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Ryan Patrick Hanley[1]

Abstract

Recently a call has gone up for a revival of the "politics of humanity." But what exactly is the "politics of humanity"? For illumination this paper turns to Hume's analysis of humanity's foundational role in morality and modern politics. Its aims in so doing are twofold. First, it aims to set forth a new understanding of the unity of Hume's practical and epistemological projects in developing his justifications for and the implications of his remarkable and underappreciated claim that humanity is the only sentiment on which a moral system can be founded. Second, by attending to Hume's substantive definition of humanity and its relationship to benevolence and sympathy in particular, it aims to clarify the relationship between the principal elements of the politics of humanity: "humanism" or secularism, "humane" or other-directed values, and mutual recognition of our shared "humanness."

"We are living in an era of transition"—a "transformation" that "involves almost every aspect of American society." Thus Martha Nussbaum begins her most recent book. As she defines it, this transition consists in a momentous shift "from a politics of disgust to a politics of humanity." And it is clearly a shift that Nussbaum herself seeks to hasten through her work; having seen the benefits of the "politics of humanity" in recent debates over sexual orientation and constitutional law, Nussbaum insists that in our future debates over

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the family, employment, and the common good, "this politics must be enacted and reenacted in each of these areas, in each region of the country, each time a new issue comes along."[1] The rhetorical force of such a call is undeniable. Yet claiming that the politics of humanity is superior to the politics of disgust is far different from explaining the grounds of its superiority—or even what it is. What exactly then is this "politics of humanity" for which so much is being claimed?

Several possibilities present themselves. Perhaps the politics of humanity is best understood as a *humanistic* politics—a secular alternative to any one of several available political theologies. Or perhaps the politics of humanity is best understood as a politics dedicated to the preeminence of *humane values*—values of pity or compassion or respect for persons. Or perhaps the politics of humanity is simply one dedicated to recognition of our *shared humanness*—a politics grounded in those shared commonalities which make it possible to speak of our common "humanity" with others. Nussbaum herself in fact nods in each of these directions at different times; sometimes the politics of humanity is simply an alternative to a politics of disgust practiced by "large segments of the Christian Right," sometimes it is a politics founded on such other-directed values as "respect" or "love," and sometimes (indeed most often) it is a politics founded on sympathy, or the "capacity for imaginative and emotional participation in the lives of others."[2] But if in fact the politics of humanity is all of these things, how do these pieces hang together? What is it in such a politics—and in humanity in particular—that enables it to embrace all of these ends at once? For illumination, I propose to turn to arguably the most complete exposition of the politics of humanity available to us: David Hume's celebration of "humanity" as at once the proper foundation and the proper end of morality.

This essay thus has two aims. First, it seeks to advance a new understanding of the unity of Hume's project by reestablishing the centrality of humanity within it, and by emphasizing in particular the significance of his remarkable and underappreciated claim that humanity is the only sentiment on which a system of morality can be founded. This aim will particularly require attention to the connection between Hume's practical project and the epistemological insights on which his philosophical fame chiefly rests. Second, by attending to Hume's definition of humanity, and particularly his understanding of its relationship to both benevolence and sympathy, the essay aims to clarify the relationship between the principal components of the contemporary politics of humanity: secularism, other-directed values, and mutual recognition of shared similarities. To these ends, the essay proceeds in five parts. The first part examines the role of the concept of humanity in Hume's

practical philosophy in order to demonstrate its centrality to his normative project. The second part argues that humanity's centrality in this project is attributable to Hume's epistemological commitments and specifically to his appreciation of the practical implications of his theory of the association of ideas. The third part argues that his theory of associationism is also the key to understanding humanity's relationship to sympathy, and in fact offers a solution to the vexing scholarly problem of his mature substitution of humanity for sympathy. The fourth part presents Hume's definition of humanity, aiming particularly to explain how the single category of humanity could serve as both the origin and the end of morality—that is, how humanity could assume the two seemingly distinct roles of both the origin of moral distinctions (the task typically associated with sympathy) as well as the peak ethical virtue (the task typically associated with benevolence). The essay concludes by examining the significance of Hume's conception of humanity for his project as a whole and for our understanding of the contemporary politics of humanity.

Humanity: Normative Dimensions

Hume's key statement of humanity's primacy comes in the concluding section of his *Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals* (the second *Enquiry*). Yet far from an outlier, Hume's claims there are consistent with his practical philosophy more generally, which is in fact consistently animated by a normative concern to encourage the growth and spread of humanity.[3] This aim is especially evident in Hume's virtue theory. The centrality of humanity to this theory is clear from Hume's many portraits of both the best and the worst characters. These portraits tend to suggest that it is the presence or absence of humanity that determines the virtuousness or viciousness of a character. Hume introduces this claim in the *Treatise*, arguing that "no character can be more amiable and virtuous" than that of the "greatest humanity" (T 3.2.1.6).[4] He develops it further in his later writings: thus in the second *Enquiry*, the model character is introduced as a man "of honour and humanity" (EPM 9.2), Hume's portraits of ideal statesmen in the *Essays* often emphasize their prominent humanity (e.g. E 549), and his portraits of Bacon—the peak of human wisdom and virtue (E 83)—chiefly celebrate Bacon's humanity (H 4.327, 4.359, 5.86).[5] Hume's critiques of viciousness similarly focus on humanity; thus his claims that the worst heart is one "destitute of humanity or benevolence," and the viciousness of a Nero is explained as a deficiency in "sentiments of duty and humanity" (E 269; EPM App. 1.12). Even the notorious "sensible knave" and his ilk—free-riders who

discover their advantage in pursuing self-interest and disregarding justice—
are faulted for having "no relish for virtue and humanity, no sympathy with his
fellow-creatures, no desire of esteem and applause" (EPM 9.22-23; E 169).

Hume's celebration of humanity extends to his conception of civic flour-
ishing; a remarkable number of his observations on peoples and cultures
ancient and modern aim to demonstrate that humanity is "the chief character-
istic which distinguishes a civilized age from times of barbarity and igno-
rance" (E 274).[6] In this vein his *History* begins with the assumption that
ancient nations were devoid of justice and humanity (H 1.15), and his portraits
of ancient Anglo-Saxons (H 1.185) and ancient Gauls (E 206) distinguish
these rude originals from their successors explicitly on humanity's grounds.
Hume discovers a "want of humanity and of decency" moreover not simply
in barbarism's rudeness but also in the very peaks of ancient civilization
(E 246). This theme is especially pronounced in the second *Enquiry*; among
its favorite tropes is the ancient obsession with courage and bravery (e.g.,
EPM n31, 7.13, 7.15, 7.25), which necessarily must "sound a little oddly in
other nations and other ages"—and especially ours, for today we recognize
that "martial bravery" often "destroyed the sentiments of humanity; a virtue
surely much more useful and engaging" (EPM 7.13-14). And Hume even
goes a step further, reminding us that when the ancients mentioned sentimen-
talized humanity at all, they did so not to sing its praises but to warn against
its seductions (EPM App. 4.14). Humanity is indeed the fault line separating
ancients from moderns. "Among the ancients, the heroes in philosophy, as
well as those in war and patriotism, have a grandeur and force of sentiment,
which astonishes our narrow souls." Yet moderns enjoy a greater gift, even if
the ancients might have considered it "romantic and incredible": namely "the
degree of humanity, clemency, order, tranquillity, and other social virtues, to
which, in the administration of government, we have attained in modern
times" (EPM 7.18; cf. E 94).

