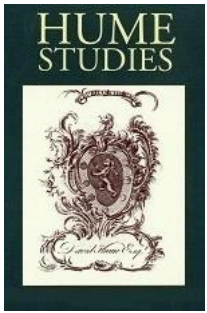

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Abstract: Hume refers to women as imaginative, compassionate, conversable, and delicate. While his appraisals of women seem disparate, I argue that they reflect a position about the distinctive role that Hume takes women to have in shaping and enforcing moral norms. On his view, I maintain, women provide us with the ideal model of a moral judge. I claim that Hume sees a tight connection between moral competency and those traits he identifies as feminine. Making this case requires clarifying a few concepts in Hume's philosophical toolbox and their relation to one another. The primary quality of a good moral judge, according to Hume, is a delicacy of taste. I show that Hume thinks of delicacy as a feminine skill that can only be developed in men imperfectly, thereby making women the ideal moral judges.

Introduction

Throughout Hume's writings, he offhandedly refers to women as imaginative, sympathetic, compassionate, conversable, and delicate. While his appraisals seem disjointed, I argue that they reflect a position about the *distinctive role* that Hume takes women to have in moral matters. On his view, I argue, women provide us with the ideal model of a moral judge. The evidence for this interpretation lies in the fact that Hume sees a tight connection between moral competency and those character traits he identifies as feminine. Making this case requires clarifying a

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few concepts in Hume's toolbox—compassion, delicacy, and conversability—and their relation to one another.

The primary quality of a good moral judge, for Hume, is their having a *delicate taste*. Hume first introduces this concept in the essay, "Of the Delicacy of Taste and Passion." He claims that "Some People are subject to a certain delicacy of *passion*, which . . . gives them a lively joy upon every event, as well as piercing grief, when they meet with misfortunes and adversity" (*Essays*, 3).[2] In contrast, Hume notes that one who has a delicate taste is sensitive to "beauty and deformity of every kind" (*Essays*, 4). There are two components of a delicate taste: first, the ability to make fine-grained distinctions about character traits and conduct; second, the capacity to experience emotions that are inaccessible to most others.[3] For Hume, delicate passions crowd out malice, contempt, and other violent passions corrosive to civil society. Throughout this paper, I argue that Hume thinks of delicacy as a *distinctly feminine* trait that can only be developed in men imperfectly, thereby making women the ideal moral judges.[4]

While scholars have identified aspects of feminism in Hume's writings, few have commented on his general view of women and how it relates to his moral theory. Concerns about Hume's view of women typically take two forms. First, he writes about women having constitutional flaws. Some of these flaws are uninteresting, like bodily strength; others, such as the susceptibility to the "amorous passion" are a bit more troubling (*Essays*, 565). Second, Hume seems committed to gender essentialism, which is problematic on its face and at odds with the character of his science of human nature. I will end this paper by suggesting a response to concerns about gender essentialism in Hume's work.

The paper is divided into four sections. In the first section, I examine the relation between Hume's analysis of compassion, imagination, and sympathy and how it connects to the idea of *moral openness*. In the second section, I consider Hume's discussion of *delicacy* and refinement as it relates to Hume's idea that women possess a "delicacy of taste" that renders them authorities in moral judgment (*Essays*, 3–8). In the third section, I explore how these qualities of moral openness and delicacy connect to Hume's claim that women are *conversable* and then consider the role that conversation plays in moral judgment (*Essays*, 535). In the final section, I consider some limitations of Hume's view of women.

Moral Openness: Imagination, Sympathy, Compassion

In this section, I argue that Hume sees women as being distinctively open to the pleasures and pains of others; this openness serves as the foundation of their delicacy, which allows them to be sophisticated moral judges. I begin by examining Hume's accounts of compassion, sympathy, and imagination and how they relate to one another. I then turn to consider the way in which Hume sees women as

distinctively *compassionate*, *sympathetic*, and *imaginative*. This discussion serves as the basis of sections II and III, which concern Hume's view of women as delicate and as conversable.

In *A Treatise of Human Nature*, Hume introduces compassion in his analysis of love and hatred.[5] Love is a pleasant sensation directed at another person, while hatred is an unpleasant sensation similarly directed (T 2.2.1.6; SBN 331).[6] Importantly, love and hatred are always *blended* with desires: "Love is always follow'd by a desire of the happiness of the person belov'd, and an aversion to his misery: As hatred produces a desire of the misery and an aversion to the happiness of the person hated" (T 2.2.6.3; SBN 367). Hume refers to the latter desire as anger and the former as benevolence. Though benevolence is a natural product of love, it "may be counterfeited on many occasions, and may arise from secondary principles" (T 2.2.7.1; SBN 369). Hume then points to the tendency of benevolence to arise from compassion, noting that we "pity even strangers, and such as are perfectly indifferent to us," and points to our propensity to feel compassion for tragic characters and historical figures (ibid.).

Hume appeals to our sympathetic capacity to explain the connection between benevolence and compassion: "We have a lively idea of every thing related to us. All human creatures are related to us by resemblance . . . 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; SBN 369). At its most basic level, sympathy is the process by which ideas are translated into impressions (T 2.1.11.8; SBN 320). The imagination accounts for this translation, as noted in Hume's discussion of why we esteem the rich and powerful. We imagine and partake in the pleasure brought forth by wealth (T 2.2.5.5; SBN 359). The imagination operates based on a general rule which states that the *possession of wealth affords one more opportunity for pleasure* (T 2.2.7.5; SBN 370). Our sympathy with the pleasure of another is always imperfect, especially if they are relatively similar to us. In these cases, we compare ourselves with the successful individual and experience envy or even malice towards them (T 2.2.8.12; SBN 377).[7]

Comparison threatens our ability to partake in the pleasure of others. According to Hume, the most "compleat sympathy" takes place with compassion, where we witness another person suffering (T 2.2.9.18; SBN 388). Though the idea of another's pain "augment[s] the idea of our own happiness," he claims that it is impossible for it to give us pleasure—any pleasure we feel comes from the recognition of our own happiness (T 2.2.8.9; SBN 376). Witnessing the pain of another person gives rise to compassion and to benevolence; we are satisfied by our lack of suffering but pity the other on account of her misfortune. For Hume, our compassion-produced-sympathy breaks down the tendency to compare ourselves with others. Let us take stock: compassion is a species of benevolence produced by sympathizing with the pain of another person. The more one can sympathize

with another, the greater compassion one feels when confronted with suffering. A "compleat" sympathetic person is less prone to comparison and is therefore less liable to experience envy or malice, at least when another's pain is at stake.[8]

Hume's account of sympathy is often viewed as overly mechanistic and its connection to the moral emotions is seen as tenuous.[9] The root of this concern is that reason seems to play little role in how sympathy functions. Because of this lack of intersection with rational thought, sympathy can be easily overridden by countervailing passions. Hume even refers to sympathy as "limited" and "weak" (T 2.2.9.15; SBN 387). But this criticism fails to appreciate the role that Hume gives sympathy in his moral theory. Regarding the automaticity of sympathy, there are two responses. First, because sympathy functions automatically, in some sense, it is less subject to manipulation. Consider the defense of vivisection that Descartes offers: animals are machines and are therefore unable to feel pain. We can assume that when Descartes—apocryphally—nailed his wife's dog to a board and carried out a vivisection to prove that it could not feel pain, that the dog's screams were registered by Descartes's sympathetic mechanism but subsequently blocked by his belief that the dog was little more than a complicated clock.

