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Elizabeth S. Radcliffe, ed. *A Companion to Hume*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2008. Pp. xiii + 573. ISBN 9781405114554, Cloth, $199.95

Here is a huge volume of twenty-eight new essays on Hume in the Blackwell Companion series. It can go on your shelf next to the *Blackwell Guide to Hume's* Treatise, fifteen essays on many of the same themes, edited by Saul Traiger (2006). There appears to be no Blackwell Companion or Guide to either of Hume's *Enquiries* so far, but Oxford University Press fills half that gap with fifteen essays of the same kind on Hume's first *Enquiry*, *Reading Hume on Human Understanding*, edited by Peter Millican (2002). All these in addition to the fifteen essays available since 1993 in the *Cambridge Companion to Hume*, now updated in a second edition by David Fate Norton & Jacqueline Taylor. And other books like this on Hume are on the way.

The profusion of reference books of this kind in recent years is something new in academic publishing. There are more than forty Blackwell Companions in philosophy alone. Oxford University Press has its corresponding *Handbook of . . .* series in philosophy. Cambridge Companions to this or that abound. This must mean this kind of publishing pays, at least for a press that can capture and hold a reasonable share of the market. Production costs must be relatively low, since although many of the books have more than five hundred pages, and each essay is newly commissioned and written especially for its own volume, authors are paid next to nothing for writing them. The authors in this *Companion to Hume* are some of the best Hume scholars of the day, some of whom contribute to one or more of the other volumes on Hume. They have taken their task seriously and produced essays of very high quality. Readers will be well served. But who are the targeted readers of books of this kind?

This Companion is not primarily a collection of new scholarly essays meant to advance understanding on specific critical issues in the interpretation of Hume of the kind familiar to readers of *Hume Studies*. The essays here are directed more towards surveying and commenting on the main lines of recent research within broader areas of Hume's philosophy or towards an overview of the general character of his contributions in this or that field. The volume covers a very wide range. There is not space to mention every valuable part of it.

Stephen Buckle opens with a very good account of Hume's place in what came to be called The Enlightenment, especially in relation to the French *philosophes*, who so often are considered the sole representatives of that movement. Buckle does his best to break down a number of other aging stereotypes about Hume, some of which, one hopes, are moribund as textbook taxonomies fade away and more

attention is directed towards what Hume actually says, or does not say. Terence Penelhum also discusses Hume in relation to the French, this time in religion. His masterly, beautifully written overview of the intellectual and cultural influences on Hume's views on religion ends with a brief sketch of how those views are embodied in the first *Enquiry*, *The Natural History of Religion*, and the *Dialogues*. In an excellent general account of Hume's *History of England* Mark Salber Philips brings out the distinctive features of Hume's great historical work and how and why it was praised and attacked in just the ways it was. He is very good on the rhetorical devices Hume used in that work to keep the present state of the nation always before the mind of the reader attending directly to goings-on in earlier times.

Richard H. Dees gives a clear, illuminating explanation of Hume's theory of the origin of government and the source of our obligation to obey it without giving up the possibility of resistance. Hume thought the inevitability of government in some form or other in any human society gave the English good reason to "cherish" a constitution that allows for the tradition of liberty they have enjoyed. On the related question of the nature and origin of justice, Eugenio Lecaldano explains how Hume's conception of an "artificial" virtue serves to support an obligation to justice that owes nothing to the tradition of natural law.

Among topics treated mainly in Book 1 of the *Treatise*, Don Garrett gives an absolutely ground-floor, bread-and-butter explanation of the general theory of impressions and ideas in terms of which all of Hume's "science of human nature" is to be expressed. He explains the basic distinctions between impressions and ideas, impressions of sensation and impressions of reflection, simple perceptions and complex perceptions, and so on, and describes the role of the various "principles" in accord with which perceptions come and go in the mind. He even tries to explain, what Hume simply took for granted without explaining it, what it is for an impression or idea to be *of* one sort of thing rather than another. Donald Ainslie interprets Hume's view of personal identity in relation to Locke, explaining exactly what Hume objects to in Locke's account, before undertaking his own very helpful assessment of the merits of various interpretations of the doubts Hume expresses in the Appendix about his explanation of the unity of the mind. Janet Broughton's wise, sensitive treatment of the relation between Hume's "skepticism" and his "naturalism" helps illuminate the puzzling quandary Hume gives expression to in the enigmatic final section of Book 1 of the *Treatise*. She thinks Hume gets closer in the last section of the first *Enquiry* to identifying what he comes to see as the real value in pursuing "the skeptical philosophy."

A number of essays in the volume overlap to varying degrees within the general area of action, passion, motivation, morality, and other forms of value. Charlotte R. Brown gives a very straightforward, accurate account of Hume's "sentimentalist" opposition to "moral rationalism" and explains the importance

of sympathy as a mechanism of the mind sufficient to give agents motivation to moral action. Tito Magri covers some of this same ground in discussing the relative roles of "reason" and "passion" in connection with the "direct passions," as does Elizabeth S. Radcliffe, the editor of the volume, in her discussion of the account of motivation in Hume and also of something that in recent decades has come to be called "The Humean Theory of Motivation." One of the best essays in the book is Nicholas L. Sturgeon's "Hume's Metaethics: Is Hume a Moral Noncognitivist?" He shows convincingly that central elements of Hume's views that clearly support a "subjectivist" interpretation, according to which moral sentiments play a crucial role in moral assessments, do not lead to a "noncognitivst" interpretation according to which what is expressed in those "assessments" is not "a matter of fact." The question of moral motivation comes into play here too, and the issues are complex, but there seems to me a certain anachronism in attributing to Hume a purely "expressivist" or "performatory" understanding of moral language or thought. For him our words and thoughts get whatever meaning they have only from their relations to perceptions in the mind.

Annette Baier's essay differs from most of the others in not trying to survey or comment on a general area of Hume studies. She takes up Hume's expressed preference, among all his works, for *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*, and tries to identify what it is about that work that pleased its author more than any others. This involves a careful description of what the book really tries to do, how it differs from the *Treatise* and works by others in moral philosophy, and what Hume's contemporaries made of it and many of them felt threatened by. She gives a wonderful account of all that, and more, but finds herself finally unable either to endorse or to resist Hume's own judgement. She suspects that her intense study of Hume has led her into a certain "diffidence and scepticism." But Hume himself was neither diffident nor skeptical on the question. He thought his second *Enquiry*, "of all my writings, historical, philosophical or literary, incomparably the best."

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