This explicit recognition of the connection between humanity and moder-
nity on the one hand and humanity and morality on the other chiefly explains
Hume's campaign on behalf of modernity itself. And indeed not just "moder-
nity" in any abstract sense; his discussions of specific modern institutions
are, to a remarkable degree, structured around consistent and explicit argu-
ments that these institutions are preferable to their forebears on the grounds
of their superior capacity to promote humanity. Some glimpse of this is
offered in his comparison of modern and ancient educational institutions, the
former of which "instil more humanity and moderation" (E 94). But Hume's
key reflections on this front are to be found in his development of several of
his foundational political ideas, including his advocacy of commercial soci-
ety, his strategies to minimize faction, and his advocacy of post-Christian

secularism. Hume's argument on the first front begins with his belief that science and humanity have "so close a connexion" (H 2.519), and is further developed in his claim that "a serious attention to the sciences and liberal arts softens and humanizes the temper, and cherishes those fine emotions, in which true virtue and honour consists" (E 170). It reaches a peak in his claim that "*industry, knowledge,* and *humanity,* are linked together by an indissoluble chain, and are found, from experience as well as reason, to be peculiar to the more polished, and, what are commonly denominated, the more luxurious ages" (E 271). Commerce—both material and interpersonal—is thus to be welcomed for its contributions to spreading humanity.[7]

The spread of humanity is to be further welcomed for its capacity to mitigate the threats that factionalism and civil war pose to stability. In the same passage in which he distinguishes civilization from barbarism via humanity, Hume observes that among the advantages of rule by "humane maxims" rather than "rigour and severity" is that such maxims are less likely to promote rebellion: "factions are then less inveterate, revolutions less tragical, authority less severe, and seditions less frequent" (E 273-74). But humanity not only mitigates the threat of disorder from factions—it also mitigates the destabilizing potential of religion. Hume's critique of religion is notoriously complex; here we note only that several of his key distinctions of true from false religion rest on consequentialist considerations of whether a given religion promotes or inhibits humanity; thus where polytheism allows "knavery to impose on credulity, till morals and humanity be expelled from the religious systems of mankind," theism "justly prosecuted" should "banish every thing frivolous, unreasonable, or inhuman from religious worship" and thereby promote justice and benevolence (NHR 9.1; cf. DCNR 86). However critical Hume might have been of the destructive potential of enthusiasm, he consistently argues that the "proper office of religion" is the regulation of men's hearts in order to "humanize their conduct" (DCNR 82).

Humanity thus plays a crucial role in Hume's practical writings and is prominent in his normative prescriptions on a wide range of fronts. Yet it is in his moral philosophy that humanity plays its most important role. Nowhere is this import more evident than in the conclusion to the second *Enquiry*. Here Hume forthrightly tells us that it is humanity—and indeed humanity alone—that makes morality itself possible:

> The notion of morals implies some sentiment common to all mankind, which recommends the same object to general approbation, and makes every man, or most men, agree in the same opinion or decision concerning it. It also implies some sentiment, so universal and comprehensive as to extend to all mankind, and render the actions and conduct,

even of the persons the most remote, an object of applause or censure, according as they agree or disagree with that rule of right which is established. These two requisite circumstances belong alone to the sentiment of humanity here insisted on (EPM 9.5).[8]

Hume reiterates this point in the paragraph that follows. While humanity may not be as strong as the passions derived from self-love, "it can alone be the foundation of morals, or of any general system of blame or praise" (EPM 9.6). This is an arresting moment: Hume's striking pronouncement that humanity "alone" can be the foundation of morals attests to a primacy in his moral philosophy that parallels if not exceeds its primacy in his political philosophy. But all of this necessarily leads us to wonder what exactly Hume found in humanity to make it worthy of this primacy. Put differently: why exactly does Hume credit "humanity" as at once the proper foundation and the proper end of morality?

Humanity: Epistemological Dimensions

Hume in fact offers two reasons for the primacy of humanity. The first concerns his understanding of the purpose of moral philosophy itself. The second concerns the fundamental commitments of his epistemology, and particularly his conception of the limits and the capacities of human understanding.

Hume's understanding of the purpose of moral philosophy, it is generally agreed, underwent an important transformation over time—a transformation coeval, perhaps not coincidentally, with his reconsideration of the primacy of humanity itself. As many have emphasized, in the *Treatise* Hume understood himself to be an "anatomist" rather than a "painter" (T 3.3.6.6), and his well-known letter to Francis Hutcheson from the same time would seem to reaffirm that the author of the *Treatise* was mostly concerned to provide a phenomenological rather than a normative account of morality. Yet by the time he began the second *Enquiry*, Hume's aims had shifted in a decidedly more normative direction.[9] These ambitions are particularly evident in the efforts of the second *Enquiry* to respond to the "selfish system of morals" (EPM App. 2.3). The specter of the selfish system looms large throughout the second *Enquiry*; thus Hume's striking warnings regarding those men of "the most depraved disposition" who further "encourage that depravity," in claiming that "all benevolence is mere hypocrisy, friendship a cheat, public spirit a farce, fidelity a snare to procure trust and confidence" (EPM App. 2.1). Clearly Hume worries that their arguments have been widely influential, noting that even decent men, "without any bad intention," frequently "discover

a sullen incredulity" toward expressions of benevolence and public spirit, and sometimes "deny their existence and reality" (EPM 6.21; cf. 5.3). Hume's own response is to attempt to rescue "more generous motives and regards" from those detractors who insist on the "deduction of morals from self-love" (EPM 5.4-6)—an aim that requires us to "renounce the theory, which accounts for every moral sentiment by the principle of self-love" and instead "adopt a more public affection, and allow, that the interests of society are not, even on their own account, entirely indifferent to us" (EPM 5.17).

The normative overtones of such injunctions are impossible to miss, and mark an important departure from the *Treatise*. Yet this shift presents important challenges of its own. Chief among these is the question of how Hume might provide a defense of other-directedness that is consistent with the metaethical commitments of his epistemology, and particularly with his skepticism with regard to reason. The nature of Hume's skepticism has of course long been a subject of controversy among specialists, and the delineation of different strands (dogmatic, mitigated, realist, Pyrrhonian) remains a perennial exercise. Yet all conceptions of Hume's skepticism, however else they might differ, recognize that one of the principal aims of his skeptical arguments demonstrating the limits of our understanding is to check our propensity to make practical inferences from a priori or theological propositions.[10] That is, in demonstrating that the understanding is "by no means fitted for such remote and abstruse subjects" (EHU 1.12), Hume famously insists that we would do better to focus on empirical phenomena known by experience, all else being "entirely arbitrary" (EHU 4.9; cf. 11.23; EPM 2.5). But this move, so familiar to students of Hume's epistemology, has crucial implications for the normative project of the second *Enquiry*. Specifically, Hume's skepticism necessarily rendered unavailable to him most familiar alternatives to the selfish system insofar as his skepticism precluded recourse to any argument against egocentrism founded on theological or teleological commitments.[11] It is here—at the intersection of his skeptical epistemology and his normative morality—that we thus find an initial reason for Hume's insistence on humanity's primacy.[12] In the first instance, humanity presents itself as a response to the selfish system commensurate with Hume's skeptical epistemological commitments. Many have noted that among the principal aims of Hume's account of sympathy is to provide a sentimentalist alternative to theological or teleological accounts of the origin of moral distinctions.[13] Humanity is likewise clearly intended as a contribution to this same "humanistic" project.[14]

Yet this immediately raises two questions. First, if indeed humanity merely does the same work as sympathy, what exactly did Hume think he

was gaining in shifting from the emphasis on sympathy that dominates the *Treatise* to the emphasis on humanity that dominates the second *Enquiry*? Second, what relationship does humanity bear to Hume's epistemology in its totality, which of course involves much more than simply skepticism? The answer to the first of these questions ultimately depends on the answer to the second, and thus what immediately follows focuses on this latter question, leaving the former for the next section. The latter question is particularly urgent given recent reconsiderations of Hume's epistemology that have done much to show that skepticism captures only part of his intent; indeed perhaps the most significant effect of the debate over what has come to be called the "new Hume" has been to compel us to reconsider Hume's epistemology as only partly critical or negative by recalling us to the import of its more constructive or positive side.[15] Studies of this side—his naturalism as opposed to his skepticism—focus especially on its accounts of those aspects of our minds that enable us to remedy gaps in our understanding that would otherwise render impossible our practical navigation of the world. Particularly important on this front has been the debate over Hume's account of "natural belief"—that is, our necessary belief in causation, the persistence of personal identity, and the continued existence of a mind-independent external world—beliefs that Hume regards as incapable of epistemic validation but yet indispensable to our practical existence.[16] But for students of humanity, the most important mechanism of our minds is that which provides us with another set of "natural instincts," without which there would be "an end at once of all action" (EHU 5.5-8, 5.22): the association of ideas.

