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# Non-Humean Holism, Un-Humean Holism

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## ABSTRACT

In this article I argue that textual evidence from David Hume's *A Treatise of Human Nature* does not support J. Baird Callicott's professedly Humean yet holistic environmental ethic, which understands the community (e.g., the biotic community) as a 'metaorganismic' entity 'over and above' its individual members. Based on Hume's reductionist account of the mind and his assimilation of the metaphysical nature of the mind to that of the community, I also argue that a Humean account of the community should be likewise reductionist. My conclusion is that Callicott's anti-reductionist holism is at least foreign to, and at worst incompatible with, Hume's philosophy.

## KEYWORDS

Hume, Callicott, holism, community, individual, sympathy

## INTRODUCTION

Alan Carter has recently argued in this journal that J. Baird Callicott's 'partial reading'<sup>1</sup> of David Hume does not support his allegedly *Humean* yet *holistic* environmental ethic. While the allegedly Humean dimension of Callicott's position is the subject of my investigation here, I should first summarise its holistic dimension. Briefly, Callicott's holism recommends that we have a 'respect for the community as such, *in addition to* respect for its members severally';<sup>2</sup> that we care for 'our communities per se, *over and above* their individual members';<sup>3</sup> and that 'the *summum bonum* resides in the biotic community and moral value or moral standing devolves upon plants, animals, people, and even soils and waters by virtue of their membership in this (vastly) larger-than-human society'.<sup>4</sup>

One sentence written by Hume, which Callicott has repeatedly cited in support for his own holism, is from Hume's *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*. The sentence in question is:

We must adopt a more public affection, and allow, that the interests of society are not, even on their own account, entirely indifferent to us.<sup>5,6</sup>

But as Carter points out, 'in the pages which immediately follow [the passage containing the above sentence], Hume provides several examples, all of which concern the sharing of sentiments with other *individuals*, and which show how their emotions matter to us'.<sup>7</sup> Hence, when we put this sentence in its original context, Hume's use there of 'public affection' and 'the interests of society' can be more appropriately interpreted as referring to one's affection towards, and the interests of, other individual members of one's society. Contrary to Callicott's interpretation, the fact that Hume talks about the general public or society does not suggest that he thinks of it as an entity 'over and above' its individual members. To reinforce Carter's point, attention should also be drawn to Hume's footnote to the passage containing the sentence in question. There Hume writes:

[W]e have humanity or a *fellow-feeling with others*. It is sufficient, that this is experienced to be a principle in human nature. [...] No man is absolutely indifferent to *the happiness and misery of others*.<sup>8</sup>

Who are these 'others' who are the objects of our 'humanity',<sup>9</sup> whom we have 'a fellow feeling' with, and whose 'happiness and misery' no human being is absolutely indifferent to? Obviously, other *individual* fellow human beings (or at most including our fellow sentient nonhuman beings).<sup>10</sup> So it is evident that by 'public affection' Hume is referring to nothing more than one's affection towards other individual members of one's society.

While I agree with Carter that Callicott has not provided adequate textual support from Hume's *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals* for his own holism, I shall further argue that Callicott's attempt to find the same sort of support from Hume's *A Treatise of Human Nature* also fails.

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In a discussion contrasting the individualistic approach of 'the (Benthamic) utilitarian and (Kantian) deontological schools of modern moral philosophy', on the one hand, with his own holistic approach which endorses what he calls the 'Humean-Darwinian natural history of morals' on the other,<sup>11</sup> Callicott writes:

[T]he two mainstream modern philosophical accounts [...] grant moral standing to individuals only, while the natural history account [of morality] makes possible

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moral status for *wholes*. Hume, for example, recognizes a distinct sentiment which naturally resides in human beings for the “publick interest.”<sup>12</sup>

[Note] 73. Hume, *Treatise*, pp. 484–85.<sup>13</sup>

Similarly, Callicott writes in another place:

[H]uman beings, as Hume points out, are, as a matter of fact, thoroughly dependent upon society and there exists a certain sentiment which *naturally* resides in us for what he frequently calls the “publick interest,” that is, for the commonweal or for the integrity of society *per se*.<sup>14</sup>

[Note] 20. *Ibid.*, [i.e., Hume, *Treatise*,] pp. 484–85.<sup>15</sup>

Now, one question concerning Callicott’s reading of Hume is: whether Hume has said anything in those places of the *Treatise*, to which Callicott refers, that suggests the notion of ‘society *per se*’, which is the pre-requisite for us having ‘a certain sentiment’ for it, and thereby may somehow support Callicott’s holistic view that it is possible for ‘*wholes*’ (e.g., society *per se*, the biotic community *per se*) to have moral status. Answer: No. For, as we shall see shortly, the whole discussion given by Hume in ‘*Treatise*, pp. 484–85’ is entirely irrelevant to Callicott’s holistic agenda.

