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Pleased and Afflicted: Hume on the Paradox of Tragic Pleasure

E. M. DADLEZ

How fast can you run?

As fast as a leopard.

How fast are you going to run?

A whistle sounds the order that sends Archie Hamilton and his comrades over the top of the trench to certain death. Racing to circumvent that order and arriving seconds too late, Archie's friend Frank screams in rage and despair. Archie is cut down before he has run twenty yards. Peter Weir's film *Gallipoli* is a chronicle of the disastrous Dardanelles campaign of the first World War, but it is also a film about racing. Archie is trained by his uncle Jack to run "as fast as a leopard." The film begins as it ends, with Archie sprinting in response to a whistle. Frank is first shown racing after a train, along with friends who are on their way to enlist. Archie and Frank meet while competing in a race, they race in Cairo once they have enlisted, and they finally race death. From the beginning, Archie has been faster; even at the end he is the first to die. And from the beginning he has swept Frank along in his wake, encouraging him, pushing him, inspiring him, and helping him to positions for which he is inadequately qualified. In the end, Archie's compassion and kindness prompt a decision which has grim consequences both for himself and for hundreds of others. Knowing that his friend fears death in the trenches, Archie recommends Frank as a substitute for himself, a designated message runner. But Frank is not fast enough, and falls short by mere seconds which Archie would not have lost. This is what leads to the failure of the one real effort to countermand the fatal charge.

I am an emotional wreck by the time the movie is over, though I should admit that most of my tears are the result of sheer rage. Both my dogs exited the room in some haste once I began to shout at the television and the unparardonably dimwitted British officers who sat sipping tea at a comfortable distance as they gave the order for soldiers to commit suicide. But it isn't just the scope of the real human disaster, or the enormity of the blunder, or the pointlessness of the entire enterprise, or even my renewed conviction that stupidity is, in fact, evil, that is so unsettling. The film unnerves with respect to personal as well as global concerns, focusing attention on the chance of vanity's leading one to undertake responsibilities beyond one's competence, the possibility of advancement or security being achievable only at the expense of another, and the realization of how easy it might be to let those things happen.

Gallipoli is a sad, disturbing film, and the spectator is grieved and disturbed in the course of watching it. Yet, having said that, I must own to having a copy in my possession, and to having watched it more than once. I recommend it to friends, offering to lend them my videotape. In fact, I press it on them. I say that it is a terrific, rewarding work which they should take the time to see. How is it that I can describe my experience of the film in such glowing terms and at the same time acknowledge the extreme distress I felt in the course of watching it? How can I reconcile the discordant aspects of my experience? David Hume explores some possible answers in his essay "Of Tragedy."¹ He begins by calling attention to the paradox of tragic pleasure:

It seems an unaccountable pleasure, which the spectators of a well written tragedy receive from sorrow, terror . . . and other passions, which are in themselves disagreeable and uneasy. The more they are touched and affected, the more are they delighted with the spectacle. . . . The whole art of the poet is employed in rousing and supporting the compassion and indignation, the anxiety and resentment of his audience. They are pleased in proportion as they are afflicted, and never are so happy as when they employ tears . . . and cries to give vent to their sorrow and relieve their heart, swoln with the tenderest sympathy and compassion. (OT 216–17)

This paradox has concerned philosophers for some time, and has prompted innumerable solutions, the only serious flaws in some of which involve their proponents' claims of exclusive applicability to all works that arouse both positive and negative emotions. I will begin by surveying the aforementioned hypotheses and then attempt to place Hume's own solutions against this backdrop. I will do the latter by addressing recent interpretations and criticisms of the tactics Hume employs in his essay, in order to get clear on their significance and in an effort to

resolve questions about the relation which Hume took to obtain between our positive and negative responses to tragic fiction. As there is debate about this relation in the literature, it seems important to venture a review and evaluation of disparate treatments so as to arrive at some agreed-upon staging ground before launching into further speculations. My intent in this paper is neither to offer a logical reconstruction of "Of Tragedy," something many of the writers whose work will be cited early on have done already, nor to contest its conclusions. It should be remembered that "Of Tragedy" is the briefest of essays, one which cannot, in its short ten pages, do more than point us in the direction of some fascinating explanations of our dual response. My purpose is therefore to speculate about some Hume-friendly solutions to the paradox of tragedy, relying primarily on ideas made available to us in "Of Tragedy" and in Hume's *Treatise*,² and attempting to follow them out to possible conclusions. Some of the solutions discussed in "Of Tragedy," such as those canvassed in section III of this paper, merely require a little elaboration to make their merits apparent. Hume also gestures toward other, even more interesting resolutions of the paradox, but only sketches them in broad strokes, without attempting to work through their implications. I will argue, however, that when supplemented with material from Hume's *Treatise* and his other writings, those gestures can point us in the direction of solutions that are both compelling and distinctly Humean in character.

I

The paradox of tragedy to which Hume turns his attention may be observed when we consider any work of the relevant type which gives rise both to positive and to negative emotional responses. *Gallipoli*, for instance, arouses a distress which does not diminish audience appreciation in the least. How is it that we can appreciate or take satisfaction in an admitted source of unease?³

Most attempts to resolve the paradox begin by maintaining that what the audience finds rewarding isn't the same as what it finds distressing. Positive and negative affective responses are directed toward different objects. The object of my distress when I watch *Gallipoli* is clearly (unless I am reflecting on history) the fictional state of affairs: the plight of the fictional characters. There is little disagreement about this contention. It is, rather, the *positive* aspect of my response to the work that has tended to absorb philosophers. Many candidate objects of satisfaction have been proposed. Although I cannot do justice to these accounts in the abbreviated survey I offer here, I hope that it provides some sense of the solutions which have been offered in the literature.

First, we may be said to enjoy something about our own negative emotional responses. In line with purgation theories of *catharsis*,⁴ for instance, it could be held that the satisfaction we take in tragedy is due to an emotional release, a blowing

off of steam. By giving way to the negative emotion, we are ultimately purged of it and “our souls [are] lightened and delighted.”⁵ Alternatively, some philosophers maintain that it is the negative emotion itself we enjoy, rather than the relief of getting it out of our system. We may enjoy the exhilaration and excitement that can be constituents of emotions like fear.⁶ Others claim that we derive satisfaction from our emotions having been “aroused by worthy and adequate stimuli,” and from their being directed toward “the right objects in the right way.”⁷ We may even take satisfaction in our own moral responsiveness or sensitivity.⁸

Leon Golden links the positive aspect of the experience of tragedy to its clarification of human experience and the human condition.⁹ Revelation or insight may afford some species of satisfaction, even if what is revealed or understood is in itself distressing. The satisfaction of curiosity, while the poorer cousin of insight, can nonetheless be seen in a positive light. Such satisfaction can occur on many levels. *Gallipoli* can satisfy my curiosity about historical facts, about how it is that events can follow from one another, about how it is that human disasters can occur.