Second, because the pleasures and pains of humans and non-human animals are equally registered by the sympathetic mechanism, bias plays less of a ground-level role in its functioning. We might worry that sympathy is impersonal in this regard, not relying on particular features of its object. I argue that the impersonality of sympathy is a strength of Hume's view, since it levels any arbitrary differences between objects that might unduly impact our judgment. Once leveled, we can replace our uncultivated judgments with those which result from conversation (more about this topic in section III). In Hume's view, the role of sympathy is to help quiet those uncivil parts of ourselves. Central to its success is that we allow the imagination to take us outside of ourselves, to focus on the experiences of others. We can begin to see how Hume views the connection between compassion, sympathy, and imagination—let us now turn to discussion of his comments on women in this context.

Hume claims that "women and children are most subject to pity, as being most guided by that faculty" (T 2.2.7.4). One might think "that faculty" refers to pity. But consider the larger context: "add to this, that pity depends, in a great measure, on the contiguity, and even sight of the object; which is a proof, that 'tis derived from the imagination . . . women and children are most subject to pity, as being most guided by that faculty" (ibid.). Here, "that faculty," refers to the imagination. For Hume, women are compassionate because their imagination exercises greater influence over them. He distinguishes imagination from memory on account of its tendency to take us outside of ourselves: "the imagination is not restrain'd to the same order and form with the original impressions; while the memory is in a manner ty'd down in that respect, without any power of variation" (T 1.1.3.2;

SBN 9). Since, for Hume, women possess a greater imagination, they are more likely to be taken outside themselves and are therefore more likely to be sensitive to the pleasures and pains of others.

What is morally significant about this sensitivity? First, increased compassion and imagination block contempt and malice. Contempt is a mixture of pride, anger, and hatred, whereby one sees the object of contempt as possessing unsavory qualities and being *below oneself* in some way (T 2.2.10.3; SBN 390).[10] Though contempt is not directly responsible for action, Hume notes that "anger and hatred bestow a new force on all our thoughts and actions" (T 2.2.10.6; SBN 391). Contempt puts one in a position to act violently towards others. Malice also includes a comparative element, though it goes beyond contempt in producing desires to harm others for the purpose of bringing pleasure to oneself (T 2.2.8.11; SBN 376). Compassion dismantles these barriers that comparison puts up between us and our fellow beings, which can block motives that we have to harm them.[11] While humans are always susceptible to contempt and malice, it is important, Hume argues, that these passions play little to no role in our conduct.

But what about the scoundrel, a critic might respond?[12] Consider the case of someone who stole the money set aside by the city council to refurbish a local library in order to fund his safari in Zambia. Contempt seems to be appropriate in this circumstance. We should ensure that our contempt does not give rise to malice, but to exile contempt from the category of moral emotions is excessive. Hume has a readymade response. He notes that "contempt or scorn has so strong a tincture of pride, that there scarce is any other passion discernable" (T 2.2.10.4; SBN 390). The pride of contempt is the result of a judgment of comparison, which gives rise to hatred (T 2.2.10.5; SBN 391). As mentioned, hatred gives new force to any thought or action, so it reinforces the present pride. The problem? The pride in question transforms in an "over-weaning conceit of our own merit" (T 3.3.2.8; SBN 596). Though contempt seems like the proper response to a scoundrel, we can more safely respond with blame, issued with the language of humanity—free of the "avarice and ambition"—with a demand that this individual enters conversation with us (EPM 9.8; SBN 274).[13]

The second role of compassion is to help support virtuous motives. The more distress one witnesses, the more compassion one feels. That said, witnessing another's suffering is typically not enough to give rise to benevolent actions, even if it does block contempt. Take the example of being confronted with acute poverty. While this experience rarely sparks contempt, we are more likely to avert our eyes than to lend assistance. It is not that compassion is never linked to benevolent actions but that the motives it produces tend to be weak. But Hume is not concerned with the motivational force of compassion: its role is not to *cause* action but to open us to experiencing virtuous motives as authoritative. For him, compassion is morally significant insofar as it takes us outside of ourselves and distances us from

our more selfish and violent passions—those that may otherwise block our sense that norms of justice and politeness obligate us to act in certain ways.[14]

But compassion can lead us to act foolishly or immorally.[15] Let us say you have a friend who is down on their luck; he has fifteen dollars in his bank account and his rent is due today. This situation is one in which your friend often finds himself. Though he makes the same amount of money as you do, your friend has a video game obsession, purchasing all the latest consoles and games of note. Your friend often comes to you when he is without coin; each time, you give him the requested funds and receive a promise that it will be paid back in full. Each time your friend breaks this promise. Still, every time your friend is without money, it causes an anxiety attack so severe that he often ends up in the hospital. It is foolish to continue funding your friend's habit, even if not doing so upsets him. In these cases, one might argue that we should block our tendency to feel compassion for your friend since it reinforces a dependency that is detrimental for you, him, and even for the friendship.

Even in cases where compassion seems to compels us to act foolishly, there are often other considerations at play. In the case of your penny-strapped friend, you are also likely worried what will happen to him if you do not offer your assistance. Perhaps you are trying to avoid his potential anxiety attack and to save him from the embarrassment of asking someone else for money. You are making an all-things-considered judgment about what to do given the options. You might make a mistake in your reasoning; your compassion for your friend may cause you to unduly privilege certain facts over others, which is certainly problematic. Still, what is important for Hume is that compassion forces us to attend to features of another person's character and situation and to take an interest in their fate. Compassion turns us outward and distances us from our selfish and violent passions. That said, the *openness* generated by compassion is not enough for competent moral judgment. We still require an understanding of that in which sound judgment consists, which begins by grappling with Hume's account of delicacy.

Cultivating a Delicate Taste

For Hume, women are more compassionate and imaginative than men and are more prone to sympathize with others. Women are therefore more likely to be *open* to the pleasures and pains of others. This openness provides the basis for developing a capacity for good moral judgment. Hume expresses the norms of moral judgment by using the language of delicacy and refinement, terms that he uses to describe moral judges and women. According to Hume, the delicate or refined person can make fine-grained distinctions about character traits, which dislodges their violent passions and replaces them with more tender sentiments.