*Treatise* p. 484 contains the end of Section 1 and the beginning of Section 2 (of Part 2 of Book 3). There are two points put forward by Hume at the end of Section 1, namely that a man naturally loves his relations better than strangers everything else being equal, and that the notion of ‘natural’ being used there is opposed to the notion of ‘artificial’. These two points from Hume in no way suggest the notion of ‘society *per se*’. Next, in the beginning of Section 2 on pp. 484–5, what Hume puts forward is the claim that society is ‘advantageous’ to its individual members for three reasons. Hume summarises them as follows:

By the conjunction of forces, our power is augmented: By the partition of employments, our ability encreases: And by mutual succour we are less expos’d to fortune and accidents. ’Tis by this additional *force*, *ability*, and *security*, that society becomes advantageous.<sup>16</sup>

In the light of this passage, Callicott is quite right in saying that ‘human beings, as Hume points out, are, as a matter of fact, thoroughly dependent upon society ...’ (i.e., the first half of the previous passage cited from Callicott). But since that is all Hume puts forward there, it is clear that Callicott is smuggling in his own holism when he continues to say (the second half) that ‘... and there exist a certain sentiment which *naturally* resides in us for what he [Hume] frequently calls the “publick interest,” that is, for the commonweal or for the integrity of society *per se*.’

More important, in ‘*Treatise*, pp. 484–85’, Hume has *no* mention of ‘publick interest’, not even once, let alone suggesting that the notion of public interest is

in any way related to the notion of society per se, or that we have some natural sentiment (moral or otherwise) for society per se. It is puzzling that immediately after quoting the phrase, 'publick interest', which is the sole object of his interpretation in favour of holism, Callicott refers to places in Hume's *Treatise* that do not contain the phrase at all! Callicott's two references to the *Treatise* might be systematic typo-errors. But it is not my purpose here to make such a speculation. Suffice to say that Callicott has not provided adequate textual support from Hume's *Treatise* for his own holism.

There is indeed something that Hume states in the *Treatise*, which, though Callicott himself has not referred to, might nonetheless invite an interpretation in favour of holism. In a discussion about the origin of justice, Hume writes:

A single act of justice is frequently contrary to *public interest*; and were it to stand alone, without being follow'd by other acts, may, in itself, be very prejudicial to society. [...] Nor is every single act of justice, consider'd apart, more conducive to *private interest*, than to public [...] But however single acts of justice may be contrary, either to public or private interest, 'tis certain, that the whole plan or scheme is highly conducive, or indeed absolutely requisite, both to the support of society, and the well-being of every individual. [...] Tho' in one instance the *public* be a sufferer, this momentary ill is amply compensated by the steady prosecution of the rule, and by the peace and order, which it establishes in society. And even every *individual person* must find himself a gainer, on ballancing the account [...] whatever may be the consequence of any single act of justice, perform'd by a single person, yet the whole system of actions, concurr'd in by the *whole* society, is infinitely advantageous to the *whole*, and to every *part* [...] <sup>17</sup>

Here Hume is contrasting 'public interest' with 'private interest'. As it is clear that by 'private interest' Hume is referring to an individual's self-interest (or at most together with the interests of those close to the individual);<sup>18</sup> so we can reasonably interpret that by 'public interest' Hume is referring to the interests of those who have little or no personal relation to oneself.