We can also respond aesthetically to tragic works, though it should be noted that the term “aesthetic” is not being used here to designate any and all responses to works of art. Aesthetic reactions will be regarded, in this particular context, as responses which involve the apprehension of beauty or grace, unity or harmony, in part because Hume himself affiliates beauty with feeling.¹⁰ Such reactions can provide still other examples of positive response to tragedy. We can have aesthetic responses to fictional and extrafictional objects. We may respond to Macbeth’s eloquence and to Shakespeare’s eloquence, to the unity and interconnectedness of events and to authorial or directorial virtuosity in so deploying them. One of Hume’s central contentions in “Of Tragedy” pertains to aesthetic response and will be addressed shortly.

But it is worth noting that the foregoing survey has only scratched the surface. We can respond positively to authorial or directorial attitudes, as I responded to the stance taken up toward military decision-making in *Gallipoli*. We can admire characters or character traits—approve of them, respect them. We can take aesthetic delight in the mere appearance of things. In tragedy, or more generally in works which give rise to distress, there is no exclusive source or object of positive response. But to say that is not necessarily to concede that we cannot speculate about what is essential to *good* tragedies, the “well written” works which Hume distinguishes from others in his essay.

II

Let us consider the specifics of what Hume has to say in “Of Tragedy.” What raises pleasure from the bosom of uneasiness, he indicates, can involve the form rather than the content of the depiction:

This extraordinary effect proceeds from that very eloquence, with which the melancholy scene is represented. The genius required to paint objects in a lively manner, the art employed in collecting all the pathetic circumstances, the judgment displayed in disposing them: the exercise . . . of these noble talents, together with the force of expression, and the beauty of oratorical numbers, diffuse the highest satisfaction on the audience. (OT 219–20)

This is clear enough, but what follows invites debate, for Hume says that the impulse of the melancholy passions is “converted into pleasure,” that the “impulse arising from sorrow receives a new direction from the sentiments of beauty,” and that these sentiments, “being . . . predominant . . . seize the whole mind and convert the former into themselves, at least tincture them so strongly as to totally alter their nature” (OT 220). What does this mean, exactly?

Alex Neill has argued convincingly against any account of emotional conversion that ascribes to Hume the position that negative reactions to tragedy are entirely eliminated by a positive response to form. Likewise, he rejects the hypothesis that the negative emotions can retain their identity in the face of a radical change in hedonic tone.¹¹ Neither the text of Hume’s essay nor his extended discussion of emotion in Books II and III of *A Treatise of Human Nature* can support such interpretations.

Robert Yanal maintains that “our experience of tragedy . . . is made pleasurable *overall*” by our pleasure in the aesthetic qualities of the work, even though a part of our experience may be painful.¹² What is converted is our ‘overall’ experience, not our pain. Yanal rejects a position supported by Neill—one which maintains that the conversion hypothesis is meant to account for a Janus-like interdependence of pleasure and pain inherent to the experience of tragedy.¹³ In the end, Yanal argues, his own pleasure-on-the-whole theory more accurately reflects Humean intuitions. Although pleasure and pain are conceptually separable and have distinct objects, they will intermingle in our experience of a work so that we will not feel pity apart from aesthetic pleasure.¹⁴ The latter will typically outweigh the former and so the experience will be one which we can regard as enjoyable *on the whole*, without thereby denying the presence of painful emotions.

Of course, that does not explain why Hume maintains at the very outset of his essay that we receive pleasure *from* sorrow and are pleased “in proportion as we are afflicted.” First, Hume’s claim suggests a closer connection between negative and positive responses than one of mere coexistence within the experience of a single work. It also appears to amount to more than the assertion that the degree of our distress over a tragic fiction can be regarded as a kind of coefficient of artistic excellence. In other words, Hume’s own talk of emotional conversion seems to require more of an explanation than a pleasure-on-the-whole theory can provide without amendments.

Neill proposes that an investigation of Humean terminology may dispel some of our confusion about Hume's numerous references to conversion and redirected impulses. Once we become aware that for Hume the terms "emotion" and "passion" are not co-extensive, an alternative account of affective conversion presents itself. We may speak of a predominant passion's appropriation of a subordinate passion's impulse, spirit, or vehemence. The latter words and the term 'emotion' are sometimes used interchangeably, which may explain initially puzzling talk of emotions themselves acquiring a new hedonic tone.¹⁵ Thus the enhancement of pleasure could be said to depend on a melancholy passion, insofar as it was held to co-opt the vehemence or intensity of the passion, without on that account committing us to some story about the metamorphosis of negative emotions into positive ones.

Elisa Galgut addresses similar issues in her defense of Hume's account of tragic pleasure. Galgut's account is similar to Neill's in that she maintains that pleasant emotions do not *replace* negative feelings. Emotional energy or intensity roused by negative emotions attaches to and augments our aesthetic delight.¹⁶ The "quantity of energy that is attached to the pathos *accentuates* our pleasure," says Galgut,¹⁷ who reinforces this claim by suggesting that the aesthetic experience is hedonically ambiguous, something that she believes makes a concordance between aesthetic pleasure and negative emotions more plausible.¹⁸

There is a good deal to be said for Galgut's claim that aesthetic experiences, at least extraordinary aesthetic experiences, have a mixed hedonic charge, possessing both painful and pleasant elements. I do not agree, however, that sadness (as we normally understand that term) can constitute a part of that mix. Galgut says that the "feeling of aesthetic joy mixed with sadness is a widely experienced phenomenon."¹⁹ She indicates that "tragic pleasure is not the yoking of two heterogeneous emotions, but a *single* emotional response."²⁰ This description of tragic pleasure as a unitary rather than composite response suggests that the sadness can no longer be regarded as conceptually distinct from the aesthetic pleasure. However, I think that a more convincing case can be made for the causal interdependence of hedonically distinct emotional responses than for the kind of blended unitary response that Galgut proposes, and that much of what Galgut says can support the former as well as the latter. What evidence does she muster that militates exclusively in favor of the latter approach?

Galgut cites Peter Kivy²¹ on musical emotions at one stage, in order to explicate the kind of blended response that she has in mind. But I do not think that emotional response to music as Kivy describes it is sufficiently analogous to the case of tragic pleasure, nor do I believe that any such account is compatible with Humean positions on response to tragedy. First, Kivy holds that the intentional object of an emotional response to music is some expressive beauty of that music, for instance, a musically beautiful melancholy.²² Our response to such music may

be “sadness-like”²³ in virtue of its object. This isn’t comparable, however, to a case in which one is saddened by the sadness of another, since the latter occurs because we judge that sadness to be painful for someone to undergo, whereas nothing of the sort can be said of the music. As an expressive property of music, the sadness Kivy speaks of can have no anchor in a work’s world, as a character’s sadness would. Kivy also says that “there is no reason to believe that the emotion aroused by sad music . . . should be anything but positively pleasurable.”²⁴ This is at odds with Galgut’s claims about mixed hedonic tone, since she claims that poetic beauty “makes us feel both a deep joy and a deep sadness.”²⁵ It is also entirely at odds with Hume’s talk of tears, cries, sorrow and pity.

