us". This we saw in the chapter on sympathy. Hume's moral account does lend itself to a certain emphasis on relations which would be in line with feminist thought. If we recall, Gilligan found that women experience the reality of interconnection. In turn, feminists claimed the highly individualized, atomistic self to be an unrealistic depiction of people who are naturally born into a relation.

On this point, Hume is right on target. The reality of interconnection is indeed the foundation of the sympathetic mechanism. Sympathy is based on the fact that humans are generally connected by resemblance and similarity; I draw attention to the quotation in chapter two, that the "minds of

men are like mirrors..." and that the degree of resemblance and contiguity are factors in determining the force of the sympathetic mechanism. Our passions are communicated to others through sympathy, so much so that we may experience another's passions or opinions as if they were our own. The strength of this communication can vary. However, we are able to 'sympathize' with other humans no matter how remote they may be either in proximity or in relation, because of a fundamental resemblance amongst human beings. The pain of starving children in distant countries can be communicated to us through sympathy in the same way that sadness in a close friend can be. In the former case, this is possible because we sympathize with what we hear of their suffering. This is also possible because we recognize, through experience, the uneasiness of starving children in our own nation to which we are more strongly affected by sympathy. Thus we can project to the other children in the same circumstance, through a mechanism Hume refers to as extensive sympathy. The essence of sympathy then is the type of interconnection which feminists have insisted on.

Furthermore, Hume sees humans as being fundamentally social though possessed of a certain amount of selfishness. Morality arises as a result of our 'socialness', since moral judgments are derived from sympathy. That humans need other humans comes out clearly in the following passage cited from Book II - "Of the Passions":

...observe the force of sympathy thro' the whole of animal creation, and the easy communication of
sentiments from one thinking being to another. In all creatures, that prey not upon others, and are not agitated with violent passions, there appear a remarkable desire of company, which associates them together, **without any advantages they can ever propose to reap from the union.** This is still more conspicuous in man, as being the creature of the universe, who has the most ardent desire of society, and is fitted for it by the most advantages. We can form no wish, which has not reference to society. A perfect solitude is, perhaps, the greatest punishment we can suffer. Ever pleasure languishes when enjoy'd a-part from company, and every pain becomes more cruel and intolerable. (THN 363, emphasis added)

These sorts of observations about human nature, whether one believes them to be accurate or not, have a certain feminist flavour. Sympathy embraces and represents a relational view of the world. We might recall Caroline Whitbeck claiming that "one becomes a person in and through relationships with other people; being a person requires that one have a history of relationships with other people, and the realization of self can be achieved only through relationships and practices." (See chapter one)

We see throughout Book III of the Treatise that the development of virtue is linked to sympathy since it allows one to broaden one's range of experience through its mechanism. In chapter two, we learned that it is through discourse and observation that a general moral point of view is formed. Through sympathy, the idea of another's opinion or feelings is converted into an impression and the observer experiences the feeling or the opinion as if it had originally been his or her own. One's own moral judgment may be adjusted by sympathizing with another's judgment through the exchange of those opinions. The sympathetic mechanism can work to create a general view of
virtuous characters. While not specifically addressed in Hume's work, it seems likely that he would reject the view that a moral point of view relies on the development of autonomy.

Similarly, Annette Baier argues that Hume does not give any centrality to relationships with equals; a feature of autonomy-based theories. Indeed, because the root of his analysis of social cooperation is family cooperation, this necessarily puts relations between unequals (parents and children) at the forefront. According to Baier, Hume's account of the familial relationship and the obligations and virtues that accompany it, reflects three central features of relations between moral agents - "it is intimate, it is unchosen, and it is between unequals."[70] These are all non-autonomous characterizations. I would argue that the reason why these relations can be so labelled is because of the prevalence of the sympathetic mechanism in the moral sphere. Moral agents relate to each other through sympathy. The intimacy and involuntariness of moral relations arises because we have fundamental interconnectedness and because we cannot control the sympathetic mechanism and the way it functions. The point is that sympathy precludes the development of a moral framework which is based solely on the interaction between fully atomistic selves. Interconnection is inherent in sympathy.

