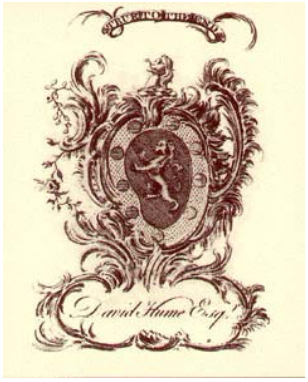

David Hume. ***A Treatise of Human Nature.*** **Edited by David Fate Norton and Mary J. Norton**
Terence Penelhum
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Book Reviews

DAVID HUME. *A Treatise of Human Nature* (Oxford Philosophical Texts). Edited by David Fate Norton and Mary J. Norton, with Editor's Introduction by David Fate Norton. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000. Pp. ix + 106 + 595. ISBN 0-19-875173-7, cloth, $49.95; ISBN 0-19-875172-9, paper, $14.95.

Readers of Hume have been aware for some years that a new Oxford edition of his philosophical works was forthcoming; and since 1998 it has been clear that the Oxford Philosophical Texts versions would appear at least a little earlier than the Clarendon edition. The Nortons' edition of the *Treatise* is the third of these volumes to be published.

While scholars will never have doubted that it was high time the versions of Green and Grose and L. A. Selby-Bigge were replaced by one that embodied the results of more recent scholarship and technology, students and general readers may still wonder how important it really is for them to acquire a new copy of a work to which they have had easy access in a handy and pretty accurate format for many years. While Green and Grose's Hume has always been confined to the libraries, there are hundreds of copies of Selby-Bigge's about, and no doubt there will be for many years yet. So one thing I shall try to do in this review is answer those who might ask how important it is that they (and their students) make a point of reading the *Treatise* in this new edition. I shall hereafter refer to the Nortons' text as OPT, and the Selby-Bigge text, first published by Oxford in 1888 and revised in the second edition by P. H. Nidditch, as SBN.

There is no suspense about the answer to the question. OPT totally supersedes SBN, and if the continued presence of copies of the latter in any way hinders the universal adoption of the former, then, as Hume might have put it, they should be committed to the flames. The reason for this judgment is the

superlative quality of the editorial apparatus that the Nortons provide for us. I shall confine my comments to this apparatus, as the textual differences between OPT and SBN are the subject of a separate account by the Nortons themselves,[1] and further review of them should await the appearance of the Clarendon edition.

The editorial material in OPT makes it a bulkier volume than SBN. The obvious additions are the substantial editor's introduction, the section-by-section summaries that precede each set of annotations, the detailed annotations themselves, the glossary and the index. This is to be set beside Selby-Bigge's analytical index, and the eleven pages of textual notes added by Nidditch. Another obvious change is that the Nortons have numbered all Hume's paragraphs; this makes referencing very easy, and reduces the temptation to use different number styles for books, parts, and sections: for example, 1.4.6.3 identifies a passage as being in the third paragraph of the sixth section of the fourth part of the first book. Any future classes where some students have SBN and others have OPT can achieve common referencing if the former group number their paragraphs with a pencil. Future scholarly works that refer, as they all will, to OPT, can be used the same way by SBN holdouts. Older scholarly works whose authors were unwise enough to make references solely by SBN page-numbers could be a problem for OPT users in the future, however; but one cannot provide for everything. I shall comment here on the editor's introduction, the editors' annotations and sectional summaries, and the index.

The editor's introduction. This occupies 97 pages, numbered "Inn" to distinguish them from pages in the text. Its stated purpose is to show how each part of the work "contributes to the achievement of Hume's efforts to provide a comprehensive account of the workings, scope, and limits of the human mind" (I3). This immediately sets the tone for the whole essay: that of relating the contents of the *Treatise* to *Hume's own* objectives. The contrast with T. H. Green's introduction could not be greater: Green's (which does not even make Hume its subject for its first hundred pages) may not be without philosophical interest, but no one could think it had a sympathetic understanding of Hume's own purposes as its central objective. SBN, of course, has no editorial introduction at all. Norton, throughout, invites the reader to use his or her imagination to see why any reasonable person might find attractions in what Hume says, and identifies the traditions and debates to which Hume is responding. Hume emerges, as he should, as an eighteenth-century thinker with a vision that he sees as transforming philosophical controversies with which he is familiar. Even with this purpose one still confronts many interpretative disagreements, but Norton manages, in my view, to avoid partisanship very skillfully. For example, his opening judgment that Hume is best understood as a "post-sceptical" philosopher strikes a wise balance between the view of him as

a destructive skeptic and the view of him as a gung-ho naturalist with no skeptical attitudes at all.

A few detailed comments next. (i) Clearly decisions had to be taken on how much detail was to be included in the editor's introduction and how much should be confined to the sectional summaries. I felt very happy with the decisions so taken regarding parts 1 and 2 of Book 1 (although a new student of Hume could have some difficulty on abstract ideas without also looking at the notes on 1.1.7). Part 3, where the apparent indirection of the original, compared with the presentation in the first *Enquiry*, is a real problem for the reader, is very deftly summarized. The introduction confines itself to sections 2, 6 and 7 of part 4, leaving the rest to the summaries; I might have done the same myself, given the prominence of these three in all the literature, but am a little uneasy about what some may see as simplification.

