



# Reflecting Subjects: Passion, Sympathy, and Society in Hume's Philosophy

*Jacqueline Taylor*

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## **Reflecting Subjects: Passion, Sympathy, and Society in Hume's Philosophy** Jacqueline Taylor

Jacqueline Taylor offers an original reconstruction of Hume's social theory, which examines the passions and imagination in relation to institutions such as government and the economy. *Reflecting Subjects* begins with a close examination of Hume's use of an experimental method to explain the origin, nature and effects of pride, an indirect passion that reflects a person's sense of self-worth in virtue of her valuable qualities, for example, her character or wealth. In explaining the origin of pride in terms of efficient causes, Hume displaces the traditional appeal to final causes, and is positioned to give an account of the significance for us of the passions in terms of a social theory. Subsequent chapters reconstruct this social theory, looking in particular at how the principle of sympathy functions to transmit cultural meanings and values, before examining Hume's account of social power—especially with regard to rank and sex. Turning to Hume's system of ethics, Taylor argues for the importance of Hume's more sophisticated moral philosophy in his *Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals*, since it emphasizes certain virtues of good moral evaluation. She demonstrates that the principle of humanity stands as the central concept of Hume's Enlightenment philosophy.

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