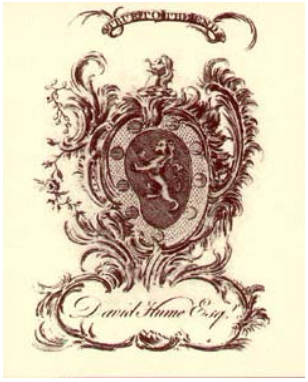

Review of G. P. Morice, *David Hume: Bicentenary Papers*
M. A. Stewart
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David Hume: Bicentenary Papers, edited by G. P. Morice. Edinburgh University Press and University of Texas Press, 1977. viii + 232 pp. £8.00 ($10.95).

Anyone who attended the superbly organized Hume bicentenary week in Edinburgh in 1976 will be glad to have this commemorative volume. It comes with the usual printed elegance, and inflated blurb, of an Edinburgh Press production, but with less than their customary typographical accuracy. It is more substantial than the 1962 commemorative volume from the same source (for the 250th anniversary of Hume's birth), but two of the contributors, Árdal and Davie, are the same. Seven of the eight plenary session addresses take up the first half of the book and twelve from over 50 short seminar papers occupy the remainder; R. J. Butler's address was withdrawn after setting, so that the pagination is awry in the cross-references in some of the footnotes of the present volume. Quite a number of the missing seminar papers have been appearing meanwhile in journals elsewhere, where they can be traced through the annual bibliographies in Hume Studies.

One attraction of the conference was the opportunity provided by the exhibitions and receptions to read and hear about less familiar sides of Hume's life and work; they disclosed, incidentally, surprisingly slight documentation for Hume's alleged connection with the University of Edinburgh. It also gave a chance for those who were interested to get a glimpse into the rich quantity of available archive material, and even to buy their own personal Humeana (which ought more properly to have been contributed to those archives) from an opportunist local tradesman. But the comprehensiveness of the sideshows was not altogether mirrored in the papers presented. This may be a reflection partly of the present state of Hume studies, partly of the way the programme was constructed. For whatever their past

achievements, some of those who delivered the main laudations can hardly have been invited as leaders of current Hume research. Only a few of these commissioned contributions were worth perpetuating in printed form.

D. D. Raphael, writing with characteristic lucidity, traces links between Hume and Adam Smith in the theory of imagination in Smith's "History of Astronomy", links which help to clarify themes in both authors. This paper develops further some suggestions made in Raphael's 1972 British Academy lecture, but in this he has been somewhat forestalled by an equally good paper elsewhere by Andrew Skinner (see Skinner's "Adam Smith: Science and the Role of the Imagination" in Hume and the Enlightenment (1974), an otherwise uncompetitive earlier anthology from the same publishers). Duncan Forbes too looks, with less lucidity, at links between Hume and Smith, in comparing their contributions to 18th-century political science. He argues that Hume was using the secular science of human nature to recreate a traditional natural law theory. Some readers may have difficulty getting their tongues round 'jusnaturalist', a non-dictionary agent noun derived from ius naturalë; but this is a useful paper for those of us who do not have the necessary learning to follow Forbes' full-scale book on Hume's Philosophical Politics, and it presents the is/ought debate from the interesting perspective of the political historian.

In the best and most original of the opening papers, Páll Árdal takes up Hume's hints in Treatise III that there is an analogy between the role played by "convention" in the formation of the artificial virtues and its role in the establishment of languages in general and the institution of promising in particular. Hume's constructive views on language are, indeed, in Book III and not in Book I. The section "Of abstract ideas" in Book I offers an account of certain processes in thinking; it does not offer an ideational or any other theory of meaning, and is in fact inconsistent with such a theory.

