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**Recognizing Resentment: Sympathy, Injustice, and Liberal Political Thought.** By Michelle Schwarze. Cambridge:

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*Recognizing Resentment* is a tightly organized study that will interest social and moral psychologists and historians of political theory. The core of the book consists of a chapter each on Butler, Hume, and Adam Smith. These are book-ended by a substantial introduction, a chapter on seventeenth-century moral philosophy, and a conclusion that brings the material of the book in conversation with contemporary, interdisciplinary work on political emotions. It is the first monograph devoted to sympathetic indignation in liberal political theory. In what follows I describe the analytic core of Michelle Schwarze's book, and then offer a chapter by chapter summary and broad assessment.

While there are established traditions in moral and political philosophy that frown on the expression of anger and resentment, Schwarze explores a historically salient argument that suggests there is a style of moral judgment in which impartial spectators find certain harms done to victims—in particular those that show contempt or lack of respect to the victim—worthy of sympathetic resentment and, thus, she argues that they would approve of the indignation felt by the injured as worthy of rectification (p. 8). Such recognition in turn presupposes a judgment about the moral status of the victim: It seems to indicate normative equality or equality of worth (pp. 8–9).

Schwarze argues from this equality of worth that spectatorial resentment “leads to the recognition of and support for the equal *political* status of others” (p. 8; emphasis

in original). On her view, liberals should argue from recognizing “equal moral status” to recognizing “equal political right” (p. 9); in particular, sympathetic indignation may well lead to a call for “political rectification of what we deem unjust” (p. 9). In her conclusion, Schwarze reiterates that “spectatorial resentment can and should motivate justice in liberal societies ... because it entails the victims’ equal moral and political status” (p. 130). Schwarze effectively establishes the victims’ equal moral status from the arguments she provides, but I would have appreciated more attention being paid to how the argument for equal political status is supposed to work by, for example, a treatment of how to think about social and political contexts in which one would expect or like to see sympathetic indignation. For example, a major theme of Arendt’s *Eichmann in Jerusalem* is the “moral collapse” in Nazi Germany that is exemplified by the absence of indignation among Germans, even *after* the war. But such examples are not sufficiently forthcoming.

The spectatorial element also has an important epistemic dimension: it focuses “our attention on evidently vulnerable populations: victims of injury” (p. 9). Such sympathetic recognition might well prevent or rectify a kind of “affective injustice,” that is, “the injustice that victims and the marginalized face in having to choose between their righteous resentment and the desire to better their condition” (pp. 10–11). Here Schwarze builds deftly on Amia Srinivasan, who, in turn, develops ideas found in Audre Lorde and the civil rights movement.

Chapter 1 expertly surveys seventeenth-century views on how the passions contribute or compromise sociability (p. 27). Schwarze treats Hobbes and Spinoza as psychological egoists (p. 28), and then argues that for Hobbes and Spinoza fellow-feeling compromises moral judgment (p. 30). This is not quite right when it comes to Spinoza, who thought we wish to free from its distress the object of compassion (see Ryan Patrick Hanley, “The Eighteenth-Century Context of Sympathy from Spinoza to Kant,” in *Sympathy: A History*, 2015, p. 176).

Grotius is treated as the exemplary thinker who treats passions, and resentment in particular, as disruptive of social life and in need of moderation by reason and natural law (p. 32); Grotius anticipated Locke (p. 30). And Pufendorf is treated as the paradigmatic thinker who recognized the “socializing effects of some passions, but nevertheless still viewed them as immoral or strictly selfish” (p. 28). Pufendorf captures “the promise of conscience as a faculty that would facilitate sociability” (p. 42). The overall effect of the first chapter is to emphasize that resentment was central to seventeenth-century debates, but that its constructive role in a “rightful sense of justice” (p. 45) was overlooked.

