

From Passions to Emotions and Sentiments

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During the period from Descartes to Rousseau, the mind changed. Its domain was redefined; its activities were redescribed; and its various powers were redistributed. Once a part of cosmic *Nous*, its various functions delimited by its embodied condition, the individual mind now becomes a field of forces with desires impinging on one another, their forces resolved according to their strengths and directions. Of course since there is no such thing as *The Mind Itself*, it was not the mind that changed. Conceptions of the mind changed. Yet even to say this is misleading, because it suggests that somewhere out there in nowhere there is *Nous*, *Psyche*, *Soul* or *Mind*, the true but opaque object of all these conceptions. But of course there is no *Mind* in the realm of things in themselves, waiting for us to see it truly, like a *China* of the noumenal world, amused that our various conceptions reveal as much about ourselves as about it.

One way of tracing changes in the mind is to trace changes in one of its activities. We can use transformations of the passions to emotions and sentiments as a scarlet dye, as it were, to locate other changes in the mind. Instead of being reactions to invasions from something external to the self, passions became the very activities of the mind, its own motions. So transformed they become proper motives, and along with desires, the beginnings of actions. During this period, emotions also cease to be merely turbulent commotions: among them appear sentiments, ways of feeling pleasures and pains as evaluations, and so as the proper guides to action. Some of these sentiments, those that are social in origin as well as in direction—calm passions and sentiments that we acquire from others—make morality possible. From having been brute facts of the fallen condition—physical states with which a moral person must contend, and which he must redirect, control, transform or suppress—passions become motives, a person's own sources and direction of energy, and then, as sentiments, they provide the conditions for civilized society.

And of course as conceptions of the passions change, the prime examples of the passions change, and their relations to the other activities of the mind also shift. When fear and anger are the prime examples of invading passions then we are 'overcome' by love, pity or compassion. In such a system, it is rationality that assures justice. But when the primary examples of the passions include sentiments acquired by sympathetic vibrations to others like ourselves—when we sorrow because others sorrow—the virtue of justice

can become the *sense* of justice, its operations assured by benevolent social passions rather than by rationality.

But the faculties of the mind hunt in packs, with factions, allies, and oppositions. So when the passions have become acts and activities of the mind, then reason, imagination, perception and desire have also been re-located. Platonic reason was a directive force, capable of opposing desires, and sometimes even forming them. Reason was once the primary ruling power of the soul. But when the mind has become a field of forces, the place of knowledge in that field becomes problematic. Is reason one of the forces in the field, or is it outside the field altogether, a map indicating but not dictating resolutions? Once the world of forms has been transformed, and psychology is a branch of mechanics, what does it mean to say that the heart is informed? When reason is assigned only the functions of discovering regularities among matters of fact and analysing the relations among ideas, it is the imagination that becomes the active faculty. Besides its traditional functions of recombining perceptual elements, it becomes capable of introducing novel ideas and impressions: it becomes a productive or spontaneous faculty and not merely a reproductive one. The ancients had allied *fantasia* with the passions, and found them both suspect. The imagination remains closely allied with the sentiments even after it has become an active power; but now instead of being a threat to justice and the virtues, it provides the condition for the possibility of sympathetic morality. So even when the map of faculties remains the same, and the imagination and the passions remain closely linked, the significance of the alliance changes.

Of course a proper account of the passions is usually not the beginning of philosophical investigations, nor is it at the centre of philosophical attention. But it is precisely because the passions are the poor relations of the mind, that they most sensitively reflect gerrymandering shifts in power elsewhere. Standardly a philosophic account of the mind begins with an exposure of a technical disaster in the work of a predecessor. But often, as in the case of Descartes and of Hume, the negative zeal is at the service either of scientific discoveries or of investigations of social and political virtues. Descartes' discovery that the necessary truths of physics are clear and distinct ideas, that they can be demonstrated deductively by the use of *reductio* arguments, suggests a theory of the mind, a particular distribution of intellectual functions. The duty of completeness, and a set of embarrassing questions, eventually requires an examination of the relations between the clear and distinct ideas of the mind and its passions. And, as is often the way with what is pushed to the back of the mind, the return of the repressed forces a reconsideration. The passions turn out to be clues to the mind's real powers.