Sympathy caters to a moral life which involve navigating oneself through a sea of often conflicting emotions, experienced

[70] Ibid., 44.
by oneself and communicated from others. Such a view addresses concerns of feminists about the role of care in morality since it undermines a notion of society as a grouping of autonomous, rational individuals. Baier would add: "...the moral point of view overcomes contradictions in our individual sentiments over time." Hume also notes, that existence is not static, and therefore neither is one's own situation or one's relationships with others. "Our situation with regards to both persons and things, is in continual fluctuation; and a man that lies at a distance from us, may, in a little time, become a familiar acquaintance." (THN 45) All of these ideas suggests that sympathy can give rise to moral frameworks which emphasize relationships rather than autonomy.

The fact that the concept of sympathy can lead to a moral model which de-emphasizes autonomy does not mean that the concept is not flexible enough to allow for some middle ground between justice and care. One can be relational while at the same time autonomous in choosing how to act. Individuals can choose how to act keeping their relationships in mind. The concept of sympathy would not imply that morality is the product of "group-think". It simply brings out the fact that influence by other humans is unavoidable, and indeed part of a decision-making process.

At the same time, sympathy does not undermine the significance of autonomy and justice in a society. Consider

\[\text{Ibid., 45.}\]
Hume's section on justice. Sympathy allows for concepts such as justice to be morally valued in a society. In Hume's words, "...self-interest is the original motive to the establishment of justice: but a sympathy with publick interest is the source of the moral approbation which attends that virtue." (THN 499-500)

According to Hume, rules of justice, rights and duties, are established in a society in order to curb the harm of unbridled liberty at the hands of selfish and only marginally generous creatures. As the society grows, however, the advantages of the system become more remote. It is through sympathy that individuals are able to feel the displeasure of injustice no matter how remote. It is in turn this displeasure which causes the individuals in society to regard injustice as a vice (THN 499). In this way, the value of justice is maintained despite an absence of daily contact with its operation. Sympathy not only captures the reality of interconnection but it also provides an explanation why humans value justice and the rules, rights and duties which flow from it.

In the same vein, feminist concerns about the over-emphasis on autonomy in justice-based moral models can be alleviated by regarding justice as stemming from experiences gained, either first hand, or through sympathy, from the basic family unit. Our first exposure to the world, on Hume's view, is relational. It is within the family unit that individuals become aware of the benefits of justice. As Hume states:

...the parents govern by the advantage of superior strength and wisdom, and at the same time are restrain'd in the exercise of their authority by that
natural affection which they bear their children. In a little time, custom and habit operating on the tender minds of the children, makes them sensible of the advantages, which they may reap from society... (THN 486)

From a feminist standpoint, two points are relevant. First, a notion of justice that is based, at least in part on the concept of sympathy inherently recognizes the connection which exists among human beings. Second, it places value on the family unit and the role it has in instilling notions of justice. In particular, the duality or parenting which Hume points out in the above quote reinforces the idea that there can be care in justice and justice in care. The natural affection for a child is a relevant 'care' factor in setting out rules in the family unit. By the same token, the natural affection is curbed by a concern for justice, since in Hume's estimation, not only do children come to realize the advantages of justice, but the family unit also "fashions them by degrees for it, by rubbing off those rough corners and untoward affections, which prevent their coalition." (THN 486)

The point of a discussion on Hume's concept of justice is simply to demonstrate that sympathy is a flexible moral concept which can be used to conjoin issues of both justice and care. The harsh concept of the atomistic self is softened by interconnectedness without fully losing the idea that society is comprised of autonomous individuals who seek to meet their needs. Part of the sympathetic mechanism in justice is based on selfishness. Societal rules which include moral norms are built as a reaction to selfishness. While this is by no means a
comprehensive discussion of what justice is or should be, the main argument is that at the very least, sympathy provides a good point of departure for explorations into a new, universal moral framework.

**PART II - REASON AND EMOTION**

Feminist ethics suggests that there has been too much emphasis on the role of reason in morality. Again, the use of the concept of sympathy can address these concerns. As an example of one way it can do so, I shall use Hume's application of it in his moral framework. In this instance, Hume's application may be one for feminists to consider as it addresses many of the issues which they have raised.