(ii) Norton's summation of Book 2 is carried out in terms of a division of the passions into *productive* and *responsive*. These terms are not, of course, Hume's own, although the material thus classified is helpfully analysed at I48–50; Hume works throughout with the distinction between direct and indirect passions, and when he tells us at 2.3.9.8 (the passage on which Norton's classification relies) that there are passions that do not arise from good and evil but produce them, the context seems to imply that these are all direct passions. The recognition of this group of passions may well be critical to establishing Hume's freedom from psychological hedonism (see the note to 2.3.9.8), but I am not sure this justifies introducing a new classificatory terminology.

(iii) Norton resorts to a diagram to help explain Hume's mind-bending account of how the "double relation of impressions and ideas" gives rise to pride and humility. I do not think it is merely my discomfort with visual aids that makes me doubt whether Hume's story is rendered any more convincing this way. The connectedness between pride and its object that Norton writes into the right-hand side of his diagram is not really provided for in Hume's account, which makes the simultaneous surfacing of the passion and of the idea of myself a purely coincidental product of two distinct linear associative sequences.

(iv) The excellent brief account of sympathy at I55f brings out the fact that it first appears as a mechanism that explains how *your* regard for me enhances *my* pride (what we might call the mirror effect). At I60f we have a helpful guide through what Norton calls the compound passions (better thought of perhaps as compounds *of* passions).

(v) The account of Hume's view of the will is masterly, and begins by making it obvious that Hume's deterministic understanding of it can best be read as a consequence of his classing the will as a mere impression (or feeling, as Norton puts it) at 2.3.1.2. In all, the treatment of the passions makes at least one reader more receptive to Hume's claim that he has introduced order and system into our understanding of the emotional life.

(vi) When I first read the *Treatise* seriously, I found Book 3 the most difficult to grasp as a whole, in spite of the arrestingness of many detailed arguments. No reader need have this difficulty now, after Norton's splendid summation on 174-97. One source of its clarity is the fact that while Hume, in part 2, plunges into the artificial virtues before the reader has been able to acquire a well-grounded understanding of the way he thinks the mind functions when it recognises the less complex natural ones, Norton changes this order at 181. This enables us to see that the problems in understanding the status of justice are special ones that arise because we have no natural inclination towards those practices that it enjoins. Norton's account of Hume's resolution of these problems, with its ingenious use of a comparison with the need for experience in the formation of causal expectations, is impeccable. The whole is a model of how to explain the appeal of controversial views without being misleadingly partisan, and is the best introduction to Hume's ethical theory now available.

The annotations. Here a reviewer can do no more than make general comments and give a few, inevitably almost random, examples. Of the notes' many purposes (see 421) I can only mention two: the provision of cross-references to other passages in the *Treatise* that discuss the current topic, and Hume's allusions to other writers. The former is especially helpful in such a systematic and detailed work. Examples that particularly struck me were at 1.3.14.34, on Hume's denial of the distinction between power and its exercise; the useful warning at 1.4.6.2 about what is to come on the idea of the self; an excellent comment on love and esteem at 2.2.1.4; and the reference to the effect of general rules on the imagination at 3.3.1.20.

Hume's allusions to other writers are notoriously vague and sketchy, and the much-needed editorial service here is unfailingly valuable. The Nortons have not only provided insights into philosophical works and controversies to which Hume alludes (or fails to allude), but have also identified and described scientific and other issues on which he comments directly or by implication. On the former, I might mention the account of the "receiv'd opinion" on abstract ideas at 1.1.7.1; the list of predecessors' views on the causal link at 1.3.2.9; the listing of sources for skeptical attacks on the reliability of the senses at 1.4.2.45; the amusing reminder of Descartes and Arnauld at 1.4.2.57; the reference to Chambers (a frequently-cited source) on the will at 2.3.1.2; the wealth of information on reason and the passions at 2.3.3.1 and 4; and the helpful presentation of likely sources for Hume's perverse view that approval and disapproval have only established motives as their objects at 3.2.1.2 and 4. Two places where Hume is shown to have got his predecessors wrong are 1.4.7.10 (Sextus) and 3.1.1.15 (Wollaston). On scientific matters, the notes to 1.2.5. are most valuable on the disputes about the vacuum; and at 2.1.8.2 we are shown where Hume probably got his references to aesthetic rules in architecture.

In addition to these two kinds of help, the notes are full of assistance on those complex arguments where Hume departs from his best standards of clarity (e.g. at 1.3.2.7 on causal priority or 1.4.2.29 on the idea of identity), and on places where his phrasing can mislead the contemporary reader (e.g. "reflex act" at 1.4.1.5 and "fantastic sect" at 1.4.1.8).

The index. Experienced readers may feel the occasional twinge of nostalgia for Selby-Bigge's index, which was a handy place to go when looking for key passages. He himself said it was intended to serve the purposes of a critical introduction. But aside from this index, his edition has no such introduction, and OPT has a very good one; and SBN makes no provision for the other things an index should do, such as listing the appearances of names and writings. The OPT index, while concentrating on key concepts and doctrines, which it maps in fine detail, also does those necessary things. Producing such a fundamental component of the editorial apparatus for a terminologically untidy work like the *Treatise* has clearly been a huge task.

It is impossible to do justice to the merits of this edition in a short (or a long) review. I will merely say in conclusion that the Nortons enable us for the first time to study this great classic in a form that makes it fully intelligible to new readers and will enrich the understanding of experts at every turn. They, and their publisher, deserve our warmest gratitude.

NOTE

1 David Fate Norton and Mary J. Norton, "Substantive Differences between Two Texts of Hume's *Treatise*," *Hume Studies* 26 (2000): 245–77.

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