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were to consider instead one man who said he believed in the Last Judgment and another who said that he was not sure, we would say that there was a great gulf between them. Now consider entering a church on three successive days and overhearing on each occasion three different solitary men articulating the words of the Lord's Prayer. When questioned, the first says he is doing so in the firm conviction that there is a God who hears him; the second says he is doing so in the hope that there is a God who hears him; the third says that he is doing so out of habit, with no thought as to the meanings of the words he uses and no beliefs one way or the other about whether or not there is a God to hear them. Would we not say that, whatever the gulf between the first two, the first two were a lot closer together than either was to the third? And would not most theists say that their own religious lives find them vacillating between the positions held by the first two, slipping into the third only when at their least reflective? Is this condition not, as Cottingham suggests, a part of what it must almost universally *mean*—in his sense of 'mean'—to be a theist this side of the grave?

To these and related questions most of the contributors to this volume have something to say; some pursue their own lines, which do not take them past these issues but are not without interest in their own right. The volume as a whole is accessible, both in style and length; it could easily be read in an afternoon, leaving the evening free to contemplate the questions it raises and answers it proffers, or alternatively to attend chapel.

The British Moralists on Human Nature and the Birth of Secular Ethics, by Michael B. Gill. Cambridge; Cambridge University Press, 2006. Pp. 359. \$85.00

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Michael Gill's new book tells the story of a crucial development, indeed transformation, of moral philosophy in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries: namely, with David Hume, the rise of a consistent and well-grounded secular ethics—an ethics that need make no reference to God or even an extra-human order to explain and justify morality. Gill's story is by no means comprehensive of the ethical theories available at this time; rather, Gill has focused his attention on a particular line of development from the Cambridge Platonists through Shaftesbury and Hutcheson to David Hume. The analysis is framed by what Gill calls "the question of human nature." The book has a wonderful shape to it because it follows this line of development as defined by this question. Gill frames the story as one of a continually developing inheritance where each figure takes up the moral theory of his predecessor and develops it by resolving an internal tension in that previous account.

Gill evidently has a full grasp of his material and the surrounding secondary literature and yet, because of the narrative drive of the volume and the clarity of analysis in the interpretations offered, the book is both eminently readable and full of material to provoke the thought of scholar

and general reader alike. It seems clear that Gill is writing for a more general audience: he has judiciously put much of his scholarly argumentation in a set of very substantial footnotes (one is in fact finished with the body of the text at page 269). Of course, what will recommend the book to a larger audience is not the clear presentation of the somewhat obscure moral theorists that preceded Hume, but rather the larger claim contained in the book's title that this book will help us understand the birth of secular ethics.

It is here that one can accuse the book of unclarity. Gill is telling us a very specific story: the stages that brought about Hume's evidently secular or naturalistic ethics. And certainly the book helps us with that. But while one can contrast Hume's position to the forefathers outlined here and so see very nicely in what his secularity consists, Hume's account cannot be equated with "secular ethics" per se. Others, both within Britain (such as Hobbes, Locke and Mandeville) and in that strange land across the English Channel (Machiavelli, Spinoza, Grotius, Pufendorf and Bayle), can arguably be claimed to be proponents of secular ethics and at an earlier date than Hume. So, in fact the most the book can reasonably claim to do is to establish a line in the story of the birth of secularity. I think Gill is basically clear about this limitation—but the title and aspects of the analysis sometimes obscures this modesty. A further limitation of the book is that it is resolutely concerned with the structure of arguments internal to moral theory; it does not consider the larger social context and historical background that may be crucial to an explanation of why a theory is propounded or found convincing at a certain time and less so at a different time. This is a philosopher's history of ethical thought.

None of these limitations take away from the intrinsic merits of this book. Indeed it is because of its selectivity that it can tell such a compelling tale. The story is the story of what Gill calls the human nature question. Really it is the story of the "positive account" of human nature and how it dissolved itself into the secular ethics of David Hume. The human nature question is, for Gill, the crucial guiding concern of moral thought preceding Hume: are humans essentially (by nature) good or evil? Are we capable, by our own powers, of ethically sound behaviour? While Gill will follow the story of the positive answer to these questions that starts with Benjamin Whitcote and Ralph Cudworth (the Cambridge Platonists of the seventeenth century), he begins his tale in the preceding generation with the English Calvinism in which Whitcote and Cudworth were raised and from which they broke. This English Calvinism clearly defines the negative account of human nature: man is altogether fallen and incapable of righteousness without Christ's redeeming work of salvation. Indeed, even access to this redemptive grace is altogether the work of an inscrutable God who regards not the works of fallen man. Against this the Cambridge Platonists claim that the human is capable of moral righteousness on the basis of internal capacities. Strangely, Gill provides us with no reason for this shift. He will find in all of the stages of the positive account a movement generated by a series of internal tensions. But how the positive account in fact got off the ground he does not say; Gill points out that when Whitcote and Cudworth looked within themselves they did not find the sin the Calvinist account supposed, but rather the opposite

and so simply stopped accepting the Calvinist position, but this is hardly an explanation.