Sympathy is not a mechanism of reason. We discovered in chapter two that moral judgment is a result of a feeling of a particular kind, a feeling which is a result of disinterested sympathy and a correction of sentiment based on past experience, and discourse. Even though our immediate reaction to an enemy who acted courageously would be contemptuous, we are still able to praise his courage. We feel at the same time, uneasiness for the suffering of our fellow person, but also the pleasure of the person whom the enemy acted courageously towards. As Baier puts it, the fundamental moral capacity for Hume is "corrected (sometimes rule-corrected) sympathy, not law-discerning reason." Moral judgment is a result of "reflective feeling responses".  

72Ibid., 40.
This idea of sentiment correction rooted in sympathy may hit a sour chord with critics who would then argue that correcting sentiment is using reason to champion wayward and impulsive passions. I think the difference is this: while in other systems emotions are 'checked' by a set of a priori rules, for Hume there is no such measure. What corrects our sentiments are things like habit, which is formed through experience, or what Baier refers to as a "wider web of feelings". 73 The key is that we learn to correct sentiment through experience rather than through some abstract and arbitrary set of 'rational' laws. In this process, reason provides us with information about possible outcomes and the consequences of alternative actions. It is significant to note that the role of reason is not eliminated by rooting morality in emotion and sympathy. Rather, the focus has been shifted away from the 'reason' end of the reason-emotion spectrum.

That Hume's sympathy-based system is critical of philosophical systems that are reason-based is clear from the following passages:

Nothing is more usual in philosophy, and even in common life, than to talk of the combat of passion and reason, to give preference to reason, and to assert that men are only so far virtuous as they conform themselves to its dictates.... The eternity, invaribleness, and divine origin of the former [reason that is] have been display'd to the best advantage: The blindness, unconstancy, and deceitfulness of the latter [the passions] have been strongly insisted on. In order to shew fallacy of all of this philosophy, I shall endeavour to prove first, that reason alone can never be a motive to any action

73Ibid., 42.
of the will; and second, that it can never oppose passion in the direction of the will. (THN 413)

Those who affirm that virtue is nothing but a conformity to reason; that there are eternal fitnesses and unfitnesses of things, which are the same to every rational being that considers them; that the immutable measures of right and wrong impose an obligation, not only on all human creatures, but also on the Deity himself: All these systems concur in the opinion, that morality, like truth, is discern'd merely by ideas... In order, therefore, to judge of these systems, we need only consider, whether it be possible, from reason alone, to distinguish betwixt moral good and evil...(THN 456-457)

The 'those' whom Hume is speaking of sounds remarkably like Kant (even though it was Kant who wrote as a response to Hume), whom many feminists are at constant loggerheads. Of course, Hume's response to his own question is plain: "The rules of morality... are not conclusions of our reason." (THN 457) The inference is then, that Hume finds the above sort of system a fallacious depiction of morality.

If we consider what feminist thinkers had to say about the supremacy of reason, we shall see that an account like Hume's which is based on sympathy can be very attractive. The obvious objection is that morality based exclusively on reason ignores the value of caring, an activity that was categorized as typically female. As Allison Jaggar suggested, the passions direct our interests and draw us to attend to certain matters more than others. The incorporation of the passions is part of the care model. Sympathy emphasizes the idea that morality arises as a result of caring. It is because we naturally sympathize with the feelings of others that we form moral judgments. In this regard, the way sympathy works in Hume's
model should be attractive to feminists. Through sympathy, caring becomes one of the foundations of morality. Sympathy explains why we care and goes on to demonstrate how that caring leads to moral judgments. This speaks to the feminist objection that the "basic realities" of moral thought have traditionally been denied.

Thus for models like Hume's which embrace care components through the concept of sympathy, emotionality enhances rather than retards moral development. By using Hume's own moral framework, I have attempted to show one way in which sympathy can be used to create a model which recognizes care. What feminists can gain from Hume's account if they are attempting to develop a piecemeal moral account is a well-developed explanation of morality with a plausible focus on emotion. Within this explanation is also a critique of systems that glorify reason as the root of morality. What Hume is missing of course is commentary on the detrimental effects of reason-based systems on the status of women or any other dominated group; but this is why feminists want to appeal to several frameworks. My only argument is that sympathy is a concept which already recognizes care and had the potential to create a moral framework that includes both men and women, both justice and care.
PART III - PARTIALITY AND IMPARTIALITY

Related to the question of autonomy and rationality, is of course the issue of impartiality. Feminist ethics has criticized traditional theories for not taking into account the inherently social nature of human beings. The problems with reason brought with it an emphasis on the impartial, the public, the male. This has led to conclusions by philosophers such as Aristotle that men are more capable of being moral, than women.