Similarly, although Hume did not begin as a partisan of the passions, he found in them solutions to the problems that arose from his attempts

to do justice to the precisions of scepticisms and the claims of common sense. Having, in the process of this arbitration, lost the idea of personal identity (or at any rate, pronounced it a mere fiction) he finds the sources of that fiction in the passions. Pride shows personal identity to be a powerful rather than an idle fiction.

For Descartes and for Hume, the passions turn out to be unexpected pivotal turning points that reveal the real nature of the self. In this paper, I shall trace the ways in which their attempts to explain the phenomena of the passions lead them to revise their initial accounts of the mind and its powers.

I

After having distinguished the functions of the soul from those of the body, and distinguished the soul's actions from its passions, Descartes says, with engaging obscurity: '...l'usage de toutes les passions consiste en cela seul, qu'elles disposent l'ame à vouloir les choses que la nature dicte nous estre utiles, et à persister en cette volonté; comme aussi la mesme agitation des esprits, qui a coustume de les causer, dispose le corps aux mouvemens qui servent à l'exécution de ces choses' (Art. LII). [The customary use or function of all the passions consists only in this, that they dispose the soul to will those things which nature tells us are useful to us, and to persist in this volition; and also, that same agitation of spirits which usually causes them disposes the body to those movements which serve to bring about those things.]

He then proceeds to give an account of the function of each of the basic passions as it affects the soul, and as it affects the body. But this quotation really introduces three characters, the soul, the body and then this third character, the *we*. But *we* might ask, who is this *we* who is served by the passions? And how are we served?

Descartes gives us two quite different pictures of the mind and of ourselves, and two corresponding pictures of the place and functions of the passions in our essential selves. He thinks he has a theory that unites these two pictures. The first picture is that presented in the first parts of *The Meditations*: the *cogito* reveals the true self as a mind whose sole activity is thought. It has ideas, is capable of reflecting on them, can doubt whether they are true, can prove some of them to be necessarily true, and can decide to refrain from asserting those whose truth is not demonstrable. As he says in his reply to Gassendi's Objections: 'Soul must be understood to apply only to the principle by which we think. I have called it by the name *mind* as often as possible in order to avoid ambiguity. For I consider the mind not as part of the soul but as the whole of the soul which thinks' (HR II 210).

As the *Regulae* is an adaptation of rules for spiritual exercises, so also *The Meditations* is an ironic theft and transformation of the traditional

religious meditation. In order to arrive at true self-realization, to see the ego for what it really is, Descartes works through the familiar catharsis of sensation, imagination, memory, desire; goes through the obligatory struggle with the devil and the temptations of nihilistic despair, to the turning point that is a reflection on the capacities that were exercised in his painful struggle. (Just as Augustine finds the mark of conscience in his capacity for guilt, so Descartes finds the sign of the power of the will in his capacity for doubt.) And so the Mind that emerges as the real metaphysical self is its ideas, and its power—the will's power—to affirm or deny the truth of its ideas. Of course, ironically, this real mind, this essential self is not individuated. The *we* in the first part of *The Meditations* is any rational mind whatever, without distinction of person. But if Mind is unindividuated, it nevertheless claims a great deal. Among the central ideas of mind are the ideas that formulate—that are the formulae of—the extended body. The clear and distinct ideas of Mind are not just necessarily true for what that might be worth. Despite the fact that the mind and body are two distinct substances, demonstrating the truths of mathematical physics and engaging in properly ordered introspective analysis are one and the same enterprise. (But Descartes is neither a proto-idealist nor a proto-phenomenologist; nor is he the author of the first draft of *Der Logische Aufbau der Welt*, though he is all three in so far as they can be conceived to be one enterprise, none of which is 'reduced' to any of the others. His is the enlightenment project allowing every mind the independent capacity to discover objective truth by reflection, without relying on authority.)