Some might want to argue, however, for an interpretation in favour of Callicott's holism instead. It goes something like this: Hume himself talks about the society as a 'whole' and 'the public' as 'a sufferer', he therefore understands the society as an entity over and above its individual members. But such an interpretation is implausible. For after the passage cited above Hume continues:

[M]y justice may be pernicious in every aspect; and 'tis only upon the supposition, that others are to imitate my example, that I can be induc'd to embrace that virtue; since nothing but this combination can render justice advantageous, or afford me any motives to conform my self to its rules.<sup>19</sup>

In other words, actions of justice performed by individuals are advantageous only if they are imitated and followed. But only individuals can imitate and follow the acts of other individuals. Society per se, understood as an entity over

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and above its individual members, cannot do that. Accordingly, when Hume earlier says that ‘the whole system of actions, concurr’d in by the *whole* society, is infinitely advantageous to the *whole*, and to every *part*’, he can be reasonably interpreted as meaning that: the system, concurred in by *all the individual members* of society, is infinitely advantageous to *all* including *oneself*. By and large, Hume’s talk of the ‘public’ as opposed to the ‘private’ should be understood as the contrast between the public domain and the private domain of one’s life. While the latter is concerned with oneself, one’s relations and friends; the former is concerned with those who have little or no personal relation to oneself. And neither the private nor the public is understood by Hume as something over and above the individuals who comprise it. When Hume writes, for instance,

[A] regard to public interest, or a strong extensive benevolence, is not our first and original motive for the observation of the rules of justice [...].<sup>20</sup>

it is evident that what he means is simply: ‘[b]enevolence to *strangers* is too weak’ for counter-balancing the love of gain, for making men observe the rules of justice (e.g., ‘abstain from the possessions of others’).<sup>21</sup> Accordingly, ‘public interest’ is, for Hume, simply the interests of ‘strangers’ taken all together. And these strangers are individual persons who are strange to oneself, not a strange entity over and above individual strangers. Furthermore, in a concluding passage about the origin of justice, Hume writes:

*Thus 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.*<sup>22</sup>

Here ‘public interest’ should be likewise understood as the interests of individuals who comprise the public. This is because, according to Hume, (1) ‘we have no such extensive concern for [the interests of] society but from *sympathy*;<sup>23</sup> and (2) it is the individuals’ *sentiments* that are the objects of our sympathy. As he himself puts it, we ‘sympathize with others in the sentiments they entertain of us’.<sup>24</sup> But who are these ‘others’? Other *individuals*, of course. So in the case of ‘sympathy with public interest’, the objects of our sympathy are the sentiments of those individuals who constitute the public. These sentiments include the ‘uneasiness’ they feel when their interests are harmed by injustice, and the ‘satisfaction’ they feel when their interests are enhanced by justice.<sup>25</sup> Now as ‘we partake of their uneasiness’ (or satisfaction) ‘by sympathy’ when their interests are harmed by injustice (or enhanced by justice), we also come to be displeased by and disapprove of the injustice they receive (or pleased by and approve of the justice they receive), even though it may be ‘so distant from us, as no way to affect our own interest’.<sup>26</sup> This is what Hume means when he concludes that ‘a sympathy with public interest is the source of the moral approbation which attends that virtue’ and ‘the good of society, where our own interest is not

concern'd, or that of our friends, pleases only by sympathy'.<sup>27</sup> But, as we have seen, the good of society can please 'by sympathy' only if it is understood as the goods of individual members of the society.

Putting this another way, society per se, over and above its individual members, is not the kind of entity capable of having any such sentiments as uneasiness or satisfaction regarding its interest. So we cannot have any Humean sympathy with the interest of society per se. As Callicott himself admits in his 1999 book *Beyond the Land Ethic*, sympathy 'can hardly extend to a *transorganismic* [he also uses the term '*metaorganismic*'] entity, such as society per se, which has no feeling per se'.<sup>28</sup> So, to be consistent, Callicott should agree that by 'a sympathy with public interest' Hume does not mean a sympathy with the interest of 'society per se, which has no feeling per se', and that what Hume means by 'public interest' is therefore simply the interests of the individuals who comprise the public.