Even if we depart from Kivy’s approach to posit an aesthetic response with a mixed tone, difficulties remain. After all, sadness is a direct passion (T 2.3.1.1; SBN 399), concerning which it is less easy to muster the kind of affiliation with ideas that Hume ascribes to the indirect passions. Hume does not consider such ideas *components* of an emotion, as Galgut does, more often identifying them as causes and effects of an indirect passion (T 2.1.2.4; SBN 278). Were we to treat sadness as cognitive despite the incompatibility of the classification with Hume’s own approach, there would remain the problem of ascribing to that sadness some single intentional object that could account for both the pleasurable aesthetic and the painful character of what we were said to feel. Most subscribing to a cognitive view of emotion describe the characteristic objects of sadness as, for example, instances of loss or suffering. Neither suffering nor loss resemble the objects of aesthetic response, which is likely to involve the manner rather than the content of a depiction.

Of course, it is possible to have an aesthetic response to different aspects of fictional states of affairs as well as to extrafictional ones. I can respond aesthetically to Macbeth’s eloquence or the sylvan beauties of Birnam wood. I can pity Macbeth in his final despair, admire him for his eloquence in expressing it, deplore him for the actions that led to it, and I can do all of these things simultaneously. But the aesthetic part of the response is conceptually distinct from the negative emotion. My aesthetic response is only to the fictional man as *speaker*, and depends on the rhythm and pattern and meaning of his words; my pity involves not his eloquence, but his suffering. Similarly, I can admire the vast expanse of Australian desert in a scene from *Gallipoli* even while I pity Archie and Frank on account of their being forced to trudge through it. My aesthetic response is to the appearance of things while my pity embraces the characters in all their grit and exhaustion. I agree with Yanal that there shouldn’t be any difficulty in our envisioning conceptually and hedonically distinct responses which intermingle in a single experience. I just do not agree that this is all there can be to a response to tragedy, and I still believe there is a strong argument to be made for emotional interdependence in other kinds of cases and on different grounds. But to say any of these things is not by

any means to accept the grafting of emotions like sadness onto responses with quite distinct intentional objects.

Nonetheless, much of Galgut's intuition remains compelling, though it appears more closely related to accounts of the sublime offered by Kant and Burke than it does to Hume's account of tragedy. Aesthetic experiences can be genuinely overwhelming, and this suggests that they can be disturbing or disconcerting by their very nature. It makes sense that they should be neither readily nor simply categorizable as painful or pleasant. Yet having said that, I still find it difficult to see how the concordance between the aesthetic and the unambiguously negative emotional response is made *more plausible* in virtue of an increased similarity in hedonic tone, as Galgut maintains. I don't think that the concordance of tone between my fearing a charging rhino and my finding it ugly somehow carries more plausibility than the *discordance* of tone involved in my fearing a charging tiger I find beautiful. Why should it? So while I believe that Galgut is on to something important when she emphasizes the hedonic ambiguity of aesthetic experiences, I do not think that this can help us to resolve Hume's paradox.

Hume tends to speak more frequently of extrafictional objects of aesthetic appreciation, something that may in certain circumstances preclude a simultaneity of aesthetic and negative emotional responses. This could pose a problem for views which explain Hume's tragic pleasure by resorting to a kind of composite state. Consider that aesthetic appreciation of authorial or thespian virtuosity requires a disengagement from the fictional action. I cannot reflect upon the histrionic skills of an actor or on the gifts of an author without distancing myself from full imaginative engagement with the work. When immersed in the action, we do not attend to the fact that what we contemplate is fictional. When dwelling on artistic virtuosity, we cannot help it. I don't pity Frank *at the same time* that I'm deciding Mel Gibson has been unfairly marginalized by endless iterations of *Lethal Weapon* movies. My admiration for the actor brings forcibly to mind the fact that Frank is a character and not a person. I suspect, however, that simultaneity plays no crucial role in most accounts of Hume on tragedy. Yanal, I am sure, is concerned with the totality of our response over time, encompassing the whole of our experience as we lose ourselves in the action, pause to reflect on direction or cinematography, enter into the perspective of one character or another, notice that the director has cut our favorite line from a speech. An experience of tragedy is not a frozen instant in time, but rather a sequential, cumulative thing.

III

The preceding investigation has attempted to determine the kind of a resolution to the paradox of tragedy that can be teased out of what Hume has had to say about our reactions to tragic fiction. It remains to be seen what can be said about the

directions in which that resolution may take us. I think that the interdependence of positive and negative affective responses can be established, and that it can be done in a way that enlarges on accounts which explain this interdependence in terms of a transfer of force between passions of opposite hedonic tone. The claim, then, is that the negative emotion doesn't simply coincide with the positive, but *enhances* it. I believe that there are several ways in which we can fruitfully elaborate such accounts of interdependence, with an eye both to Hume's treatment of the passions in the *Treatise* and to the specific claims made in his essay. The results are surprising for their contemporaneity alone.

Before we embark on a survey, however, it is worth noting that the positive aspect of our response to tragedy does not have to be regarded as an exclusively aesthetic one. As indicated in the beginning of this paper, there is a wide range of plausible candidates, so it need not always be a purely aesthetic reaction that is enhanced by negative emotion. Although Hume speaks of beauty and eloquence as sources of pleasure in tragedy, making it appear that we are somehow sensitized to these things by the very intensity of our distress, he also speaks quite frequently as if the experience of distress itself is something in which we take considerable pleasure (OT 216–17). Taking delight in novelty and satisfying one's curiosity are also mentioned (OT 221). So the pleasure Hume thinks we take in tragedy may not be just aesthetic pleasure.

And is it pleasure we feel in any case? As Alex Neill points out, it is difficult to regard tragedies as pleasant or to regard the disturbing insights to which they can give rise as enjoyable. "Of Tragedy" fails to discriminate between different kinds of works and the reactions to which they give rise. Neill therefore considers Hume's account of the negative aspects of our experience of tragedy to be inadequate and Hume's account of tragic pleasure to be too indiscriminating. Hume's notion of pleasure is too crude, Neill claims, to capture the positive aspects of our experience of tragedy.²⁶ I agree that Hume fails to discriminate between different kinds of works, but I am inclined to argue on this very account that Hume's notion of pleasure is just crude enough to capture a wide variety of experiences. It may fail to isolate those pleasures unique to high tragedy, but it does not exclude them. Nor is it clear that a narrow focus is appropriate to Hume's project, for his many examples in "Of Tragedy" appear quite intentionally to range into the less exalted, distinctly unAristotelian territory of melodrama. This suggests that Hume may be interested in all those works which give rise to both negative and positive emotions rather than in (what we would today refer to as) high art alone. He may be concerned to show what such works *as a class* have in common, and be invested only in giving a general overview of this kind. And if that is the case, however disappointing it may be to find the topic stretched so thin, then of course the term "pleasure" had better be as inclusive as possible, since no one will want to claim that the pleasure I take in watching *Gallipoli* at all resembles that which I experience when watching *Alien* or *Scream*.

