

Edward W. Glowienka

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Diametros nr 44, 153-172

2015

Artykuł został opracowany do udostępnienia w internecie przez Muzeum Historii Polski w ramach prac podejmowanych na rzecz zapewnienia otwartego, powszechnego i trwałego dostępu do polskiego dorobku naukowego i kulturalnego. Artykuł jest umieszczony w kolekcji cyfrowej bazhum.muzhp.pl, gromadzącej zawartość polskich czasopism humanistycznych i społecznych.

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DAVID HUME: UNWITTING COSMOPOLITAN?

– Edward W. Glowienka –

Abstract. If Hume is considered cosmopolitan in his ethics at all, he is said to be so through his anti-mercantilist approach to commerce. Prevailing commercial interpretations attribute to Hume a cosmopolitanism that is best described as instrumental and supervenient. I argue that Hume’s principles lead to a cosmopolitan ethic that is more demanding than commercial interpretations recognize. Hume’s cosmopolitanism is more than merely supervenient and its instrumentality is such that cosmopolitan regard becomes inseparable from healthy patriotic concern. I show sympathy and duty, not merely justice, central to Hume’s cosmopolitanism and address how Hume’s moderate cosmopolitanism might be enacted in society. I suggest Hume’s view can contribute to contemporary cosmopolitan discourse, aiding both those forms with which it is consonant and the practical ends of otherwise opposed, Kantian forms.

Keywords: Hume, cosmopolitanism, patriotism, commerce, custom, sympathy.

David Hume is not generally considered an ethical cosmopolitan. For all the ways Hume stirred Kant from dogmatic slumber, the two thinkers appear to represent rival camps on the topic of cosmopolitan duties. If by cosmopolitanism one means what Arneson calls its extreme form, namely the thesis that “national borders and membership in nation states (and similar social groups) lack intrinsic, noninstrumental moral significance... and our common humanity is the ground of our duties toward people,” then it is right to exclude Hume from the cosmopolitan tradition.¹ MacIntyre identifies such cosmopolitanism with “impersonal liberal morality;”² insofar as impersonal morality is tied to a Kantian notion of reason as the source of moral distinction and the condition of dutiful action, Hume cannot be cosmopolitan in the extreme sense.

Though not an extreme cosmopolitan, Hume is likewise not taken to be extremely anti-cosmopolitan, as he is ethically neither provincialist nor nationalist. According to MacIntyre, Hume always reasons about justice within a particular community, yet is an “assimilationist” in economic matters.³ Stilz similarly por-

¹ Arneson [2013] p. 1.

² MacIntyre [1984], Section II.

³ MacIntyre [1988] p. 320-321, 295-296, respectively.

trays Hume as a “liberal nationalist,” who reconciles the primacy of national allegiance in “structuring our moral and political duties” with a need for impartiality in commerce.⁴ Livingston believes Hume’s true philosopher must be a patriot, but that through his patriotism he fulfills his obligations as a citizen of the world.⁵ Their differences notwithstanding,⁶ these accounts aiming to show Hume as an advocate of some goals of the cosmopolitan project – for instance, the goal of fairness towards those beyond one’s own borders – share in limiting Hume’s cosmopolitan orientation to the sphere of commerce between nations. They represent the consensus view which takes what I will call a commercial approach to Hume’s views on transnational relations.⁷ I do not dispute the commercial approach in its main claims, but I hope to show it is limited in its understanding of Hume’s relationship to cosmopolitan thinking.

To be fair, Hume himself gives the impression, which commercial approaches develop, that cosmopolitanism has value either instrumentally or superveniently. By instrumental cosmopolitanism, I mean the idea that one’s motivation for engagement with other cultures has its root in utility for one’s self and one’s nation. By supervenient cosmopolitanism, I mean the idea that the development of humankind is a concomitant effect, requiring no further effort, of the development of one’s self or one’s nation. In this essay, I argue that, despite appearances to the contrary, Hume’s principles result in a form of cosmopolitanism that is more than merely supervenient and whose instrumentality is other than the commercial approach presumes. Hume does not offer an impersonal moral standard, but does show cosmopolitan regard to be inseparable from the healthy promotion of justice and virtue in the domestic sphere. My account accords sympathy, benevolence, and duty, much greater places in Hume’s cosmopolitanism than do commercial accounts which center on utility and justice. I ultimately suggest that Hume’s cosmopolitanism is congenial to some forms of contemporary cosmopolitan thought and that Hume’s sentiment-based approach can indirectly aid some of the practical ends of even Kantian forms of contemporary cosmopolitanism it opposes in its foundations.

⁴ Stilz [2002] p. 30.

⁵ Livingston [1998] p. 139, Ch. 8 (especially p. 173–175).

⁶ Stilz argues against MacIntyre’s casting Hume as an “Anglicizing subverter” of the patriotic worldview. Livingston’s Hume is *in toto* more conservative than the other two interpreters mentioned.

⁷ For one further example of the commercial approach, see de Saavedra [2006].