Note that back in 1991, in a response to Callicott's holism, Gary Varner had already pointed out:

[S]ympathetic concern for communities as such has no historical antecedent in David Hume.<sup>29</sup>

But instead of admitting in his 1999 book that he is in effect making a concession to Varner's point about sympathy, Callicott misrepresents Varner as saying that 'concern for communities as such has no historical antecedent in David Hume' (where Varner's word 'sympathetic' in the original sentence is deleted), and then seeks to dismiss Varner's (misrepresented) point by arguing that Hume's talk of 'publick affection' and 'publick good', but not sympathy, supports a holistic concern for communities as such.<sup>30</sup> After citing Hume's remarks concerning the public, such as the one that I discuss in the beginning of this article<sup>31</sup> and the following one (call it **H1**):

It appears, that a tendency to *publick good*, and to the promoting of peace, harmony, and order in society, does always by affecting *the benevolent principles of our frame* engage us on the side of social virtues [...]<sup>32</sup>

Callicott writes:

Hume [...] recognized *other* moral sentiments *than sympathy*, some of which — patriotism, for example — relate as exclusively and specifically to society as sympathy does to sentient individuals.<sup>33</sup>

But such a manoeuvre would not do. On three counts. In the first place, Varner's original point is only that the extension of our concern, via *sympathy*, to cover communities as such is unsupported by Hume. Varner says nothing about whether there is any 'other' Humean device which may or may not support such a concern. So in seeking to dismiss Varner by appealing to what Hume says about 'publick affection' and 'publick good', Callicott is dismissing a straw man

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instead. Secondly, as we have seen in the *Treatise*, Hume explains our concern for the society in terms of our sympathy. It is clear that Hume's view on public affection cannot be divorced from his view on sympathy. For Hume, sympathy and public affection are *not* as unconnected as Callicott seems to think.<sup>34</sup> It is not that while the one is to do with 'sentient individuals', the other with some 'transorganismic' entities such as society per se. Rather, both sympathy and public affection are, on Hume's view, concerned with individuals, not wholes as such. Thirdly, after the sentence about 'publick good' and 'the benevolent principles of our frame' (i.e., **H1**) — which Callicott appeals to in order to support his own view that there are 'other moral sentiments than sympathy' specifically for society per se — Hume himself continues to write the following (call it **H2**):

[...] And it appears, as an additional confirmation, that these principles of *humanity* and *sympathy* enter so deeply into all our sentiments, and have so powerful an influence, as may enable them to excite the strongest censure and applause.<sup>35</sup>

Hence, when the two sentences (**H1** and **H2**) are put together, it is obvious that what Hume earlier means by 'the benevolent principles of our frame', which excite a strong concern from us for the 'publick good' beyond our private ones, are nothing but 'humanity'<sup>36</sup> and sympathy'. This confirms my previous point that Hume's account of public affection (i.e., the concern for public good) is inseparable from his account of sympathy. And this (together with the fact that Humean sympathy operates only in the level of sentient individuals, not in the level of 'metaorganismic' entities such as society per se) also vindicates Varner's objection to Callicott's use of Hume to support holism.<sup>37</sup> In short, not only does Callicott give a partial reading of Hume on public affection, he also gives a partial reading of Varner on Hume and sympathy. So much for Callicott's reading of others.

## UN-HUMEAN HOLISM

I cannot forbear adding to the above observations a reasoning, which may, perhaps, be found of some importance. Given Hume's well-known position on personal identity in the *Treatise* that there is no such thing as the self or mind per se, over and above the individual mental states that comprise it, it seems rather *un-Humean* (or, at least, it is not in anyway Humean) to suggest that there is such a thing as society per se, over and above the individual persons who comprise it. Hume writes:

When I turn my reflection on *myself*, I never can perceive this *self* without some one or more perceptions; nor can I ever perceive any thing but the perceptions.



'Tis the composition of these, therefore, which forms the self. [...] *we have no notion of it, distinct from the particular perceptions.*<sup>38</sup>

Hume's approach to the metaphysical nature of the mind is clearly not holistic but *reductionist*.<sup>39</sup> It reduces the mind to:

nothing but a bundle or collection of different perceptions which succeed one another with an inconceivable rapidity and are in a perpetual flux and movement.<sup>40</sup>

It is quite plausible to think that a Humean approach to the metaphysical nature of the society will be likewise reductionist. In fact, Hume himself in the *Treatise* makes a comparison between the mind as a composition of perceptions and the society as a composition of persons. He says that he 'cannot compare the soul more properly to any thing than to a republic or commonwealth', and he offers a reductionist interpretation of the identity of each in terms of the causal relations among its individual parts.<sup>41</sup> Now, putting together Hume's *assimilation of the mind to the society* and his *reductionist account of the mind*, it is reasonable to expect him to have assumed a parallel reductionist account of the society. Hence, similar to what Hume says on the mind, a Humean on the society will say:

When I turn my reflection on the society, I never can perceive this society without some one or more individual persons. It is the composition of these individual persons, therefore, which forms the society. *We have no notion of the society, distinct from the particular persons who comprise it.*

Society is nothing but a bundle or collection of different individuals who relate to one another with an inconceivable complexity and are in a perpetual flux and movement.