John Passmore for his part starts not from Humean texts, but from a modern philosophical problem to which Hume texts are then related in an orthodox analytical manner. Does or can belief arise from decision or choice, or is it always involuntary? Passmore can do nothing more for Hume here than to find an unresolved ambivalence similar to one which can be found between different modern writers on the subject. But this is because Hume like so many other philosophers - Passmore certainly among them - has tended to run together two different things: belief proper (which is not an act and which Hume construed sometimes simply as a way of conceiving something, and sometimes as a way of conceiving something due to custom), and the act of assent (which may certainly be the subject of decision or indecision in the light of particular evidence or argument). Only when these two things are distinguished, and the best account given of both, can we start to consider the relation between them: whether belief determines assent or assent goes to form belief. This paper does not show why anyone who wishes to study belief should go back to Hume.

The first half of the book also has contributions from Ernest Mossner, Isaiah Berlin and George Davie. Mossner delivered an affectionate but uncritical address on the Dialogues; it is best read in conjunction with his companion piece, "The Religion of David Hume", in Journal of the History of Ideas 39 (1978), since neither paper really stands on its own. If Mossner exaggerates the extent to which Hume's irony has been overlooked by other readers of the Dialogues, he underestimates the amount of philosophical acumen and historical scholarship necessary to use it as an interpretative tool. Berlin and Davie were not really concerned with Hume at all, but with how Hume was read by various European thinkers whom their accounts give one little inducement to go off and read. Hume's theory of natural instinct was exploited in the philosophical theology of Hamann and Jacobi, but part of the historical "irony"

Berlin sees in this rests on the implausible assumption that the Dialogues are an assault on deism; Berlin here takes even less notice than Mossner of the serious scholarly literature on Hume's philosophy of religion. Davie's rambling ruminations, ostensibly on Husserl, were mercifully abridged for publication. It is lamentable that this trashy, execrably written piece should nevertheless stand in the volume as the untypical representative of the host university, when so much better scholarly work on Hume is being done by younger members of the same institution.

Some of the volunteered papers were above the average standard of the commissioned papers, and the discussion that atended them showed that there is a greater historical consciousness among many contemporary Hume scholars than there was a few years ago. But they were all competing against the water-clock. All but one of the papers in the printed selection still suffer from the original enforced compression. The one which has benefited from decompression is R. W. Connon's study of possible significances in the late changes in Treatise III and the second Enquiry, considered in the light of Hume's dealings with Hutcheson. But though we must be grateful to Connon for his recent research elsewhere on Hume's text, he certainly does not show here that the self-interest which is for Hume the motive to civil obedience is inconsistent with the benevolence which is the basis of moral feeling, or that the latter clashes with Hume's denial that we have any indiscriminate, universal philanthropy; and so his complex explanation of Hume's motivation collapses. See further David Raynor's reply to Connon in Phil. Quarterly 28 (1978).

Some of the most interesting papers in this part of the book look at Hume's philosophy in relation to its historical context. Reinhard Brandt seeks to work out what was going on in Hume's head, and when, in the period between the end of his formal education and the publication of the Treatise, and proceeds to show that commentators who claim

to know what the "new Scene of Thought" was that Hume faced in 1729 are all just improvising; Brandt believes it was a short-lived venture in literary criticism, but that Hume's decision to embark in earnest on a philosophy of human nature dates from the revival of interest in Bacon in the early 1730's. The lines that Brandt wants to draw clearly here were blurred by Hume himself in the "Advertisement" to the Enquiries - an unreliable document, perhaps, but Brandt should have mentioned it. He does however have an interesting argument that Hume's manuscript essay on Chivalry must belong to this same constructive period, by virtue of its allusions to the philosophy of human nature. Brandt is wrong to say Hume left this essay unfinished: the end is simply lost, for the extant ms. cuts off at the foot of a page with the catchword ('Entertainments') for the following page. But in all other respects Brandt is completely right, and Mossner, who put out a wayward version of this ms. in 1947 and shrouded it in a pretentious web of pious fantasy, is completely wrong.* The ms. is not in the immature college boy's hand that Mossner alleged; it is in a more mature hand than Hume's 1727 letter to Ramsay (Greig no. 1) and belongs to the rather early 1730s. The one extant letter with which the hand is identical is the letter to Ramsay at Greig no. 541 but the year of that is not known for certain - Greig conjectured 1730 since it was written from Ninewells at the time when Hume was feeling very sorry for himself. By comparison, the page of ms. jottings on Natural Philosophy, which Mossner has put at 1729-34 (JHI 9 (1948)), is in a later hand still.