Unlike aesthetic judgment, Hume argues that *moral* delicacy is distinctly *feminine*. Men can only imperfectly develop the skills required for sound moral judgment.

What is it to be delicate or refined in one's taste and how does this skill connect with moral openness? In "Of the Standard of Taste," Hume notes that the person of delicate taste is one whose "organs are so fine, as to allow nothing to escape them; and at the same time so exact as to perceive every ingredient in the composition: this we call delicacy of taste" (*Essays*, 235). Drawing the analogy with our sense of taste, Hume notes that "a good palate is not tried by strong flavors; but by a mixture of small ingredients, where we are still sensible of each part, notwithstanding its minuteness and its confusion with the rest" (*Essays*, 236). According to Hume, a savant can make "quick and acute" judgments about objects and their parts without deliberation (ibid.). As he notes, "when objects of any kind are first presented to the eye or imagination the sentiment, which attends them, is obscured and confused . . . but allow him to acquire experience in those objects, his feeling becomes more exact and nice" (*Essays*, 237). Before one can develop the refinement necessary to make sound judgments, one must be open to experiencing the relevant class of objects, whether it be Chianti or pencils.

In aesthetics, our judgments concern art objects; in morals, we are engaged with the passions, traits, and conduct of others and ourselves. To be delicate of taste in morals is to perceive with clarity and discernment—to the extent that one can—the character and conduct of our fellows. According to Hume, we refine our taste through "*comparison* between several species and degrees of excellence, and estimating their proportion to each other" (*Essays*, 238). One cannot render sound judgments without experience, which can only be amassed over time, in conversation with similarly oriented individuals. The model for moral conversation is found in polite society, where one reflects on "human Affairs, and the Duties of common Life, and to the Observation of the Blemishes or Perfections of the particular Objects, that surround them" (*Essays*, 533–34). Moral education begins with reading history and learning about the deeds of others, but we only become fully-formed moral agents when we begin to use our capacities in concert with others to discuss the duties of common life. By learning to make our case and to receive feedback, we gain an appreciation of how to observe and to judge characters.

Hume speaks of the critic as possessing a few epistemic virtues that contribute to her impartiality (*Essays*, 238). This suggestion has led scholars to work to clarify his notion of the "true judge."[16] Hume's virtues of taste are not principally about a lack of bias, for example, though being unbiased is important for any good judge. Instead, the virtues of taste are those which contribute to one's fruitfully conversing with others and allow one to refine their powers of observation and discernment. A good judge is also disposed to offer up provisional descriptions to their fellows, knowing that they will be refined. Consider the following judgment: "Gerald is an unsociable sod: he pollutes the air around him with his unyielding

cynicism." Someone may remind me that Gerald's mother died last year and, while my descriptions of his conduct are accurate, my characterization of his motives are not. My willingness to yield in this case is a sign of my possessing the virtues of a good judge. Importantly, this acquaintance is not excusing Gerald's behavior but providing further information so I can make a reasonable judgment of him considering new evidence—a lesson that I can extend to other cases.

Hume argues that, with a greater attention to detail and the openness to competing descriptions offered by one's fellows, the critic enjoys a broader scope of pleasures and pains than the rest of us. As he points out, a delicate taste "enlarges the sphere both of our happiness and misery and makes us sensible to pains as well as pleasure, which escape the rest of mankind" (*Essays*, 5). Hume gives two examples of "enlarging" First, when a delicate person is presented with "a poem or picture . . . the delicacy of his feeling makes him be sensibly touched with every part of it; nor are the masterly strokes perceived with more exquisite relish and satisfaction, than the negligences or absurdities with disgust and uneasiness" (*Essays*, 4). Second, when "a polite and judicious conversation affords him the highest entertainment; rudeness or impertinence is as great a punishment to him" (*Essays*, 4–5). For Hume, the delicate person finds poorly constructed poems and unamiable company to be equally offensive, while the coarser person remains indifferent or prefers ruder ways of spending his time. The problem with the coarse person's indifference is that he is not properly skeptical of his passions—he naturalizes them.

Take the example of someone who uses his free time to watch *Bachelor in Paradise* as opposed to developing a skill (gardening, martial arts, woodworking, and so on). When receiving criticism from his fellows, this person may insist that he *prefers* watching reality television to other activities; people prefer different things and should not be criticized for their preferences. Hume would respond that this person is giving his immediate desires the veneer of authority. It is only because of the unrefined state of his character that he finds developing a skill less preferable to spending his time in idleness. This point seems elitist on its face; however, the argument runs similarly regardless of the object of one's preferences. Hume does not seek to provide us with a hierarchy of preferences in his writings—he shows little concern for the fact that most people favor pushpin over politics. What concerns Hume is the self-certainty that individuals display about their own intuitions, preferences, and beliefs, prior to any cultivation. Without a delicate taste, we lack the desire to become more than whatever we currently are, and we despise the suggestion that we should wish to be anything more.[17]

By cultivating a delicate taste, we also distance ourselves from violent and selfish passions. As Hume notes, increased taste "improves our sensibility for all the tender and agreeable passions; at the same time that it renders the mind incapable of the rougher and more boisterous emotions" (*Essays*, 6). Our identity therefore becomes tied up with our experience of more tender sentiments.[18] He views this

transformation as taking place equally in the context of aesthetics and morals. In aesthetics, Hume claims that "nothing is so improving to the temper as the study of the beauties, either of poetry, eloquence, music, or painting . . . the emotions which they excite are soft and tender" *(Essays,* 6–7). Regarding morals, he notes that "a delicacy of taste is favourable to love and friendship" and excites those "virtuous and tender sentiments" (*Essays*, 6–7; 539). In the first *Enquiry*, Hume argues that "Morals and criticism are not so properly objects of the understanding as of taste and sentiment. Beauty, whether moral or natural, is felt, more properly than perceived" (EHU 12.33; SBN 165).[19] The moral openness provided by greater imagination, sympathy, and compassion is tied to delicacy. Both features are tied to the ability to make sound moral judgments, an ability that Hume prizes above all.

