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undermines the transformation that comparative and postcolonial theory bode for political theorizing. If, as McWilliams herself claims, "understanding involves listening to other people" (p. 127), then we must start actively listening to those other people, wherever and whenever they are located. To build a global political theory, reflecting about the reflections of Western travelers can never be an adequate substitute for engaging the actual experiences and voices of excluded others.

Reflecting Subjects: Passion, Sympathy, and Society in Hume's Philosophy, by Jacqueline A. Taylor. Oxford: Oxford University. 2015, 240 pp.

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The main title of Jacqueline A. Taylor's book—*Reflecting Subjects*—is an insightful play on words. As Taylor wishes us to appreciate, David Hume conceived of ethical agents not only as continuously reflecting on the conduct and actions of themselves and their peers but argued that this was grounded in processes of empathic (or in eighteenth-century parlance, "sympathetic") "mirroring": reflecting sentiments back and forth in the milieu of social existence. As Hume put it, "the minds of men are mirrors to one another, not only because they reflect each others emotions, but also because those rays of passions, sentiments and opinions may be often reverberated, and may decay away by insensible degrees."[1] In turn, Taylor argues that Hume's ethical philosophy is vastly richer—and much more robust and plausible—than is often alleged. The case she builds is convincing.

Central to Taylor's endeavour is the much-neglected second book of Hume's *A Treatise of Human Nature*. Whilst scholars interested in Hume's epistemology have concentrated on Book 1, and those investigating his moral and political philosophy have predominantly dedicated themselves to Book 3, most have either ignored Book 2, or pilfered it for incidental support regarding wider controversies. Taylor has not only made the effort to read Book 2 but has done so with a careful philosophical eye. She has taken Hume's theory of the passions—rightly identified as a theory of human psychology, facilitated by the application of a carefully conceived "science of man"—on its own terms, resisting the temptation to subordinate it to the preconceived demands of contemporary scholarly disputes.

Her first three chapters are largely exegetical, concentrating on Parts 1 and 2 of Book 2 of the *Treatise*, and the account supplied is both sensible and accurate. This might seem like mere lukewarm praise, but it is not. Hume's texts are some of the most abused in the philosophical literature, frequently accused of putting forth views that are as ridiculous as they are implausible. Partly, this is a function of modern scholars, typically trained in the discipline of analytic philosophy, failing to appreciate that Hume is their distant dead cousin, not their living interlocutor: that although he often writes loosely, he always argues tightly. The modern prejudice that such a conjunction is necessarily oxymoronic leads many commentators to read Hume with a ferocious lack of charity, and thus to entirely miss whatever point he is making. Taylor, by contrast, has a great respect for her subject, and the benefits are obvious. She peels away accreted layers of misunderstanding clinging to Hume's more well-known writings, and uses her diligent attention to the detail of Book 2 to get the exegesis right.

This care results in the discrediting of two depressingly long-standing misconceptions of Hume's moral philosophy, variations of which are engaged with throughout Taylor's argument, in more and less sophisticated forms as they happen to come along. The first is that Hume took the highly localized prejudices of eighteenth-century educated Scots to be representative of the uniform ethical practice of all human beings. The second is that Hume has no theory of whether and how human beings come to reflect upon the values that they find themselves with, meaning that his account is empirically false *and* philosophically inadequate. Taylor shows that these claims are wrong, in all their instantiations. Although Hume did believe in an underlying, uniform, human nature, this existed at a very deep level, and whilst it structured how human beings must experience the world, it wholly under-determined what form of values they would adopt in different material circumstances, and gave them the capacity for normative self-reflection.

Taylor draws attention, for example, to the fact that Hume stressed that human beings are typically dazzled by wealth and power, insofar as the possession of these things both augments esteem for others and is a boost to the complicated "indirect" passion of pride (itself central to Hume's psychological account). But noticing this opened the space for Hume to show how reflexive self-awareness of our own partialities can lead us to question established social values. Hume's "social philosophy," for Taylor, is not merely a descriptive explanation of how certain values come to be privileged amidst particular groups but covers the ongoing dynamic process of renegotiating shared moral and political environments, with resources that can be drawn upon to criticize established practice. But as Taylor stresses in chapter 4,

Hume did not manage to adequately account for this in the *Treatise*, where his famous account of morals in Book 3 lost touch with the critical implication of the theory of the passions expounded in Book 2. She thus presents the later *Enquiry into the Principles of Morals* as an improvement on Hume's argument, in particular with regards to how human beings move beyond the basic, first-person, sentimentalist responses of "sympathy" (the capacity to share each other's feelings) to adopting a "common point of view." Whereas the *Treatise* helped itself to argumentative resources Hume could not justifiably claim, the *Enquiry* improved matters by offering an account of how human beings gradually developed the notion of a "principle of humanity," which explained both how individuals could adopt a steady, impartial moral perspective and how this could itself be turned back upon dominant views and used to change them when they failed to pass internal evaluative muster. Taylor thus presents the *Second Enquiry* not (as it is often read) as merely a popularized and simplified version of Book 3 of the *Treatise* but as the mature and more sophisticated work, which must be carefully consulted in any satisfactory evaluation of Hume's moral philosophy.