That Hume's doctrine of association is central to his project is clear; in his own Abstract of the *Treatise*, Hume famously identifies it as his chief invention (Abstract 35). Its significance lies chiefly in the supplement that it provides to his well-known "copy principle": the claim that ideas are merely copies of our impressions derived from our senses (T 1.1.1.7). Hume understood that such an account alone could hardly explain the existence of our many ideas that are not traceable in any direct way to experience. These ideas, he explains, are not copies of impressions but rather products of a recombination of simple ideas in the imagination. In particular, Hume identified three relations that make certain ideas particularly susceptible to this sort of association: resemblance, contiguity, and causation (T 1.1.4; EHU 3.2; Abstract 35). These three relations apply to either the relation between an idea and its object or between two ideas; thus whenever an idea and an object or two ideas are related by either similarity (resemblance), close proximity (contiguity), or seeming necessary connection (causation), Hume posits that

one will call forth the other. The significance of this discovery lies in its capacity to rescue us from the morass in which skepticism might otherwise seem to land us; Hume himself credits associationism as the source of "the only links that bind the parts of the universe together, or connect us with any person or object exterior to ourselves" (Abstract 35).

This is a striking claim, and its practical significance has not gone unnoticed. Many have particularly noted its implications for the theory of sympathy in the *Treatise*, which Hume himself explicitly accounts for in terms of associationism. Yet for all the scholarly agreement on the centrality of association in sympathy, there is considerable disagreement on the fate of association in Hume's mature ethics. Some have argued that in his later works Hume simply drops association altogether—that he "sets the hypothesis regarding association to one side" having come to see it as "problematic," or because the technical details of association simply "ceased to interest him."[17] Others have responded that his later works in fact retain a "continued general commitment to associationism," even if for various prudential reasons Hume chose not to highlight it to the same degree as he had in the *Treatise*.[18] On the grounds of evidence presented below, the latter camp seems to have the stronger case in this debate. Yet there is also reason to believe that the question on which debate to now has turned—does Hume keep or drop associationism?—fails to speak to most important question raised by his late ethics. The crucial question isn't *whether* Hume retains associationism but rather *which* associationism he retains.

The key fact here is that in the *Treatise*, sympathy involves both contiguity and resemblance, whereas in the second *Enquiry* sympathy is identified with contiguity, and humanity with resemblance.[19] In the *Treatise*, Hume presents his case in his account of how sympathy enables us to experience the affective states of others—the indispensable element in the larger process of generating moral norms in the absence of access to those foundations that Hume, as we have seen, considered epistemically unavailable. Here he particularly insists that we are necessarily more affected by what is close to us than by what lies at a distance: "the sentiments of others have little influence, when far remov'd from us, and require the relation of contiguity, to make them communicate themselves entirely" (T 2.1.11.6). He reiterates the same point elsewhere: "We sympathize more with persons contiguous to us, than with persons remote from us: With our acquaintance, than with strangers: With our countrymen, than with foreigners" (T 3.3.1.14). This leads him ultimately to observe:

> Now as every thing, that is contiguous to us, either in space or time, strikes upon us with such an idea, it has a proportional effect on the

will and passions, and commonly operates with more force than any object, that lies in a more distant and obscure light. Tho' we may be fully convinc'd, that the latter object excels the former, we are not able to regulate our actions by this judgment; but yield to the sollicitations of our passions, which always plead in favour of whatever is near and contiguous. (T 3.2.7.2; cf. 3.3.1.15, 2.3.7.3)

Clearly contiguity plays a role in sympathy—indeed a role that we can already see to be hardly unproblematic insofar as contiguity relations seem to weaken as they widen. But in the *Treatise* sympathy is generated by resemblance as well as contiguity. Thus at one place Hume accounts for the influence of pity and compassion in terms of resemblance, arguing that "we have a lively idea of every thing related to us" as "all human creatures are related to us by resemblance" (T 2.2.7.2). Elsewhere he applies this to sympathy, suggesting that it is in fact precisely our awareness of our "very remarkable resemblance" to others that "must very much contribute to make us enter into the sentiments of others" (T 2.1.11.5), a point further developed in Hume's emphasis on the "immediate sympathy, which men have with characters similar to their own" (T 3.3.3.4). Thus resemblance and contiguity each play a key role in the process of enabling us to enter into the sentiments of others in the *Treatise*—a point underscored in Hume's claim that "we must be assisted by the relations of resemblance and contiguity, in order to feel the sympathy in its full perfection" (T 2.1.11.8). But what happens to this claim in the second *Enquiry*?

From Sympathy to Humanity

In the second *Enquiry*, contiguity comes to be associated with sympathy and in fact comes to be identified as sympathy's chief disadvantage, while resemblance comes to be associated with humanity and comes to be identified as humanity's chief advantage. Hume's appreciation of this distinction, and specifically its implications for his normative project to combat the selfish system, explains his shift from sympathy to humanity, and provides an answer to the question of what exactly the later account of humanity adds to his earlier account of sympathy. A humanity associated with resemblance offers two distinct advantages to a sympathy associated with contiguity: first, it provides a means of establishing a universal or comprehensive morality that transcends the partiality endemic to *both* the selfish system *and* to systems of sympathy dependent on contiguity relations; and second, it provides a

mechanism that self-corrects for such partialities by establishing a common point of view intrinsic to humanity itself.

Hume's first important discussion of humanity in the second *Enquiry* comes in Section 5, Part 2. Hume crucially introduces this account with an account of sympathy—and specifically of sympathy's shortcomings. In this vein he claims that sympathy "is much fainter than our concern for ourselves, and sympathy with persons remote from us, much fainter than that with persons near and contiguous" (EPM 5.42). Two points here bear emphasizing. First, Hume explicitly identifies sympathy not with associationism in general here but specifically with contiguity; and second, he uses this point to illustrate not an advantage of sympathy but its weakness. Indeed, taken as a whole, the aim of this passage is to demonstrate precisely the incapacity of a sympathy tied to contiguity to forge affective bonds that transcend gaps in contiguity whether understood in terms of space (here represented by the difficulty of sympathizing with those far removed from us geographically) or in terms of time (here represented by the difficulty of sympathizing with those far removed from us historically). But this, we are reminded, is a real problem— indeed a problem that goes straight to the heart of Hume's concern to respond to the selfish system. If not to sympathy, to what can we turn to "render our sentiments more public and social"?

Humanity ends up succeeding where sympathy falls short. Thus in what follows we learn that humanity promotes "acquaintance or connexion," for "in proportion as the humanity of the person is supposed to encrease, his connexion with those who are injured or benefited, and his lively conception of their misery or happiness; his consequent censure or approbation acquires proportionable vigour" (EPM 5.43). Humanity's ability to promote such connections—and particularly connections between those far removed or noncontiguous—is an especially prominent element of Hume's second key discussion of humanity. Thus in the second *Enquiry*'s concluding section, Hume argues that when regarded from the perspective of humanity, "no character can be so remote as to be, in this light, wholly indifferent to me" (EPM 9.7), and further that "there is no circumstance of conduct in any man, provided it have a beneficial tendency, that is not agreeable to my humanity, however remote the person" (EPM 9.8). In contrast to sympathy, humanity is not at all limited by contiguity relations. Indeed this is one of the two reasons why Hume insists that humanity "alone" can be the foundation of morals: because it alone is "so universal and comprehensive as to extend to all mankind, and render the actions and conduct, even of the persons the most remote, an object of applause or censure" (EPM 9.5). Humanity is "comprehensive"—the sentiments that arise from it are universal in their scope

as they "comprehend all human creatures," even and especially the most remote (EPM 9.5, 9.7).