One might ask at this point: why does Hume think that men are less capable of cultivating delicacy?[20] Though he talks about women as possessing a greater degree of imagination, compassion, and sympathy, Hume does not think that these features are absent in men. After all, Hume *must* hold that men can be delicate of taste since he *at least* takes himself to be a competent moral judge. So, unless Hume sees his own capacity of moral judgment as wanting, then it seems that my case is flawed. Importantly, since delicacy of taste is a capacity, it can be developed to a greater or lesser extent. For Hume, men are less likely to develop this capacity and are therefore worse off as moral judges. His reason? Men are more prone to malice and contempt, both of which are connected to ideas of honor. Hume argues that, in the context of a patriarchal society, matters of honor are distinctly masculine (T 2.1.9.13; 2.1.10.1; 2.2.2.20; 3.2.2.26; 3.3.2.11; SBN 308; 315; 343; 500–1; 598). To the extent that men internalize ideas about honor, they will act out of concern for their status and will fall prey to contempt and malice.[21]

At times throughout Hume's corpus he ties morality and honor closely together, referring to honor as a "great check upon mankind" (*Essays*, 43). But Hume immediately qualifies this comment by noting that "where a considerable body of men act together, this check is, in a great measure, removed; since a man is sure to be approved of by his own party, for what promotes the common interest; and he soon learns to despise the clamours of adversaries" (*Essays*, 43). As he points out elsewhere, concern for honor can even "steel men against compassion" (*Essays*, 274). Hume therefore sees honor as being a hardening of sorts, which closes one off from experiencing others' passions as truly worthy of moral consideration. Such "steeling" is inimical to the cultivation of delicacy and the ability to make fine-grained moral judgments. When one has been slighted, to be concerned with honor is to have *oneself* in view as opposed to the perpetrator. Perhaps self-directed concern is important when it is wrong not to defend ourselves, but self-defense is warranted *only if* it is grounded on competent judgment—an activity which requires that we take ourselves out of view, so to speak.

In this way, delicacy is connected to another Humean virtue: modesty. Scholars typically treat modesty as an *artificial* virtue for Hume; modesty is seen as important for regulating our pride so that it is agreeable to others.[22] But Hume defines modesty as a "just sense of our weakness," implying that it goes beyond our concern to please others (T 3.3.2.1; SBN 592). In the second *Enquiry*, Hume explains that "modesty may be understood in different senses . . . its most usual meaning is when it is opposed to impudence and arrogance, and expresses a diffidence of our own judgment, and a due attention and regard for others" (EPM 8.8; SBN 263). Modesty is then the vehicle by which we come to have a proper regard for others and form the norms that shape our lives together.[23] The person wrapped up in his own honor cannot have a just sense of his own weakness. Modesty ensures that one can render competent judgments about one's own character and that of others. The extent to which men find themselves in this position on account of either their nature or their position in society is unclear. I turn now to the setting in which Hume claims that delicacy and refinement are born: conversation.

Conversation and Moral Judgment

For Hume, women are generally more compassionate and imaginative than men and also feel more sympathy and are less prone to comparison. Women are, therefore, more likely *open* to the pleasures and pains of others. This openness is importantly amoral but it is also the basis for developing traits of that we all reflectively approve. Hume captures how these traits are developed by using the language of delicacy and refinement. The cultivation of delicacy takes place in what he calls *the world of conversation*: the realm of art, decorum, and duty. Hume proceeds to argue that women's openness to and curiosity about others' experiences makes them virtuosos of conversation. He claims that through conversation we come to codify our moral norms and to combat indifference and cruelty.

Hume laments the academy's separation from polite society throughout his works, including "Of Essay-Writing," which appeared in the second edition of the *Essays* (1742).[24] Hume notes that the world of learning concerns itself with "difficult Operations of the Mind, which require Leisure and Solitude"; the conversable, with "gentle Exercises of the Understanding, to obvious Reflections on human Affairs, and the Duties of common Life" (*Essays*, 533).[25] He notes that, in the world of *conversation*, topics "require the Company and Conversation of our Fellow-Creatures" (*Essays*, 534). By conversing with others, we "bring Mankind together in Society, where every one displays his Thoughts and Observations in the best Manner he is able, and mutually gives and receives Information, as well as Pleasure" (ibid.). In this way, the conversable world is the cradle of our sociability and humanity.

For Hume, each world—the learned and the conversable—play distinct but complementary roles in the functioning of society. He makes note of two reper-

cussions of scholarly seclusion in the modern age. First, our manner of writing suffers: the "Belles Lettres have be[come] totally barbarous, being cultivated by Men without any Taste of Life or Manner, and without that Liberty and Facility of Thought that . . . which can only be acquir'd by Conversation" (ibid.).[26] Even worse, "Philosophy . . . this moaping recluse Method of Study . . . became as chimerical in her Conclusions as she was unintelligible in her Stile and Manner of Delivery" (*Essays*, 534–35). The style and substance of philosophy is negatively impacted by a life of solitude and study. The solution, for Hume, is to bring the worlds of conversation and learning closer together in terms of both their manner of writing and how they discuss morals. The idea is not to consign all abstract matters to the flames but to show that the impoverished state of moral discourse in philosophy is to be blamed on the methods of solitude and casuistry.

Hume sees himself as the mediator between the "college and cells" and polite society. He is also a proponent of what he calls *l'Art de Vivre,* or "the art of society and conversation" (*Essays*, 90–91). While the rules of justice must be observed for human society to exist, a *community* cannot come to exist without the widespread practice of conversation and politeness. It is through conversation that we learn to correct the natural vices of our nature. As Hume points out, "thus, as we are commonly proud and selfish, and apt to assume the preference above others, a polite man learns to behave with deference towards his companions, and to yield the superiority to them in all the common incidents of society" (*Essays*, 132). He returns to this point throughout the *Essays*, noting elsewhere that "arts of conversation . . . lead[s] us to resign our own inclinations to those of our companion, and to curb and conceal that presumption and arrogance, so natural to the human mind" (*Essays*, 126). Like sympathy and delicacy, conversation takes us outside of ourselves, forcing us to confront those more distasteful parts of ourselves, and to engage with others on mutual footing with hopes of receiving their approval.

While women did not enjoy a central place in politics or industry in eighteenth-century Britain, the world of conversation and politeness were occupied most naturally by women, for Hume. He attributes the advances in arts and letters to the inclusion of women in these contexts, noting that "among the ancients, the character of the fair-sex was considered as altogether domestic; nor were they regarded as part of the polite world or of good company. This, perhaps, is the true reason why the ancients have not left us one piece of pleasantry that is excellent" (*Essays*, 134). Hume then blames the lack of advancement in Greek literature beyond the fundamentals of composition to the lack of focus on society and conversation, which is only seen in the modern age, when women are liberated from the state of "abject slavery" (*Essays*, 133). At his own time, Hume claims that there is an explosive growth of the refined arts on account of increased sociability and contexts in which "both sexes [can] meet in an easy and sociable manner"

(*Essays*, 271). The result of such a congregation, for Hume, is nothing less than the refinement of "the tempers of men, as well as their behavior" (ibid.).