This story, which is presented as the true story of the mind, treats sensations and memory, desires, sentiments and passions as confused, untrustworthy. In so far as we form judgments directly from such ideas, we are misguided. In themselves, they reveal neither the nature of bodies nor of our minds. The essential nature of mind, as a thinking thing, would not be changed if it had no passions or perceptions (*Principles*, 53). But of course while the identification of the ego with the purely intellectual powers is the true story of the mind, it turns out not to be the whole story. For one thing, the mind discovers that it has a lot of other ideas besides the necessary truths of mathematics and those of its own operations. So the question arises, what is the status of those confused perceptions, passions, desires, that it found necessary to doubt? What is their relation to the mind as a thinker of necessary truths? Now while the necessary mathematical ideas of the mind reveal the structure of extended body, they are not caused by it. They are part of the very structure of the mind and would exist in it even if the mind were not embodied or joined to any body. But passions and perceptual ideas represent themselves to the mind as being caused by the Other Substance, by Body. And in truth, as God is no deceiver there must be something to this, even though the passion-perceptions are not to be trusted at face value.

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It is the passions—those ideas which the mind would not have unless it were united to the body—that with the grace (or more properly, the truthfulness) of God—reveal the second or larger *we* in question. As the body's imprint on the mind, the passions enlarge the *ego*. Besides clear and distinct ideas, the understanding also has representations from the body. The distinction between mind and body now reappears within the mind, as the distinction between its actions and its passions. The mind is passive to such ideas, since it receives them from the body. They are not its own actions or its own activity. But this raises some serious problems. What happens to the claim of the unity of the mind on which Descartes is strongly insistent? 'There is within us but one soul', he says, 'and this soul has not any diversity of parts; the same part that is subject to sense is rational and all the soul's appetites are acts of will' (HR I 353). But how is this possible? There is no problem in thinking that the active understanding is a unity; but if its passions are not necessary to it and are not, strictly speaking, parts of it, how does extended mind, which includes the passions caused by the body as well as the actions of thought, form a unity? How does the mind's unity extend to the ideas it received from the body? Even if it is God who assures this unity, how does he do it?

To answer this question, we must look more closely at the passions. There are several kinds of passions. Although all the passions enter the soul through the intermission of the nerves—whatever that means—we refer perceptions to external objects; kinaesthetic sensations to our own bodies; and passions proper, to the soul. Perceptions are the mind's confused ideas of the external objects that cause them. The kinaesthetic and proprioceptive sensations—hunger, thirst, heat, pain—are also ideas of the soul, passions in it, caused by, and referring to our own bodies. Like the ideas of perception, these sensations confusedly represent some particular bodily condition that causes them.

And now, finally, there are the passions proper, passions narrowly speaking. Joy and grief, hate and love, wonder and desire and all the indefinite number of passions compounded from these are ideas in the soul. It is the soul and not the body that grieves, fears, loves; but it is the body—our own body—that produces these passions in the soul, in the usual way, through the nerves and the animal spirits affecting the pineal gland. But unlike perceptions and kinaesthetic sensations, the passions do not refer to or represent their bodily causes. They are confused ideas that cannot become clear because they are not ideas *of* anything in particular. If the mind is regarded as essentially a truth teller, the passions (at best accidental products of the interactions of body and mind) are extraneous, even when they indicate functional states of the body.

Narrowly speaking the passions are functions of functions. When our bodies interact with other parts of extension they undergo modifications that enhance or diminish normal functioning. Something impinges on us—

we see a lion rushing directly towards us. The nerves and animal spirits are agitated in such a way that, besides the perception of a bounding tawny sinuous creature, and the kinaesthetic sensations of our throats being dry, our hands trembling, we also register fear. In so far as the passions come through or with sensations, they are sentiments, feelings; in so far as they interrupt and change the course of thought, they are emotions (Art. 28). Since fear does not represent its cause, even in a confused way, we cannot even begin to try to transform it into a clear and distinct idea, even though we can be quite clear (on reflection) that we *are* afraid. Nevertheless, once in the mind, fear concentrates the mind quite wonderfully. Instead of allowing us to pursue our thoughts in random associations, the passions direct them to what is useful: we persist in thinking about the danger that confronts us, we remember remedies for such dangers, and form the appropriate *volonté*. As a result of this concentrated, fortified, directed association of ideas, the will can resolve either to flee from what is dangerous or to overcome and disarm it. In either case, the action of the mind in willing to flee or to combat danger causes a movement in the pineal gland which, by exciting the animal spirits and eventually the muscles, produces the appropriate useful motion.