Humanity thus clearly succeeds where sympathy fails; where sympathy is limited by contiguity, humanity transcends gaps in contiguity and "extends to all mankind." But what then explains humanity's capacity to extend beyond the boundaries that seem to be imposed on sympathy? Hume's commitments would seem to entail that the answer lies in humanity's association with resemblance. Hume has previously insisted that the three principles of association are the "only" links that "connect us with any person or object exterior to ourselves" (Abstract 35; T 1.4.6.16; EHU 3.2). That Hume retains this view in the second *Enquiry* seems likely; certainly he never suggests that he has discovered any other principle of connection. This fact, in conjunction with his silence on causality and his explicit critique of the limits of contiguity relations, would seem to leave us with only resemblance. Hume himself earlier attested to the power of resemblance in our relations with others. Thus, the *Treatise* repeatedly notes that our perception of the world begins with "the relation of objects to ourself," since "ourself is always intimately present to us" (T 2.1.11.8; cf. 2.3.7.1, 2.1.11.4; DP 3.4). It then argues that having studied ourselves we next turn to compare others to us. What we immediately recognize is our resemblance, a process Hume explains in the first of the passages briefly noted in the previous section:

> We have a lively idea of every thing related to us. All human creatures are related to us by resemblance. Their persons, therefore, their interests, their passions, their pains and pleasures must strike upon us in a lively manner, and produce an emotion similar to the original one; since a lively idea is easily converted into an impression. (T 2.2.7.2)

Hume repeats and extends the claim in the second of the two passages noted above:

> Now 'tis obvious, that nature has preserv'd a great resemblance among all human creatures, and that we never remark any passion or principle in others, of which, in some degree or other, we may not find a parallel in ourselves. The case is the same with the fabric of the mind, as with that of the body. However the parts may differ in shape or size, their structure and composition are in general the same. There is a very remarkable resemblance, which preserves itself amidst all their variety; and this resemblance must very much contribute to make us enter

into the sentiments of others, and embrace them with facility and plea-
sure. (T 2.1.11.5)

This process explicitly described in the *Treatise* is, I think—with one crucial
caveat to be explained later—the process implicitly at work in the account of
humanity in the second *Enquiry*. For taken together, Hume's failure to revise
his claim that association relations are our "only" links to others, his explicit
insistence on the limits of contiguity sympathy in the *Enquiry*, his detailed
accounts of resemblance relations in the *Treatise*, and his very employment of
the term "humanity" to describe this process, collectively suggest that Hume
has precisely this process of reflection on the resemblance of others to our
selves implicitly in mind in arguing for humanity's superiority in the second
Enquiry. Yet the import of this association of humanity with resemblance is that
it enables humanity to be truly comprehensive in a way that sympathy cannot.
Sympathy, it is generally agreed, is a spectatorial process.[20] Hume's central
account of sympathy makes this clear: "when any affection is infus'd by sym-
pathy, it is at first known only by its effects, and by those external signs in the
countenance and conversation" (T 2.1.11.3). The sympathy process thus clearly
begins with what can be seen by the spectator or "the observation of external
signs" (T 2.1.11.4). But seeing of course requires proximity: and hence the
dependence of sympathy on contiguity, for to "please the spectator," spectators
need to be sufficiently close to actors to observe them (T 3.3.1.8). It is in this
vein that the *Treatise* emphasizes that pity "depends, in a great measure, on the
contiguity, and even sight of the object" (T 2.2.7.4). But where sympathy
requires the close proximity necessary for spectatorship, humanity is free from
dependence on contiguity precisely because resemblance relations take place
entirely in the imagination, independent of the external senses and the limits of
contiguity they entail. It is thus that Hume, whenever he offers examples of
association by resemblance, specifically emphasizes the capacity of resembling
images to make the distant or "absent" seem immediate (e.g., EHU 5.15).[21]

Humanity's first advantage over sympathy is its comprehensiveness. But
this is only one of two advantages. Humanity's superiority, Hume claims,
ultimately lies in the fact that it not only *extends* universally, but that it is also
felt universally; humanity, that is, not only embraces all but is experienced by
all. Hume makes this point repeatedly in his analysis of humanity, and indeed
does so in a language clearly indebted to his theory of resemblance. Thus
Hume strikingly insists that humanity is a sentiment "common to all man-
kind," that it generates sentiments that are "the same in all human creatures,"
and that it is "diffused, in a greater or less degree, over all men, and is the
same in all" (EPM 9.5, 9.7, 9.9). This explicit reliance on the language of

resemblance emerges most clearly in his claim that "the humanity of one man is the humanity of every one" (EPM 9.6). But Hume's emphasis on our sameness with regard to our possession of humanity only comes to be amplified when he describes the operations of humanity. For not only is humanity possessed by all and not only does it operate similarly in all, but it also recommends the same objects as valuable; thus his claim that humanity "recommends the same object to general approbation, and makes every man, or most men, agree in the same opinion or decision concerning it" (EPM 9.5). And herein lies not only humanity's clearest debt to resemblance but also its most distinctive feature: its capacity to guarantee that "the same object touches this passion in all human creatures" and thereby produce in all men "the same approbation or censure" (EPM 9.6-7).

Hume clearly recognizes the momentous import and applications of his claim. Humanity, insofar as it is uniformly experienced, and its substantive determinations of value are universally similar, is precisely what enables us to establish universal norms in a pluralistic world without necessitating recourse to those foundations that he has already judged unavailable. But humanity has a further advantage—and indeed one that again directly speaks to its superiority to sympathy. Hume consistently argues that sympathy requires a corrective by judgment, as is well known. For not only is sympathy limited in its scope and unable to extend beyond boundaries of contiguity, but within its boundaries it is prone to distort the phenomena it treats. Thus even as sympathy functions to extend us outside of ourselves and correct partialities to which self-love renders us susceptible, its dependence on contiguity can also distort our judgments of objects closest to us. Thus sympathy—originally proposed as a remedy for the partiality endemic to self-love—itself requires a remedy to ameliorate the "partiality" or "unequal affection" to which sympathy itself, when unregulated, gives rise (e.g., T 3.2.2.8, 3.2.5.8). Clearly this worries Hume: "there is no quality in human nature, which causes more fatal errors in our conduct, than that which leads us to prefer whatever is present to the distant and remote" (T 3.2.7.8). It is for this reason that the *Treatise* invokes the need for recourse to a "common point of view" that can enable us to achieve the impartiality necessary to correct the distortions to which sympathy is prone; thus, by "judgment" or "reflection" we "correct the momentary appearances of things" (see T 3.3.1.11, 3.3.1.15-18, 3.3.1.21, 3.3.1.30).[22]

All of this is present in the second *Enquiry* as well; here too we are reminded that in all instances in which we are affected by a "less lively sympathy"—and Hume has here in mind another instance involving "distant ages" and "remote nations"—we need to take recourse to that "judgment" which "corrects the inequalities of our internal emotions and perceptions"

(EPM 5.41; cf. T 3.3.3.2). But what is new here is that "reflection" is no longer the only means by which we might "correct these inequalities" (EPM n25).[23] Humanity itself plays a key role in this corrective process, and in fact provides its own specifically noncognitive route to a common point of view. Thus, Hume explains that he who would make normative judgments with which he expects others to concur must transcend his "peculiar" sentiments and "particular" circumstances; he must

> choose a point of view, common to him with others: He must move some universal principle of the human frame, and touch a string, to which all mankind have an accord and symphony. If he mean, therefore, to express, that this man possesses qualities, whose tendency is pernicious to society, he has chosen this common point of view, and has touched the principle of humanity, in which every man, in some degree, concurs. While the human heart is compounded of the same elements as at present, it will never be wholly indifferent to public good, nor entirely unaffected with the tendency of characters and manners. And though this affection of humanity may not generally be esteemed so strong as vanity or ambition, yet, being common to all men, it can alone be the foundation of morals, or of any general system of blame or praise. One man's ambition is not another's ambition; nor will the same event or object satisfy both: But the humanity of one man is the humanity of every one; and the same object touches this passion in all human creatures. (EPM 9.6)