Delicacy allows women to be virtuosos of the language of polite society. This fact is significant for Hume, who holds that the language of morals *is* the language of polite society: moral language is the form of expression we adopt to represent the moral community. To act or speak in an unamiable manner is not only impolite but immoral since it betrays a possession of character traits that we all recognize as distasteful. By interacting with one another in society, Hume claims that we come to "rub off" our "rough corners and untoward affections," making us more likely to develop worthy traits and act properly (T 3.2.2.4 SBN 486).[27] For him, women have a less unseemly nature to "rub off." In this way, women more readily adopt the moral standpoint because they have fewer obstacles to doing so. Both the polite person and the moral one seek to represent the common point of view and to cultivate useful and agreeable character traits, the sort of traits that help combat indifference and cruelty.

In the essay "Of Moral Prejudices," Hume illustrates how, when divorced from politeness and conversation, moral views become dangerous. He gives two examples. In some cases, those impolite moralists seek to ridicule everything "venerable in the Eyes of Mankind. Reasons, Sobriety, Honour, Friendship . . . even Public Spirit" (*Essays*, 538). According to Hume, this ridicule proceeds from a "love of *simplicity*" (EPM App. 2.6; SBN 298). Other moralists, "under the Pretext of reforming Prejudices and Errors, strike at all the most endearing Sentiments of the Heart" (*Essays*, 539). On this view, the tender passions are "chimerical," "romantic," and a form of "weakness" (*Essays*, 538, 538, 541). By denying these aspects of our nature a place in morals, Hume claims that we remove "all the useful Bypasses and Instincts, which can govern a human creature," resulting in a philosophy that is "chimerical in her Conclusions" (*Essays*, 539, 534). While it is easy to forget the commitments of polite society when wrapped up in abstractions or ascetic cynicism, conversation about matters of mutual interest, when conducted by individuals who are sufficiently delicate, will not admit of acceptance of these views.

Take the example of the zealot, who presumes to speak for humanity when, in all actuality, he speaks only for the party to which he belongs. Though the zealot uses the words "odious," "vicious," "depraved," fully expecting to "move some universal principle of the human frame, and touch a string to which all mankind have an accord and symphony" (EPM 9.6; SBN 272). No one except him can accept how he uses these terms; his principles and partial sentiments cannot be endorsed by the *party* of humankind (EPM 9.9; SBN 275). The zealot's delusion can be illustrated by the following four-step descent into disorder: first, the zealot presumes his own commitments and sentiments reflect those of everyone; second, this self-assurance closes him off to the need to rely on others and to form reasonable moral norms and judgments; third, the zealot becomes unresponsive to the

sentiments of humanity; fourth, acts of cruelty tend to follow. The only way to halt this descent is to remove the obstacles for conversation and to cultivate the desire in him to engage with his fellows about matters of mutual interest.

By shielding ourselves from the experience of malice, hatred, and the coolness of indifference, we become less prone to the fiery rhetoric of the enthusiasts or the gloom of the superstitious (*Essays*, 74). In so doing, we recognize the unimportance of our selfish and domineering tendencies; we choose to instead speak and feel from a perspective that can be equally adopted by those with whom we interact in polite society. What obstructs one's ability to switch perspectives in this manner is righteous anger that comes with another challenging the moral principle that one has adopted (*Essays*, 247). For Hume, delicacy and conversation work to undermine this threat on two fronts. First, delicacy gives one access to a set of passions that escape the zealot; while these passions are initially less efficacious, with habit they become entrenched. Second, conversation reminds us that the project of moral life is undertaken with others: norms are provisionally adopted and justified from a common point of view, not one's own group (EPM 9.6; SBN 272). Delicacy and conversation are ultimately corrosive to all forms of zealotry.

Once people converse with one another, their "tempers are softened as well as their knowledge improved" (*Essays*, 274).[28] Neither coercion, shame, nor ridicule is sufficient to undercut enthusiasm. Hume argues that women model the openness and refinement necessary to engage in conversation. As he notes in "Of Refinement in the Arts," with the progress of cities and the arts and sciences, "particular clubs and societies are everywhere formed: Both sexes meet in an easy and sociable manner; and the tempers of men, as well as their behaviour, refine apace" (*Essays*, 271). The result is an increase of pleasure and entertainment between the parties and for humanity (ibid.). By upgrading our own humane sentiments, we develop a sense of the "confederacy of mankind," and the relation between the interests of this confederacy and our own happiness (EPM 9.19; SBN 281). Conversation is the progenitor of moral terms and our sense of their natural authority. To claim that women are virtuosos of conversation is not to claim that men are indifferent to morality. Hume only finds that women are *better suited* to engage in the process of codifying our moral norms, and perhaps even with managing their enforcement.

So, who is the "perfect character" that retains "an equal ability and taste for books, company, and business; preserving in conversation that discernment and delicacy which arise from polite letters; and in business, that probity and accuracy which are the natural result of a just philosophy" (EHU 1.5; SBN 8)?[29] For Hume, the answer is a properly educated woman. Women are *open* on account of their increased imagination, compassion and sympathy; they are virtuosos of *conversation*, helping to codify our moral norms and combat zealotry and indifference; they are also *delicate*, being models for how to make fine-grained distinctions about character traits. Hume reflects in "My Own Life" that he enjoyed his time with the

"young and careless" and the "studious and literary," but felt most at home "in the company of modest women" (MOL 21, Mil xl-i), as they shared his "open, social, and cheerful humour" (ibid.).[30]

Lingering Concerns

I have argued that Hume sees the qualities of an ideal moral judge as *distinctly feminine*. Women, for Hume, have a greater openness to the pleasures and pains of others; when cultivated, this openness is accompanied by a two-fold delicacy that allows for superior moral discernment, making them ideal moral judges. I end this paper by confronting a troubling aspect of Hume's view of women: his notable commitment to gender essentialism. I consider Hume's comments about women in the context of 18th century discussions about the masculine and feminine virtues. By understanding this conversation and Hume's role therein, we can make a better case for why he ties feminine virtues so closely to women's natures, even if it does not dispel concerns about Hume's commitment to gender essentialism.

Hume writes about women having constitutional flaws. For example, her argues that women are sensitive to the "amorous passion" (*Essays*, 565, 537). He notes that women are carried away by gallantry and attributes this preference to "a tender and amorous disposition [which] perverts their Judgment on this occasion" (*Essays*, 537). What troubles Hume is how this tendency is reinforced by problematic literature, whether it be the poetry of mystics, the devotional literature of John Bunyan, or the plays of John Dryden.[31] In "Of the Study of History," Hume suggests that women should read history in order to learn how to direct their love of gallantry to more suitable ends (*Essays*, 563). He claims, contrary to popular belief at this time, that women are not averse to history insofar as it "contain some memorable transaction proper to excite their curiosity" (*Essays*, 564). Hume's thought: because women possess a greater imagination, it requires greater satiation than can be provided by a mere chronicle of events. Provided a history is constructed in a compelling way, women will experience the same intrigue as they do with novels, if only given the opportunity.