And so it is for every passion: when it appears in the mind, standardly in combination with perceptions and kinaesthetic sensations, it produces a train of associated ideas, usually initially directed by a desire—itsself a passion—to promote well being. There is the mind, full of its ideas: what determines to which of them it will attend? When it is engaged in scientific inquiry, presumably the will focuses the mind to attend to those ideas which are appropriate to the inquiry at hand. But what determines which, of all the mind's perceptual ideas, are at the focus of its attention when it is not engaged in inquiry? The answer is: the passions. Not only fear, but all the passions—love, self-esteem, generosity—wonderfully concentrate the mind, direct the association of ideas, fortifying it to think of what is useful. But this raises again the question: useful for what and to whom? Can a passion wonderfully concentrate the mind on ideas that produce a desire useful for the body, and yet disturb the purely intellectual functions? Since there are as it were three of us, or, at any rate, two which can be regarded separately or as conjoined, every passion is introduced and analysed as an idea; and as a physical condition; and then for its useful effects on the soul and on the body. Having given a general characterization of the passions, Descartes turns to an account of the basic six passions—wonder, joy and grief, love and hate, and desire—showing in what ideas they consist. He shows how the indefinite number of passions can be constructed from these, as the associated object is thought to be good or harmful, as it is conceived to be in the past, present or future; as it is thought to be probable, improbable or necessary; and as we regard ourselves as being able or unable actively to control the outcome.

But since the passions are caused by the body, they are also identified by their characteristic physical conditions and consequences. So Descartes runs through all the passions again, this time as physical states. But this is not yet enough. We might just have two distinct phenomena, passion ideas in the soul, and an odd lot of associated physical states. If an individual is a special union of mind and body, as Descartes thinks he has proven that we are, more needs to be said. And so Descartes goes through the list of passions again, showing how their effect on the mind is useful to the body. But in fact the body would have in any case standardly produced the motions that are appropriate for its welfare. Even animals without souls make the appropriate adaptive bodily motions without any intervention of the will: they act as self-regulating machines. (In characterizing animals as machines, and the operations of our own bodies as mechanical, Descartes is not downgrading them. On the contrary, a machine's organization is of the highest functional elegance: the structure and composition of each part is fixed by its function in the whole. Descartes' conception of a machine—he standardly uses clocks as examples—is much closer to our conception of an organism than one might at first think.) What happens in our case is that the mind intervenes—the will intervenes—to produce just those motions which the body standardly does itself in any case produce, and which it could and often does produce without the intervention of the will. So it emerges that the passions are useful because they incite the mind to think and to persist in thinking a train of thoughts that are useful to the *union* of the soul and body, and they are useful to the *body* as a member of that *union*.

But there is an apparent embarrassment. It turns out that some passions which are extremely useful for the body are disruptive to the mind and some passions which are highly functional for the mind are of minor utility for the body. For instance hate, fear and grief are extremely useful for the body because they generate protective motions: for sheer survival these passions are more useful than the pleasant motions assured by love and joy. But of course if the body is sitting on the stove while the mind is thinking deep mathematical thoughts, hate, fear and grief are distractions from what is most useful to the mind as *mind*. For mind as scientific inquirer, wonder, joy and self-esteem are far more useful. Only if the mind is already conceived as attached to the body and needing that body's well-being in order to get on with thinking, are what we might then call the negative passions useful to the mind; and only if the body is already conceived as attached to the mind, are wonder and self-esteem and generosity useful to it.