But, in fact, Hume uses the term ‘pleasure’ in a sweeping, inclusive way throughout the *Treatise*. Pleasure and pain are described as actuating principles of the human mind, without which we’d be incapable of passion or action, desire or volition (T 3.3.1.1; SBN 574). Mere approbation pleases. The gratification of curiosity pleases (T 1.4.7.12; SBN 271). And as pleasures can differ in kind, so they can differ in source. Pleasure can spring from utility, or from the exercise of understanding in the “discovery or comprehension of any truth” (T 2.3.10.6; SBN 451). These pleasures need not involve the kind of gleeful jubilation that can seem perverse or ridiculous when affiliated with a response to the tragic, although I take it that an objection to the characterization of our experience of tragedy as “pleasant” might involve the claim that glee or fun do not capture the experience. Glee is, after all, only one type of pleasure among many. In the *Treatise*, pleasure is tied to the experience of a wide variety of passions: pride, love, admiration, approval, joy, hope. Each of these emotions is entirely distinct from the others, yet all may be described as agreeable or pleasant, just as humility and hatred and fear may be regarded as painful or uneasy. Hume’s “pleasure” is simply a kind of positive motivating force, perhaps a broadly construed satisfaction. Given this expanded interpretation of pleasure, we can venture some plausible stories about how it is that a positive emotion which can be described as pleasurable in this nonspecific sense can derive support and acquire intensity from a negative one.

I want first to focus on the direct passions, since a number of negative emotions associated with tragedy fall into that category, in particular aversion and fear (T 2.3.1.1; SBN 399). We may readily link fear and distress to certain physiological states or to phenomenological impressions of these, states which are also characteristic of positive emotions.

In a well-known study, Stanley Schachter and Jerome Singer surmised that “the same state of physiological arousal can be labeled ‘joy’ or ‘fury’ or ‘jealousy’ or any of a great diversity of emotional labels depending on the cognitive aspects of the situation.”²⁷ Some of the things Hume has to say in “Of Tragedy,” especially in light of the emphasis on affective conversion, are compatible with this possibility. The hedonically neutral component of distress or fear that is simply excitement can be co-opted by a more positive emotion. This is more or less in line with Galgut’s suggestion that the energy roused in us by our distress over the plight of fictional characters heightens our pleasure without thereby eliminating our uneasiness. Hume claims that the *impulse* of the negative passion (not the passion itself) is converted into pleasure, receiving a new direction from the positive response (OT 220). As Neill points out, the negative passion need not be transformed or annihilated in such an account, but need only contribute some of its “impulse” or “vehemence,” thereby increasing the force of the positive passion.

This particular approach is most applicable to melodrama and horror, forms it seems permissible to consider for several reasons. Not only do Hume’s own ex-

amples sometimes exhibit a plebeian disregard for high art, but the whole tenor of the essay suggests that Hume's central interest is less in tragedy proper than it is in the paradox which our experience of tragic fiction can exemplify. Because there exist a variety of forms which give rise to that paradox, it seems permissible to claim that there may be more than one kind of interdependence between positive and negative emotions at work in different cases. In the case of melodrama or horror or action-adventure extravaganzas, the keenest element of pleasure is unlikely to be aesthetic. The solution to the paradox canvassed above becomes all the more plausible when we consider the kind of tension between fear and excitement, suspense and fascination, which even inartistic fiction can arouse.

So we can give one explanation of how positive emotions can be parasitic on negative responses by looking at physiological or phenomenological elements which such responses may have in common and which may be transferred from one to the other, just as Hume might look to a transfer of force or vehemence in formulating a like explanation. But one explanation need not preclude others, also compatible with Humean claims but more suited to accounts of different kinds of works.

The indirect passions, for instance, offer further interesting possibilities. Pity, an almost inevitable concomitant of our experience of tragedy, is said by Hume to be an indirect passion (T 2.1.1.4; SBN 276) arising from sympathy (T 2.2.7.2–3; SBN 369). It is an uneasiness prompted by the pain of another, an aversion to that person's misery. This aversion naturally correlates with benevolence—the “desire of happiness to another” (T 2.2.9.3; SBN 382). Hence, “there is always a mixture of love or tenderness with pity,” despite the asymmetry in hedonic tone (T 2.2.9.1; SBN 381). In Hume's *Treatise*, therefore, we see one clear connection between easy and uneasy passions in which the uneasy passion supports, indeed *brings forth*, the positive response.

These claims are not ignored in Hume's essay on tragedy, for one of his examples is intended to show how pity for a sickly child and anxiety over its plight can intensify concern, hope and affection (OT 220–1). Hume's purpose is to demonstrate merely how a subordinate emotion can intensify a predominant response of a contrary nature, but such examples can also help to explain positive responses to fictional characters and the kind of concern for the well-being of fictional entities that intensifies reader or audience engagement and interest, leading to an absorption that we typically associate with those works whose perusal we find rewarding.

IV

Even more can be said about the explicit references to authorial eloquence and genius of presentation which Hume makes in “Of Tragedy.” Eloquence and artistry

are not only direct sources of pleasure, but potential sources of insight that can lead to an equal or even greater satisfaction. Pleasure is said by Hume to proceed from eloquence and genius. However, Hume's frequent distinction in the *Treatise* between the causes and objects of the passions (e.g., T 2.1.2.3; SBN 278) should not be forgotten. Obviously, artistry can be an object of positive aesthetic response. No one could deny that we delight in the beauty of Shakespeare's prose. But that prose can also be instrumental in the production of other kinds of satisfaction. If we apply the *Treatise's* account of sympathy and the general point of view to our response to tragic fiction, exciting prospects emerge for demonstrating that eloquence and artistry abet in the achievement of clarity and insight.

Sympathy is something to which Hume refers directly in "Of Tragedy" (e.g., OT 217). It is not a single focused emotion like pity, but a *process* which enables us to share the emotional experience of another. "When I see the effects of a passion in the voice and gesture of any person," says Hume, "my mind immediately passes from these effects to their causes, and forms such a lively idea of the passion as is presently converted into the passion itself" (T 3.3.1.7; SBN 576). That is, a belief about the emotional state of another is transformed into the emotion itself—the very impression that the belief or idea represents. This transition from idea to impression is made possible by the acquisition of force or vivacity from the "idea, or rather impression, of the self," which Hume says is "always intimately present with us," giving us so lively a conception of ourselves that it is "not possible to imagine that anything can in this particular go beyond it" (T 2.1.11.4; SBN 317). Indeed, "whatever object...is related to ourselves must be conceived with a like vivacity of conception" (T 2.1.11.4; SBN 317). The process is assisted by the relations of resemblance, contiguity, and causation holding between ourselves and others, which enable us "to feel the sympathy in its full perfection" (T 2.1.11.8; SBN 320). So sympathy is not only something that makes us feel (and therefore makes us be) alike. It is not just a drawer together, but is in itself the result of an already extant similarity.

The preceding account of sympathy raises several questions. First, the pronouncements on personal identity in Book I of the *Treatise* make it clear that the "impression of the self" referred to in Book II can be neither uniform nor static. It seems possible, however, to suggest that the self be characterized as a complex of impressions, a complex that constitutes the self at some given moment and that is expected to alter over time.²⁸ Second, while this may resolve problems of potential inconsistency, it does little to provide an answer to the next question—that of how the conversion of an idea into an impression is negotiated by a perception of the self.

Many scholars subscribe to the view that Hume is describing what is literally to be regarded as a psychological mechanism, a kind of involuntary mechanical process that simply happens to us and that is for the most part beyond our control.

But I am inclined to argue that a series of observations about what does happen and about which elements of the cognitive architecture come into play need not further commit Hume to a view about the involuntariness of the process, especially in light of the intimate connection he forges between sympathy and morality. I am also inclined to think it permissible to speculate a little about the ways in which Hume's account might be expanded.