In part one, I sketch the *prima facie* case for the commercial approach and against my expanded notion of Humean cosmopolitanism. That is, I provide the grounds for considering Hume anti-cosmopolitan in the extreme form, but instrumentally and superveniently cosmopolitan. I explain what is right in the commercial approach and establish the limiting conditions for an acceptable interpretation of Humean cosmopolitanism. In part two, I show Hume's moral principles to result in a species of cosmopolitan ethic, one limited in scope but more expansive than what has heretofore been realized in Hume scholarship. I term Hume's cosmopolitanism "unwitting," since it is not an explicit goal of his writings but is nonetheless, I find, an unavoidable upshot of his ethics. In part three, I briefly put Hume in conversation with contemporary cosmopolitan writers, showing him in line with some and a partial, potentially powerful ally of others.

I.

The case against Hume being an extreme cosmopolitanism and for him being a patriot begins with Hume's contention that only sentiment, or passion, can motivate (T II.iii.3). Our shared rationality as human beings—"the portion of the divine" in each of us so central to Stoic cosmopolitanism⁸—can neither motivate concern towards humanity as such nor enjoin such concern. "Reason is, and ought only to be the slave of the passions, and can never pretend to any other office than to serve and obey them," goes Hume's famous dictum (T 415). If extreme cosmopolitanism is to have any purchase as an ethical approach, it must have basis in some sentiment; in this case the relevant sentiment would have to be or include universal, impartial benevolence. Hume, however, denies the existence of any such benevolence. "In general, it may be affirm'd that there is no such passion in human minds, as the love of mankind, merely as such, independent of personal qualities, of services, or of relation to ourself" (T 481).

In denying "love of mankind," Hume denies two theses. One, he denies that humanity is the lone object of affection. Sympathy extends to, and thus can enliven sentiment towards, all *sentient* creatures.⁹ If we sympathize more with rational creatures, this is not because reason specially motivates sympathy; rather, we sympathize more with fellow human beings because they greater resemble us,

⁸ Nussbaum [1995] p. 7.

⁹ Sympathy, for Hume, is "that propensity we have... to receive by communication their inclinations and sentiments, however different from, or even contrary to our own" (T 316). In short, sympathy names our ability to have not only ideas of another's sentiments, but also impressions. See Penelhum [1992] p.153-156, for a helpful introduction.

with resemblance—not reason *per se*—being the operative motive.¹⁰ Rationality, therefore, does not ground any ethical relationship, let alone a cosmopolitan one. Two, Hume denies that affection is or could be impartial to individuating characteristics and relations. As we find human beings the objects both of love and contempt, some characteristic over and above “humanity” must be the cause of our affection.¹¹ Since “[o]ur sense of duty always follows the common and natural course of our passions,” Hume concludes that we can have no natural duty to love humanity as such (T 484). “This we may observe in our common judgments concerning actions,” he observes, “where we blame a person who either centers all his affections in his family, or is so regardless of them, as, in any opposition of interest, to give the preference to a stranger, or mere chance acquaintance” (T 488–489). In his denial of universal benevolence, we find Hume undercutting any cosmopolitan ethic that would ground duties either in shared rational agency or in natural affection towards one’s fellow man.

Hume reiterates his denial of universal benevolence in the *Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*, where he calls the limited scope of sentiments such as benevolence not only natural, but also advantageous, since it is a prerequisite for any action whatsoever: “It is wisely ordained by nature, that private connexions should commonly prevail over universal views and considerations; otherwise our affections and actions would be dissipated and lost, for want of a proper limited object” (EM 229n). Universal benevolence would spread the sentiment so thin that it would no longer be capable of motivating any determinate action. In this, Hume sounds a familiar anti-cosmopolitan refrain that love of all is effectively love of none. He thus provides a limiting condition on an acceptable interpretation of his cosmopolitanism.

Hume’s denials of universal benevolence in both the *Treatise* and *Enquiry* form part of a larger argument, familiar to Hume’s readers, against grounding justice in extensive benevolence. Justice must be impartial and disinterested in a way our passions cannot. Justice for Hume has its foundation in neither sympathy nor reason, but rather its utility to civil society (EM 188). In essence, justice has its root in self-interest which sees the utility of disinterested laws, first and foremost those regarding property. Justice is, in Hume’s terminology, an artificial virtue. Importantly for our purposes, it is a virtue predicated on limited benevolence (T 495).

¹⁰ On resemblance and sympathy, see T 318.

¹¹ Since it is not central to my argument, I put to one side Hume’s assertion that in cases like the one I am describing, a passion is excited through “a double relation of impressions and ideas” and instead speak in simple causal terms (T 482).

We are now in a position to see what is right in the commercial interpretation of Hume's cosmopolitanism. Hume recognizes the utility of justice in not only domestic commerce, but also international (EM 192), which leads him to advocate mechanisms of fair play against mercantilist and protectionist trade strategies.¹² Hume provides his most detailed account of the utility of international commerce in his essay *Of the Rise and Progress of the Arts and Sciences*, wherein he observes "[t]hat nothing is more favourable to the rise of politeness and learning, than a number of neighboring and independent states, connected together by commerce and policy" (E 119). Among the chief benefits of commerce is its ability to strengthen freedom, particularly of thought; intercourse spurs competition, comparison, and the development of standards of excellence.