This conclusion is largely right, but by skipping Descartes’s influential *Passions of the Soul* the evidence for it is exaggerated. Descartes was no proto-liberal and a critic of

sympathy, but he treats indignation as a moralized reactive attitude that presupposes considerable impartiality by an observer to intentional harm done to someone not deserving of it; when indignation functions properly socially—Descartes also thinks it can deteriorate into virtue signaling—it is proportioned by the size of the harms. This anticipates how Schwarze sees Adam Smith (p. 116).

In chapter 2, Butler takes central stage because he “directly tied duty to sympathetic resentment” (p. 49). Schwarze shows how resentment is for Butler a “moral motive” for justice (p. 58). One of the highlights of the book connects Butler’s moral psychology to his political theory; Schwarze shows that Butler is an early liberal, defending “mild, equal, government” (p. 63) in which the powerful are restrained by the rule of law, and in which each of us can act as we see fit. Butler reinterprets the Golden Rule as suggesting that we abide best by it when we pursue our own interests and don’t harm others (p. 61). Lurking in Butler is a proto-Utilitarian defense of duty. Doing our duty directly promotes our happiness (p. 61), and indirectly, as he writes, “the happiness of that society.” Schwarze notes that Butler presupposes a teleological conception of human nature (pp. 51–52). Hume, by contrast, rejects providence (p. 66).

In chapter 3 Schwarze aims to show that Hume’s account of the origin of the “artificial” convention, justice, is ground in sympathetic resentment (p. 68). In particular, that such sympathetic resentment “could inspire a sense of common interest in justice” among self-interested beings (p. 68). Schwarze claims that it “is constitutive of the ‘sense of common interest’ that makes individuals feel justice is mutually advantageous” (p. 69). Schwarze attributes to Hume the claim that prior to the establishment of the convention of justice “*the strongly felt* belief that others see the mutual advantages of cooperation” (p. 84; emphasis in Schwarze). However, it is not obvious how agents prior to the establishment of the convention would sense it is mutually advantageous to abide by it and how they would coordinate on it. Adam Smith famously suggests that Hume presupposes—the utility of the convention of justice—what he needs to prove in its original foundation (p. 78). By suggesting that sympathetic resentment is such an original motive that it can provide a “general sense of common interest” (pp. 68, 82), Schwarze attributes to *Hume Smith’s* solution to the problem *Smith* diagnose in Hume.

Unfortunately, Hume never suggests that sympathetic resentment leads to mutual trust. Moreover, it is not obvious it could lead to such trust prior to the establishment of the convention of justice (as Schwarze recognizes in her conclusion [p. 131]). It is not obvious that sympathetically felt resentment can “constitute” common interest or social trust (p. 95); it seems it would be the *effect* of social trust. Avital Hazon suggests more plausibly that such trust presupposes group loyalty, which is available to

Hume as a motive because the way others become part of expanded selves (see “Group Loyalty as the Motive of Hume’s Conventional Obligations,” 2022). Hume is not especially interested in articulating how resentment relates to the victims of injustice.

Adam Smith is interested in showing how resentment is a necessary response to injustice for the victims and spectators (p. 99). Schwarze’s account of how Smithian moral spectatorship epistemically allows to distinguish between improper anger and proper resentment is quite helpful. Schwarze emphasizes how on Smith’s view we “*need*” resentment to motivate our concern for injustice (p. 108, emphasis in Schwarze). Even in well-governed states injustice may flourish, and Schwarze shows that for Smith the psychological consolations offered by religion are the functional effect(s) of unsatisfied needs of (and for) resentment. I would have liked to see Schwarze reflect a bit more on what this entails for societies in which (say) Christianity has declined. One missed opportunity here in Schwarze’s argument is lack of attention to the role of biblical religion in articulating and legitimizing sympathizing indignation.

In her conclusion, Schwarz connects the book’s historical material to recent work in social and moral psychology, especially focusing on how work on deservingness illustrates and seems to confirm Butler’s and Smith’s ideas. She closes with a call for more interdisciplinary work on moral motivation and political obligation. Hers is a clearly written and excellent contribution to such an enterprise.