Sympathy works in such a way that partiality is an integral part of moral judging. We saw in chapter two that the sympathetic mechanism is affected by resemblance and consanguinity. The closer a person is to us, the more vivid the converted impression is of their ideas. This is because the self is always intimately present to us and is the enlivening force that drives the conversion. Therefore, those that are closer to us are closer to our self and the impression we get is stronger. Sympathy more than adequately recognizes the reality of partiality and its role in the moral arena. If we recall from chapter one, this is part of the care perspective developed by feminists.

A second concern of feminists is the inherent exclusion of women in theories which purports to give everything equal consideration, since women have traditionally been associated with the relational and partial activities of caring and nurturing. Again, sympathy may help to eliminate this separation of men and women since it is something which occurs
in everyone. For this reason, a system based on sympathy is capable of being gender neutral. With the new aim of including all types of activities, be it family-related or public, as morally significant, sympathy can serve to unify and equalize men and women in the moral sphere. There is no basis in utilizing sympathy as a fundamental moral concept, to claim that women are less morally capable than men. Even Hume, who is often criticized for his sexism in delineating male and female virtues\textsuperscript{74}, does not claim that women are not moral agents because of their role as caregivers. Such a claim cannot be made given the universality of the concept. Sympathy's potential for inclusivity is undeniable, especially if one considers that Hume extends sympathy to the other members of the animal kingdom as well.

Finally, feminists find that the emphasis on rights and justice is inappropriate for close relationships. However, the new paradigm suggests that there is a place for justice in care. As Friedman argued, we can be partial without being parochial. Again, Hume's account appears compatible with these concerns. In his account of sympathy and in his general framework, Hume recognizes and often centralizes close relationships. While, for example, in 'other' traditional theories justice and personal relationships were at opposite ends and mutually exclusive, Hume connects them by showing how our sense of

justice is only possible because of the close relationships that we had in our early family units. Any rights or obligations that come out of justice are only acceptable because we understand and appreciate the benefits of cooperation, through our experiences in the family. We have also experienced the pleasure or pains of different rights and obligations through sympathy. Sympathy allows us to appreciate the force of a broad range of experiences without needing to turn to a priori rules to provide us with information on the effects of certain characters of conduct.

The inclusion of caring is evident in passages like the following: "I do services to such persons as I love, and am particularly acquainted with, without any prospect of advantage; and they may make me return in the same manner." (THN 521) Friedman's idea of proportion then, seems to come out in Hume. Sympathy explains how we can appreciate close relationships as well as more distant systems which are beneficial to everyone. Hume shows that both relations can be recognized.

The concept of sympathy is a useful concept in mediating between partiality and impartiality. While on the one hand, sympathy ties all of humanity together, and allows distant concerns to reach each individual, the force of sympathy also varies on degree according to the factors of resemblance and contiguity mentioned earlier. Hume has repeated instance of feeling more strongly for relations and close friends yet also being able to connect with the passions of more distant people. As I pointed out earlier, morality is a matter of navigating
oneself through these competing emotions. He does not suggest that the compass be general impartiality. Rather, he seems to suggest that impartiality and partiality are required at different times. When we make moral judgments we do form them from a more disinterested point of view, but this just means that we take into account a wider range of emotions rather than applying one set of standards to everything. Either way, my claim is not that Hume's account is perfect for our new human ethic. I am claiming, however, that the concept of sympathy shows more than a few glimpses of what feminists have been striving towards. The idea that we can experience what another is feeling as if the feeling were our own is a jewel for those opposed to traditional reason-based theories. Such a notion allows for a great degree of inclusion without losing the reality of partiality; a central aim in feminist ethics.

PART IV - UNIVERSALS AND PARTICULARS

Related to issues of partiality is universality. It was noted repeatedly in chapter two that sympathy rendered morality a matter of particularity rather than universality. Feminist criticism of universality revolves around its abstractness. In their minds, morality should be more grounded in experience and less grounded in abstract principles. Sympathy grounds morality in this way. In Hume's application of the sympathetic mechanism, judgments are made according to feelings of pleasure
or uneasiness that arise as a result of a transfer of emotion from one person to the next.