However, once the positive account gets going in Whitcote and Cudworth, it starts generating tensions and problems that only cease once we get to Hume who dissolves the human nature question altogether. Let me briefly list the stages of this series of tensions. (1) The Cambridge Platonist positive account of human nature presents real analytical difficulties in trying to be held in concert with an orthodox Christian account of Christ's role in salvation: if we can be good simply through our inner and natural relation to God, what role does Christ's external action have in righteousness? (2) Shaftesbury takes up this implication by abandoning Christianity for a more general deism. The tension that is generated in his thought arises from his trying to hold to a still external or "objective" account of morality, while engaging in what Gill calls the Copernican turn in morality. That is, Shaftesbury supposes he can claim both that morality belongs to an external "nature of things" and that it is independently founded in a purely internal account of human morality (so, even if God and the world did not exist we would still have access to morality through our own internal disposition toward moral aims and purposes). For Gill this Copernican turn is crucial—its ultimate implication is to dissolve the human nature question, for in the end it makes morality a purely inwardly realized human reality that cannot then be used to measure human nature as if by an external standard. (3) Hutcheson bites the bullet of the Copernican revolution in morality and abandons external standards and argues that morality is based entirely on our human sentiments. Hume will follow Hutcheson here, but Hutcheson falls short of taking on the full implications of this step through his explication of these human sentiments: he equates the moral sense grounded in human sentiments to our normal physical senses. In short, they retain a certain kind of normative naturalness that can lead us to see a God that gave us the moral senses necessary to benevolence and a positive ethical life. (4) It is Hume who finally fully naturalizes or secularizes ethics by seeing that once ethics is made to be a property purely of human sentiment it is rendered fully contingent and historical. We can not ground morality in revelation, in God, in a cosmic order, or indeed in a conception of nature or what is natural—morality belongs both to the contingencies of human nature and the contingencies of human history. It can find no grounding outside of itself. As Gill notes, this new secular, Humean conception of morality will strike some today, as it did his own contemporaries, as no account of morality at all, because it expressly precludes asking what human nature is for. Does a Humean account of morality provide a basis for moral resistance in deeply inhuman circumstances—moments of radical evil or social and moral revolution?

Hume is the hero of this story and the reader is led through a series of tensions in the earlier Christian and deistic accounts to see that those standpoints are incoherent. Indeed, like Hume himself, Gill shows great powers of intellectual sympathy for those with whom he has disagreement, but, in the end, his accounts are framed to lead to a secular standpoint. This is to say that there appears to be a "meta-narrative," a moral, to this story about morality. While Gill presents his book as moving through a series of tensions, finally ending in Hume, really what holds the story

together is the working out of a single tension. One way of putting this is that the Copernican revolution in morality, which Gill ascribes to Shaftesbury, in fact is there from the beginning, even in the English Calvinism that serves as a background to Gill's account.

One way to get at this is to recognize how inadequate Gill's discussion of positive and negative accounts of human nature is when one pans back from the narrow focus of his book to look at the larger Western tradition. From this broader perspective, there is a whole array of positions, both negative and positive and complex mixtures of the two, which makes this simple dichotomy look unhelpful. A broader perspective enables one to see that the kinds of tensions generated in the specific tradition Gill is looking at need to be seen as arising not from any account of human nature, but rather from the specific way the human nature question was framed in the early modern period—in particular, the thoroughly internalist character that belonged even to the Calvinist negative account. So while Hume may be the logical outcome of the particular line of positive accounts that Gill describes for us, this in fact has done nothing to more broadly discount either the validity of the human nature question or the sense of a trans-human basis for morality.

But even to say this is still to presuppose that Gill has given us a valid account of the origins and nature of Hume's ethical thought. Again, I want to emphasize how helpful the account is, especially at so sharply analyzing the distinctive character of Hume's position. But this virtue is also a weakness. Underlying the whole account is a claim that one cannot hold together an internalist humanly derived ethics with an external, objective or even divinely grounded ethics: one cannot be both a Copernican and a Ptolomeist in ethics. Ultimately, once Hume has drawn out the full implication here, ethics cannot be both contingent and naturalist in origins and at the same time divine or transcendent. While it is undoubtedly true that Hume is the greater philosophic mind, nonetheless there can be something valuable in the earlier, apparently less consistent, positions of Cudworth, Shaftesbury, and Hutcheson which may point to a possibility not in fact altogether absent in Hume's work. So that what Gill finds, on the basis of analysis, to be simply tension and inconsistency, may well be intuited unities that are in fact actual and real. Indeed, one can claim that such a unity is there in the confidence in Hume that thought and the world can come together in a way that exceeds all the contingency and finitude of his empiricism. Charles Taylor has written compellingly of the need to overcome the dichotomous thinking that opposes the inner turn of modernity to our capacity to connect, even in and through that internality, to an external order or source. While it is certainly true that there is much in David Hume's critique of those who preceded him that they could not easily answer, nonetheless, in their more "contradictory" positions there may be a crucial insight to possibilities obscured by a Humean account of moral thought (which may indeed be necessary to that very Humean secularity). In short, it may be that Hume did not "dissolve" the human nature question, but rather provided the basis for its necessary reformulation. Certainly, when one looks to the further development of Western thought, it would be hard to say that the human nature question is not still very much alive.