



David Hume. *A Treatise of Human Nature: A Critical Edition*, ed. David Fate Norton and Mary J. Norton

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David Hume. *A Treatise of Human Nature: A Critical Edition*. Ed. David Fate Norton and Mary J. Norton. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2007. Vol. 1, Pp. xvi + 431; Vol. 2, Pp. x + 742. ISBN 0-19-92383-1, Cloth, \$250.

Apparently, at an early stage of the planning of the Clarendon Edition of the Works of David Hume, the General Editors of the Philosophical Works adopted the policy to produce *clean* critical texts on pages which bear no sign of the way those texts evolved. For example, in Tom Beauchamp's critical edition of the *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* there is no indication on the text pages themselves of the numerous changes which Hume made to the 11 editions he prepared. These changes, some of which are philosophically significant, are only to be found in the "Editorial Appendix" and are discussed in the Introduction and the "Editor's Annotations." However, scholars would have gained much if they had been alerted to these changes on the text pages themselves. For example, would it not be useful to know when one reads Hume's famous *vis inertiae* footnote to Section 7 of the *Enquiry* (7.25n16; 57–58) that when he first wrote it he praised Newton for putting forward the hypothesis of "an ethereal active Matter," and only dropped the reference to an "active Matter" in the third edition of 1756? Certainly one can learn of this change and the reasons for it in Beauchamp's learned discussions elsewhere in the critical edition. However, if a central aim of a critical edition is to provide a convenient way of helping readers understand its history then much would have been gained by making clear the author's substantive emendations in different editions on the text pages. This is done in a transparent way by means of a critical apparatus at the foot of the text pages in P.H. Nidditch's Clarendon Edition of Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*—and it is unfortunate that the Editors of the Clarendon Edition of the Works of Hume did not adopt this model. The precedent was set by A. A. Luce and T. E. Jessop's standard edition of *The Works of George Berkeley*, and followed in *The Glasgow Edition of the Works and Correspondence of Adam Smith*. Hume scholars know how useful Kemp Smith's notes on the text pages of his edition of the *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* can be in establishing the evolution of the text, in spite of problems shown more recently in Kemp Smith's dating.

Since, unlike the first *Enquiry* and his other later published writings Hume prepared only one edition of *A Treatise of Human Nature*, the problems of producing a critical text are far fewer. It is true that Hume did publish a list of additions and corrections for Book 1 in the Appendix which he added to Volume 3, as well as acknowledging (but not correcting) two philosophical errors in his original text. He also made mostly minor alterations to two surviving presentation copies

of Books 1 and 2, and some philosophically significant ones in his own copy of Book 3. Unlike the two *Enquiries*, a usable scholarly text of the *Treatise* has been available since 1978 when the Clarendon Press published Nidditch's revision of L. A. Selby-Bigge's late nineteenth-century edition of the book. Nidditch worked under severe constraints from the press since he had to retain the original Selby-Bigge pagination. In most cases he called attention to Hume's Appendix revisions to Book 1 by way of asterisks in the texts. Thus, for example, we find an asterisk on page 58, line 8 (T 1.2.5.12) of the text and learn from Nidditch's textual note at the end of the book that we need to consult the Appendix on page 636. Here Hume acknowledges his error in claiming that we determine the distance of objects by "the angles, which the rays of light flowing from the bodies make with each other." On page 500, line 2 (T 3.2.2.24) there is an asterisk indicating an insertion which Hume made in his own published copy of Book 3 of the *Treatise*. We find Hume's emendation of the sentence with the asterisk in Nidditch's textual notes on page 670, along with an additional sentence in which he stresses that while sympathy is the basis for our moral judgments concerning justice it is too weak to control our passions. Unfortunately, Nidditch did not see the full potential of such markings, and limited their use to locations where there was not enough space to incorporate Hume's revisions. Where such space existed, he made the changes silently into Selby-Bigge's text (e.g., pp. 190.16–17, 263.14, 479.9, & 483.12).

