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readings. I, like O'Connor (as I understand him), think R is extremely plausible on both readings. However, there are those who find R plausible on the first reading but not on the second. I don't have the space here to defend the plausibility of R on the second reading. Let me just say that to reject R on that second reading, it seems one would need a reason to think there is no good that (a) includes the *permission* of all inscrutable evil but doesn't include divine intervention of the kind that would make it possible for us to discern reasons for the permission of such evils and (b) is greater than any other obtainable good that doesn't include such things or other things as bad. But we don't have a reason to think there is no good like this. Our inability to identify such a good certainly doesn't provide us with such a reason.

10. My thanks to Dan Howard-Snyder, Bill Rowe and Linda Zagzebski for their comments on earlier drafts.

Religion and Faction in Hume's Moral Philosophy by **Jennifer A. Herdt**. Cambridge University Press, 1997. Pp. xiv and 300. Cloth \$59.95

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Jennifer Herdt's fascinating book is a study of the concept of sympathy in Hume's moral philosophy. So why this title? What makes Herdt's discussion unique is that she examines this central notion in Hume's moral theory in the context of religion and its divisive effect on seventeenth- and eighteenth-century society. Her thesis is that when Hume's moral theory is studied within the tradition of natural law from which it is descended, it becomes evident that Hume replaces divine revelation in previous moral frameworks with the workings of natural sympathy. Generally, the argumentation of this book is historical; that is, Herdt defends various claims concerning the philosophical development of Hume's moral philosophy by appealing to the ideas and current events to which he is reacting. Herdt's interpretation appeals to a breadth of Hume's writings, including the critical essays and *The History of England*. Consequently, readers should not come here looking for an analytic study of the arguments in Hume's ethics; rather, they should expect an interpretation in a broad, historically-informed setting. At the same time, Herdt's discussion leads to some interesting claims about the content of Hume's moral theory that I will later address here.

The purpose of Herdt's plan is clear: She wants to reject the approach to Hume that has mainly seen him as concerned with epistemology, and substitute for it an interpretation that sees Hume as concerned in his work with achieving a social outcome—namely, peace and prosperity. Then, she claims, Hume's political essays and the *History* form a unified corpus with his other very famous works (Preface, xiii). Herdt explains that her book, to which it is well worth devoting some time, is designed to defend eight claims.

(1) Hume's project is best understood in the context of natural law, but it is more radical than the other natural law theorists. They purport

to give accounts of morality by appeal only to human nature, but steal in reference to Providence; Hume, on the other hand, makes no such surreptitious references. (2) A major goal in the *Treatise of Human Nature* is to replace the role of Providence in morality with a naturalistic concept that connects morality to human flourishing without being egoistic. (3) That concept is sympathy, and so to understand the secularization of moral theory, we must understand sympathy. (4) Hume recognizes that natural, unregulated, sympathy can reinforce prejudices and divisions, and so he argues that moral judgment requires a correction of sympathetic feelings; this leads to a normative, and not merely a descriptive, account of moral judgment. (5) This normative account, developed through the essays and the *History*, requires that we have the capacity to enter into the perspectives of others and this allows us to overcome factions. (6) A theme of these works is that religious fanaticism and sectarianism undermine the role of sympathy in making moral judgments. (7) Hume holds that the lives of those who lead so-called “artificial” lives, the lives of religious zeal, cannot be entered into sympathetically. (8) Hume’s own capacity for sympathetic understanding is adequate only if he is right that theism is logically untenable, although he is still correct to hold that good judgment requires a sympathetic understanding of actions in history.

It is difficult to disagree with most of the main claims in Herdt’s project here, and she substantiates her readings with previously neglected material concerning the development of the concept of sympathy, a “near-obsession” for eighteenth-century moralists who wanted to elude the charge of egoism. She traces the notion of sympathy in the Latitudinarians, who reacted to the Calvinist doctrine of the viciousness of human nature with the claim that sympathy and pity demonstrated the benevolence of human passions. Shaftesbury incorporated the view of the Latitudinarians into his theory of the sympathetic sharing of pleasures, but Shaftesbury added a pessimistic note about the abuses of sympathy when limited to one’s own sect. The enemies of the sympathy-based moralists were first, Hobbes, who depicted people as only self-interested, and later, Mandeville, who charged that those who thought sympathy instinctual could not argue that it was meritorious at the same time. So, Butler then argued that human beings engage in a *reflective* process in which they place themselves imaginatively in the situation of others. All of these formulations set the stage for Hume, Herdt argues, to introduce his *new* account of sympathy—new, she says, because Hume is the first to suggest that sympathy is the source of moral judgments, and not only of motivations or information about the state of others (32-38).