Nelly Demé looks for Newtonian rather than Baconian influences on Hume, in the mechanical analogies that are to be found in Hume's science of the passions. This interesting paper, originally delivered in impeccable English, is here printed in French - with English footnotes. Odd. Günter Gawlick does some useful conceptual underlabouring on the term 'deist' as used both by opponents and sympathizers,

to help the debate on Hume's relations with deism: much of the value of this paper is in its useful notes. E.J. Khamara and D. G. C. Macnabb defend the banal conclusion that Hume's predecessors did not believe that the causal maxim was a logically necessary truth - I suppose there may be someone for whom this is news - in a paper which is more substantial and more engagingly written than the topic would suggest. I doubt if they have got Samuel Clarke sorted out - who has? - since the necessary being he believed in was the necessary being of the cosmological argument, not of the ontological argument. And lastly of the papers oriented towards historical scholarship, Eugene Sapadin goes back to the context of the is/ought debate, which in Hume "is at best only peripherally relevant to the meta-ethical disputes of the twentieth century", not least because non-normative value judgements certainly belong to the "is" side in Hume's dichotomy. Though sympathatic to this general line, I found the paper as a whole obscure, less illuminating than Forbes on the same subject. It seems to rely on a relationship between the 18th-century usage of 'ought', 'obligatory', 'obligation' and 'motivation' which is explained in such a way as to imply that, for Hume, people will always act as they ought - and that at least cannot be right.

The remaining contributors are Wade Robison, John Bricke, John W. Davis, E. W. van Steenburgh, Karl Britton and Stewart Sutherland. The subjects are, respectively, Hume's psychology of causal judgement; the role of memory and causation in his account of self-identity; the need for secondary (relational) qualities in the identification of individuals; the parts of time; symbolic actions (a delightfully Humean essay); and the non-introspective features of "moral" pleasure. Bricke seems not to know the 18th-century meaning of 'discover' (= 'disclose'). But these papers show that there is life still in even the most hackneyed Humean topics.

Connoisseurs of Humean irony will like to know that,

in preparing this review away from home, I consulted a copy of the Selby-Bigge Treatise in the library which is directly descended from the library of which Hume himself was librarian; and that for some of the most famous passages of Hume's ethics I had to ask for the pages to be cut.

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*See E. C. Mossner, "David Hume's 'An Historical Essay on Chivalry and modern Honour'," Modern Philology 45 (1947). Having dismissed J. H. Burton's Victorianized extracts as "inaccurate and incomplete", Mossner supplies a text which, for the quantity and quality of its invention, leaves Burton still at the starting post. Since this is unfortunately the only available version, interested readers should make the following principal corrections to Mossner's published text; I take no account of more than 30 wrong or missing accidentals.

Ref.	Mossner	Hume
P. 56 col. 2, lines 22-3	capital nation	Nation
P. 57 col. 1, line 8	Thence	There
" , line 9	shody	& study
" , line 11	Notion	Notions
" , line 12	human	humane
" , line 22	devout	devote
" , line 23	quietly	quickly
P. 57 col. 2, line 18	necessarily	necessarly
" , line 22	Those	These
" , "	had	bred
P. 58 col. 1, line 7	regular	& regular
" , line 9	immitated	imitated
P. 59 col. 1, line 2	turns	hews
" , line 5	Hercules, Perseus	Hercules Pirithous
" , line 17	Notions	Nations [error for Notions or Nature?]

P. 59 col. 1, lines 22-3	Capital fictions	Fictions
P. 59 col. 2, line 24	Tho' indeed express'd	This indeed display'd
P. 60 col. 1, line 28	all	all his
" , line 29	rescue	relieve
P. 60 col. 2, line 40	come	ensue