Here again the central problem concerns how to effect a shift from a private or individual perspective to a more public or common point of view. But now the route is different. In the earlier account, achieving a "common point of view" required correction by cognition, and specifically cognition that corrects sentiments. The difficulties of squaring such with Hume's sentimentalism have long been appreciated.[24] But here Hume provides a quite different means of achieving the common point of view—and indeed one commensurate with his sentimentalism—in insisting that the common point of view is established when one is in accord with the "affection of humanity" that is itself a "universal principle of the human frame." In addition, this account of the common point of view is independent of all reference to spectators—a crucial difference from the *Treatise* account. There the common point of view without which "'tis impossible men cou'd ever agree in their sentiments and judgments" is achieved by spectators who transcend their partialities by taking on the only perspective "which might cause it to appear the same to all of

them"—the perspective of the agent, "the only interest or pleasure, which appears the same to every spectator" (T 3.3.1.30). The second *Enquiry*'s account, on the other hand, is free from any reference to spectatorship; here the "sameness" that collective deliberation in ethics requires is established not by reciprocal and reiterated intersubjective exchanges or the efforts of spectators sympathetically entering into the affective states of agents, but by the sameness that emerges from the determinations of a sentiment that is the same in all, extends to all, and recommends the same object to the approbation of all. Humanity, that is, itself provides us with a "common point of view" precisely because it is "common to all men" and generates the same judgment in all men. What this common judgment is—and indeed what humanity itself is—is the next subject to which we must turn.

Humanity, Sympathy, and Benevolence

The foregoing has sought to illuminate two of the most puzzling aspects of Hume's conception of humanity: first, what is its relationship to his epistemology and to his theory of associationism in particular; and second, what did Hume think he stood to gain in shifting from the sympathy of the *Treatise* to the humanity of the second *Enquiry*? But for all this we have yet to address the most important question regarding humanity: what exactly is it? The answer is by no means obvious. In one sense—and as we have seen—humanity is clearly aligned with sympathy. Hume himself connects the two via the coordinating conjunction in several instances (e.g., EPM 5.45, 6.3, 9.12, n60), and many scholars have regarded humanity as simply equivalent to sympathy.[25] But Hume also often couples humanity with benevolence (e.g., EPM 2.5, 5.18, 6.21, 9.20)—a fact that has led others to equate humanity with benevolence.[26] Yet this debate between the humanity-as-sympathy and the humanity-as-benevolence camps may itself benefit from a reorientation. In the end it seems clear that Hume uses the single term humanity in *both* senses; at times it clearly denotes an ethical virtue (as in the first section of this essay), at other times it clearly denotes the mechanism that gives rise to our moral distinctions (as in the essay's second and third sections). In light of this, the crucial task for interpreters is less to justify why humanity is better understood either as sympathy or as benevolence than to identify what exactly Hume thinks humanity is, and explain what about it renders humanity capable of contributing, as Hume thinks it does, to both the phenomenological or descriptive project associated with sympathy, as well as the normative or prescriptive project associated with benevolence.[27]

What then is humanity? Hume's definition is simple but subtle: humanity is our preference for the well-being of others. He presents this definition in a striking number of places across the second *Enquiry*. It is particularly evident in the concluding section. Here humanity is introduced as the most important of those "generous sentiments" that "direct the determinations of our mind, and where every thing else is equal, produce a cool preference of what is useful and serviceable to mankind, above what is pernicious and dangerous" (EPM 9.4). Humanity, that is, generates "that applause, which is paid to objects, whether inanimate, animate, or rational, if they have a tendency to promote the welfare and advantage of mankind" (EPM 9.12, cf. 9.8). In this sense, humanity is the answer to the rhetorical question implied in the title to Section 5 of the second *Enquiry* ("Why Utility Pleases"), and is distinguished as the aspect of our minds that determines us to regard the well-being of others as an end, and to bestow approbation on whatever is capable of promoting that end (T 3.3.1.9):

> How, indeed, can we suppose it possible in any one, who wears a human heart, that, if there be subjected to his censure, one character or system of conduct, which is beneficial, and another, which is pernicious, to his species or community, he will not so much as give a cool preference to the former, or ascribe to it the smallest merit or regard? Let us suppose such a person ever so selfish; let private interest have ingrossed ever so much his attention; yet in instances, where that is not concerned, he must unavoidably feel *some* propensity to the good of mankind, and make it an object of choice, if every thing else be equal. . . . We surely take into consideration the happiness and misery of others, in weighing the several motives of action, and incline to the former, where no private regards draw us to seek our own promotion or advantage by the injury of our fellow-creatures. And if the principles of humanity are capable, in many instances, of influencing our actions, they must, at all times, have *some* authority over our sentiments, and give us a general approbation of what is useful to society, and blame of what is dangerous or pernicious. (EPM 5.39)

Hume's definition of humanity is important both as a statement of what humanity is as well as what it is not. Humanity is neither an affective state that leads us to feel deeply for others, nor is it principally distinguished as a motive to action. In this sense, Hume's humanity is something very different from either pity or benevolence as they tend to be understood today. It is

certainly the case that humanity does have some resemblance to the ways in which Hume himself conceived pity and benevolence in the *Treatise*. There pity is described as "a concern for, and malice a joy in the misery of others, without any friendship or enmity to occasion this concern or joy," and benevolence "a desire of the happiness of the person belov'd, and an aversion to his misery" (T 2.2.7.1, 2.2.9.3; cf. 2.2.9.15, 2.2.6.3-4). The core of each of these—a concern for the well-being of another—is retained in humanity. But humanity conspicuously lacks the deeply affective aspects of these.[28] Humanity is rather a "natural affection," part of "the original constitution of the mind," which only establishes our "cool preference" for what is beneficial over what might be harmful to others (EPM 5.3-4, cf. 5.17, 5.39, 5.42-44, 9.4, App. 1.3). And this "cool preference" cannot be emphasized strongly enough; not only does it distinguish humanity from pity or benevolence, it also absolves Hume from a charge of gross inconsistency. In the *Treatise*, Hume insisted that there is "no such passion in human minds, as the love of mankind, merely as such" (T 3.2.1.12). But his concept of humanity revises neither this nor the related claim that "'tis seldom men heartily love what lies at a distance from them" (T 3.3.1.18). For while Hume most certainly means to insist that humanity leads us to be concerned with others, this concern is consistently expressed as a matter of "cool preference," far different from the warmth that animates love.[29] In this sense, humanity occupies a unique place among the other-directed or social virtues. It shares with other social virtues a concern with the well-being of others. Yet it can neither be assimilated to the sentimentalized social virtues associated with feeling appropriately (e.g., compassion, benevolence, and pity) nor to those active social virtues associated with acting well (e.g., generosity, liberality, and beneficence). Humanity occupies a different place altogether; rather than prompting affect or action, it serves as a determining ground that establishes social ends and actions as preferable to selfish ones.

Humanity is thus neither pity nor benevolence nor love. But neither is it simply sympathy. Sympathy, as we know, is first and foremost a form of "communication" (T 2.2.7.5, 2.2.9.13, 2.3.6.8, 3.3.1.7).[30] Specifically, it is that form of communication that enables us, in our relations with others, to "receive by communication their inclinations and sentiments" and thereby "enter into" their affective states (T 2.1.11.2, 2.2.5.14-15). Humanity, however, is defined without reference to those forms of communication that establish the sort of intimate identification that produces deep affective bonds. Thus in sharp contrast to the *Treatise*, which emphasizes how sympathy enables us to "enter so deep" into the feelings of others (T 2.1.11.7), in the second *Enquiry*, humanity is defined in quite different terms—not as the

process that enables us to enter into the perspectives of others in order to feel their pain or partake in their suffering, but one that does nothing more (and nothing less) than to produce a decidedly "cool" or unemotional preference for the well-being of others. This preference, moreover, is established without any intimate knowledge of the particular situation of another; we are rather led by humanity to prefer that other human beings be benefited rather than harmed, no matter how distant they are from us and no matter how little we know of their conditions.[31]