I want to examine critically a few of the moves in Herdt’s interpretation. She initiates her discussion by remarking, “Hume’s account of sympathy is often dismissed as an unfortunate example of associationist psychology, which Hume introduces in the *Treatise* but thankfully has the sense to take out of the restatement of his moral theory in the *Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*” (1). She later supports this assessment by appealing to Philip Mercer and Páll Árdal (42)¹, who complain that Hume’s account of sympathy depicts it as mechanical and

instinctual. She is certainly right to object to their perspectives, but their views should not be taken to represent the state of Hume scholarship on the matter. Hume's account of sympathy from the *Treatise* is taken quite seriously by current scholars in Humean ethics and by contemporary virtue theorists as well, and much recent analysis has centered on sympathy and its role in making us both moral judges and the subject of moral judgments.²

One interesting issue which emerges in Herdt's discussion is whether Hume has an account of normativity in his moral theory, or whether he means it as a purely descriptive account of how we derive moral judgments. Herdt maintains of Hume's account of natural sympathy and its correction: "To the extent to which this is seen as an attempt to give an account of the origin of our moral distinctions, of the way in which moral distinctions first developed out of pre-moral distinctions, rather than an account of how the capacity for good moral judgment can be formed, it is misguided" (78). She thinks that Hume includes normativity in his account, but that he can only get it by begging the question. Her argument is that an attempt to found the normative on the natural can never get back to the "purely" natural, for any account of how morality arises out of some aspect of human nature already assumes that feature is morally important and others are not. So, Hume can justifiably describe how we make moral judgments, but he cannot give an account of the genesis of morality itself.³ Still, he presents a normative (not merely descriptive) account, but one that simply cannot *explain* the source of value itself.

But I think Herdt's remarks presuppose a framework foreign to Hume's project. The account of how we make moral judgments *is* Hume's account of how our moral distinctions arise. The label "moral" here means what *we* take to be moral; it is not a designation of a special quality bestowed on our concepts by something beyond our own experience. To charge that Hume can never get beyond the normative to the natural supposes a demarcation of the moral versus the natural that was not a part of Hume's perspective, not a feature of his naturalistic theory of morality. That we don't take our natural moral sentiments to be indicative of morality, but instead filter them through a correction process, doesn't imply that we have stolen the normative into the correction process we have chosen. Rather, the correction process is necessitated by a practical need; and since we regard the results as indicators of morality, on Hume's account, that *is* how moral distinctions arise for us.

Herdt's examination of Hume's theory progresses through a discussion of the controversy over the pleasures of tragedy. What sort of people take pleasure in seeing the sufferings of others, certain eighteenth-century Calvinist critics ask, and ought we to allow cultivation of such habits through the theater? Hume's stand on this issue was evident both through his critical essays and his support of the production of a controversial tragedy in Edinburgh, a play named *Douglas*, on a Scottish folk hero, written by a relative and friend, John Home. Hume's philosophical answer to the problem of tragedy, Herdt argues, was to point to the role of belief, but not to a simple distinction between our reaction to

fiction and genuine belief. That is a distinction which he sometimes has trouble making on his phenomenal characterization of belief in terms of force and vivacity. Rather, he analyzes belief in terms of connections of ideas that form a coherent network (108-10). Exactly how Herdt's solution is related to what Hume goes on to say about sympathy in his essay "Of Tragedy" isn't entirely clear, but with some work, one can get the point. In that essay, Herdt claims, Hume's view is that the presence of an aesthetic framework makes us feel uninvolved as spectators to tragedy, just as when we have limited sympathy with others, we are unaffected by their situations; in neither case is there a "moral claim" made on us, no call to action. Further, Hume charges that religious factions have the same effect as literature or poetry—namely, they induce an "artificial connection among the ideas". So, Herdt is promoting the idea that Hume's solution to the problem of taking pleasure in tragedy is to replace these artificial systems that produce a distorted sense of reality with natural belief systems that require broad perspectives (111-16).