The Clarendon Critical Edition of *A Treatise of Human Nature* consists of two separate volumes, the first (447 pages) containing the critical text of the *Treatise*, the *Abstract* and *A Letter from a Gentleman to his Friend in Edinburgh*, and the second (752 pages) containing diverse editorial materials including, (1) "Historical Account of *A Treatise of Human Nature* from its Beginnings to the Time of Hume's Death"; (2) "Editing the Texts," a discussion of the principles used in editing Volume 1 along with records of the editorial changes; (3) the "Editors' Annotations"; (4) a four part bibliography including both primary and secondary sources used in preparing and annotating the texts; (5) an index to the editorial material in (1) and (2) above; and (6) a second index to the three texts in Volume 1 and the editors' annotations of those texts in Volume 2.

In the "A Note on the Texts" which introduces Volume 1, David and Mary Norton explain their intention to produce "as far as circumstances permit . . . the second edition of the work that Hume envisioned," and to present it "in a modern, scholarly format that facilitates . . . its use by the modern scholarly reader" (xi). It seems appropriate to ask the question whether they have succeeded in making the task of a modern scholarly reader easier. For example, the Nortons have decided that Hume himself sometimes failed to catch substantial errors in his own text, and have silently replaced words in that text with those they consider to convey his true meaning. In order to discover these changes one must run through the entries in

Register B of the section “Editing the Texts” on pages 644–62 of Volume 2. Some of these changes are very controversial and by the editors’ own admission change the sense of Hume’s original; see especially the entries for p. 85, line 35; p. 166, line 27; p. 380, line 10; and p. 391, title. How are the goals of the modern scholarly reader facilitated by making these changes without any indication on the page of the text? Here Nidditch does have the advantage over the Nortons, since the few editorial revisions he made that lack any Humean authority are clearly marked in his text with square brackets. The Nortons also introduce the changes Hume made in his own copy of Book 3 and silently transpose these into their “second edition” text. When carefully studied these latter changes may well alert a reader to ways in which Hume’s thoughts were still evolving after the book was published. These too must be discovered by working one’s way through Register B in Volume 2. How easy and convenient it would have been to alert scholars to these changes on the actual text pages of Volume 1. (For an excellent study of the problems with these and other textual changes in the critical text see James A. Harris, “Editing Hume’s *Treatise*,” *Modern Intellectual History* 5.3 (2008): 633–41.)

The changes which Hume himself made to Book 1 in the Appendix to Book 3 of the original text are dealt with in a better fashion than the other textual matters I have mentioned. These are clearly marked within the critical text with an ‘App’ superscript. The paragraphs of the Appendix in which Hume gives his second thoughts on *belief* and *personal identity* and confesses to two other errors follow the Conclusion to Book 3 in Volume 1 (396–401); and the complete original intact Appendix (with the editorial changes collected together as in the Selby-Bigge/Nidditch edition) is reprinted in Volume 2 (674–84). At the same time, it would have facilitated the use of the text by modern scholars to indicate on the text page itself the points where Hume acknowledged errors, as Nidditch did through the use of asterisks. Corrections of these passages would certainly have been introduced in the second edition text which Hume projected. One wonders how many readers are going to work their way through the critical apparatus of Volume 2 of the Critical Edition in order to discover the substantial philosophical changes which Hume made in his original text.

It is unfortunate that the publishers have undermined the clear intention of the editors that the two volumes be used together, by permitting them to be sold separately. Readers who are considering buying the first volume without the second should realize that it not only comes without any critical apparatus indicating the changes which the editors have introduced in Hume’s original text, but also without any index.