Hume's comments may seem relatively unproblematic. If those traits he sees most troubling in women can be altered through education, then Hume's position becomes that women possess certain tendencies which, given proper education, produce virtue. But Hume's comments betray a troubling form of essentialism. After all, his claim is not that women can alter their traits though education but that these problematic traits can be *managed* in sensible ways, leaving little hope for genuine improvement. When accounting for the difference between "the manners of men in different ages and countries," Hume appeals to custom; however, when it comes to men and women he notes that in experience "we become acquainted with the different characters, which nature has impressed upon the sexes, and

which she preserves with constancy and regularity" (EHU 8.11; SBN 85). Hume sees women's propensity to be carried away as a part of their nature, noting that "all human creatures, especially of the female sex, are apt to over-look remote motives in favour of any present temptation" (T 3.2.12.15; SBN 571). He therefore takes away with one hand what he gives with the other.

Still, Hume seems less concerned with tying the differences between men and women to their respective physiologies than with clarifying the virtues associated with each gender. This approach is noticeably different than the one he takes with race.[32] Certainly some of Hume's comments about women are directed at their physiology, especially in his discussions about women's more forceful imagination, amorousness, and compassion. Hume does seem to assume Malebranche's assessment of women as being subject to these states on account of their delicate brain fibers, but it plays an insignificant role in his account. Hume maintains that women more easily develop into moral judges on account of *something about them,* but this feature is not reducible to physiology; one becomes delicate in one's taste and polite in one's conversation only through practice. Perhaps women are better at developing these skills on account of their nature but, for Hume, women's positions in Britain at the time was a substantial factor in explaining the discrepancies between the genders. In fact, it was widely recognized that changing social conditions had an impact on traditional gender-specific values.

Many 18th century moralists were skeptical of the "feminization" of civil society which came with the onset of commercial forces. On the one hand, politeness was tied to the growth of commerce, which was associated with social, political, and economic progress.[33] On the other hand, politeness and commerce were believed to threaten virtues like virility and honor.[34] Moralists thought that men should resist a takeover of these feminine virtues lest civil society be put at risk.[35] Hume's appraisal of the feminine virtues is wholehearted; he is disinterested in virility and honor. Regarding the heroic virtues, he notes that "Heroism, or military glory, is much admir'd by the generality of mankind. They consider it as the most sublime of merit. Men of cool reflection are not so sanguine in their praises of it" (T 3.3.2.15; SBN 600). Heroism is captivating but dangerous and self-indulgent (ibid.). One is pressed to find a skeptical comment about the place of politeness and commerce in civil society in Hume writing. If anything, he is an apologist of these virtues and is transparent about their feminine nature.

Hume leaves us with serious questions about his view of women. To what extent are the joints of nature cut along lines of gender for Hume? The project of the science of human nature is to give an account of those fundamental aspects of our human frame; still, Hume also wishes to explain how different aspects of this frame develop over time. Finding the line between what is innate and what is malleable in Hume's account of human nature is, of course, fraught, and it is with his treatment of gender and race where the significance of us doing so becomes

clear. Are Hume's most denigrating comments about women connected to his thoughts about their nature, are they off-handed remarks of an 18th century sexist and gallant, or are they even under-handed critiques of the state of dependency to which women are consigned?[36] My sense is that Hume's comments express some uneasy mixture of all three—unfortunately, determining the requisite proportions will take another paper.

NOTES

1 I would like to thank the editor and referees at *Hume Studies* for their comments. The article has greatly improved on account of their input. An earlier version of this paper, "Sovereigns of the Empire of Conversation: Hume on Women" was presented at the 44th International Hume Conference at Brown University, in 2017, and the American Philosophical Association, Eastern Division, in 2018. I would like to thank the organizers and attendees of both events for their consideration and feedback. In particular, I would like to thank Amy Schmitter and Anne Jacobson for providing comments on these occasions (and to Remy Debes, for reading Anne's comments in lieu of her absence and for offering his own). This article is the last in a series of articles written during graduate school at Boston University on the British Moralists. I would like to thank the Department of Philosophy at Boston University and my dissertation supervisors, Charles Griswold and Aaron Garrett, in particular. Each article in this series was developed in conversation with Aino Lahdenranta. I would like to dedicate this article to her, with hope that the final product adequately responds to her criticisms. I would also like to thank everyone who has given me feedback on this paper: Rebeccah Leiby, Zach Joachim, Alex Yen, Malin Lalich, Taru Auranne, and Alyssa Stockdale. Lastly, I would like to thank my Hume Society family, especially Margaret Watkins and Liz Goodnick, for their friendship and support.

2 "When Hume speaks here of a 'delicacy of passion,' he means a disposition to be affected strongly by violent passions in the face of prosperity or misfortune, favors or injuries, honors or slights, and other accidents of life that lie beyond our control. What he here calls 'taste'—the sense of beauty and deformity in actions or objects—is also a passion, broadly speaking, but a normally calm one. A delicacy of taste is a keen sensitivity to beauty and deformity in actions, books, works of art, companions and such" (*Essays*, 3–4n1).

3 Hume gives the following example in "The Sceptic": "The mathematician, who took no other pleasure in reading VIRGIL, but that of examining ENEAS's voyage by the map, might perfectly understand the meaning of every Latin word, employed by that divine author; and consequently, might have a distinct idea of the whole narration. He would even have a more distinct idea of it, than they could attain who had not studied so exactly the geography of the poem. He knew, therefore, every thing in the poem: But he was ignorant of its beauty; because the beauty, properly speaking, lies not in the poem, but in the sentiment or taste of the reader. And where a man has no such delicacy of temper, as to make him feel this sentiment, he must be ignorant of

the beauty, though possessed of the science and understanding of an angel" (*Essays*, 165–66).

4 While scholars have identified aspects of feminism in Hume's writings, few have commented on his general view of women and how it relates to his moral theory. Conversation about Hume's view of women has typically centered on two topics: the extent to which Hume is a feminist and his discussion of chastity and modesty as artificial virtues. On the latter, see Immerwahr, "David Hume, Sexism, and Sociobiology"; Baier, "Hume, the Woman's Moral Theorist?"; Guimarães, "The Gallant and the Philosopher." For more on chastity and modesty, see Baier, "Good Men's Women"; Levey, "Under Constraint"; Villanueva-Gardner, "Chastity and the Practice of the World in Hume's *Treatise*"; Falkenstein, "Without Gallantry and Without Jealousy." I set these topics aside here, and instead focus on the role that Hume takes women to play in the codification, application, and enforcement of moral norms.

5 For a useful taxonomy of the passions in early modern philosophy, see Schmitter, "Passions, Affections, Sentiments."

6 References to the *Treatise* are to Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. Norton and Norton, hereafter cited in the text as "T" followed by Book, part, section, and paragraph number, and to Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. Selby-Bigge, rev. by Nidditch, cited in the text as "SBN" followed by the page number.

