

Persons and Passions: Essays in Honor of Annette Baier, by Joyce Jenkins, Jennifer Whiting and Christopher Williams (eds). Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005. Pp viii + 368. H/b \$53.00.

This collection of papers explores some of the themes that have been central to the philosophy of Annette Baier. The bulk of the papers take a largely historical approach, looking especially at the two thinkers who have most stimulated Baier in her philosophical career, Descartes and Hume. The papers offer some original insights into the work of the two thinkers by focusing on the role that the *passions* play in their work, and by reflecting on the importance of *persons* in a full, morally-loaded sense.

The collection begins with a useful scene-setting introduction from Christopher Williams, who recounts an anecdote of Baier warning him ‘about the type of historian of philosophy who “tries to show that he is just a bit smarter” than the historical thinker he is writing about’ (p. 13). We doubt that Baier is any smarter than Descartes or Hume. But we think she is often *wiser* than they. And that is a still rarer quality among philosophers. Many of the essays in this collection try to show that Descartes or Hume were wiser than philosophers tend to suppose—in allowing a real role for passions in one’s mind (Descartes); by allowing a ‘world-taking’ and not merely feeling-ist character to emotional cognition (Hume). They might be right, though we shall give some indications in the remainder of this review about why we remain to be convinced. We are convinced that Baier herself *has* at times succeeded in offering wisdom. Perhaps she, and some of her colleagues and followers who are present in this volume, have been somewhat hobbled by suggesting wisdom in Descartes and Hume, when what is really brought out by their writing is most frequently the deep wisdom in Baier’s. Karen Jones’s essay, ‘Trust as an affective attitude’, claims that an ‘entrusting’ theory of trust fails, because it cannot explain that trust cannot be willed. But surely trust can be willed, a fair bit. One can *decide* to trust—on imponderable evidence. We think that such a semi-willed attitude, towards Baier’s work if not as often towards that of her great but flawed predecessors, may well itself be wise.

Lisa Shapiro leads off an attempted reassessment of the philosophy of Descartes based upon the role of ‘passions’ in his work. She discusses Descartes’s *Meditations* in light of the passionate language it contains, and she implicitly licences, we think, the intriguing suggestion that the *Meditations* is a kind of ‘progress of sentiments’, in Baier’s sense (following of course Hume) of that phrase. But we suspect that taking seriously the scenario central to the *Meditations*, that of the malign demon, should have generated far more emotional language than Descartes allows himself. The terror that should be consequent

upon the demon hypothesis, a terror at total cognitive penetration, and thought-disorder or terminal confusion, not to mention the terror consequent upon the possibility that I *have* a body and am therefore intensely suffer-able, is barely hinted at in Descartes's text. The focus on the reason of the meditator in radical doubt occludes from view the rational terror at unreason or at torture that should follow from Descartes's own hypothesis. Thus we cannot allow, as Shapiro wishes to, that there is an adequate presence of the passions in the *Meditations*.

Continuing with this theme, Amy Morgan Schmitter offers a defence against feminist critiques of Descartes. Schmitter's paper is historically astute, differentiating between Descartes's work and the Cartesian legacy. Schmitter argues that whilst the latter can be seen to be prejudiced against 'femininity' by strongly favouring reason over passion, the former strives towards a harmony between the two. Unfortunately, she fails to show how passion and reason can be reconciled without reason dominating, and fails to rescue Descartes from the accusation of privileging mind over body (p. 51). The ultimate end of 'proper' relations between reason and passion is a kind of intellectual harmony. Reason shapes the passions to desire knowledge and to respond to situations in ways that accord with reason. The passions are always destined to play a secondary role.

The problem with the volume's papers on Descartes is that they only succeed in showing how *Cartesian* passions play a role in Descartes's work, when the real point at issue is what role the *everyday* conception of passions can play. It is hard to see how Descartes's work can be fruitfully defended or reappraised unless one can show how his philosophy can accommodate passions in anything other than a Cartesian sense.