Chapter 5 addresses the issue of pride, and whilst Taylor shows how Hume breaks with the "selfish school" (Hume's term) of moral psychology—exemplified by Hobbes and Mandeville—in making pride a virtue and repudiating the sceptical, debunking, explanations of these forbearers, it is here that Taylor's account is most under-developed. Although she is, in other parts of the book, a relatively historically sensitive reader—frequently putting Hume in the rough context of his immediate predecessor's ideas—her account of pride is not adequately focused on *the* central moral-political (for the two had not yet come apart) debate of the eighteenth century: in what sense humans could be said to be sociable. Much studied by recent intellectual historians, it is a pity that Taylor does not engage the literature on human sociability, which could have greatly deepened her treatment of pride.[2] As it stands, her exploration remains at the level of obvious-enough contrasts with Hobbes and Mandeville, which by themselves are not particularly illuminating or novel—an interesting concluding discussion of the parallels between Hume's concept of pride and Bernard Williams's view of shame notwithstanding.

Taylor's sixth and final chapter will be of most direct interest to readers of this journal and deserves to be taken notice of. Building on the foundations laid in the earlier parts of the book, Taylor prosecutes two connected cases. The first is a rejection of a commonplace view that Hume's account of justice as an "artificial" virtue must be incorrect insofar as it cannot account for the universal scope of justice, which we experience as making demands on us as ethical agents *simpliciter*, not merely as pursuers of material gain. Taylor

shows that such accusations make the mistake of taking Hume's *origins* story—of justice as a convention between agents of roughly equal power seeking to promote their own self-interest—to be coterminous with the developed, final, status of justice as a "moral" virtue. But for Hume this is simply not the case. Although justice starts out as a convention for the promotion of utility, it evolves and expands. In particular, Taylor argues, with the advent of the "principle of humanity," its application broadens and the scope of inclusion—for traditionally excluded groups like women and others lacking in social rank and privilege, and in the future perhaps even animals and the non-sentient—grows, as evidenced by the inclusive political and moral practice of more polished societies vis-à-vis less developed, historically earlier, typically militaristic, human groupings.

More fundamentally, Taylor's message—which alas is left somewhat to be inferred, perhaps because the book is lacking a dedicated "Conclusion" where this might have been more fully stated—is that there is no reason to suppose that Hume, and by extension, modern Humeans, cannot undertake critical and forward-looking political reflection. Although Hume is frequently labeled a "conservative" in politics, the impression one comes to from Taylor's analysis is that such a label is either unhelpful or simply wrong. Even if Hume can himself be labeled a conservative (dubious, given his Whig politics), there is nothing inherent to his ethical and political philosophy that implies "conservatism" in any illuminating sense. His own recognition of the socially constructed subordination of women, and the clear moral costs of this, is a case in point, as Taylor convincingly stresses. More generally, Hume—and modern Humeans—has no reason to accept the claim that only a rationalistic, non-sentimentalist (more often than not Kantian) ethical perspective can deliver the point of view from which political criticism and social progress can be coherently advanced.

Taylor urges the importance of Hume's later development of the "principle of humanity": a principle which in time, if given favourable-enough circumstances, expands outwards and brings into its remit groups that have previously been neglected and downtrodden, putting them on a more equal footing with the powerful. In other words, a sentimentalist principle of human dignity. This, Taylor claims, was the central moral message of Hume's Enlightenment philosophy. We may not, as scholars of Hume, necessarily be convinced of that: Hume's ambitions and scope were wide, and his later economic essays, and six-volume history of England, suggest that the task of explaining and preserving the rise of modern European liberty was more centrally on his mature agenda. But nonetheless, there is no reason why we cannot, as inhabitants of complex societies experiencing ongoing clashes of value, see such a Humean principle of humanity as speaking

forcefully to us, here and now, as we continue to reflect on, and to, each other.

Notes

1. David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. D. F. Norton and M. J. Norton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), *T*.2.2.5.21.
2. For example, Istvan Hont, *Jealousy of Trade: International Competition and the Nation State in Historical Perspective* (Harvard: Belknap, 2005), especially “Introduction”; E. J. Hundert, *The Enlightenment's Fable: Bernard Mandeville and the Discovery of Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); James Moore, “Hume and Hutcheson,” in *Hume and Hume's Connexions*, ed. M. A. Stewart and J. P. Wright (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1994), pp. 23–57; John Robertson, *The Case for the Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), chapter 6.