7 "'Tis not the great disproportion betwixt ourselves and another, which produces it; but on the contrary, our proximity. A common soldier bears no such envy to his general as to his sergeant or corporal; nor does an eminent writer meet with so great jealousy in the common hackney scribblers, as in authors, that more nearly approach him . . . great disproportion cuts off the relation, and either keeps us from comparing ourselves with what is remote from us, or diminishes the effect of the comparison" (T 2.2.8.13; SBN 377–78). The difference between contempt and respect is the "changing point of view, tho' the object may remain the same, its proportion to ourselves entirely alters; which is the cause of an alteration in the passions" (T 2.2.10.3; SBN 390). Cf. Radcliffe, "Acali and Acid, Oil and Vinegar."

8 One might argue that I give too much credit here to Hume's idea of "limited" sympathy (T 2.2.9.15; SBN 387). After all, the critic might argue, Hume finds this idea of sympathy wanting, and introduces "extensive sympathy" to replace his original model (T 2.1.11; SBN 586). For more on this criticism, see Herdt, *Religion and Faction in Hume's Moral Philosophy*, 39–82. I follow Andrew Cunningham ("The Strength of Hume's 'Weak' Sympathy") in arguing that we should not think of extensive sympathy as correcting limited sympathy. In fact, I claim, Hume maintains that limited sympathy is superior to extensive sympathy. In this way, I subscribe to the Cunningham "strength-in-weakness" theses and make limited sympathy my focus (244). I set aside these issues, since to explore this topic would go beyond the scope of this article. Thank you to an anonymous referee for drawing my attention to this point.

9 Thank you to an anonymous referee for drawing my attention to this point.

10 "The near approach of the inferior is regarded as a piece of ill-breeding, and shows that he is not sensible of the disproportion, and is no way affected by it. A sense of superiority in another breeds in all men an inclination to keep themselves at a distance from him, and determines them to redouble the marks of respect and reverence, when

they are oblig'd to approach him; and where they do not observe that conduct, 'tis a proof they are not sensible of his superiority" (T 2.2.10.10; SBN 393).

11 For a discussion of the role that compassion plays in Hume's moral theory, see Swanton, "Compassion as a Virtue in Hume." There is an indirect connection between compassion and our tendency to take up the common point of view. For Hume, moral education *begins* with compassion, putting him in the company of Mandeville and Rousseau. For a connection between Hume's account of compassion and his treatment of the "sentiment of humanity," see Shaver, "Hume on the Duties of Humanity"; Taylor, "Hume on the Importance of Humanity."

12 Thank you to an anonymous referee for drawing my attention to this point.

13 References to the second *Enquiry* are to Hume, *An Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals*, ed. Beauchamp, hereafter cited in the text as "EPM" followed by section and paragraph number, and to Hume, *Enquiries Concerning the Principles of Human Understanding and Concerning the Principles of Morals*, ed. Selby-Bigge, rev. by Nidditch, hereafter cited in the text as "SBN" followed by page numbers.

14 There are further capacities that individuals require to act morally, principally the strength of mind. I do not discuss this character trait here, though other scholars have done so with great skill. See Abramson, "Two Portraits of the Humean Moral Agent"; Radcliffe, "Strength of Mind and the Calm and Violent Passions"; Kopajtic, "Cultivating Strength of Mind."

15 Thank you to an anonymous referee for drawing my attention to this point.

16 For good examples of this literature, see Wieand, "Hume's Two Standards of Taste"; Ross, "Humean Critics: Real or Ideal?"; Galgut, "Hume's Aesthetic Standard"; Baceski, "Hume on Art Critics, Wise Men, and the Virtues of Taste"; Shelley, "Hume and the Verdict of True Judges."

17 Hume quotes Ovid's *Epistualae ex Ponto* [Letter from Pontus] immediately afterwards: "Ingennuas didicisse fideliter artes, Emollit mores, nec sinit esse feros [A Faithful study of the liberal arts humanizes character and permits it not to be so cruel]" (2.9.47–48). Hume pursues this topic further in "Of Refinement in the Arts." Here, he claims that "besides the improvements which they receive from knowledge and the liberal arts, it is impossible but they must feel an increase of humanity, from the very habit of conversing together, and contributing to each other's pleasure and entertainment. Thus industry, knowledge, and humanity, are linked together by an indissoluble chain" (*Essays*, 271). Hume sees no conflict between the ideals of refinement and authenticity; for him, the self becomes realized through its engagement in the polite arts, the pleasures of conversation, and projects of mutual interest with others. Hume's position reflects that of Shaftesbury. See Gill, "Shaftesbury on Politeness, Honesty, and Virtue."

18 Hume writes about "generous pride," a reflexive judgment of one's own character in the context of polite society which concerns "a proper sense of what is due to one's self, in society and the common intercourse of life" (EPM 7.10; SBN 253). Hume distinguishes this form of pride from "heroic virtue" (T 3.3.2.13; SBN 475). The difference between the two is that generous pride is based on a sense of what is *proper*, which inevitably refers to the judgments of one's fellows. Heroic virtue is singular and therefore open to

abuse. For more on this point, see Taylor, *Reflecting Subjects*, 130–59; Abramson, "Two Portraits"; Marie A. Martin, "Hume on Human Excellence."

19 References to the first *Enquiry* are to Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Beauchamp, hereafter cited in the text as "EHU" followed by section and paragraph number, and to Hume, *Enquiries Concerning the Principles of Human Understanding and Concerning the Principles of Morals*, ed. Selby-Bigge, rev. by Nidditch, hereafter cited in the text as "SBN" followed by page numbers.

20 Thank you to an anonymous referee for drawing my attention to this point.

21 For Hume, the violent passions function largely on the basis of *comparison*. Hume is clear about the role of comparison in contempt (T 2.2.10.3; SBN 390) and in malice (T 2.2.8.1; SBN 372). Both of these passions operate on considerations of honor. Hume is clear that—in the context of a patriarchal society—matters of honor are distinctly masculine (T 2.1.9.13; 2.1.10.1; 2.2.2.20; 3.2.2.26; 3.3.2.11; SBN 308; 315; 343; 500–01; 598). To the extent that men are prone to internalize considerations of honor, they are more likely to act out of concern for their status, and to therefore fall prey to contempt and malice.

22 Baier, *A Progress of Sentiments*, 206–07; Taylor, *Reflecting Subjects*, 147; Tolonen, "Politeness, Paris, and the *Treatise*"; Árdal, *Passion and Value in Hume's* Treatise, 146–47; Postema "Cemented with Diseased Qualities?"