Those partial to affective imaginative identification with others will find Hume's turn from sympathy to humanity disappointing. But Hume himself regards this turn as a significant move forward, and it is important to see why. Hume knows well that the process of sympathy described in the *Treatise* asks a great deal of spectators. First, the account itself relied on a complex and perhaps too-clever-by-half account of infusion via the spectator's conversion of original impressions into ideas into secondary impressions to form the foundation of moral distinctions (T 2.1.11.3). But more importantly it would require ordinary moral agents also to develop an acute degree of sensibility. The account of humanity in the second *Enquiry* asks for much less by comparison. First, it locates our concern for others not as a result of intersubjective processes but as a consequence of an "original" or "antecedent" principle of "our nature" (EPM n19, 5.46; T 3.2.1.6). In this sense, far from requiring intersubjectivity for the generation of moral distinctions, the determining ground of these distinctions is established by the ordinary operations of our nature. Thus where the turn to sympathy had previously been justified as necessary in light of the unavailability of certain foundations, in locating this "cool preference" in "our nature," Hume points to a very different origin for moral distinctions.[32]

Humanity conceived as a "cool preference" also has a second advantage insofar as it demands only that affective level of concern for others that is accessible to most human beings. Hume repeatedly insists in this vein that humanity is a minimal disposition that asks its possessor only to prefer that others be benefited rather than harmed in only those instances in which all else is equal and in which self-interest is not at stake. And herein lies perhaps the most striking feature of his account. His argument for humanity as the only sentiment on which a moral system can be founded is itself founded on the striking claim that humanity extends to all and is felt by all. But what may be most remarkable about humanity is how little it in fact demands of us, for while its strength is exercised in its collective operations, unto itself it is "somewhat small and delicate"—indeed "weak" and "faint" (EPM 9.9, 9.4). Yet it is Hume's aim to show that it is precisely this minimal effect on us

individually that makes it capable of its maximum collective effect. Indeed ultimately it is not by sympathy or imagination but by "universal principles" that "arise from humanity" that "the particular sentiments of self-love [are] frequently controuled and limited" (EPM 9.8).[33]

Conclusion

Humanity, understood as a cool preference for the well-being of others, is thus a third category, substantively independent of both benevolence and sympathy but capable of contributing to each of the projects with which they are commonly associated. In determining our preference that others be benefited, it lays a foundation for our approval—and ultimately our practice—of those social virtues that work to promote the well-being of others. And in generating a universal preference for the well-being of others, humanity provides a foundation for our collective construction of norms. Humanity thus regarded plays a crucial role in the projects of both benevolence and sympathy. But in addition to clarifying the reasons behind Hume's conception of humanity's significance, attending to his theory of humanity has two further benefits: first, doing so helps clarify how we ought to characterize Hume's ethics as a whole; and second, doing so helps clarify what exactly is at stake in the contemporary call for a renewed "politics of humanity."

With regard to Hume, attending to his theory of humanity can help us clarify how we might characterize his ethics on two fronts. The first concerns the tension between his reputation as a human nature theorist and his reputation as a theorist of intersubjectivity. Many students of Hume have taken him to have founded his political theory on his vision of "the constant and universal principles of human nature" that form the foundation of his "science of man" (EHU 8.7, T Intro 6-10).[34] Others have understood Hume's project quite differently, emphasizing less his claims on behalf of a universal human nature than his claim that it is the "intercourse of sentiments" in intersubjective social interaction that produces that "general unalterable standard" by which we judge what is properly praised or blamed (EPM 5.42).[35] But how are these two readings—each of which captures some crucial side of Hume's project—to be reconciled? It is precisely here that we see one of the greatest benefits of attending to his theory of humanity. Reestablishing humanity as central to his project not only does justice to Hume's own intentions, but it provides an alternative to both the thoroughgoing naturalistic and the thoroughgoing constructivist readings of his project. For while it is clear that Hume, in his mature ethics, hardly denies the influence of intersubjective and reciprocal exchanges of approbation and disapprobation in shaping norms, by

privileging the "original principle" of humanity as the foundation of morality Hume establishes a standard by which the moral effects of intersubjective processes can themselves be judged.

Attending to Hume's theory of humanity also helps resolve a second dichotomy. Hume is still frequently celebrated today as the architect of a positivistic social science; on the basis of both his famous distinction between "is" and "ought" and his debate with Hutcheson, Hume has been regarded as principally dedicated to articulating a descriptive or phenomenological social science free of normative injunction.[36] Yet this is difficult to square with the second *Enquiry*, which argues that "the end of all moral speculations is to teach us our duty," and concludes with Hume's hope that his work will "contribute to the amendment of men's lives, and their improvement in morality and social virtue" (EPM 1.7, 9.14). In light of such, other interpreters have emphasized that his aims are at once normative as well as descriptive.[37] Attending to his theory of humanity, I have sought to show, provides further support for this view. By grounding his system in a sentiment that both accounts for the origins of judgment (i.e., which promotes the phenomenological aims of sympathy) and establishes a "rule of right" in the form of an attachment to "public good" (i.e., which promotes the normative aims of benevolence), Hume argues that these two projects are neither discrete nor incompatible.

Attending to Hume's theory of humanity thus has great potential payoffs for our understanding of Hume himself. Yet it can also do much to illuminate what is at stake in the contemporary call for a renewed "politics of humanity." In particular, by attending to Hume's vision of a politics of humanity we can better understand the ties that connect the three principal elements of such a politics: humanism, humane values, and "humanness." In Hume's theory, as we have seen, the primacy of humanity first emerges as a response to the unavailability of certainty in matters extending beyond experience; humanity, that is, is conceived as a necessarily "humanist" response to the epistemic unavailability of categories needed for a political theology or a teleological politics. Further, the specific form of humanity to which Hume turns— humanity defined as a preference for the well-being of others—establishes the grounds of our preference for the socially beneficial or humane over the socially destructive or selfish. And insofar as this humanity is shared by all and extends to all human beings connected to us by resemblance, it at once serves to connect human beings universally and define what it is that connects us. Taken as a whole, Hume's vision of a politics of humanity thus establishes a minimal ground for the ethics of a secular age—a minimalism in the realm of social values that complements and parallels the more familiar

minimalism associated with liberal theories of procedural justice. Equally important is that Hume's theory also brings into relief the challenges of the contemporary call for a "politics of humanity." Nussbaum's politics of humanity, as we have seen, not only calls for a level of emotional intimacy with strangers she labels "love" but also for a "transformation at the level of the human heart" leading to "deep social transformations."[38] And it is here that Hume and the contemporary politics of humanity part ways. Hume's theory of humanity is less concerned to effect the social change that a politics of love envisions than to achieve a decidedly more realist (and in Hume's mind more pressing) aim: to set forth a response to the selfish system that is at once consistent with his epistemological commitments yet sufficiently robust to preserve what is best in modernity from degenerating into egocentrism. In so doing he illuminates the true promise of a politics of humanity—a promise well captured by Deleuze in his account of Hume's "true morality": "It does not involve the change of human nature but the invention of artificial and objective conditions in order for the bad aspects of this nature not to triumph."[39]

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Notes

1. Nussbaum, *From Disgust to Humanity: Sexual Orientation and Constitutional Law* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), xix-xx.

2. See Nussbaum, *From Disgust to Humanity*, xiv-xxiii, 47-51, 204-209.

3. The role of humanity in Hume, and especially in its normative role, has been largely underemphasized by commentators; important exceptions include Andrew Sabl, "Noble Infirmity: Love of Fame in Hume," *Political Theory* 34 (2006): 548; Scott Yenor, "Revealed Religion and the Politics of Humanity in Hume's Philosophy of Common Life," *Polity* 38 (2006): esp. 405-412; Jacqueline Taylor, "Humean Humanity versus Hate," in *The Practice of Virtue*, ed. Jennifer Welchman (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2006), 182-203; and Robert Shaver, "Hume on the Duties of Humanity," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 30 (1992): 545-56. Taylor (182, 196-99) and Shaver (545-46, 552-55) are especially helpful in presenting humanity as a supplement to justice that sensitizes us to cruelty and promotes social stability in a way that procedural liberalism alone cannot.