Reputation is often as great a fascination upon men as sovereignty, and is equally destructive to the freedom of thought and examination. But where a number of neighboring states have great intercourse of arts and commerce, their mutual jealousy keeps them from receiving too lightly the law from each other, in matters of taste and of reasoning, and makes them examine every work of art with the greatest care and accuracy. The contagion of popular opinion spreads not so easily from one place to another. It readily receives a check in some state or other, where it concurs not with the prevailing prejudices. And nothing but nature and reason, or, at least what bears them a strong resemblance, can force its way through all obstacles, and unite the most rival nations into an esteem and admiration of it. (E 120)

Note that progress in culture is incompatible with insular, uncritical patriotism. The health of domestic society originates in national pride and allegiance, but also requires cosmopolitan commerce to temper prejudiced standards and feelings of self-importance. Thus far, the commercial approach to Hume on international affairs has it right. Commerce is Hume's primary brand of cosmopolitanism.

This brief, *prima facie* reading shows Hume to promote a form of what I termed instrumental cosmopolitanism. Engagement with the broader world is valued on Hume's analysis for its utility to the domestic project. This form of cosmopolitanism is consistent with, in fact demands, fair international structures, but it is inconsistent with any attempt to justify them from an impartial point of view. "Instrumental," that is, does not describe how other countries and cultures are treated, but the order of normative justification. Arneson's extreme cosmopolitanism provides a helpful comparison. In extreme cosmopolitanism, patriotism is

¹² Cf. MacIntyre [1988] p. 295-296 and Stilz [2002] p. 31.

valued instrumentally, justified if and only if it furthers otherwise impartial, noninstrumental ends. Hume reverses the order; his cosmopolitanism is valued instrumentally for its utility to local, irreducible moral communities.

Of the Rise and Progress of the Arts and Sciences also putatively presents Hume's cosmopolitanism as supervenient. If commerce has the benefit of freeing thought and increasing learning and decorum, then any cultural product or practice one culture develops furthers, *mutatis mutandis*, the development of all other cultures which come into contact with it, and potentially all peoples. In developing my own nation, I thus benefit others. Hume elsewhere carries this point further, observing that even in situations of conflict, serving one's own country serves humankind.

When the interests of one country interfere with those of another, we estimate the merits of a statesman by the good or ill, which results to his own country from his measures and councils, without regard to the prejudice which he brings on enemies and rivals. His fellow-citizens are the objects, which lie nearest to the eye, while we determine his character. And as nature has implanted in every one a superior affection to his own country, we never expect any regard to distant nations, when a competition arises. Not to mention that, while every man consults the good of his own community, we are sensible, that the general interest of mankind is better promoted, than by any loose indeterminate views to the good of a species, whence no beneficial action could ever result, for want of a duly limited object, on which they could exert themselves. (EM 225n)

Sentiment, we see once more, needs a determinate object to motivate action at all. Though it may seem counterintuitive to suggest that one serves the interests of mankind by privileging his own nation at the expense of another, Hume's contention is that this beats the alternative, *viz.*, trying to promote the said interest through abstract and impotent universal benevolence.¹³

To sum up the *prima facie* reading, Hume is a patriot. His patriotism calls for cosmopolitan justice if by that one means just commercial structures instrumentally valuable to domestic development; his patriotism also contributes to the good of humankind insofar as this simply supervenes on domestic development. One can thus call Hume's "assimilationist" or "liberal" patriotism a kind of cosmopolitanism, but it is a rather weak form, as it falls short even of what Arneson calls "moderate cosmopolitanism." Moderate cosmopolitanism "holds (a) that we have sig-

¹³ Cf. EM 274n.

nificant moral duties to other people that obtain just in virtue of their humanity and (b) we also have significant moral duties to other people in virtue of the special tie relationship arising from our being fellow countrymen.”¹⁴ Hume leaves no room for the first set of duties, as duty follows upon natural passion and there is no natural benevolence to mankind as such. Commercial approaches, the virtues of which we have identified, present Hume as a patriot with palpable, yet weak cosmopolitan regard.

The preceding remarks require one qualification. A defender of the commercial approach might at this point counter that passion only determines our natural sense of duty, which forms but one small portion of morality. Hume, after all, recognizes artificial virtues and attendant obligations. As he writes concerning justice, “self-interest is the original motive to the establishment of justice; but a sympathy with public interest is the source of the moral approbation which attends that virtue” (T 499–500, emphases in original). Could we not say the same of the justice required of international trade, that it has its root in national self-interest, yet has annexed to it ideas of virtue due to the sympathy we have with citizens of other nations? If we can, Hume may indeed be something of a moderate cosmopolitan on the commercial approach.