23 In her discussion of pride and modesty, Baier makes the following observation, "To know one's strength or force justly is necessarily to know its limits, and so, in all but the omnipotent, due pride will be accompanied by due modesty. In a society where division of labor is encouraged, where cooperation works best when different persons' particular strengths are complementary and not reduplicative, a modest sense of what one cannot do but that others can, of where one is weak while others strong, need not cause uneasiness, when it is accompanied by a due sense of what strengths one does have" (*A Progress of Sentiments*, 206). Modesty is then crucial for undertaking joint projects with others. If we understand morality as a joint project undertaken with others, we might hold that modesty is crucial for understanding full-blooded moral agency.

24 "Of Essay Writing" appeared in the second edition of the *Essays* (1742), suggesting that Hume in some way disavowed its contents. That said, there are a number of reasons the essay could have been removed. Hume removed three unrelated essays for the third edition—"Of Essay Writing," "Of Moral Prejudices," and "Of the Middle Station of Life"—and replaced them with "Of National Characters," "Of the Original Contract," and "Of Passive Obedience," all of which were interventions in contemporary debates. Removing the former three pieces suggests nothing more than that he wished to make room for the latter essays, which would be of greater public interest. Further, there is little in "Of Essay Writing" that Hume does not say elsewhere. Take the problem at the center of the essay: the disconnect between the world of the learned and the world of conversation. This theme is present throughout Hume's work. What lead him to write the *Essays*, *Enquires*, and the *History* was the desire to bridge the gap between polite society and the scholarly world, a desire that is present in many of Hume's major influences: Bayle, Mandeville, Shaftesbury, Hutcheson, Kames, and so on.

25 Hume's comments about "Colleges and Cells" (*Essays*, 534) mirror Shaftesbury's own in *Characteristicks of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times*, volume 1:105. For Shaftesbury,

conversation forges connections between people, combats ill-will, and gives content to our ideas of the common good. Kames speaks of "the delicate pleasures of conversation, in communicating opinions, sentiments, and desires" and says of women, "the female sex have risen, in a slow but steady progress, to higher and higher degrees of estimation. Conversation is their talent, and a display of delicate sentiments: the gentleness of their manners and winning behaviour, captivate every sensible heart" (Lord Kames, *Sketches on the History of Man*, I:41, I:116).

26 "The moderns have applied themselves, with great industry and success, to all the other arts and sciences: And a learned nation possesses a popular government; a circumstance which seems requisite for the full display of these noble talents: But notwithstanding all these advantages, our progress in eloquence is very inconsiderable, in comparison of the advances, which we have made in all other parts of learning" (*Essays*, 102). Hume lauds the Ancients' study of rhetoric, saying: "ancient eloquence, that is, the sublime and passionate, is of much juster taste than the modern, or argumentative and rational: and, if properly executed, will always have more command and authority over mankind" (*Essays*, 108). For more on this topic, see Hanvelt, *The Politics of Eloquence*.

27 This statement originates in Shaftesbury's writings, who claims that, in society, "we polish one another, and rub off our corners and rough sides by a kind of *amicable Collision*" (*Characteristicks*, 42).

28 Hume is at pains here to defend the arts and sciences from those "severe moralists" who claim they enervate "either the mind or the body" (*Essays*, 274–75). These moralists, who take Ancient Rome as the paradigm of virtue, are concerned that with politeness and refinement comes a general loss of "ferocity" and "martial spirit" in the populace, meaning that individuals become less "undaunted and vigorous in their defense of their country or their liberty" (*Essays*, 274). Hume responds, "if anger, which is said to be the whetstone of courage, loses somewhat of its asperity, by politeness and refinement; a sense of honour, which is a stronger, more constant, and more governable principle, acquires fresh vigour by the elevation of genius which arises from knowledge and good education." (ibid.) His treatment of honor overlaps with the analysis given by Bernard Mandeville in *An Inquiry Into the Origin of Honor and the Usefulness of Christianity in War* (1732).

29 One might argue that my argument runs roughshod of Hume's comments about Cleanthes in the second *Enquiry* (EPM 9.2; SBN 269–70). While this passage is striking, it is important to remember the context of his comments. Prior to being given the account of Cleanthes's character, Hume sets up the example by noting, "You are very happy, we shall suppose one to say, addressing himself to another, that you have given your daughter to Cleanthes" (ibid.). Hume is asking you, a father or mother, to consider the ideal candidate for a son-in-law. In this way, the example is geared specifically to men. Further, the passage does not consider Cleanthes's ability to offer sound moral judgments, focusing instead on the extent to which one might wish to be around him. My argument hinges on the idea that Hume takes women to be superior moral judges. The relation between one's possession of virtuous character traits and one's capacity of moral discernment is a complicated one that goes beyond the scope of this article. Thank you to an anonymous referee for drawing my attention to this point.

30 "MOL" refers to the posthumously published essay, "My Own Life" (1777). The essay is found in the 1987 edition of Hume's *Essays*.

31 John Bunyan was known most for his work, *The Pilgrim's Progress from This World, to That Which Is to Come* (1678), written during his time of imprisonment after the Restoration. Hume has a low opinion of Bunyan's work (*Essays*, 231). John Dryden, a Tory and the first English Poet Laureate (1668), and master of heroic couplet, who wrote plays as well as poetry, was also much maligned by Hume (*Essays*, 537). It is interesting that Hume takes aim at both enemies and allies of the Restoration, meaning that his criticism of these works is not primarily political. There is something about the tone of the mystics, Bunyan, and Dryden that offends Hume. I would argue that it is these authors' "enthusiasm" to which Hume objects. For more on Hume's idea of enthusiasm see *Essays*, 73–79.

32 For more on Hume's view of race, see: Immerwahr, "Hume's Revised Racism"; Eze, "Hume, Race, and Human Nature"; Garrett and Sebastiani, "Hume and Modern Conceptions of Race"; Watkins, "'Slaves Among Us'."

33 Baron de Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*; Alexander, *The History of Women*; Ferguson, *An Essay on the History of Civil Society*; Millar, *The Origin of the Distinction of Ranks.*

34 Kames, *Sketches*, I.487, I.474, I.459; Ferguson, *Essay*, 202; Alexander, *History of Women*, I:XIII; William Russell, "Of the Progress of Society in Britain, and of the Character, Manners, and Talents of British Women."

35 Sebastiani notes that, for many philosophers, "women were designed to 'soften *our* hearts and polish *our* manners' [the hearts and manners of men]. In other words, they had the duty to render their husbands' characters more human, guiding their feelings and polishing their way of life." *The Scottish Enlightenment* II: 149.

36 See Hume's comment in his essay, "Of the Immortality of the Soul": "On the theory of the soul's mortality, the inferiority of women's capacity is easily accounted for: Their domestic life requires no higher faculties either of mind or body. This circumstance vanishes and becomes absolutely insignificant, on the religious theory: The one sex has an equal task to perform with the other: Their powers of reason and resolution ought also to have been equal, and both of them infinitely greater than at present" (*Essays*, 593).

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