(As an additional confirmation of my view that a Humean account of the society should be reductionist instead of holistic, Andrew Brennan pointed out to me that in the essay 'Of National Characters' Hume stated: 'a nation is nothing but a collection of individuals'.<sup>42</sup>) Accordingly, the society understood by Callicott as a 'metaorganismic' entity 'over and above' its individual members will be judged by a Humean reductionist account to be as fictitious as the mind per se, over and above individual perceptions. This reinforces the previous point that in the *Treatise* when Hume talks about 'a regard to public interest' he means nothing more than a concern for the interests of members of the public. *Pace* Callicott, a holism which suggests 'respect for the community as such, *in addition to* respect for its members severally' is clearly foreign to, and arguably incompatible with, Hume's philosophy.<sup>43</sup>

It is not my purpose here, however, to recommend or defend any reductionist account (Humean or otherwise, metaphysical or axiological) of human society or the biotic community. My point is that textual evidence from the *Treatise* does not support but rather undermines Callicott's reading of Hume in favour of his

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own holism. It is evident that Callicott's holism, as it stands, is at least non-Humean and at worst un-Humean.

## NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> Carter 2000: 11.

<sup>2</sup> Callicott 1999: 67 (emphasis added).

<sup>3</sup> Callicott 1988: 57 (emphasis added).

<sup>4</sup> Callicott 1982b: 198 (emphasis original).

<sup>5</sup> Hume 1751: 5. 17 (cited by section and paragraph numbers).

<sup>6</sup> This sentence is cited by Callicott 1988: 57–8 and his interpretation of it is criticised by Carter (2000: 7–8). The very same interpretation of the same sentence also appears in Callicott 1987: 85 and 1999: 67, which, I think, should also be subjected to the same criticism by Carter.

<sup>7</sup> Carter 2000: 8 (emphasis original).

<sup>8</sup> Hume 1751: 5. 17, n. 19 (emphases added).

<sup>9</sup> Cf. *ibid.*: 5. 46 where Hume understands 'humanity' as 'a concern for others'. Also see n. 36 below.

<sup>10</sup> See Hume 1751: 3. 18–9, where he argues that we should treat nonhuman animals with 'humanity', 'compassion' and 'kindness', although they are not the kind of beings with whom we can or should, 'properly speaking', enter into a relationship defined by rules of justice.

<sup>11</sup> Callicott 1986a: 149.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*: 151 (emphasis added).

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*: 296, n. 73, Callicott's reference. It refers to Hume 1739–40: 3. 2. 1. 18–9 and 3. 2. 2. 1–3 (cited by book, part, section, and paragraph numbers).

<sup>14</sup> Callicott 1982a: 124 (first emphasis original, last emphasis added).

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*: 287, n. 20, Callicott's reference. It refers to Hume 1739–40: 3. 2. 1. 18–9 and 3. 2. 2. 1–3.

<sup>16</sup> Hume 1739–40: 3. 2. 2. 3 (emphases original).

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*: 3. 2. 2. 22 (first emphasis original, the rest added).

<sup>18</sup> See *ibid.*: 3. 3. 1. 9.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*: 3. 2. 2. 22.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*: 3. 2. 2. 19.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*: 3. 2. 2. 13 (emphasis added). Also see *ibid.*: 3. 2. 1. 11–3, where Hume uses the phrases 'public benevolence', 'the love of mankind', and 'kind affection to *men*' interchangeably, and argues that a man's love for others is dependent on their '*personal* qualities' (emphases added). It is evident that by 'mankind' Hume does not mean some entity over and above individual 'men'. Similarly, by 'public benevolence' Hume does *not* mean benevolence towards the public as an entity over and above members of the public.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid.: 3. 2. 2. 24 (emphases original).