If one takes the time to carefully master the complex critical apparatus created by the Nortons in Volume 2, then one certainly will find first rate information about the history of the text which significantly facilitates modern scholarly

research. David Norton's excellent "Historical Account . . ." (433–588) builds on important work done on Hume's intellectual biography in recent years—a good deal of it researched by David and Mary Norton themselves. Perhaps what is most interesting in this history of the writing and reception of the *Treatise* is the argument that Hume's famous claim that the *Treatise* "fell *dead-born from the Press*" cannot be taken at face value. David Norton argues that the *Treatise* "was, for its time, widely reviewed," that a number of these reviews dealt with substantive issues, and that "during the summer of 1739, in Scotland at least, the *Treatise* may have created a philosophical stir" (518–20).

At the beginning of the "Editors' Annotations" in Volume 2, the Nortons explain that unlike their annotations in the Oxford Philosophical Texts edition for students which they published in 2000, those in the critical edition aim to "provide materials intended to illuminate, but not interpret" the text (685). They list seven purposes of these annotations: (1) to explain archaic phrases or terms in the texts; (2) to translate Hume's quotations from the Latin; (3) to augment and clarify his cross references to other sections of the *Treatise*; (4) to explain his references to other authors; (5) to identify authors or books to which Hume himself alludes; (6) to identify particular passages in the writings of his predecessors which relate directly to the issues he is discussing in a given paragraph or section; and 7) to make references to discussions in Hume's other writings which either incorporate those of the *Treatise* or "*reappear, typically in modified form*" (687).

The Nortons' topic by topic reconstruction of the intellectual context of the *Treatise* in their annotations represents an extraordinary intellectual achievement which will serve many generations of future Hume scholars. They not only cite relevant passages in well-known sources such as Bacon, Locke, Shaftesbury, Butler, Mandeville, Hutcheson, Malebranche, Berkeley, Bayle, Descartes and Hobbes, but also in many lesser known writers whom Hume either certainly did read, or might have read. They trace specific topics by way of quotations from or references to these authors, and at the very least recover a world of ideas very different from our own in order to help us to understand Hume's ideas and arguments. Their quotations from reference books such as Ephraim Chamber's 1728 *Cyclopaedia* and Isaac Watts's 1725 *Logick* are of great value in aiding our comprehension of the central concepts of the *Treatise*.

There are slips of course, as is inevitable in a vast undertaking of this kind. In their annotation to page 13, lines 18–20 on page 701 they attribute to Locke the view that the relation of cause and effect produces an association of ideas, making us think of two ideas as one: a careful look at the text of *An Essay concerning Human Understanding* which they cite (2.33.11) reveals that Locke makes no reference to cause and effect. *They attribute a view to Locke which is original with Hume*. They also imply on the top of page 700 that when Locke writes of "a natural Correspondence

and Connexion” of ideas (*Essay* 2.33.5) he means an association of ideas: on the contrary, a careful examination of the passage reveals that Locke *contrasts* “natural” connections of ideas with associational ones. This is relevant to Hume because when *he* writes of a “*natural* relation” of ideas (T 1.3.6.16; SBN 94 & T 1.3.14.31; SBN 169–70), he reverses Locke’s conception of what is natural. But it is remarkable how few slips of this kind there are in the annotations, and the Nortons have generally tracked the views of Hume’s predecessors with great accuracy.

As useful as is the intellectual context supplied by David and Mary Norton in their annotations, it is important to remind ourselves that it does not solve the problems of an interpreter of Hume’s *Treatise*. As they themselves acknowledge, the key problem in interpretation is that of understanding just how a creative thinker such as Hume responds to the ideas of his contemporaries and predecessors. To what extent does he accept their ideas, to what extent does he reject them and to what extent does he rework them in order to convey his own unique philosophical message? Hume scholars owe an enormous debt to the Nortons in giving us the raw materials to develop our own best answers to these questions over the wide range of philosophical topics with which Hume dealt in his *Treatise of Human Nature*.

The Critical Edition of the *Treatise of Human Nature* will provide an invaluable resource for scholars, but I hope that Oxford University Press will continue to sell the Selby-Bigge/Nidditch edition which, in spite of its limitations, still facilitates the philosophical study of the *Treatise* in a convenient and generally reliable format.

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