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Macaulay and Wollstonecraft on Reasoned Benevolence

Macaulay and Wollstonecraft are typically celebrated for advancing rationalist accounts of moral reasoning and for advancing accounts of education that uphold the view that education should principally aim at cultivating autonomous rational faculties in men and in women. However, what tends to be overlooked in their philosophical frameworks is that there is an essential connection between benevolence and the distinctly human capacity to *know* when and that something is suffering through sympathy. In other words, what tends to be missed in their respective moral philosophies is that both Macaulay and Wollstonecraft unite reason with sentiment in their moral frameworks. In this paper, we argue that this critical component is missing in existing approaches to Macaulay and Wollstonecraft's philosophies, and in studies of their intellectual relationship. By attending to the sentimental elements of Macaulay and Wollstonecraft's moral philosophies, we therefore hope to show that for both women, moral emotions and virtues are discovered only through using reason and sentiment in tandem. This makes clear that for both women, moral emotions are as informed by reason as they are by sentiment.