But all this again raises sharp questions about who we really are and how unified the mind itself is. The passions of self-esteem and generosity strengthen the mind's proper conception of itself. It is, Descartes says, one of the most important parts of wisdom to know how and why to esteem

oneself. There is only one proper ground for self-esteem (in contrast to *orgueil*, *gloire* and *satisfaction de soi mesme*): the mind's free will, and the empire we have over our volitions. Like other passions, self-esteem incites the mind to persist in thinking certain thoughts useful to it. In this case, it focuses our attention on what is essential to ourselves, the will's capacity to elicit ideas and to affirm or deny them. In concentrating our attention on our real powers, self-esteem promotes the will's activity, its power to avoid errors by refraining from judging, and to avoid disturbing passions by redirecting thoughts.

The two stories of the mind are united by the powers of the will. And it is the will that reconciles the diverse evaluations of the utility of the passions. The power of the will over the passions is exactly the same as its power over other confused ideas. While it cannot decide not to feel fear, any more than it can decide not to have a particular perception or sensation, it can avoid the consequences of fear as it avoids making erroneous perceptual judgments. It can avoid affirming the confusion, and it can elicit counterbalancing ideas. In an exuberant passage, Descartes says that there is no mind so weak that it cannot avoid error, or so weak that it cannot contrive to counterbalance the turbulent passions when they are not useful to the mind. So if the body on the stove gets so painfully hot that *douleur* distracts the mind from its mathematical researches, the will must decide whether to continue its scientific inquiry or to follow the association of ideas engendered by the passions. And if it does the latter, the will again chooses whether to affirm or deny the desire to get off the stove. This is a rather involved way of saying that even when the person is uncomfortable, he is free to choose to stay on the stove: that a minded body can check its reflex actions in a way that a machine-body cannot. The passion of self-esteem reminds the mind to focus on the will's freedom as its essential proper activity, to remind it that it doesn't have to make false judgments, or to think fearful and grieving thoughts in an obsessive way. A vivid sense of self-esteem reminds the mind that even if the body is painfully hot on the stove, the body is joined in a substantial unity with the mind. The will can intervene in such a way that the body need not jump off the stove as if it were only capable of reflex actions.

II

Notoriously, by the end of Book I of the *Treatise*, Hume has exposed the idea of personal identity as a fiction to which no real entity corresponds. His statesmanlike arbitration between the claims of scepticism and those of common sense led him to deny reason the power to discover—let alone to be—a causal force of any kind whatsoever. Taken strictly and philosophically the mind is a theatre in which impressions pass . . . without

the theatre. When we look for the origins of the idea of personal identity, we find nothing but a series of impressions. What is worse, the contents of those impressions seem to have no reference to the self: try as we may, we only find hot and cold, light or shade, hate or love. If we except the passions—the impressions of reflection—the ingredients combined by the imagination to form the idea of personal identity are the same as those that form our fictions of the continued identity of physical objects. What then accounts for the special character of the fiction of personal identity? Against the caution of the sceptics, common sense claims that a person is a continued existence with a sense of itself; it is a creature of thought and imagination, capable of observation; but it can also act, in a relatively disinterested way, on behalf of others as well as on behalf of its own relatively distant future. ‘There is a distinction’, Hume says, ‘between personal identity as regards thought and the imagination and as regards our passions or the concern we take for ourselves’ (T. 256).

Hume proposes to reconcile the claims of philosophical sceptics with those of common sense by admitting that the idea of self is a fiction constructed by the imagination. But because the passions contribute to the construction of that fiction, as it goes beyond thought and imagination, the idea of self is not a mere figment of the imagination, but a powerful fiction, indeed the fiction of an entity with powers. It is pride that, as Hume says, produces the idea of self (T. 287). Now one might have thought that pride presupposes rather than produces the idea of self. And so in a sense it does. It presupposes the idea of a continuous autobiography: the bundle of impressions has been arranged by the imagination to form a single narrative of a continuous life, one’s own. But that life might still be that of an observer without any concerns for itself.