While sympathy may be amenable to the partiality of the care perspective, it does not preclude justice type considerations. We are not so partial that all judgments emanate from our most immediate feelings or an immediate sympathy. Some degree of universality can be achieved. Disinterested sympathy involves projecting oneself into the general point of view such that the virtue of an enemy, for example, can still be recognized. As we learned in chapter two, correction of sentiment can occur through discourse of general rules which we have been exposed to as a result of education, training or discussion.

According to Elizabeth Radcliffe, however, even the rule that we must project ourselves into the general point of view does not mean that moral distinctions cannot ultimately be grounded in human feelings. In her words:

Consequently, that we must 'project' ourselves into the GPV is one of the rules which we apply when we want to arrive at correct moral beliefs, but that people have to apply it does not mean that moral distinctions cannot ultimately be grounded in human feelings.... Just as I can describe to someone who has never heard Mozart how his music sounds and enable that person to have a notion of Mozart's style and converse with others about his music, likewise, individuals who by Humean standards have never felt genuine moral approbation can acquire moral notions through education, training, and discussion, and can communicate perfectly well about them with others. In neither case does this possibility mean that the
relevant concepts did not originate in direct perceptual experience.\textsuperscript{75}

A morality which is based on sympathy allows for both justice-related and care-related principles to work together. We saw in chapter two that Hume himself admits that 'corrections' are common to all senses. The key point in a system that uses sympathy as its most basic principle is that reason does not override the passions. Correction occurs by the interplay of other feelings. In turn, these feelings are either transmitted as feelings or as opinions. In both cases, we say in chapter two that transmission can occur by the sympathetic mechanism.

Sympathy keeps the general point of view within the realm of human emotion, thus having some universality without losing aspects of care. This is because inherent to sympathy is care. From care can emerge general ideas of rights and obligations, yet care remains a fundamental concept. In Hume's framework, generality of this sort is never absolute. Morality remains subject to the same variation as the passions which arise as a result of sympathy (THN 531-2). The rules of rights and obligations are variable. For Hume, they are perhaps just guidelines for morality.

PART V - THE DEGENDERIZATION OF MORAL VIRTUE

Another feminist criticism of traditional theories has been that moral virtues have been those which are traditionally attached to male personality traits. Caring, patience and nurturance were always denounced in the name of courage, rationality, prudence and competitiveness. The equal applicability of sympathy to both women and men would discourage such imbalances. Furthermore, by having a basic moral principle that is founded in relationships and sentiment, it opens up the range of traits that come to be considered virtuous to include those which have been regarded as typically female.

Even Hume attempts to strike balances in the virtues he refers to. For example, Hume leaves room for martial virtue but with qualification. In his observation, martial prowess can threaten "the sentiment of humanity" and lead to "infinite confusions and disorders... the devastation of provinces, the sack of cities." (THN 601) The point is that a system based sympathy can bring some balance to extreme traditional or extreme feminist frameworks. In this case, it is not a question of whether martial bravery is absolutely good; rather, it is a matter of extent, keeping in mind other factors such as human sentiment towards each other. The fact that Hume views the sentiment of morality as being more important than martial bravery is a significant step in light of feminist concerns. I would argue that such stances are not only possible but also
encouraged when a concept like sympathy is at the root of moral thinking.

Even when Hume is sounding his most patriarchal, his list of virtues is unusually balanced. A possessor of the natural virtues is "a safe companion, an easy friend, a gentle master, an agreeable husband, and indulgent father." (THN 606) While feminists would be repulsed by the combination of master, father and husband, Hume's virtuous man has other qualities which are not as strongly related to men. According to Baier, to be agreeable, gentle, indulgent and friendly are all traditionally female traits.76 Thus Hume seems to portray a good mix of qualities. As an observer, he recognizes the benefit or value of both types of virtue. From a feminist point of view, the fact is that Hume's list does not automatically exclude women from moral virtue. The list actually sets women up very nicely to be as virtuous as men.

The relevance of using Hume's list of virtues is to exemplify the idea that sympathy can soften or balance a moral framework though it was developed in a period when moral sexism was prevalent. Relationality, emotion and related virtues are difficult to avoid when a mechanism like sympathy is used to explain moral processes. As we have seen, sympathy captures many of the aspects of morality that have been lacking in other traditional first principles.

