WHAT IS THE FOUNDATION OF MORALITY?

Passions, Emotions & Sentiment or Reason...
“The hypothesis...maintains that morality is determined by sentiment. It defines virtue to be whatever mental action or quality gives to a spectator the pleasing sentiment of approbation; and vice the contrary.”

Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals.
“Reason is and ought to be the slave of the passions”
HUME’S ARGUMENT:

P1) Reason cannot tell us what we value
P2) Reason can help us pursue what we value
P3) What we value is based on our sentiments & passions
   SP1) We find virtue beautiful and vice odious
   Sp2) Matters of taste cannot be defended on reason
P4) Morality is based on what we value

C) Morality must be based on our sentiments & passions
“It appears evident that the ultimate ends of human actions can never, in any case, be accounted for by reason, but recommend themselves entirely to the sentiments and affections of mankind without any dependence on the intellectual faculties.”

(p.688)
HUME’S ARGUMENT:

- Reason alone might override those “common fellow feelings” and permit inhuman acts (p.685)
- Role of compassion is directly linked to one’s conscience & to the ability to feel disgust at vice and approbation towards virtue; with reason alone, “men become totally indifferent toward these distinctions.” (p.687)
The conscience as “Divine Reason” (p.689)
JEAN JACQUES ROUSSEAU:

“...the first impulses of nature are always right....Do we take more pleasure in the sight of the sufferings of others or in their joys?”

“Take from our hearts this love of what is noble and you rob us of the joy of life.”

(pp.689-90)
“Conscience! Conscience! Divine instinct, immortal voice from heaven; sure guide for a creature ignorant and finite indeed; yet intelligent and free; infallible judge of good and evil, making man like to God! In these consists the excellence of man’s nature and the morality of his actions;...I find nothing in myself ... but the sad privilege of wandering from one error to another, by the help of an unbridled understanding and a reason which knows no principle.”

(p.692)