Indeed, Hume does believe ideas of moral approbation attach to the utility of just international trade structures, and yet I do not believe this alone moves us much beyond a weak, instrumental and supervenient, cosmopolitanism. Consider that Hume does not put the moral obligation to international justice on the same footing as that to domestic justice, as would be required of a moderate cosmopolitan:

But here we may observe, that tho’ the intercourse of different states be advantageous, and even sometimes necessary, yet it is not so necessary nor advantageous as that among individuals, without which ‘tis utterly impossible for human nature ever to subsist. Since, therefore, the natural obligation to justice among different states is not so strong as among individuals, the moral obligation which arises from it must partake of its weakness; and we must necessarily give a greater indulgence to a prince or minister, who deceives another; than to a private gentleman, who breaks his word of honour. (T 569, emphases in original)¹⁵

¹⁴ Arneson [2013] p. 2.

¹⁵ To avoid confusion, I should note that though in this passage Hume speaks of our “natural” obligation to justice among states, this does not run counter his judging justice an artificial virtue. See T 484 for Hume’s take on the ways in which justice is and is not natural.

Hume here again points to a cosmopolitanism that is fundamentally instrumental, predicated on the utility of commerce. Though he can recognize duties to other nations, such obligations do not have the force and necessity of analogous demands in the domestic sphere. We find nothing *prima facie* in Hume's ethics that demands the kind of parity implicit in moderate cosmopolitanism. Once again, commerce alone can furnish a cosmopolitanism that is discernible, yet weak.

II.

I now wish to move beyond the commercial understanding. Hume is a stronger cosmopolitan than the commercial approach allows, and this without denying any of the interpretative conditions established in part one. In fact, Hume is close to being a moderate cosmopolitan in Arneson's sense. Hume's cosmopolitanism is at its root instrumental but is nonetheless more demanding than what is captured in the commercial approach, as it in fact occasions duties arising from natural passions. Likewise, while I do not wish to deny that Hume believes benefit for humankind supervenes on benefit to one's nation, I believe he makes world citizenship integral to—and thus not merely supervenient upon—patriotic concern. In this section, I argue that these conclusions follow from Hume's ethics, arguably in ways Hume did not himself recognize.

I begin my case for Hume's unwitting cosmopolitanism with another seemingly anti-cosmopolitan aspect of Hume's ethics, what Livingston calls "the autonomy of custom":

Philosophical reflection may criticize any prejudice of common life by comparison with other prejudices and in the light of abstract principles, ideals, and models (what Hume calls "general rules"). But these critical principles, ideals, and models must themselves be thought of as reflections, abridgements, or stylizations of a particular domain of custom. What we cannot do is form critical principles from some Archimedean point... which throws into question the order of custom as a whole.¹⁶

On Livingston's reading, the role of reason is to "methodize and correct" common life, to bring explicit order and coherence to customary practice.¹⁷ The autonomy of custom stipulates that reason find its proper context within custom and, crucially, that critiques of cultural practices be internal to those practices, not subject to

¹⁶ Livingston [1998] p. 21. The terms "methodize" and "correct" are borrowed from EU 162.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*.

the external authority of abstract “reason.” The autonomy of custom makes patriotism, or some other bounded allegiance, a defining aspect of moral inquiry.¹⁸ Again, we have Hume the patriot and ostensibly weak cosmopolitan.

However, the autonomy of custom should not be confused with—and is, in fact, incompatible with—the insularity of custom, and this for two reasons. The first we have already discussed in relation to *Of the Rise of the Arts and Sciences*. Exchange between nations helps us to guard against myopic public opinion and to form the “steady and general points of view” needed in the “method of correcting our sentiments, or at least, of correcting our language where the sentiments are more stubborn and inalterable” (T 581–582). Hume’s point is that though ethical judgments are rooted in sentiment, reflection helps to quell purely personal interests that obscure our calmer sentiments and judgments. In this effort, internal critique of culture is actually abetted by, if you will, external data. Proper ethical reasoning within a culture does well to consider other cultures, not as authoritative, but as similarly positioned, potentially insightful ethical units.

Hume often lauds the study of history as the most effective means of forming a steady and general point view—he calls historians “the true friends of virtue” (E 567)—due to the particular effectiveness temporal distance has in mitigating strong passion (T 536–537). There is no reason, however, remoteness in space—conceived both as quantitative physical distance and qualitative difference in social environment—could not have a similar mitigating effect. What I want to stress at this point is that cross-cultural considerations enhance our judgments of not only social products, as *Of the Rise of the Arts and Sciences* makes plain, but also social practices, as both are subject to reflective correction. The good moral philosopher accepts the autonomy of her own culture, but in her efforts to methodize and correct it maintains, where helpful, a cosmopolitan orientation. Though Hume denies universal benevolence, he does recognize “some spark of friendship for humankind” as making possible such shared moral discourse (EM 271).