It is a brute given, an ‘original’ fact as Hume calls it, that among the series of impressions there is anger as well as amber, boredom as well as blue, pride as well as puce. All of these, impressions of reflection as well as impressions of sensation, are psychologically speaking, simply felt unanalysable qualities (T. 275–277). Taken simply as impressions, no item in an autobiography has any more weight as one’s own than any other. However vivid he may be, a person of thought and imagination is flat; and however continuous he may imagine himself to be, no future is more his own than any other, though certainly some may be more desirable because they bring more pleasure. Pride gives this flatness a third dimension: the narrative sequence of impressions becomes a mobile sculpture instead of a painted surface. Now of course among the series of impressions there are plenty of impressions of pleasure and pain to move us. We try to capture and prolong the passing moment of joy at the sight of light on a leaf; and when we are pained by unjust social arrangements we try to remedy them.

But there must be an explanation of why some pleasures and pains direct action more consistently and forcefully than others, even when they are not,

on the surface of it, our strongest pleasures. The fact is, we do not simply go for the greatest immediate pleasure, or even the greatest projectible pleasure; nor do we simply avoid the greatest pains. Reflection on what gives us pride provides the additional weighting that turns a mere wanton into a person of prudence. Why does a person tend his own gardens rather than the more beautiful and splendid gardens of his neighbour, which may indeed give him more joy? If he were merely propelled by the greatest pleasure, he would tend the gardens in the public parks, or those that most delight him, wherever they may be, and whosoever's they are. It is because a person not only takes pleasure from his garden, but also pleasure in the thought that it is *his*, and further, pleasurable pride in it, that he tends *that* garden. Hume does not claim that this is rational; indeed he is quite clear that strictly speaking it is not. The point is rather to show that a person's conception of his self is formed by what gives him pride. If he takes pride in his garden, and if the pleasures of his garden lead him to tend it rather than those which might give him more joy, then his fictional idea of himself is, among other things, a conception of himself as owner of this garden. A person who enjoys his garden, but does not take pride in it, does not think of himself as: owner of this garden.

To understand how pride produces the idea of the self, it is necessary to distinguish it from joy. It goes roughly like this: a person has, as Hume says, a fine house or family, and he finds that these please him. But he also takes joy in seeing light on a leaf, and that joy produces neither pride nor the idea of self. The pleasure that a person takes in his house or family is however a double pleasure. He is pleased by the house and family and he is pleased by the thought that they are his own. This double pleasure, the initial pleasurable idea of house or family, and the second pleasure in the fact that they are one's own, produces that special pleasurable impression, pride. But someone might also take joy in the fact that just this impression of light on a leaf was part of his autobiography. 'Wonderful', he might think, 'that I should have lived to see this.' He might even have the double pleasure that the sight is his. If his pleasure is just that of having seen the shimmering leaf, his passion is joy. But if he is pleased that *he* is a person who really knows how to take pleasure in shimmering leaves, then his passion is pride: it has produced the idea of self, the idea of the self as a sensitive observer. But to explain how pride does—and joy does not—produce the idea of self, we need to distinguish the conditions that attend the two passions (T. 290–294).

What gives pride is characteristically perceived as especially close to oneself. We judge our qualities, Hume says, more by comparison than from their real and intrinsic merit: we take pride in what is particular to ourselves or at any rate not very common. Unless we are recovering from an illness, we do not take pride in the ordinary ability to breathe or walk, even when doing so gives us great joy. Moreover, what gives pride is

characteristically relatively enduring; and publicly shining and visible, prized by others. None of this is necessary for joy. Finally, general rules also have as strong an influence on pride as they do everywhere. We can take pride in virtue or a possession even when it does not immediately please, simply because that virtue or possession is standardly a focus of pride. Independently of our pleasures, habitual association can sometimes produce the passion of pride.

It is now clear why Hume gives pride such pride of place among the passions. Although it does not itself generate any specific motives or actions, it reveals the weights a person assigns to his direct passions, to pleasure and desire. By showing which pleasures a person takes to be most closely his own, pride reveals those motivating concerns that go beyond immediate pleasures and pains.