In section V of this paper, I will indulge in a few speculations about the compatibility of Humean sympathy with contemporary accounts of empathy. My claim will not be that Hume held any such view, but rather that it is a perfectly reasonable explanation of how the internal workings of the sympathy mechanism might be configured, something that Hume himself was not concerned to elaborate or to explore. Before launching on that enterprise, however, it should be noted that even an unelaborated analysis of sympathy, especially when coupled with an account of Hume's common point of view, yields interesting conclusions about the significant contributions of eloquence and artistry to our appreciation of tragedy. I will argue that the function both of natural sympathy and of sympathy as regulated by the general point of view can be enhanced by artistic eloquence and can add depth to tragic pleasure by means of the insights it thereby affords.

We must first consider that sympathy and shared emotion alone cannot guarantee responses which align with our moral judgments. So where specifically moral insights are concerned, it is the further adoption of what Hume calls a "general point of view" that allows us to "correct" our initial sympathetic responses. The general point of view can compensate for the remoteness of the object of our attention (T 3.3.1.6; SBN 582), given our tendency to sympathize more strongly with acquaintances and countrymen than with strangers or foreigners (T 3.3.1.14; SBN 581). It allows us to redress the balance in cases where our sympathy gives the preference to individuals whose moral luck has situated them so as to permit the exercise of every virtue. That is, adoption of a general point of view requires us to take into account the tendencies of a character, not just its actual effects (T 3.3.1.19; SBN 584–5). The general point of view regulates sympathy by fixing the attention on the impact a person's character tends to have on herself and on those who have a connection with her (T 3.3.1.30; SBN 590–1). As Christine Korsgaard puts it, the causal efficacy of a person's character may be observed only from within that individual's narrow circle: "your character is something that exists in the eyes of your narrow circle. It is something that is constructed from their point of view. This means that to see you as having a character is essentially to take up the point of view of your narrow circle toward you."²⁹ Having adopted the general point of view, our sympathy depends not on "the actual effects of a person's character traits, but rather . . . [on] the tendencies of those traits."³⁰

Hypothetical thinking is involved on several levels here. We imagine how it would seem if we were less remote and if certain traits were given free reign. Hume's

discussion of sympathy in the *Treatise* makes it clear that the sympathetic response can involve hypothetical rather than actual situations. He indicates that “we often feel . . . the pains and pleasures of others which are not in being, and which we only anticipate by force of imagination” (T 1.2.9.13; SBN 385). This suggests that the principle of sympathy operates in relation to the fictional as well as the actual, as does Hume’s own reference to sympathy in “Of Tragedy.”

Indeed, the description of our adoption of a general point of view is more than a little reminiscent of the workings of fiction.³¹ Fiction lessens our remoteness from hypothetical or historical or otherwise distant situations by presenting us with particular and immediate cases. It brings us into the narrow circle of the protagonist. The film *Gallipoli*, for instance, draws us into the heat and horror of battle, and shows us how it could have been for a participant and his close connections. Fiction also gives us the frequent opportunity to observe an individual’s character traits, not just by surveying their actual effects, but also by being made privy to the individual’s thoughts and impulses, insofar as these are accessible via literary description, cinematic depiction, and soliloquy. Fictions, in other words, can help us toward a morally appropriate perspective on hypothetical events by bringing those events into the appropriate perspective *for* us and thereby providing us with an opportunity to rehearse our moral judgments. That is, fictions are ideally suited to evoke specifically moral insights.

This is not to say that all fictions provide us with such opportunities, nor is it to claim that a fiction could not present a deviant point of view, warping or misrepresenting what it purports to depict. In “Of the Standard of Taste,”³² Hume inveighs against works in which “vicious manners are described, without being marked with the proper characters of blame or disapprobation,” indicating that we cannot “bear an affection to characters which we plainly discover to be blameable” (ST 246). It seems clear that Hume is exercised about the endorsement rather than the mere depiction of vice. A work might present a false or a deviant point of view when it depicts a character trait as having tendencies or consequences it does not in fact have, as when *The Turner Diaries* presents genocide as the natural outgrowth of integrity and self-respect. And given that fictions are intended to engage us emotionally, an inability to imagine the praiseworthiness of genocide (i.e., an inability to imagine it approvingly)³³ will lead to imaginative disengagement, deterring the response the work is intended to elicit. In this way, a moral flaw can become an aesthetic one.

I have elsewhere addressed the question of why it is thought that we will sometimes imaginatively resist entering into (fictional) moral endorsements when it is at the same time supposed that “speculative opinion” in fiction will not faze us.³⁴ Hume does not provide an explicit answer to that question, though, as indicated above, possible answers may be found in the *Treatise*. But whatever position is eventually taken with respect to such questions, it remains

clear that Hume believes some of our engagements with fiction involve us in a moral exercise in which events can be brought into the right kind of focus for us by the skill and eloquence of the artist. That is, a sympathetic reaction which is regulated by our adoption of the general point of view can be a source of moral insight, even when the attention is brought to bear on a work of fiction rather than an actual event.

As Hume has pointed out, not all sympathetic experiences are agreeable,³⁵ whether or not they are regulated by the general point of view. Further, not all sympathetic responses will produce insights, nor will all insights be unequivocally agreeable once produced. It is no part of my project to issue some edict about conditions necessary and sufficient for the experience of agreeable insights or, indeed, for the experience of any insight whatsoever. I am in a position, however, to say why I believe that sympathetic responses to literary works of eloquence and genius are likelier to produce insights than are sympathetic responses to people. They are more likely to do so because they are directed and focused for us, because the writer orchestrates the manner and degree and trajectory of our attention. Sympathetic responses to our fellows are not so orchestrated and are more liable to be plagued by ignorance or insufficient information, by an inability to weed out irrelevancies or to make connections. This orchestration of our emotional response, this organization of our attention, amounts to the provision of a perspective which not only facilitates adoption of the general point of view, but also facilitates the adoption of other perspectives which permit us to abstract from personal concerns. The latter may evoke insights into the nature and quality of a given kind of experience rather than insights into matters of moral character or virtue.

In fact, Hume provides an aesthetic analog to the general point of view required for moral judgment in "Of the Standard of Taste." He indicates that "every work of art, in order to produce its due effect on the mind, must be surveyed in a certain point of view" (ST 239), but by this he means to recommend the point of view of the work's intended audience. This point of view is introduced in order to eliminate imaginative parochialism and to enable us to abstract from potentially distracting aspects of our personal cultural and historical situations. (Consider, for instance, an eighteenth-century work in which we are required to imagine an invalid's health improving on account of his being bled repeatedly by the wise old family physician. We would need to abstract from our medical knowledge in order to fully engage with the work.) The aforementioned perspective is *not* intended (in any direct way, at least) to facilitate the kind of delving into character experience that has been described. But that is just because Hume expects our sympathy with characters, whether or not it is regulated by the general point of view, to resemble our sympathy with real people.