A second consideration pointing to the cosmopolitan dimension of moral reflection emerges not from Hume’s writings on commerce, but from a philosophical problem any defender of the autonomy of custom must, I submit, confront. Custom’s autonomy means that, as a whole, it cannot be judged systematically wrong. There is no pure philosophical position unadulterated by custom from which one could evaluate and find wanting the entirety of custom. We could imagine a society with systematic moral corruption from a Humean point of view,

¹⁸ For another interesting and informative take on the importance of patriotic concern in Hume’s ethics, especially his account of the moral approbation attached to justice, see Ainslie [1995].

say, a society protecting no form of property, but Hume would likely be dubious whether such a society could persist. At least practically, then, the thesis of the autonomy of custom survives the specter of systematic corruption. It seems, however, that custom's autonomy does not spare it the specter of inadequacy. What I have in mind is this: there is nothing in the thesis of the autonomy of custom which necessitates that each culture have sufficient internal resources to respond to all challenges and crises it potentially faces. Cultural autonomy does not entail cultural self-sufficiency. Hume would need additional argument to defend the second, stronger thesis. Perhaps one could manufacture an argument on Hume's behalf, but I do not see how one could do so without reproducing the problems of universal, rationalist moralities. Besides, I find no evidence that Hume wishes to develop an answer of this kind. To address the issue of adequacy, he need only take the position we have already seen in favor of historical study and – germane to our purpose – cross-cultural comparison.

A cursory glance at recent social phenomena suggests, to my mind at least, that cultures do in fact recognize their own inadequacy to methodize and correct their own practices and turn to cosmopolitan comparison and appropriation. For example, western cultures in recent decades have taken increasing interest in eastern meditation practice, arguably in response to the pace and demands of life in contemporary capitalist society. Scholars and writers in the west have studied the understandings of nature found in, for instance, indigenous cultures in Asia and the Americas in order to develop understandings of man's place in nature other than the Cartesian program of technological dominance. Legal scholars regularly compare practices and there have been pushes in parts of the Middle East, Africa, and Asia to adopt laws regarding sexual violence drawn from western models. Americans herald a multitude of foreign cuisines and lifestyles as antidotes to prevalent diseases (heart disease, diabetes) their own lifestyle seems to produce. One could multiply examples (and there is a wealth of literature on each), but in each case we find members of one culture – I say members since none of the cited efforts is without its resisters – seeking out the practices of another in attempts to solve political and moral crises its own practices have produced. Even if one is not persuaded by these examples, the vulnerability of insular cultures stands on its own as a philosophical problem and thus demands response.

Admittedly, a foreign practice or understanding will not take lasting hold if there is no precedent in domestic customs to sustain it. In the preceding paragraph, I chose, for lack of a better alternative, the verb "appropriation" to express this point. There is certainly precedent in western culture for contemplative practices and for non-anthropocentric views of nature. There is likewise precedent in

non-western cultures for whatever western legal provisions they adopt. One might therefore object to my calling any culture inadequate to respond to challenges and thereby support the self-sufficiency of custom. Perhaps a safer statement would be that foreign practices in many cases help reinvigorate dormant customs in novel ways or develop latent possibilities in a culture, thus enabling internal critique. The fact remains that people are often more drawn to new and exotic practices and that these are often needed catalysts to recapture similar traditions in their own culture. Again, compare Hume's endorsement of historical study (EM 223ff). Hence, even when a culture is technically adequate in its traditions, it still may face inadequacy in its ability to mobilize these at a given historical moment. The very Humean process of methodizing and correcting thus invites a perhaps surprisingly Humean openness to other traditions.

To this point, we have seen that cosmopolitan orientation and cross-cultural comparison both facilitate the development of standards and provide resources for peoples to respond to crises of justice and meaning in novel, or at least underutilized, ways. Certainly for Hume we cannot see these benefits in the absence of just trade structures, but I see no reason to tie the benefit of cosmopolitan openness to the contingencies of commerce. If the benefits of cosmopolitanism to the health of one's own culture are clear, then it seems a culture should actively seek—to borrow a commercial turn of phrase—best practices. It therefore ought to seek knowledge even of those peoples with whom trade lacks utility. Such peoples may yet have helpful models for organizing time, work, family life, economic mores, recreation, spiritual practice, technology, relations to nature, and the like. Importantly, the type of cosmopolitan inquiry I here describe is not solely rooted in jealousy of other cultures; it also derives from an awareness of the contingent limitations of one's own tradition. Respect for the autonomy of custom can be enhanced by comparative cosmopolitan practice. Such practice can enhance the cultivation of sentiment and institutions of justice in the domestic sphere. In this way, world citizenship does not merely supervene on national citizenship. World citizenship is integral to the fulfillment of patriotic duties—either particular duties better met through cosmopolitan appropriation, or at the least one's responsibility to be an active, reflective participant in culture—and this without sacrificing the autonomy of custom to an impartial practical reason.

I must here qualify one point. I have claimed that Hume's ethics requires cosmopolitan comparison and that world citizenship is integral to the success of national projects. I admit that I have not justified the strict necessity of such practice. It is possible that a culture be self-sufficient and equipped to address all manner of challenge. I am satisfied, however, if I have succeeded in making, on

Humean grounds, the lesser but still significant point that traditions secure their best chances for flourishing if they cultivate such a cosmopolitan orientation. I am satisfied, that is, if I have provided grounds for moral necessity in the absence of absolute necessity.