Herdt's analysis proceeds then to show that Hume turns his advocacy of wide sympathetic understanding of foreign viewpoints into an attack on Scottish Evangelicals, arguing that the artificiality of their moral system makes it inaccessible to our general understanding. She maintains that the sort of sympathy doing the work in Hume's theory is a reflective understanding, informed by refined and expert judgment, as indicated in Hume's essay "Of the Standard of Taste". In other words, we are not actually capable of taking on the feelings of others, so Hume's theory is not one of moral sentiment, but one of sympathetic understanding (121, 125, 166-67).

The obvious question to ask about Herdt's spin on Hume's account of sympathy is: What happens to the motivational aspect of his account? I don't have the space here to argue for an interpretation of Hume that shows how our sympathetic responses, which when taken from "a general point of view" ground our moral judgments *and* are motivating, but I have argued at length for this thesis elsewhere.⁴ This interpretation is, I maintain, the import of Hume's various famous claims about the motivating force of "morality". If we couple the thesis that our sympathetic responses are motives with Hume's claims about how reason alone does not motivate us, then it is puzzling how Hume can mean the product of sympathy to be only sympathetic *understanding*. For I think there is very good reason to consider reason and understanding as purely intellectual and not motivational "faculties" (functions, not faculties reified), productive of beliefs, but not on their own productive of motives.⁵

Herdt's final chapter and conclusion argue that, due to "an ironic failure on Hume's part to extend sympathetic understanding to religious believers," he makes an unjust accusation in charging that religious systems propagate narrow perspectives and prejudices. "Hume can make sense of the possibility of entering sympathetically into the situation of someone without embracing his or her beliefs or way of life, but this possibility does not extend to theism since theism is not simply wrong but 'absurd' and 'artificial'" (Herdt, 223). I think that to embrace Herdt's perspective is to see Hume's conclusions in the *Dialogues*

Concerning Natural Religion as insincere in a certain respect; indeed if he was convinced *first* of the logical incoherence (and not just the falsity) of theism, why should he not *then* view the way of life that springs from it as absurd? I am not here to defend him in his conclusions, but to wonder whether Herdt is correct in her accusation, which implies that Hume argued from the charge of absurdity. Perhaps Hume's disdain for religious factionalism in eighteenth-century England motivated his discussions; did it also motivate the conclusions of particular arguments? It is up to Hume's readers to ask whether his arguments concerning religious belief are sound.

NOTES

1. Páll, Árdal, *Passion and Value in Hume's Treatise* (Edinburgh University Press), 1966, and Mercer, *Sympathy and Ethics: A Study of the Relation between with Special Reference to Hume's "Treatise"* (Oxford Clarendon Press), 1972.

2. See, for example, Annette Baier, *A Progress of Sentiments: Reflections on Hume's Treatise* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press), 1991; Charlotte Brown, "From Spectator to Agent: Hume's Theory of Obligation," *Hume Studies* XX (April 1994): 19-36; Rachel Cohon, "Is Hume a Noncognitivist in the Motivation Argument?" *Philosophical Studies* 85 (March 1997): 251-66; Don Garrett, *Cognition and Commitment in Hume's Moral Philosophy* (Oxford University Press, 1997): Chapter 9; Elizabeth Radcliffe, "Hume on Motivating Sentiments, the General Point of View, and the Inculcation of Morality," *Hume Studies* XX (April 1994): 37-58.

3. She also cites Annette Baier as an ally in this.

4. See Elizabeth Radcliffe, "Hume on Motivating Sentiments," and "How Does the Humean Sense of Duty Motivate?" *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 34 (July 1996): 47-70.

5. Hume's claim that reason alone does not produce motives has mostly been understood as the view that beliefs do not motivate, although a few critics have recently questioned this interpretation. Herdt might want to take the view that Hume's thesis about the inertness of reason leaves it open that the products of understanding can motivate, but I think the orthodox interpretation, which rules this out, stands on solid ground. She says herself that the intentional, rational activities of the judge, rather than the sense of taste, do the work in Hume's account (125); so it's difficult to see how she can argue that reason and sympathetic understanding are two different things.

God Without the Supernatural: A Defense of Scientific Theism by Peter Forrest (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996). ISBN 0-8014-3255-3. Pp. xiv, 256.

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Near the beginning of his book, Peter Forrest tells us of "the sensitive New Age cat who never eats meat and never hunts birds and lizards. Does it, I ask, ever get the chance? Likewise," he goes on to add, "it is no wonder that intellectual conversion to religion is rare—no one ever