There are, of course, readily discernable distinctions in the way the principle of sympathy operates when it comes to characters as opposed to actual people. In

life, we make inferences and assumptions concerning the mental state of another person on the basis of our own observations.³⁶ In art, what we observe is dictated by the eloquence and genius of the artist, who can distill and make clear for us what can sometimes prove inaccessible by means of independent inference and examination. The Aristotelian association of poetry with the universal and history with the particular comes to mind in the context of this discussion, for in poetry the irrelevant can be elided and the essential foregrounded. It is the artist who selects those features of a given experience to which we will attend most closely, the artist who makes us privy to a character's reactions and her thoughts, the artist who renders salient particular aspects of that character's circumstances. In Hume's words, "the art employed in collecting all the pathetic circumstances [and] the judgment displayed in disposing them" (OT 219) govern the imaginative activity of the participant, guide it, direct and focus the attention in a way that can transcend a subject's commonplace perspective on the world.

Hume does not expect that sympathetic responses experienced in the course of actual disasters will yield much pleasure. Sympathetic responses to the plights of real persons are likely to be only as agreeable as the emotions of those with whom one sympathizes. And Hume is quick to point out that our reaction to real-life tragedies—whether or not that reaction is sympathetic, presumably—differs considerably from our reaction to fictional ones. Pity and indignation and fear are likely to overwhelm any tincture of pleasure which may occur as a result of insights afforded by contemplation or as a consequence of the eloquence with which an incident is described (OT 223). I do not think that we must regard a positive response to genuine catastrophes as *impossible*, just as less likely than a positive reaction to fictional catastrophes would be.

Are the insights afforded by sympathy alone, or when it is accompanied by adoption of a general point of view, inevitably agreeable when it comes to narrative art? Do these particular insights, at least, always fill us with delight? Almost certainly not. But it seems appropriate at this juncture to invoke the earlier discussion about Hume's encompassing use of the term "pleasure." There is, for instance, a very evident sense in which "insight" or "clarification" or "revelation" all describe a transition from an inferior state of ignorance or confusion or unclarity to a state of superior awareness or informedness or knowledge. That is, insights and revelations are, by their very nature, epistemic improvements. That an insight into someone's motive can make one miserable, that a clarification of the human capacity for monumental blunders may produce despair, is beside the point. There is still some sense in which one is better off for having had the insight, and it seems an obvious mistake to claim that the mere presence of any negative emotion rules out the possibility of positive experience. This would, after all, simply be to deny that the paradox of tragedy exists. Moreover, Hume states that "the pleasure of study consists chiefly in the action of the mind, and the exercise

of the genius and the understanding in the discovery or comprehension of any truth” (T 2.3.10.6; SBN 450–1). There is clearly a sense, then, in which revelation and insight may be regarded as “pleasant” just because of what they are. This sense may just involve an awareness of being epistemically better off—the satisfaction of getting at the truth or of figuring things out. These satisfactions are not in themselves aesthetic. Yet it is the eloquence and artistry of the tragedian, her careful manipulation of our attention and emotions, that can be responsible for their occurrence. Hume’s pronouncement that pleasure *proceeds* from eloquence (OT 219) may be read in two ways. It may refer not only to our delight in artistic virtuosity, but to the satisfaction in the insight and clarity that such virtuosity has made possible.

Sympathy, when regulated by the general point of view, contributes to understanding and to the acquisition of moral knowledge insofar as it requires us to take an informed perspective on the experience of an individual’s narrow circle. Unregulated sympathy may lead us to reflect upon and thereby gain insight into the experience of an individual. But one further concern should be addressed. I would like to argue that sympathetic *feeling* can make a distinct contribution in either case. Naturally, the emotions with which we sympathize can contribute to our overall evaluation of someone’s character. Consider a case in which one individual (or fictional character) is assaulted by another. We will sympathize with the victim and probably regard his assailant with one degree or another of disapproval. But if we also contemplate and share the feeling of the aggressor, then our disapproval may diminish or increase as we discover the sentiments that led him to action. Our disapproval may lessen if he acts from fear; it may increase if he acts in anger. So awareness of feeling can contribute to the moral evaluations we make and the moral insights we have.

This doesn’t answer the question of whether our *own* sympathetic feelings can lend additional insight or knowledge. Do they impart information? Aren’t they supposed to be unanalyzable sensations in Hume, despite their cognitive affiliates? I want to say that, just as a phenomenological matter, there is a real distinction between, say, understanding all about the dangers inherent in a given situation and just being afraid. Our exercise of sympathy, even without recourse to the empathetic interpretation, can let us know how it is to have a certain feeling. It can bring to mind previous experiences that resonate emotionally with that to which we direct attention. And there is, in any case, a difference between propositional and acquaintance knowledge. Someone who is colorblind will know that a stop sign is red, and will assume that others experience red when they see it, but he won’t know what experiencing the stop sign as red is *like*. Someone who is not colorblind *will* know that. Likewise, our own experience of feeling when we sympathize contributes acquaintance knowledge to our understanding of someone else’s experience, or to our understanding of a fictional character.

V

As indicated previously, it may also be possible to ally Hume's account of sympathy with contemporary conceptions of empathy, something that would facilitate an analysis of identification with fictional characters. While there is no direct evidence that Hume held such a view and while many scholars repudiate its ascription to Hume,³⁷ others have maintained that the empathy-like description of sympathy offered by Adam Smith "differed but little from that of Hume in the *Treatise*, and the applications and illustrations with which . . . [Smith] elaborated it are in many cases strikingly similar to those which Hume employed."³⁸ Smith, of course, approached sympathy in much the same way that contemporary philosophers do empathy.

In *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, Smith states that, in sympathizing with the suffering of another, we imaginatively adopt that person's perspective on the world: "By the imagination we place ourselves in his situation, we conceive ourselves enduring all the same torments, we enter as it were into his body, and become in some measure the same person with him, and thence form some idea of his sensations, and even feel something which . . . is not altogether unlike them. His agonies, when they are thus brought home to ourselves, when we have thus adopted and made them our own, begin at last to affect us."³⁹

Hume never states, as Smith does, that sympathy involves the imaginative adoption of the perspective of another. However, a published review of *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, which is most convincingly attributed to Hume, describes Smith's account of sympathy as "very natural and probable."⁴⁰ Hume did not agree with every particular of Smith's account, of course. For instance, he took issue with Smith's characterization of sympathy as invincibly agreeable, given the possibility of sympathizing with an unpleasant emotional experience.⁴¹ Nevertheless, the positive review suggests that Hume may have regarded Smith's treatment of sympathy as a possible analysis of the sympathy mechanism, perhaps as an elaboration or expansion of the process rather than a conflicting theory.

In other words, it seems permissible to suggest, not that Hume agreed with Smith in every particular, but that Smith's account gives Hume a way to explain how it is that the transition from idea to impression can be negotiated. The impression of the self, taken to enliven our belief about the experience of another in such a way as to enable us to share it, may be tied to the sympathizer's imaginative adoption of a first-person perspective which "enlivens" ideas about another individual's experience by imaginatively co-opting it. This could gain in plausibility if the complex of impressions associated with the self were taken to incorporate recollections of experiences similar to those concerning which a belief is entertained. The "enlivening" in such a case would be accomplished by a kind

of resonance and correspondence between experiences that brought a first-person point of vantage to the fore. I do not claim that Hume held a view of sympathy as empathy, but I do believe that Hume's account of sympathy has explanatory gaps that can be filled by taking an approach like Smith's. Hume's referring to this approach as "probable" suggests he believed that Smith's account provided *a* (not *the*) plausible explanation.

