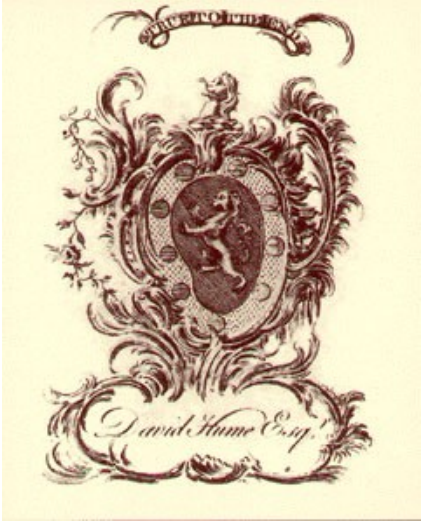

David Hume. *A Treatise of Human Nature*. Edited by John P. Wright, Robert Stecker, and Gary Fuller

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DAVID HUME. *A Treatise of Human Nature*. Edited by John P. Wright, Robert Stecker and Gary Fuller. London: J. M. Dent, 2003. Pp. lxx + 392. ISBN 0-460-88224-4, paper, $12.50.

No reader of *Hume Studies* is likely to make use of an abridgement of the *Treatise*. Everyman editions, however, are aimed not at scholars but at members of that elusive species, the intelligent general reader (henceforth "IGR"); and the *Treatise* surely constitutes a paradigm case of a book that needs to be trimmed and tidied for consumption by non-specialists. This was something Hume himself came to realize: hence the *Enquiries concerning Human Understanding and concerning the Principles of Morals*. But perhaps Hume trimmed and tidied too much. Perhaps the IGR should not feel she has to restrict herself to the *Enquiries*; perhaps she should be able to explore the secret passages and unused rooms of the *Treatise*, while remaining confident that she will easily find her way back to the principal corridors and chambers. This new edition might well introduce Hume's first book to a readership it does not have at present, and is therefore to be welcomed. If my experience is anything to go by, in fact, even a reader of this journal might benefit from a read straight through a stripped-down version of the *Treatise*—a point I shall return to below.

The Everyman text comes with a chronology, an introduction, a relatively small number of explanatory notes (seventy-seven for the entire *Treatise*), a summary (with quotations) of the principal trends in 250 years or so of Hume interpretation, a bibliography, and a comprehensive index. I have a feeling that the IGR might find the introduction a bit daunting, interesting though it most certainly is in its assessment of the nature of scepticism contained in the *Treatise*, and in its speculations as to why Hume came to repudiate his first book. I wonder whether the IGR approaching Hume and the *Treatise* might not want, first and foremost, a map, and a sense of what to look out for on the journey. Like any tourist, she will probably also want a bit of historical context: who were Hume's most important predecessors and contemporaries, what were the questions being discussed by philosophers when Hume was formulating his ideas, and how Hume altered the state of the art. The introduction dwells almost wholly on the last of these questions, and, in particular, on the debate, such as it was, between Hume and Reid. The difference between these two philosophers is characterized in terms of their understanding of the relation between science and common sense: for Reid science is an extension of common sense, while for Hume science challenges common sense, and inevitably generates scepticism as it does so. As I have said, this is very interesting; but I am not sure that it is likely to help the IGR to navigate her way through the immense depths of Hume's philosophy.

Most notably absent from the introduction is help with making sense of the subtitle Hume chose for the *Treatise*. Explanation of what experimental reasoning is, what moral subjects are, and what Hume means when he says he is introducing the former into the latter are all things a first-time reader of the book might feel grateful for. These matters are relegated to the notes to the text—and consequently might well escape the notice of the IGR. The notes make frequent reference to the letter to Michael Ramsay in which Hume encourages his friend to read Descartes, Malebranche, Bayle, and Berkeley as helps to the understanding of the *Treatise*. Perhaps this would have been a better point of departure for the introduction. The chronology provides a good deal of information about Hume's cultural and political context, but contains a regrettable number of typographical errors (especially when giving the titles of French works). The copy-editing of the supplementary material (but not of the text itself) is in general rather poor: in the introduction, though not in the chronology, the date of publication of Reid's *Inquiry* is given as 1763; we are told that Hume's *Philosophical Essays concerning Human Understanding* were "retitled *Essay concerning Human Understanding*"; Chambers's *Cyclopædia* is said to have been published in 1738 and not 1728; and so on. The inclusion of a "Hume and his Critics" section and a bibliography suggests that the publishers might be intending the book for undergraduates as well as IGRs. I doubt that many college and university teachers will choose it over David and Mary Norton's recent Oxford Philosophical Texts edition. The space would have been better filled by the inclusion of Hume's *Abstract* of Books 1 and 2 of the *Treatise*.

I read this new edition of the *Treatise*, as I suspect the IGR will, away from my desk, while travelling, and during idle moments at home. The mode of abridgement proved especially thought-provoking as I read through Book III with the lineaments of Book II fresh in my mind. Book II is perhaps the least loved and least read part of the *Treatise*, and is trimmed and tidied the hardest by Wright, Stecker, and Fuller. As a result, the temptation to skim and skip as one makes one's way towards the excitement of Book III is reduced, and when one reaches Book III, the discussion of pride, humility, love, and hatred suddenly appear essential to Hume's account of the virtues—in particular, to his account of such 'natural' virtues as "greatness of mind" and "goodness and benevolence." It is now clearer to me than it was before reading this edition of the *Treatise* that Book 2 provides the raw, pre-moral material out of which much of Humean virtue is fashioned. Modesty and mutual deference have their origins in pride as regulated by the rules of good manners; generosity, humanity, and so on, are approved because we naturally love what is agreeable and useful to ourselves and others. Hume's theory of the passions gives him many of the means whereby to construct a moral philosophy that avoids the extremes of naïveté and cynicism represented

by, respectively, Hutcheson and Mandeville. Another aspect of the *Treatise* that benefits from this abridgment is the explanation of belief production in Book 1, part 3. The editors seem to have made the right decisions about what to cut, and what to leave intact. One quibble, though: was it really necessary to omit the very first sentences of Hume's own introduction?

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