<sup>23</sup>Ibid.: 3. 3. 1. 11 (emphasis added).

<sup>24</sup>Ibid.: 3. 2. 2. 24.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid.: 3. 3. 1. 9.

<sup>28</sup>Callicott 1999: 68 (emphases added).

<sup>29</sup>Varner 1991: 179 (emphasis added). Carter (2000: 8–9) makes a similar point.

<sup>30</sup>Callicott 1999: 67. Also see Callicott 2001: 208.

<sup>31</sup>See notes 5, 6 above.

<sup>32</sup>Hume 1751: 5. 45 (emphases added).

<sup>33</sup>Callicott 1999: 68 (emphases added). Also see Callicott 2001: 209, and 1986b: 407–8.

<sup>34</sup>Furthermore, sympathy, for Hume, is *not* a ‘moral sentiment’ as (the first sentence of the previous quote from) Callicott appears to suggest. Rather, sympathy is, in Hume’s word, a ‘principle’ of the mind (see Hume 1739–40: 2. 1. 11. 1–2 and 2. 3. 6. 8, for example). It is a mental *mechanism* in virtue of which the mind comes to share others’ sentiments as well as opinions (moral or otherwise). For a detail argument for this point, see Ardal 1966: ch. 3.

<sup>35</sup>Hume 1751: 5. 45 (emphases added).

<sup>36</sup>According to Hume (ibid.: 2.5), ‘humanity’ is a virtue that ‘proceeds from a tender sympathy with others’. Also see ibid.: annotation for 5. 18, where the editor relates Hume’s view on ‘humanity’ to his view on ‘sympathy’.

<sup>37</sup>It should perhaps be noted that Varner (1991) did not provide textual evidence from Hume for his objection to Callicott’s use of Hume to support holism.

<sup>38</sup>Hume 1739–40: appx. (emphases original).

<sup>39</sup>Briefly, I understand a theory that reduces X to Y as a theory that translates talks about X into talks about Y, where the latter is taken by the theory to be more primitive than the former. And, in the present context, I understand a theory as ‘holistic’ if it maintains that wholes cannot be reduced to individual parts. Hence, holism (e.g., Callicott’s communitarian holism) is a form of anti-reductionism.

<sup>40</sup>Hume 1739–40: 1. 4. 6. 4.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid.: 1. 4. 6. 19.

<sup>42</sup>Hume 1748: 198.

<sup>43</sup>Given that Hume assimilates the metaphysical nature of the person to that of the community, but that we can have Humean sympathy with a person, you might ask: ‘Can’t we likewise have Humean sympathy with a community?’ Strictly speaking: ‘No’ *if* a community is, as Callicott understands it, a ‘metaorganismic’ entity ‘over and above’ the individuals who comprise it. Loosely speaking: ‘Yes’ but *only if* a community is reducible to its individual members *and* those individuals are capable of having sentiments. This is because, on Hume’s view, to sympathise with a person is to share the sentiments of the person, where those sentiments are part of the perceptions that comprise the person; hence, similarly, on a Humean view, to sympathise with a community of persons is to share the sentiments shared by those persons who comprise the community. So we may, loosely speaking, have Humean sympathy with a community. But if so, it is *not* something in addition to, but rather reducible to, the Humean sympathy with its individual members. Relatedly, it should be noted that a reductionist account of the person does not say that the person is fictitious. It says only that if the person is taken to be an additional entity over and above perceptions, then it is fictitious. Hence, Hume’s bundle theory of the person

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allows us to regard persons as objects of our moral sentiments insofar as they are understood as nothing more than structured bundles of perceptions. Similarly, a Humean reductionist account of the community allows us to regard communities as objects of our moral sentiments insofar as they are understood as nothing more than structured collections of persons and/or sentient individuals. In sum, from a Humean reductionist point of view, moral concern for communities is reducible to moral concern for their individual members. For, as we have seen, (1) Hume explains our concern for the community in terms of the operation of sympathy, and Humean sympathy with the community is reducible to Humean sympathy with its members, and (2) Humean reductionism rejects the notion of the community as a 'metaorganismic' entity 'over and above' its individual members. Accordingly, Callicott's holism, which suggests that we care for 'our communities per se, over and above their individual members', is essentially anti-reductionist and therefore un-Humean.

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