Once a sin, the source of all vices, pride is now the foundation of prudence. Yet a prudent person can be a vicious one: his conception of himself is only as sound as the objects of his pride. Hume gives an account of what usually gives pride: virtue, beauty, such external advantages as the antiquity of one's family or the geography of one's native land, property, and fame (T. 294–328). The story as it has been told so far does not yet include a critique of the objects of pride: we understand its genesis without yet being able to determine whether it is better or more appropriate to be proud of one's virtues than of one's garden. We do not know how to rank or evaluate the varieties of fictional persons that pride can produce.

In the *Essay on the Standard of Taste*, Hume gives an account of how fictions are evaluated. He remarks that a consensus among men of delicate sentiment and refined imagination provides a standard of judgment for fictions and for other works of art. Why not also for those other fictions and artifices of the imagination, among them the idea of personal identity? This social measure—the judgment of experts on what is useful, pleasing, beautiful—provides an independent evaluation, though not, to be sure, a rational critique—of the proprieties of pride. It distinguishes modesty from self-abasement, megalomania from proper self-respect. History, then, is the arbiter among the various productions of pride. And the history of social approbation strongly suggests, without of course proving, that virtue is a more appropriate source of pride than one's garden, however beautiful that garden may be; and the idea of oneself as a virtuous person more appropriate than the idea of oneself as an owner of this beautiful garden. Hume does not himself explore the social contribution to the critique of the varieties of pride. He only mentions, almost in passing, that because a condition of pride is that others must prize its sources, our conceptions of ourselves are partly social constructions. Nor does he make much of his observation—so crucial to Rousseau—that the social contribution to the fictional idea of the self always involves comparisons, and that

such comparisons do not always select what is genuinely meritorious (T. 291).

The social contribution to the construction of the idea of the self that Hume himself emphasizes is that assured by the mechanisms of sympathy. It is to these operations that Hume looks for the sources of the idea of persons as moral, and not only as prudential beings. Here, roughly, is how it goes. Having formed some idea of similarity between ourselves and others, we discover, as a matter of brute fact, that we are sometimes affected by the passions we believe them to have (T. 317–322). On the basis of our observations of someone's demeanour and behaviour, the imagination forms an idea of that person's passion. That idea, now an idea of one's own, becomes enlivened by the imagination and the mechanism of sympathy to become an actual impression, a passion of our own. The metaphor is musical: our frame resonates in harmony with others. The passion we acquire from them by sympathy can remain ours even after theirs has passed (T. 576).

But of course sympathy does not assure morality. It can as easily equip us with the passions of villains as with those of virtuous men. Sympathy only provides the conditions for morality; it cannot assure it. Other capacities are required. Since sympathy depends on a previous judgment of similarity, a person has to fix on the appropriate class of those who are genuinely relevantly similar to himself. This is partly a matter of seeing through superficial differences, and partly a matter of being able to foresee the consequences on oneself of the company one keeps. But also, and quite centrally, the imagination should be able to envisage the conditions of others in a vivid and detailed way, to form appropriate ideas of their passions. On Hume's account, we only see how others *seem* and how they behave—that they are pale or flushed, that they wring their hands or clench their fists. The imagination moves from such observations to an idea of the passions of others. Equipped with all these passions—some original to ourselves, others acquired by sympathy, many of them quite likely to be conflicting—we then take a general survey to determine what conduces to the general good, to balance the passions that serve our concerns with those that serve others. Empirical investigations into the effects of various sorts of actions and motives—the judgment of history again—helps to locate, though not to resolve, those conflicts. Such empirical investigation into what is likely to promote the general good can inform, even though it cannot form, the sentiments that evaluate actions and motives, our own as well as those of others. After sympathy has done its work, and after balanced judgment has sorted out the consequences of various passions acquired by sympathy, we form sentiments of approval and disapproval. It is a brute fact that we do so, just as it is a brute fact that we have the passion of pride. These sentiments, the calm passions of benevolence and the sense of justice can move us in just the same way that other passions

do. Such passions need not be weak because they are calm (T. 419). Moral indignation and the sense of justice can be powerful enough to set aside the concerns discovered by pride.