4. Citations take the following abbreviations: Abstract = Abstract of the *Treatise*, in T; DCNR = *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, ed. Richard H. Popkin (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1980); DP = *Dissertation on the Passions*, ed. Tom L. Beauchamp (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2007); E = *Essays, Moral, Political, and Literary*, ed. Eugene F. Miller (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1985); EHU = *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Beauchamp (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000); EPM = *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*, ed. Beauchamp (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998); H = *The History of England*, ed. William B. Todd, 6 vols. (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1983); NHR = *Natural History of Religion*, ed. Beauchamp (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2007); T = *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. David F. Norton and Mary J. Norton (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2007). Clarendon references are to section and paragraph number; other references are to pages. In some instances Hume's original italics have not been retained.

5. See also Shaver, "Hume on Duties," 546-47, which also helpfully notes that humanity provides a "check" on exploitation of the weak. Eric Schliesser provides an illuminating account of the evolution of Hume's views on Bacon in his manuscript "The Science of Man and the Invention of Usable Traditions."

6. For this claim, see Neil McArthur, *David Hume's Political Theory: Law, Commerce, and the Constitution of Government* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 8, 18; Sharon R. Krause, "Hume and the (False) Luster of Justice," *Political Theory* 32 (2004): 636-37; Taylor, "Hume's Later Moral Philosophy," in *The Cambridge Companion to Hume*, ed. David Fate Norton and Taylor, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 338-39; and Yenor, "Revealed Religion," 410.

7. See Yenor's excellent account of how "the ethic of humanity, among its other meanings, implies sufficiency and comfort in an entirely human world" ("Revealed Religion," 408-411; quote at 409). On how commerce promotes these ideals, see

Christopher J. Berry, "Hume and the Customary Causes of Industry, Knowledge, and Humanity," *History of Political Economy* 38 (2006): 291-317.

8. Hume's description of humanity as a "sentiment" is striking. While consistent with his accounts of humanity elsewhere (e.g., T 3.2.5.6; EPM 7.14) and with his tendency to regard virtue as a sentiment or quality of mind (T 3.1.1.26, 3.1.2.3), it departs from traditional understandings of humanity and stands in particular tension with Cicero's understanding of humanity as the cultivation or perfection of our natures; in this vein see the discussion of *humanitas* as embracing both *philanthropia* and *paideia* in M. L. Clarke, *The Roman Mind* (London: Cohen and West, 1956), 135-45. As a consequence of this shift, Hume occupies a key transitional point between the classical focus on the individual character virtues and the modern focus on social sentiments or values.

9. On this shift, see esp. James Fieser, "Is Hume a Moral Skeptic?" *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 50 (1989): 95-96; Kate Abramson, "Sympathy and the Project of Hume's Second *Enquiry*," *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 83 (2000): esp. 49, 64-66, 71; James Moore, "Utility and Humanity: The Quest for the *Honestum* in Cicero, Hutcheson, and Hume," *Utilitas* 14 (2002): 379-80; and Annette C. Baier, "*Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*: Incomparably the Best?" in *A Companion to Hume*, ed. Elizabeth S. Radcliffe (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008), 293-320.

10. Several studies examine Hume's aims to combat religion via a skepticism culminating in secularism; see e.g. Jennifer A. Herdt, *Religion and Faction in Hume's Moral Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Michael B. Gill, *The British Moralists on Human Nature and the Birth of Secular Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), esp. 205-208; and John Rawls, *Lectures on the History of Moral Philosophy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 12-14. This is particularly well expressed in Yenor's claim that Hume "endorses the revolutionary aspiration of making God obsolete" ("Revealed Religion," 405; cf. 398, 407-408, 413); and Aryeh Botwinick's account of Hume's "separate peace" with religion (*Ethics, Politics and Epistemology: A Study in the Unity of Hume's Thought* [Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1980], 170-71). These studies have emerged in tandem with a renewed emphasis on Hume's Hobbesianism; see Stephen Buckle, "Hume in the Enlightenment Tradition," in *Companion to Hume*, 33-34; Russell Hardin, *David Hume: Moral and Political Theorist* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), esp. 2, 6-7, 23, 212-24; and Paul Russell, *The Riddle of Hume's* Treatise*: Skepticism, Naturalism, and Irreligion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), esp. 61-69.

11. The distance of Hume's ethics from Christian ethics is well established; see e.g. Baier's description of EPM as "anti-Christian manifesto" ("Incomparably the Best," 298, 309, 311, 314-15; quote at 315). Hume's relationship to ancient

systems is more complex. They are often sympathetically compared; see e.g. Moore, "Utility and Humanity," 365-86 (which identifies Hume's humanity with Cicero's *honestum* at 385-86); Peter Jones, *Hume's Sentiments: Their Ciceronian and French Context* (Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh Press, 1982); and John W. Danford, *David Hume and the Problem of Reason* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 161. But others offer reasons to question this association; see esp. Krause, who notes that Hume frequently employs the language of the noble and praiseworthy as if they are unproblematic (e.g. EPM 1.7, 5.3, 8.7), yet his ambition to incorporate the noble "within the confines of his empiricist method" faces a challenge as it "uses the language of nobility and elevation while rejecting the framework of independent value that had once given it meaning"—leading Krause rightly to wonder "what could Hume mean by the perfection of the man, given the empiricist, antiteleological character of his moral science?" ("Hume and Justice," 629, 635, 645-646).

12. In this sense, attending to the role of humanity provides further reasons to think Hume's practical philosophy is inseparable from his epistemology—a view helpfully developed by Botwinick (*Ethics, Politics and Epistemology*, esp. 85), though recently challenged by McArthur (*Hume's Political Theory*, esp. 5).

13. An excellent discussion of sympathy's role as a nonfoundational alternative to theologically grounded systems is offered in Herdt, *Religion and Faction*, esp. 2, 58-60, 80-81. In a similar vein, see the discussion of sympathy as a substitute for the civic relations of neo-Aristotelian civic humanism in Christopher J. Finlay, *Hume's Social Philosophy: Human Nature and Commercial Sociability in* A Treatise of Human Nature (London: Continuum, 2007), 105ff; and the discussion of justice as a mediator between relativism and teleology in Krause, "Hume and Justice," 647.

14. See e.g. Carl Becker, who regards Hume as "representative of his century," sharing its attachment to "*bienfaisance, humanité*"—words coined "to express in secular terms the Christian ideal of service" (*The Heavenly City of the Eighteenth-Century Philosophers* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1932], 39, cf. 40-41, 130); see also Clifford Orwin, "Montesquieu's Humanité and Rousseau's Pitié," in *Montesquieu and His Legacy*, ed. Rebecca E. Kingston (Albany: SUNY Press, 2009), 141, 146.

15. For an introduction, see esp. Rupert Read and Kenneth A. Richman, eds., *The New Hume Debate* (London: Routledge, 2007).

16. Kemp Smith is commonly credited with reawakening interest in the role of natural belief in Hume; see *The Philosophy of David Hume* (London: Macmillan, 1941), 443-58.

17. Taylor, "Hume's Later Moral Philosophy," 315, 319-22; Terence Penelhum, "Hume's Moral Psychology," in *Cambridge Companion*, 242; see also Nicholas Capaldi, *David Hume: The Newtonian Philosopher* (Boston: Twayne, 1975), 179.

18. See esp. Remy Debes, "Has Anything Changed? Hume's Theory of Association and Sympathy after the *Treatise*," *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 15 (2007): esp. 314-15, 325, 330; and Abramson, "Sympathy and the Project," 71, 78-80.

19. It should be said that Hume is not indifferent to the role of causality (e.g. T 2.1.11.6), but this is not emphasized in the second *Enquiry*.

20. See e.g. Abramson, "Sympathy and Hume's Spectator-centered Theory of Virtue," in *Companion to Hume*, esp. 240.

21. Botwinick rightly notes that Hume fails to recognize explicitly the limits of a spectatorial ethics (*Ethics, Politics and Epistemology*, 165-66), yet his substitution of humanity for sympathy may well testify precisely to such an awareness.

22. See esp. Rachel Cohon, "The Common Point of View in Hume's Ethics," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 57 (1997): 829-33; and Charlotte R. Brown, "Hume on Moral Rationalism, Sentimentalism, and Sympathy," in *Companion to Hume*, 234-38.