Though more far-reaching than the commercial approach and less supervenient, the cosmopolitanism I have thus far presented would appear instrumental. In an important sense, it must be so, on pain of introducing a sentiment of universal benevolence, the only possible ground for noninstrumental duties to humanity as such. Yet, while Hume's theory of sentiment rules out universal duties to humanity, I will now argue that his cosmopolitanism engenders benevolence, and with it duties, to particular non-compatriots. These duties, we shall see, do not outstrip patriotic duties, but do require institutional integration into domestic society. By introducing benevolence and duty into Hume's cosmopolitan account, I hope to offer needed nuance to its instrumentalism.

To this point, I have explored the impetus for Hume's cosmopolitanism, but have been intentionally vague in describing what it requires. I have used the phrases "cosmopolitan openness," "cosmopolitan orientation," "cross-cultural comparison," and "comparative cosmopolitan practice." To grant these phrases substance, we must presently consider what understanding and appropriating a foreign practice requires. This in turn requires that we consider more deliberately the mechanisms of Humean sympathy and its role in moral judgment. In one of the more well-trodden passages in the scholarship, Hume writes:

When experience has once given us a competent knowledge of human affairs, and has taught us the proportion they bear to human passion, we perceive, that the generosity of men is very limited and that it seldom extends beyond their friends and family, or, at most, beyond their native country. Being thus acquainted with the nature of man, we expect not any impossibilities from him; but confine our view to that narrow circle, in which any person moves, in order to form a judgment of his moral character. When the natural tendency of his passions leads him to be serviceable and useful within his sphere, we approve of his character, and love his person by a sympathy with the sentiments of those, who have a more particular connexion with him. We are quickly oblig'd to forget our own interest in our judgments of this kind... (T 602)

The proper vantage point from which to judge a person's character is the "narrow circle" of her customary associations. We do so by sympathizing with the sentiments of her associates. While the narrow circle passage treats the moral evaluation of individuals, only a small leap is needed to see the narrow circle as the van-

tage point from which Hume would judge the moral value of cultural practices. One can discern the value of a practice only when sympathetically identifying with the practitioners for whom it is serviceable and useful. The first step in comparative cosmopolitan practice, then, is to sympathetically identify with the sentiments of some “narrow circle” of non-compatriots. It bears noting that, as Rick has argued, Humean sympathy is demanding, requiring a “re-creative affective mirroring” of an agent’s “particular practical identity and psychological economy” and a setting aside of one’s own practical identity.¹⁹

Sympathizing with members of another culture allows us to internally grasp the value in their traditions and practices. It is possible for this exercise to have no lasting impact on one’s own activities. In recommending “narrow circle” sympathy as a means of judgment, Hume does not hope or imagine our passions and motivations will always be changed, only our moral discourse (T 603). The mechanism of sympathy is not itself evaluative.²⁰ Nevertheless, I think there is good reason to believe that in many cases the sympathy at the heart of cross-cultural comparison will give rise to affection towards non-compatriots. For one, internally grasping the practices of another culture requires a high degree of intimacy with that culture. And, as Hume observes, acquaintance alone gives rise to love and kindness (T 352). What’s more, I see a potential parallel for cross-cultural comparison in Hume’s consideration in the second *Enquiry* of how an individual’s virtue affects us when at a remove.

Bring this virtue nearer, by our acquaintance or connexion with the persons, or even by an eloquent recital of the case; our hearts are immediately caught, our sympathy enlivened, and our cool approbation converted into the warmest sentiments of friendship and regard. (EM 230)²¹

Discerning the virtue—where this is to be found—in ways of life of other peoples would similarly enliven, I believe, “the spark of friendship for human kind” within us (EM 271). The earnest cosmopolitan comparison needed to meet the demands of Hume’s ethics can thus result—and I suspect would most often result²²—in feelings of benevolence towards other peoples. Benevolence comes in

¹⁹ Rick [2007] p. 148.

²⁰ For helpful commentary, see Rick [2007] p. 139.

²¹ While obviously not the only mechanism for establishing familiarity and regard for other peoples, poetry receives special recognition from Hume for its success in enlivening sympathy for those removed from us in time and, I would extrapolate, space (EM 222).

²² I may be guilty here of a general optimism which suspects that most long-standing traditions will have something virtuous in them, such that one would feel affection for the bearers of that

degrees, of course. One might have more regard towards cultures whose practices she sees worthy of adopting (benevolence in this case being strengthened by gratitude), less with those she believes should methodize and correct in the direction of her own practices. The quality of the sentiment itself, though, depends little on the practical conclusions one draws; benevolence is a common upshot of the very project of sympathizing with the practices of another people.²³

I am now in position to explain my contention that Hume's cosmopolitanism engenders duties to non-compatriots in a way not captured by the commercial approach. The commercial approach can locate artificial duties to non-compatriots based on the feelings of moral approbation that come to attach to the artifices of just international trade. In my account of Humean cosmopolitanism, feelings of moral obligation arise naturally from our feelings of benevolence. Hume's remark on our natural sense of duty bears repeating: "[o]ur sense of duty always follows the common and natural course of our passions" (T 484). This should not be taken to mean that duty comes with any passion; passion is a necessary, not a sufficient, condition for duty.²⁴ The other necessary condition is this: one would disapprove of oneself for not performing an action (approve of oneself for performing it) from the general point of view.²⁵ Both conditions are met in Hume's cosmopolitanism. I have already addressed the origin of benevolence and the narrow circle sympathy at the heart of Hume's cosmopolitanism is the very mechanism for establishing the "general, inalterable standards" for moral action (T 603).²⁶ It thus stands to reason that at least some duties will arise in concert with

tradition, and this independent of what one thinks of the tradition's practices all things considered. I believe this optimism to be in general keeping with the spirit of Hume's philosophy, but I do not mean to deny the reality of truly deplorable practices such that one, even understanding a practice's supposed utility to a culture, would have no affection for its practitioners.