Saul Traiger follows with an historical account of the role of the precipice scenario and shows Hume's original take on the problem. Whilst the accepted conclusion drawn from the scenario had been that it 'unhinges' reason, Traiger shows how Hume's thought allows for a dynamic and novel interplay between reason, imagination, and passion. Lilli Alanen follows with an engaging account of Hume's work on the passions. There are two particularly admirable features of this paper: firstly, the author never shirks from the fact that her characterisation of Humean passions as intentional states relies on substantive *implicit* evidence and is contradicted *explicitly* in several places in Hume's work; and secondly, she shows why Hume is still an important figure in contemporary philosophising about emotions (particularly in the debate between cognitivism and non-cognitivism). Ainslie's essay, elaborating his powerful account of the Humean self as not just a mind, but also an embodied person with a distinctive place in the social sphere' (p. 144), follows in Baier's footsteps; Broughton poses serious questions as to whether we can really follow Baier in taking there to be any genuine *progress* of sentiments in Hume.

Hume's moral philosophy is then explicitly discussed. Alisdair MacIntyre's fascinating comparison of why it is impossible to teach Hume or Aristotle in

an evaluatively-neutral manner is a real highlight of the collection. David Gauthier produces a fine piece of critical scholarship on Hume's relationship between morality and self-interest. Robert Shaver is less successful in his attempts to 'save' Hume from the clutches of Kantianism. Whilst Shaver succeeds in showing that Hume's moral theory cannot be assimilated to Kantian moral theory, the consequence of this is to render Hume as overly like a Benthamite utilitarian. The author fails to distinguish between the sophistication of Hume's moral theory, namely the link between 'moral' reflection and the appeal to well-being, and brute utilitarianism.

Appropriately, the book moves on to discuss the thinkers for whom Baier set herself up as an 'adversary'. The 'cold' deontology of Kant's ethics is discussed, and defended, by Sergio Tenenbaum and Michele Moody-Adams. Moody-Adams is always worth reading, and her essay here is no exception. It raises good questions to Baier and Hume on whether they can actually make sense of the phenomenon of cruelty, and whether their sometime attribution of a tendency toward cruelty in the warp and weft of Kant's moral philosophy itself is justified. Tenenbaum attempts to reconcile Kant's moral theory with the importance that feelings such as friendship play in human lives. Whilst it is praiseworthy to 'take on' the work of a thinker to whom a collection of papers is dedicated, Tenenbaum's efforts are ultimately unsuccessful. He argues that there is no inconsistency—in terms of treating people with equal respect—in withholding information about a job that one covets from a stranger and not doing so from a friend (p. 271). However, this surely does violence to the intuitively appealing impartiality of Kantian ethics. Furthermore, other passages reduce friendship to nothing more than a rationally cultivated feeling of beneficence, devoid of 'raw, indiscriminate feeling' (p. 269). If applied universally this can easily be made consistent with Kant's moral theory—however, that would do little to deflect Baier's criticism. Baier's criticism relates to *human* friendship, something that will often be guided by 'raw ... feeling', and properly so. The point is not that Kantian ethics leaves no room for rationally cultivated good will, but rather that it overlooks the very *human feeling* of friendship and the role that it *should* play in our moral lives.

This is symptomatic of a general problem with this collection of papers. All are concerned with the themes of passions and persons. But what is quite often missing is a reliable sense that the authors are discussing clearly defined concepts. Partly this is due to an almost reverent historical faithfulness (particularly with Descartes), but it is also symptomatic sometimes of a lack of penetration into foundational questions like 'what are *the passions*?' and 'what is *a person*?'. The terms have a somewhat protean existence in this collection and the lack of clarity over exactly what is being discussed gives the sense that important groundwork needs to be done in order to get clear about what is at issue here. Whilst the papers are admirable in both scholarship and originality, it is this lack of coherence in respect of these central concepts that ultimately leads the reader to more questions than answers.

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But possibly it is in the spirit of Baier's philosophy to think that that might not be such a bad thing, after all?

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