23. The parallels between the *Treatise* account and the EPM account are very nicely traced in Debes, "Has Anything Changed?" 318-22; see also Abramson's helpful account of how Hume sought to create "safeguards for the intersubjectivity of our moral sentiments" ("Sympathy and the Project," 54-55; and Debes, "Humanity, Sympathy and the Puzzle of Hume's Second *Enquiry*," *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 15 (2007): 39-40). I differ from Abramson in thinking that Hume's retention of the language of the moral point of view can testify only to his continued engagement with the problem of partiality, and cannot establish that Hume regarded sympathy as the only—or even the best—solution to it.

24. For an important effort at such, see Cohon, "Common Point of View," esp. 828, 833; though cf. EPM n24.

25. Among political theorists, the most prominent defender of this view is Rawls (see *Lectures*, 101-102); cf. Abramson's claim that the second *Enquiry*'s "'principle of humanity'" is "shorthand for the imaginative process described explicitly in the *Treatise*, and there named 'extensive sympathy,'" ("Sympathy and the Project," 55; cf. 78); Rico Vitz, "Sympathy and Benevolence in Hume's Moral Psychology," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 42 (2004): 262-63, 271-72; Baier, "Incomparably the Best," 307, 309-10.

26. See e.g. David Wiggins, *Ethics: Twelve Lectures on the Philosophy of Morality* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), 107; and McArthur, *Hume's Political Theory*, 8, 17; cf. Herdt, *Religion and Faction*, 75-77; Shaver, "Hume on Duties," 546; Capaldi, *Hume*, 182-84; cf. 180. Taylor seems closest to the mark in noting that Hume uses the terms *humanity, general benevolence,* and *sympathy* at various times "to refer to the capacity that explains why we tend to be pleased by others' happiness or pained by their misery" ("Hume's Later Moral Philosophy," 319). Among the most important treatments in this vein is that of Debes, which

begins with the observation in the second *Enquiry* that there is an "equivalence" between benevolence and humanity ("Humanity, Sympathy and the Puzzle," 29) but goes on to demonstrate the significance of the distinction between the principle of humanity and the sentiment of humanity, and also provides an insightful analysis of both benevolence and humanity as species of "cool preference" (31-32).

27. Doing so may also help to mitigate the common complaint that Hume's use of terms is imprecise or even "sloppy" (Baier, "Incomparably the Best," 309; Taylor, "Hume's Later Moral Philosophy," 323; Debes, "Humanity, Sympathy and the Puzzle," 29; Vitz, "Sympathy and Benevolence," 261, 272). It may also shift debate away from distinguishing the "principle of humanity" from the "sentiment of humanity"; see, e.g., Debes, "Humanity, Sympathy and the Puzzle," 32. Hume is, I think, quite conscious of what is at stake in applying a single category to both normative and descriptive phenomena, and his decision to do so requires us to account for his intention in so doing (cf. Debes, "Humanity, Sympathy and the Puzzle," 41).

28. In this sense, humanity seems less a principle "by which a person desires to give aid to others" (Vitz, "Sympathy and Benevolence," 271) than one with "little coercive force," which "need not lead to any intentions or action" (Baier, "Incomparably the Best," 309-10). Insofar as he emphasizes humanity's coolness, Hume also seems to draw back from the view that humanity is a sense of commonality "which makes us respond emotionally at least, if not with action, to the situations and emotional experiences of others" (Taylor, "Humean Humanity versus Hate," 192).

29. Vitz rightly calls attention to humanity as an original principle ("Sympathy and Benevolence," 263, 271; cf. Taylor, "Hume's Later Moral Philosophy," 321; Debes, "Humanity, Sympathy and the Puzzle," 52), yet humanity needs to be explicitly distanced from love insofar as love requires more than the recognition of resemblance (cf. Vitz, "Hume and the Limits of Benevolence," *Hume Studies* 28 [2002]: 279). This "minimal" conception of humanity may also serve to defend Hume from the charge that his shift from sympathy is a "retreat" to an "uncharacteristic idealism" (Krause, "Hume and Justice," 642).

30. On sympathy as communication, see David Owen, "Hume and the Mechanics of Mind: Impressions, Ideas, and Association," in *Cambridge Companion*, 89-92; and James Farr, "Hume, Hermeneutics, and History: A 'Sympathetic' Account," *History and Theory* 17 (1978): 289-99, 306-7; see also Capaldi's claim that "to reject sympathy is to reject the importance of the communication of vivacity as the connecting link of the three books of the *Treatise*" (*Hume*, 185).

31. Hume's caveats that we prefer that others be benefited rather than harmed only when "everything else is equal" and we are free of all "private regards" and "particular bias" (EPM 9.4; 5.39; 5.43) must be here remembered lest his theory of

humanity be thought inconsistent with his conceptions of the relationship of self-interest to concern for others expressed elsewhere (e.g., T 2.3.3.6).

32. On these grounds I question the "no-change" hypothesis emphasizing continuity between sympathy in T and humanity in EPM; see Debes, "Has Anything Changed?" 314-15; Abramson "Sympathy and the Project," 48, 53, 55; Vitz, "Sympathy and Benevolence," 268, 274; Vitz, "Hume and the Limits of Benevolence," 286-87. So too I would question the suggestion that humanity in the EPM is a retreat from or attenuation of the theory of sympathy in T (see, e.g., Rawls, *Lectures*, 101-102; Selby-Bigge's introduction to his edition of the *Enquiries*, xxv-xxvii; and cf. John B. Stewart, *The Moral and Political Philosophy of David Hume* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963), 331).

33. Here lies my difference with Debes, who argues that humanity is "fundamentally dependent on sympathy" and indeed requires sympathy to "activate" it ("Humanity, Sympathy and the Puzzle," 28, 35, 40-41, 46, 52-54, 56), and that "no notion of humanity as a concern for others merely as such *could* exist in the *Enquiry*," for "any actual concern for another's well-being is instead necessarily mediated by sympathetic representation" (47). I agree that adding sympathy to humanity enlivens it, just as it would any other form of association (see e.g. T 1.3.9.6; Vitz, "Hume and Limits of Benevolence," 271). At the same time, the process by which humanity is expressed—a process in which intersubjectivity and enlivening by sympathy are indeed instrumental—is, I think, practically and conceptually distinct from the grounds on which humanity's authority is established. Yet on this front, others have wondered whether Hume's effort "to ground the moral in the natural" in his account of humanity isn't "fundamentally question-begging." In one sense this seems right; the absence of a metaphysical defense of humanity's naturalness indeed raises the question of the extent to which Hume's account is "a genuine advance in a theoretical account of the origin of moral distinctions *qua* moral" (Herdt, *Religion and Faction*, 77-78). At the same time, Hume's defense of humanity's superiority ultimately seems to be conceived on practical rather than metaphysical grounds—that is, on the grounds of the accessibility and reliability that is the consequence of its substantive minimalism, and which, together with its comprehensiveness and universality, distinguish it as a chief ally in the political project of mitigating egotism.

34. Representative and particularly useful is Berry, "Hume's Universalism: The Science of Man and the Anthropological Point of View," *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 15 (2007): 535-50, esp. 538ff; see also Beauchamp's claim that "morality, for Hume, is contingent on human nature, which alone is the source of moral universality" ("The Sources of Normativity in Hume's Moral Theory," in *Companion to Hume*, 493).

35. See, e.g., Abramson, "Sympathy and the Project," 52-53.

36. Most recently, Hardin has argued that Hume is a "proto-social scientist" with no substantive moral theory whatsoever (*Hume: Moral and Political Theorist*, 3, 6, 23-28, 53, 125, 171, 209, 230).

37. See, e.g., Finlay, *Hume's Social Philosophy*, 5; Krause, "Hume and Justice," 629-31, 634; Penelhum, "Hume's Moral Psychology," 267-68.

38. Nussbaum, *From Disgust to Humanity*, xx.

39. Gilles Deleuze, *Empiricism and Subjectivity: An Essay on Hume's Theory of Human Nature*, trans. Constantin V. Boundas (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 50.

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