²³ My take on benevolence in this paragraph is in agreement with that of Vitz [2002]. Vitz argues that benevolence is limited in scope only as a practical fact of our psychology. Hume's denial of universal benevolence rules out love for a human being regardless of circumstances, but leaves every human being a potential object of benevolence, given the right circumstances. Hume does not, that is, restrict the scope of benevolence to the members of one's "narrow circle."

²⁴ See T 518: "And where an action is not requir'd by any natural passion, it cannot be requir'd for any natural obligation."

²⁵ See Haakonssen [1978].

²⁶ I have taken for granted Hume's argument that sympathizing with "narrow circles," rather than our own, affords the formation of a general point of view. There is no consensus on the success of Hume's argument, but I take Hume at his word to better focus on the contours of his cosmopolitanism. In the end, the question of whether cosmopolitan orientation occasions duty in addition to benevolence would turn much on whether one forms a general point of view or simply trades one partial vantage point for another, an issue I cannot settle here. See Rick [2007] for an argument against Humean sympathy's suitability to forming a general point of view. See Korsgaard [1999] for a more positive take on the formation of a general point of view.

cosmopolitan practice. Such obligations will not outstrip those towards her more immediate associates with whom she sympathizes more, but this is not because the former is artificial, the latter natural. Moreover, since the duties to non-compatriots I am identifying follow the natural course of her passions, they are more likely to influence her conduct than obligations arising from the general point of view, which often fails to correct our sentiments amidst “stubborn and inalterable” passions (T 582).

It is time to bring the claims I have made in this section together with the limiting conditions treated in section one. On the one hand, proper care for autonomous customs and traditions requires a degree of vigilance in seeking best practices from other traditions. If such practices are sought earnestly through the mechanism of Humean sympathy, benevolence for their practitioners will often follow. Patriotic commitment thus gives rise to extra-national benevolence and duties towards foreigners. On the other hand, no one person can have universal benevolence; we rightly blame someone who prefers a stranger to his family and rightly praise the enemy who benefits his own country. What kind of cosmopolitanism does this set up? The foregoing demands might be met in several ways. A nation might set up a ministry specifically devoted to cultivating the kind of cosmopolitan orientation I have described: a kind of diplomatic corps, but one whose animating principal is intercultural exchange, not the extension of soft power. In the absence of such high institutionalization, individual citizens might form of themselves what Cabrera, with others, calls the “cosmopolitan vanguard, or individuals consciously attempting to enact principles of global citizenship or human rights more broadly.”²⁷ Each of these options strikes me as insufficient, however. For one, the project of methodizing and correcting custom belongs to each of its participants. It is not the province of a government ministry or a self-appointed vanguard, though these may prove helpful as part of broader effort. Furthermore, to the extent that these options presume financial resources and other institutional structures, they run the risk of making cosmopolitan appropriation a privilege of the powerful. But as Appiah has rightly observed, politics runs in the opposite direction, with cosmopolitan adaptation most often forced upon the poor.²⁸ For these reasons, we would do well to seek other ways of realizing Humean cosmopolitanism.

It seems to me that the most likely and most effective means of enacting Hume’s cosmopolitanism would be to enact cosmopolitan education efforts, as

²⁷ Cabrera [2010] p. 29.

²⁸ Appiah [2006] p. xviii-xix.

Nussbaum has called for.²⁹ Educational efforts would garner popular regard for cosmopolitan *orientation*, not unlike how “the artifice of politicians” enhances popular esteem for justice (T 500). The goal of such education would not be, *per impossible*, to have every citizen sympathetic and duty-bound to every foreign citizen. Yet, if a virtue is made of this orientation and its value is appreciated, we can imagine a society in which citizens collectively explore and sympathize with a great diversity of cultures, ideally all, though any given citizen will feel sentiment and duty towards only a small number of them. Such a society would then be equipped with all the resources it needs for healthy internal discussion regarding the value of its own practices and regarding which particular duties to foreigners it ought to meet (and can best meet). We can imagine individual citizens fulfilling the duties they themselves feel and appealing to their fellow citizens to do the same, though, again, citizens—and by extension state agencies—will be swayed to action in unequal measure based on which advocates best enliven collective passion. There is an ineluctable partiality that attends to each person’s benevolence, and there would be inevitable competition for a purchase on the limited benevolence of others. Even so, under this model nations will feel obliged to do a great deal more for other peoples than the commercial approach envisions. Importantly, because in this model duties to non-compatriots are integrated into the course of domestic life, not presumed counter to it, we do not risk sacrificing patriotic concern to an impersonal universal standpoint. We also do not violate the authority of custom or jeopardize the proper exercise of reason therein; we in fact strengthen reason’s ability to methodize and correct custom and to guard against potential inadequacy. Hume’s cosmopolitanism is, as it must be, dialogical. It is not, as is extreme cosmopolitanism, authoritative.

