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## **A Treatise Of Human Nature**

Being An Attempt to introduce the experimental Method of Reasoning Into  
Moral Subjects

Of The Passions

**Hume, David**

**London, 1739**

Sect. IV. Of the love of relations.

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PART of the objects prevails, and excites its proper  
 II. passion.

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 and ha-  
 tred.

## S E C T. IV.

*Of the love of relations.*

S E C T. IV. **H**AVING given a reason, why several actions, that cause a real pleasure or uneasiness, excite not any degree, or but a small one, of the passion of love or hatred towards the actors; 'twill be necessary to shew, wherein consists the pleasure or uneasiness of many objects, which we find by experience to produce these passions.

ACCORDING to the preceding system there is always requir'd a double relation of impressions and ideas betwixt the cause and effect, in order to produce either love or hatred. But tho' this be universally true, 'tis remarkable that the passion of love may be excited by only one *relation* of a different kind, *viz.* betwixt ourselves and the object; or more properly speaking, that this relation is always attended with both the others. Whoever is united to us by any connexion is always sure of a share of our love, proportion'd to the connexion, without enquiring into his other qualities. Thus  
 the



the relation of blood produces the strongest S E C T.  
 tie the mind is capable of in the love of IV.  
 parents to their children, and a lesser degree  
 of the same affection, as the relation les-  
 sens. Nor has consanguinity alone this ef-  
 fect, but any other relation without excep-  
 tion. We love our country-men, our neigh-  
 bours, those of the same trade, profession,  
 and even name with ourselves. Every one  
 of these relations is esteem'd some tie, and  
 gives a title to a share of our affection.

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THERE is another phænomenon, which  
 is parallel to this, *viz.* that *acquaintance*,  
 without any kind of relation, gives rise to  
 love and kindness. When we have contrac-  
 ted a habitude and intimacy with any per-  
 son; tho' in frequenting his company we  
 have not been able to discover any very va-  
 luable quality, of which he is possess'd; yet  
 we cannot forbear preferring him to stran-  
 gers, of whose superior merit we are fully  
 convinc'd. These two phænomena of the  
 effects of relation and acquaintance will give  
 mutual light to each other, and may be  
 both explain'd from the same principle.

THOSE, who take a pleasure in declaim-  
 ing against human nature, have observ'd,  
 that man is altogether insufficient to support  
 himself; and that when you loosen all the





**PART** holds, which he has of external objects, he immediately drops down into the deepest melancholy and despair. From this, say they, proceeds that continual search after amusement in gaming, in hunting, in business; by which we endeavour to forget ourselves, and excite our spirits from the languid state, into which they fall, when not sustain'd by some brisk and lively emotion. To this method of thinking I so far agree, that I own the mind to be insufficient, of itself, to its own entertainment, and that it naturally seeks after foreign objects, which may produce a lively sensation, and agitate the spirits. On the appearance of such an object it awakes, as it were, from a dream: The blood flows with a new tide: The heart is elevated: And the whole man acquires a vigour, which he cannot command in his solitary and calm moments. Hence company is naturally so rejoicing, as presenting the liveliest of all objects, *viz.* a rational and thinking Being like ourselves, who communicates to us all the actions of his mind; makes us privy to his inmost sentiments and affections; and lets us see, in the very instant of their production, all the emotions, which are caus'd by any object. Every lively idea is agreeable, but especially that

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that of a passion, because such an idea be-  
comes a kind of passion, and gives a more  
sensible agitation to the mind, than any o-  
ther image or conception.

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THIS being once admitted, all the rest is  
easy. For as the company of strangers is  
agreeable to us for *a short time*, by inli-  
vening our thought; so the company of  
our relations and acquaintance must be pe-  
culiarly agreeable, because it has this effect  
in a greater degree, and is of more *durable*  
influence. Whatever is related to us is con-  
ceiv'd in a lively manner by the easy tran-  
sition from ourselves to the related object.  
Custom also, or acquaintance facilitates the  
entrance, and strengthens the conception of  
any object. The first case is parallel to our  
reasonings from cause and effect; the second  
to education. And as reasoning and educa-  
tion concur only in producing a lively and  
strong idea of any object; so is this the  
only particular, which is common to rela-  
tion and acquaintance. This must, there-  
fore, be the influencing quality, by which  
they produce all their common effects; and  
love or kindness being one of these effects, it  
must be from the force and liveliness of  
conception, that the passion is deriv'd. Such  
a conception is peculiarly agreeable, and  
makes



PART makes us have an affectionate regard for every thing, that produces it, when the proper object of kindness and good-will.

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'TIS obvious, that people associate together according to their particular tempers and dispositions, and that men of gay tempers naturally love the gay ; as the serious bear an affection to the serious. This not only happens, where they remark this resemblance betwixt themselves and others, but also by the natural course of the disposition, and by a certain sympathy, which always arises betwixt similar characters. Where they remark the resemblance, it operates after the manner of a relation, by producing a connexion of ideas. Where they do not remark it, it operates by some other principle ; and if this latter principle be similar to the former, it must be receiv'd as a confirmation of the foregoing reasoning.