There are even passages in the *Treatise* which seem to suggest that sympathy involves the adoption of a first-person vantage point. In discussing how it is that sympathy leads us to "feel the passion as if the person were really activated by it," even when the object of our sympathy is in fact unmoved, Hume offers the following example: "we blush for the conduct of those, who behave themselves foolishly before us; and that tho' they show no sense of shame, nor seem in the least conscious of their folly. All this proceeds from sympathy." (T 2.2.7.5; SBN 371). Hume puts this down to the imagination's being affected by a general rule. What I find interesting, however, is that the sympathetic emotion here is *shame*, and—as Hume makes perfectly clear—humility can only take the self as object: "when self enters not into the consideration, there is no room either for pride or humility" (T 2.1.2.2; SBN 277). Pride and shame are prototypically self-directed. We can only be proud or ashamed *of* other people if something about them is our responsibility or if they are somehow affiliated with us. Thus, we may take pride in or be ashamed of the performance of a student, although bringing this into line with what Hume has to say makes it a case of our being proud or ashamed of ourselves and our own effectiveness as instructors. But that is surely not the case in Hume's example, in which no affiliation between the sympathizer and the one for whom he blushes is proposed.

To feel shame and to blush for our colleague Brad, say, after an ill-advised flamenco demonstration at a department party, is not to acknowledge any flaw of one's own, since one neither indulged in conduct like Brad's, nor spiked the punch that proved his downfall. The only perspective that gives shame an object is Brad's perspective. It is only from Brad's vantage point that there is something of which to be ashamed. It seems that self-directed emotions like shame or embarrassment cannot be sympathetically shared unless the sympathizer imaginatively adopts the perspective of the individual with whom he sympathizes.

The foregoing does not demonstrate that Hume held any particular views about sympathy as empathy, but it does show that such an account is compatible with Hume's aims and that it serves an explanatory function with respect to the principle itself and in regard to certain examples. Also, in light of the present project, it offers further evidence of the way in which unregulated or natural sympathy may provide unique insights in the course of our response to tragedy.

Our sympathy with a tragic hero, seen in such terms, would involve not just an awareness of the character's emotion, but a *sharing* of it stemming from

an imaginative adoption of that character's point of vantage. Sympathy, as it is proposed here, involves a kind of thought experiment in which we imagine undergoing what another does, a process that begins with our taking note of the "causes and effects" of someone's passion: the circumstances, situation, and behavior of that individual. It culminates in the imaginative contemplation of those circumstances from a first-person perspective. That is, we imagine them from what we take to be the other agent's point of view. Sympathy, in this sense, permits us to share the passion of another because that passion's causes are shared in imagination.

So, sympathy may afford a revelation about how it may be for a certain person in certain circumstances. Sympathy and poetry together can sometimes offer something more: a genuine insight into some aspect of the human condition. It is my contention that such insights can depend on two things: on the perceptiveness and eloquence of the artist and on the emotional and imaginative engagement of the participant, enabling that person not just to understand the character's plight, but to understand it from the inside.

Consider *Gallipoli*, and the case of Frank's failure to arrive in time to countermand the order to charge the enemy line. What Weir and the screenwriter collaborate to make possible is, among other things, an insight into the ugliest ramifications of accepting responsibilities which one is not equipped to discharge or which one is well aware that another is better equipped to fulfill. Everything in the film builds up to this final disaster, as each falling short on the part of Frank is somehow made good or compensated for by Archie. Archie tries to help Frank join the Light Horse even though Frank cannot ride; he teaches Frank to ride; he gets Frank into his unit when they meet in Cairo; he encourages Frank and attempts to raise his spirits in the grim hellhole of the military encampment. Finally, he ensures Frank's (relative) safety by having Frank made the designated message runner instead of himself. This is particularly ironic, since Archie could just as well have ensured Frank's safety and, as it turns out, saved the lives of hundreds of others, had he not delegated the job. Archie's final kindness in negotiating Frank's reassignment is such that he cannot compensate for Frank's inadequacies. In giving away the runner's job to Frank, he has committed himself to a run which will take him directly into the line of fire. And so Frank fails by falling just a little short, by hoping that a performance he knew to be less than optimal would still be good enough, by indulging in the kind of wishful thinking about his own capabilities to which it is as easy as it is contemptible to succumb.

Sympathy can be intimately related to such an insight when we consider possible emotional reactions to Frank's defeat. As has already been indicated, Hume maintains that emotions like pride and humility have the same object: oneself (T 2.1.2.2; SBN 277). And such self-directed passions are the very ones that make it easiest to discriminate between empathetic and non-empathetic spectator

responses. Shame or guilt, for instance, cannot be felt *for* or *toward* a character (unless one is responsible for, e.g., having created a very bad one, or is an associate of someone who has done so). The cognitive affiliate of an emotion like guilt or shame is a consciousness of having personally erred, not a consciousness of someone else's error.

One can, of course, hold any of several attitudes toward Frank: contempt for his selfishness, outrage at his placing his own interests ahead of everyone else's, pity on account of the painful realization of his own culpability. But it is only sympathy, on the empathetic interpretation, which can create the kind of excruciating guilt on Frank's behalf that may actually lead one to cringe in one's seat or to jerk back as the deadly whistle sounds. We don't need to see Frank's situation from the inside to understand his motives or his shortcomings. But it is seeing that situation from the inside which provides a full sense of the loss and failure and conviction of inadequacy that permeate Frank's perspective on the world.

Such a perspective could not by the wildest stretch of the imagination be thought delightful. What makes that perspective particularly grim is the fact that Frank is not a dreadful person. He is funny, engaging, optimistic, confused about his goals and kind to his friends. He takes the easy way out. He coasts. He is altogether too like us for comfort. And this, of course, is another insight: that well-meaning, likeable people who coast whenever they can get away with it are just as likely to be implicated in human disasters as villains of the deepest dye. We may take satisfaction in such an insight not because it presents a happy prospect, but because it reconfigures ordinary notions of responsibility and brings to light methods for the reevaluation of our own conduct. That is, we may be taken to experience satisfaction because we are the gainers—in conceptual clarity or moral knowledge or an increased understanding of the world. So a positive experience derived from artistic pathos can involve our grasping some broader human truth. And our comprehension of such truths may ultimately depend on our imaginatively inhabiting a world whose tragic parameters are fixed by the decisions of the artist.

What Hume offers us is a broad explanation of our reactions to works which arouse both positive and negative emotions, one that opens further avenues for exploration. His resolution of the paradox of tragedy depends on claims about the interdependence of such emotions. These are claims that can be put to work in a variety of ways, given the multitude of sources from which Hume acknowledges that positive responses can arise. I have attempted to apply Hume's ideas about affective conversion and emotional interdependence in a range of contexts, in order to demonstrate that the directions in which they take us may lead to solutions which prove more plausible and persuasive than critics are sometimes willing to allow.