76Baier, "Women's Moral Theorist?" 42.
One final point about Humean virtues is his recognition of due pride or self-esteem. Due pride may not have been a recognized virtue in Hume's society, but Hume saw it as such, I suppose through observation and comparison of those who have self-esteem and those who do not. Baier notes that if Hume believes this to be a virtue, then his scheme cannot allow for oppression or suppression. For feminist ethics, the extent of caring must be checked. Caring is important, but feminists do not want it to exist to the detriment of women. Too much emphasis on caring will lead to further exploitation. Part of feminist aims is to have a realistic sense of whether or not one's agreeableness is being exploited by others. The development of self-esteem is essential to this process. Thus Hume's focus on the importance of due pride is compatible with the demands of feminist ethics.

In this final chapter, I have endeavoured to show how much Hume's concept of sympathy is amenable to feminist ethics. Although Hume's account is not feminist, per se, yet there are several concepts that can be feminist. I have primarily used examples of Hume's own work to illustrate how a framework based on sympathy can include moral precepts that include both justice and care. Some of the key areas of potential include autonomy, rationality and impartiality and universality. In all four of these justice-based areas, sympathy serves to bring a care component to the forefront.

77 Ibid., 52.
My main point has been that Hume can be helpful to feminists who have moved beyond the care/justice debate. As I described at the end of chapter one, one direction in which feminist ethics is beginning to branch towards is the development of a human ethic based on the compilation of several different moral systems. My own sense is that this integrationist attitude is a healthy one. To this end, I have tried to present Hume as one candidate for this grand project. His insights are profound and flexible, especially if one were to try and integrate feminist issues. This is mainly because his most basic principle of sympathy is based on interconnectedness and emotionality, both of which are central to care considerations of feminists. At the same time, a system based on sympathy would not preclude traditional justice based concerns. A system based on sympathy would reinforce and perpetuate the idea that there can be care in justice and justice in care.
CONCLUSION

The aim of this thesis has been to provide further impetus to the growing school of moral thought which embraces both justice and care as primary principles. Feminists such as Virginia Held, Marilyn Friedman and Annette Baier have suggested that there can be care in justice and justice in care. What are needed then are principles which have the ability to give rise to both justice and care issues.

I have presented Hume's concept of sympathy as one such principle. Feminist concerns have focused on issues of autonomy, rationality and generality. Other points target the exclusivity of traditional moral frameworks. Hume's concept of sympathy offers the potential for a great degree of inclusivity, and softens the extremity of traditional concepts by bringing in the reality of human interconnection and the role of emotion and particularity.

It is to be noted that I have presented sympathy as I have interpreted it within Hume's own moral framework. Furthermore, I have often referred to the benefits of using the sympathetic mechanism by showing how it works in Hume's descriptions. This was done mainly by way of example and by way of familiarity. While I do pose sympathy as a good starting principle in moving toward a new morality rather than moving towards Hume's description of morality, I wanted to show the practical application of the mechanism in order to show its capabilities.
At the same time, I realize that it is within the context of Hume's writings that I became familiar with the concept of sympathy and thus cannot, at this stage, avoid speaking of it without some reference to Hume's work.

The ultimate goal would be to extract the basic components of the sympathetic mechanism and consider in more detail, how it would lead to a moral system of justice and care beyond what can be found in Hume's own framework. While at least some aspects of Hume will assist in developing the new morality, the idea is to draw from all sources. One step may to compare sympathy with what some feminists have termed empathy. From this, perhaps a concept of sympathy can be developed which modernizes or contextualizes the basic building blocks which Hume's concept is built on. For example, it is unclear whether 'ideas', 'impressions' and the 'self' as an 'enlivening source' are terms which would remain significant and meaningful within today's language. These need reformulation - if not in concept, then in language which is perhaps less technical and more accessible. Other approaches may be to see how or where a concept like sympathy can fit in to rights-based systems like Utilitarianism.

A final point is that my main focus has been to show how the concept of sympathy addresses feminist concerns with traditional moral concepts. While I have tried to demonstrate that sympathy alleviates these problems without losing the possibility of justice-based concerns, I have not given as much attention to showing how sympathy addresses justice-based concerns. This needs to be done before the usefulness of
sympathy can be definitively shown. My goal has been to show that further inquiry into the matter is worthwhile and that sympathy has at the very least, a great potential to include both justice and care considerations.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


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