THE idea of ourselves is always intimately present to us, and conveys a sensible degree of vivacity to the idea of any other object, to which we are related. This lively idea changes by degrees into a real impression ; these two kinds of perception being in a great measure the same, and differing only in their degrees of force and vivacity. But this change must be produc'd  
with



with the greater ease, that our natural temper gives us a propensity to the same impression, which we observe in others, and makes it arise upon any slight occasion. In that case resemblance converts the idea into an impression, not only by means of the relation, and by transfusing the original vivacity into the related idea; but also by presenting such materials as take fire from the least spark. And as in both cases a love or affection arises from the resemblance, we may learn that a sympathy with others is agreeable only by giving an emotion to the spirits, since an easy sympathy and correspondent emotions are alone common to *relation, acquaintance, and resemblance.*

THE great propensity men have to pride may be consider'd as another similar phenomenon. It often happens, that after we have liv'd a considerable time in any city; however at first it might be disagreeable to us; yet as we become familiar with the objects, and contract an acquaintance, tho' merely with the streets and buildings, the aversion diminishes by degrees, and at last changes into the opposite passion. The mind finds a satisfaction and ease in the view of objects, to which it is accustom'd, and naturally prefers them to others, which, tho',

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PART tho', perhaps, in themselves more valuable,  
 II. are less known to it. By the same quality  
 of the mind we are seduc'd into a good  
 opinion of ourselves, and of all objects, that  
 belong to us. They appear in a stronger  
 light; are more agreeable; and consequently  
 fitter subjects of pride and vanity, than any  
 other.

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IT may not be amiss, in treating of  
 the affection we bear our acquaintance and  
 relations, to observe some pretty curious  
 phænomena, which attend it. 'Tis easy to  
 remark in common life, that children esteem  
 their relation to their mother to be weaken'd,  
 in a great measure, by her second marriage,  
 and no longer regard her with the same eye,  
 as if she had continu'd in her state of wi-  
 dow-hood. Nor does this happen only,  
 when they have felt any inconveniencies  
 from her second marriage, or when her  
 husband is much her inferior; but even  
 without any of these considerations, and  
 merely because she has become part of an-  
 other family. This also takes place with  
 regard to the second marriage of a father;  
 but in a much less degree: And 'tis certain  
 the ties of blood are not so much loosen'd  
 in the latter case as by the marriage of a  
 mother. These two phænomena are re-  
 markable.



markable in themselves, but much more so when compar'd.

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IN order to produce a perfect relation betwixt two objects, 'tis requisite, not only that the imagination be convey'd from one to the other by resemblance, contiguity or causation, but also that it return back from the second to the first with the same ease and facility. At first sight this may seem a necessary and unavoidable consequence. If one object resemble another, the latter object must necessarily resemble the former. If one object be the cause of another, the second object is effect to its cause. 'Tis the same case with contiguity: And therefore the relation being always reciprocal, it may be thought, that the return of the imagination from the second to the first must also, in every case, be equally natural as its passage from the first to the second. But upon farther examination we shall easily discover our mistake. For supposing the second object, beside its reciprocal relation to the first, to have also a strong relation to a third object; in that case the thought, passing from the first object to the second, returns not back with the same facility, tho' the relation continues the same; but is readily carry'd on to the third object, by means  
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PART of the new relation, which presents itself, and gives a new impulse to the imagination. This new relation, therefore, weakens the tie betwixt the first and second objects. The fancy is by its very nature wavering and inconstant; and considers always two objects as more strongly related together, where it finds the passage equally easy both in going and returning, than where the transition is easy only in one of these motions. The double motion is a kind of a double tie, and binds the objects together in the closest and most intimate manner.

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THE second marriage of a mother breaks not the relation of child and parent; and that relation suffices to convey my imagination from myself to her with the greatest ease and facility. But after the imagination is arriv'd at this point of view, it finds its object to be surrounded with so many other relations, which challenge its regard, that it knows not which to prefer, and is at a loss what new object to pitch upon. The ties of interest and duty bind her to another family, and prevent that return of the fancy from her to myself, which is necessary to support the union. The thought has no longer the vibration, requisite to set it perfectly



fectly at ease, and indulge its inclination to S E C T.  
change. It goes with facility, but returns IV.  
with difficulty; and by that interruption  
finds the relation much weaken'd from what  
it wou'd be were the passage open and easy  
on both sides.

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Now to give a reason, why this effect follows not in the same degree upon the second marriage of a father: we may reflect on what has been prov'd already, that tho' the imagination goes easily from the view of a lesser object to that of a greater, yet it returns not with the same facility from the greater to the less. When my imagination goes from myself to my father, it passes not so readily from him to his second wife, nor considers him as entering into a different family, but as continuing the head of that family, of which I am myself a part. His superiority prevents the easy transition of the thought from him to his spouse, but keeps the passage still open for a return to myself along the same relation of child and parent. He is not sunk in the new relation he acquires; so that the double motion or vibration of thought is still easy and natural. By this indulgence of the fancy in its inconstancy, the tie of child and parent still preserves its full force and influence.

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