NOTES

I am grateful for the comments, suggestions and advice of Elizabeth Radcliffe, Susan Feagin, Dabney Townsend, Alex Neill, Dan Shaw, Tim Costelloe, and Rachel Zuckert.

1 David Hume, "Of Tragedy," in *Essays: Moral, Political and Literary* (Indianapolis: Liberty Classics, 1987), 216–25. Henceforth abbreviated OT.

2 David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. David Fate Norton and Mary J. Norton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), henceforth abbreviated T. David Hume; *A Treatise of Human Nature*, 2nd ed., ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge, revised by P. H. Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), henceforth abbreviated SBN.

3 For the past few decades, the aforementioned paradox has been featured most often as the centerpiece of inquiries into Aristotle's reference to *catharsis* in chapter 6 of the *Poetics*, even though Aristotle himself manifested no interest in the paradox of our pleasure in tragedy, but took it as a given. In a brief but well-known passage, tragedies were said by Aristotle to depict incidents "effecting through pity and fear [what we call] the catharsis of such emotions" [*Aristotle's Poetics*, chap. 6, trans. James Hutton (New York: W. W. Norton, 1982), 60]. A small industry aimed at the elucidation of this passage has since developed. Though investigations of the paradox of tragedy are not conducted exclusively by Aristotelians, the sheer number of rival interpretations on offer demonstrates the variety of perspectives it is possible to adopt with respect even to the most unelaborated claims and, further, explains some of the sources I will review in considering solutions to the problem which tragedy poses.

4 See, for instance: Stephen Halliwell, *Aristotle's Poetics* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986), 191, 353; Leon Golden, "The Purgation Theory of Catharsis," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 31 (1973): 473–9.

5 Aristotle, *Aristotle's Politics* VIII, chap. 7, trans. Benjamin Jowett (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1920), 315.

6 See, for instance, John Morreall, "Enjoying Negative Emotions in Fictions," *Philosophy and Literature* 9 (1985): 95–103. Susan Feagin suggests that "the adrenalin rush, the tingles," may be an enjoyable aspect of our fear in "Monsters, Disgust, and Fascination," *Philosophical Studies* (1992): 75–84, 81–2. Marcia Eaton points out that exhilaration can depend on fear and indicates that there may simply be times when we "like to feel our juices flowing" in *Aesthetics and the Good Life* (Cranbury, N.J.: Associated University Presses, 1989), 56–7.

7 Humphry House, *Aristotle's Poetics* (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1961), 106.

8 Susan Feagin, "The Pleasures of Tragedy," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 20 (1983): 95–104.

9 Golden, 473, 478.

10 Peter Jones, for instance, states that "Hume's view [is that] beauty is the name of a pleasurable but indefinable sentiment" in "Hume's Aesthetics Reassessed," *Philosophical Quarterly* 26 (1976): 48–60, 49. See also "Another Look at Hume's Views of Aesthetic and Moral Judgments," *Philosophical Quarterly* 20 (1970): 53–9.

- 11 Alex Neill, "‘An Unaccountable Pleasure’: Hume on Tragedy and the Passions," *Hume Studies* 24 (1998): 335–54, 338–43.
- 12 Robert J. Yanal, "Hume and Others on the Paradox of Tragedy," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 49 (1991): 75–6, 76.
- 13 Alex Neill, "Yanal and Others on Hume on Tragedy," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 50 (1992): 151–4, 153.
- 14 Robert J. Yanal, "Still Unconverted: A Reply to Neill," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 50 (1992): 324–6, 325.
- 15 Neill, "‘An Unaccountable Pleasure,’” 346–7.
- 16 Elisa Galgut, "The Poetry and Pity: Hume’s Account of Tragic Pleasure," *British Journal of Aesthetics* 41 (2001): 411–24, 416.
- 17 *Ibid.*, 421.
- 18 *Ibid.*, 423.
- 19 *Ibid.*, 423.
- 20 *Ibid.*, 423–4.
- 21 Peter Kivy, "Feeling the Musical Emotions," *British Journal of Aesthetics* 39 (1999): 1–13.
- 22 *Ibid.*, 9–10.
- 23 *Ibid.*, 11.
- 24 *Ibid.*, 12.
- 25 Galgut, 423.
- 26 Alex Neill, "Hume’s ‘Singular Phaenomenon,’” *British Journal of Aesthetics* 39 (1999): 112–25, 120–2.
- 27 Stanley Schachter and Jerome Singer, "Cognitive, Social, and Physiological Determinants of Emotional State," in *What Is an Emotion? Classic Readings in Philosophical Psychology*, ed. Cheshire Calhoun and Robert C. Solomon (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), 183.
- 28 Such solutions are suggested in: Pall Árdal, *Passion and Value in Hume’s Treatise* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1989), 44–5; Annette C. Baier, *A Progress of Sentiments: Reflections on Hume’s Treatise* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), 129–31.
- 29 Christine Korsgaard, "The General Point of View: Love and Moral Approval in Hume’s Ethics," *Hume Studies* 25 (1999): 3–41, 30.
- 30 Elizabeth S. Radcliffe, "Hume on Motivating Sentiments," *Hume Studies* 20 (1994): 37–58.
- 31 There are other comparisons and connections to be made between the aesthetic and the moral in Hume, but these cannot be addressed here. Parallels between aesthetic

and moral judgments (and between competent critics and competent moral judges), especially as regards the general point of view, appear in Geoffrey Sayre-McCord, "On Why Hume's General Point of View Isn't Ideal," *Social Philosophy and Policy* 11 (1994): 202–28, 220–2.

32 David Hume, "Of the Standard of Taste," in *Essays, Moral Political, and Literary* (Indianapolis: Liberty Classics, 1985), 226–49. Hereafter abbreviated ST.

33 I have purposely oversimplified the example, since this issue is only peripherally related to the topic under discussion. The case is more complicated than I've indicated, since we can and do regard genocide with approval while watching films like those in Ridley Scott's *Alien* series. I address such complications in "Knowing Better: The Epistemic Underpinnings of Moral Criticism of Fiction," *Southwest Philosophy Review* 21 (2005): 35–44.

34 I address this in "The Vicious Habits of Entirely Fictitious People: Hume on the Moral Evaluation of Art" *Philosophy and Literature* 26 (2002): 143–56.

35 *The Letters of David Hume*, ed. by J. Y. T. Grieg, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1932), 1: 313.

36 Rachel Cohon points out that "Hume seems to think [that we know of the passions of others] by making some sort of analogy between our own minds and those of others, or perhaps between two resemblances, that of our own bodies to other people's bodies knowable by means of sense impressions—and that of our passions to other people's (supposed) passions." See "The Common Point of View in Hume's Ethics," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 57 (1997): 827–50, 830.

37 E.g., see Árdal, 45.

38 Glenn R. Morrow, "The Significance of the Doctrine of Sympathy in Hume and Adam Smith," *Philosophical Review* 32 (1923): 60–78, 69.

39 Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, ed. D. D. Raphael and A. L. Macfie (Indianapolis: Liberty Classics, 1984), 9.

40 David Raynor, "Hume's Abstract of Adam Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments*," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 22 (1984): 51–80, 67.

41 *The Letters of David Hume*, 1: 313.