Following Hume's lead, we can say what he does not himself say: just as pride produces the idea of self as regards the passions and the concerns it has for itself, so the calm passions, the sentiments of approval and disapproval, benevolence and the sense of justice, are the ingredients of the fictional idea of self as a civil person with public virtues as well as private passions.

III

After the zeitgeist has swept by in this way, we might ask what has this been *about*? Are there really no facts that constrain theories about the passions? Is Descartes as right about the fear and the pineal gland, self-esteem and the persistence of proper self-regarding thoughts, as Hume is about the function of pride? Is there nothing but a series of fictions, a sort of philosophical *Elective Affinities*, with rarefied protagonists called passions, imagination, person, a sort of late romantic mystery play without a moral? Is it really true that the mind is what it thinks it is and that the experience of passions conforms to accepted theories? Is the story of the mind and its powers not merely a fiction, but a self-fulfilling fiction, joy of every true believer? Well, yes and no. There are somewhere at least some facts. Descartes could have been more attentive to Harvey's denial of animal spirits. And besides facts there are also some arguments. Spinoza's criticisms of Descartes are far enough within the theory to be difficult for a Cartesian to answer. And besides some facts and some arguments, the difference between barrenness and luxuriant detail can help us to select among theories of the passions. While Descartes' theory gives an interesting account of the intellectual functions of the passions, he has no account at all of their social origins and formation. Although some of the basic passions are directed to persons, there is in principle no real difference between loving an object and loving a person. If we are interested in the social and political force of the passions, Descartes holds little interest for us.

One of the reasons that the passions are especially interesting, red dye tracers of the shifts in the mind, is that they are found in that no-man's land where theories create the experiences they describe . . . and yet also in that area where there are constraints. We can judge that some extraordinarily ornate and self-fulfilling theories have gone quite haywire.

Contemporary philosophical and psychological debates about the emotions make all this very vivid. There is, as one might expect, combat on all sides, singularly unreflective polemics about whether the passions are evaluative judgments or physical states; about whether they can be vol-

untarily controlled; about whether there are some culturally invariant basic passions; about whether altruism can be the consequence of purely prudential considerations or whether it requires special development. One might be tempted to say about these debates: 'Disgusting absurd theorizing. Philosophers should give up their pretensions at psychological speculation and turn these issues over to those prepared to do empirical research.' And certainly there is something to this response. Physiological facts, generalizations in social psychology, and cross-cultural comparisons are all extremely important and relevant arbiters at the edges of polemical debates. But they serve to weed out the field of theories, rather than to assure the final selection among the strong competitors. Among these, it is not always clear what the arbitrating theory-neutral facts could be. When read fully and sympathetically, each robust theory comes complete with its own sustaining facts. Disputes between such theories are reproduced as disputes about how to describe the phenomena. And this is not a verbal matter that can be straightened out by a little terminological hygiene. The problem is that our theories of the passions—and thus at least some of our experiences of what we call emotional states—are formed from the picturesque ruins of previous views. We are a veritable walking archaeology of abandoned theories, even those that have claimed to vanquish one another. So with some combination of courage and procrustean folly, a contemporary philosopher takes one strand in our complex inheritance and declares it to be central. When Chomsky revives Descartes, and when, according to some interpreters, Freud revives Rousseau, we find ourselves simultaneously sympathetic to their claims, and (as our temperaments dictate) either amused or outraged by the gross neglect or denial of opposing truths. Other voices that compose our history remain vocal to protest: it is these that provide at least some constraints on contemporary self-fulfilling prophetic theories. The voices from Descartes to Rousseau are still alive and well in modern dress, all of them. And of course it is not only the philosophic voices. Philosophy sometimes begins at home, but with any luck it doesn't end there: it moves back and forth to sermons, scientific treatises, political rhetoric, poetry and trashy fiction, obituaries that praise and editorials that blame, and above all the daily gossip that explains the mysterious actions of friends and foes. All these, combining theory and practice as they do, carry our predecessors alive within them. We carry all the participants *in foro interno*. That is what comes of our being historical creatures, formed by the words of our predecessors as well as by The Look of the Other. Not only society, but history with its babble of conflicting tongues remains alive and intact within us.

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