I do not intend to advocate in further detail for any particular manifestation of Hume’s cosmopolitanism. I am open to mechanisms other than public education. I am more concerned presently with normative justification than social forms. I hope to have shown that Hume is a proponent—I suspect unwittingly, but at the very least subtly—of a form of cosmopolitanism that supervenes on national development but also facilitates it, that justifies itself in the first place by its instrumental utility to the nation but also occasions benevolence and therefore duty in the end. Hume thus comes close to satisfying the conditions of moderate cosmopolitanism, which “holds (a) that we have significant moral duties to other people that obtain just in virtue of their humanity and (b) we also have significant moral duties to other people in virtue of the special tie relationship arising from our be-

²⁹ Nussbaum [1994] *passim*.

ing fellow countrymen.”³⁰ Hume would only quibble with the term “just.” Duties in virtue of others’ humanity as enacted through particular customs and practices? Sure. Duties just in virtue of an indeterminate humanity? This picture is, for Hume, much too simplified. Still, Hume approaches moderate cosmopolitanism in a way neither commonly appreciated nor captured in commercial approaches.

III.

We have arrived at Hume’s cosmopolitanism. The point in my argument that may appear non-Humean – that on the potential inadequacy of custom – I hope to have suitably delimited and justified by Hume’s own standards. Even if one grants me the descriptor “Humean,” however, he may still refuse to grant “cosmopolitanism.” We have not established duties to humanity as such. We have not assured inalienable rights. Though we have provided a model in which each culture will engage and represent the concerns of other members of the globe, we have not guaranteed that all persons will, in the end, have their basic needs met. Some will see any cosmopolitanism without impersonal, impartial duties to humanity as such a false form. I will not attempt to settle this question and do not mean to present Hume’s as the best version of cosmopolitan theory all things considered. By way of conclusion, however, I would like to point out two benefits I can see in bringing Hume’s voice into discussion with contemporary cosmopolitan theory. These are benefits beyond what I take to be the obvious inherent value in better understanding any great thinker.

For one, some versions of contemporary cosmopolitan theory share commonalities with Hume’s. Appiah, for instance, presupposes cultural plurality and autonomy – that “[w]e can’t hope to reach a final consensus on how to rank and order... values”³¹ – and emphasizes models of conversation which “help us get used to one another.”³² Sypnowich, even in the course of defending egalitarian duties, voices concern that cultural autonomy is insufficiently defended in much cosmopolitan discourse.³³ Understanding and evaluating Hume’s particular brand of cosmopolitanism – well beyond weak commercialism, just short of moderate – can help us to situate and evaluate these more recent arguments and concerns. I suspect Hume’s reflections on sympathy and duty could help further develop such accounts that take cultural autonomy seriously. While “Hume can help those

³⁰ Arneson [2013] p. 2.

³¹ *Ibidem*, p. xxi.

³² Appiah [2006] p. 78.

³³ Sypnowich [2005].

already like Hume" is potentially a trivial conclusion, it gains in significance when one considers how overwhelmingly contemporary cosmopolitan thinking is dominated by the legacies of Kant and Rawls. Those hoping for a cosmopolitan ethic, but wary of impartial, universalist ethics, could use, I suspect, a partner like Hume.

Perhaps more surprisingly, Hume could prove a useful ally even to broadly Kantian forms of cosmopolitan ethics, in both negative and positive manners. Negatively, given that Hume's emphases on the autonomy of custom, internal critique, and contextualized reason might easily be used to justify anti-cosmopolitan, aggressively patriotic positions, showing Hume to be more cosmopolitan than he appears removes a potential haven from anti-cosmopolitan partisans. Hume *qua* unwitting cosmopolitan indirectly aids more Kantian projects simply by tending in the same direction and undermining a seemingly viable counter-position. Positively, Hume might help to solve the practical problem plaguing Kant and his descendants, the problem of moral motivation. Even if one sees reason as capable of generating universal duty to humanity as such, even if one believes this is enough to make acting on such a duty possible,³⁴ one does not therein hold an explanation for how to go about fomenting respect for the moral law or, to use Kant's technical terms, for making objective ends one's subjective ends. Hume may aid those cosmopolitans who accord more power to reason, for Hume's cosmopolitanism suggests a model for developing cosmopolitan regard in otherwise patriotically motivated citizens. At a certain point, the two models necessarily diverge, but current world conditions seem to put us far from that point. For the time being, Hume's sentiment approach might go a long way towards making the eventual realization of a more Kantian form of cosmopolitanism, if desirable, a reality. Indeed, I find the most promising upshot of studying Hume *qua* cosmopolitan to be the groundwork he lays for a potential theory of cosmopolitan virtue.

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³⁴ See, for instance, Korsgaard's response to Hume on this issue [1986].

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