



Thomas Mautner. *Francis Hutcheson: Two Texts on Human Nature*

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THOMAS MAUTNER. *Francis Hutcheson: Two Texts on Human Nature*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993. xiv + 194 pages. ISBN 0 521 43089 5 (hc).

Thomas Mautner's edition, *Francis Hutcheson: Two Texts on Human Nature*, is a double treat. First, it provides access to two revealing works of Hutcheson that previously have not been well known or readily available. Second, it provides an impressive editorial introduction that situates the texts by considering by whom Hutcheson is influenced, against whom he is reacting, and how his work was received by his contemporaries.

Two texts are presented. The first is a substantial essay that appeared in issues of *The London Journal* immediately preceding publication of *An Inquiry Into the Original of Our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue*. The second is Hutcheson's "Inaugural Lecture on the Social Nature of Man," first published in Latin in 1730, translated by Mautner with the assistance of Colin Mayrhofer.

Neither of these two texts offer the philosophical structure and argument that are in Hutcheson's longer treatises. But where they do reward the reader is in providing clearer insight into what Hutcheson expects a moral system—a moral theory—to be and to do. Not only should a moral philosophy be an accurate account of our moral experience, it should also serve to reaffirm, to encourage, perhaps to enhance our natural commitment and motivation to be morally approvable in our actions and in our character.

It is in the editorial introduction and in the numerous appendices, however, where Mautner's work shines. By correctly appreciating Hutcheson's own project, Mautner is able to show clearly what has eluded so many Hutcheson (and Hume) scholars of a less historical bent: while Hobbes and Mandeville may be the most often named antagonists, the real opponent is that particularly bleak culture of orthodox Scottish Calvinism, a faith that makes a mockery of human free will, that emphasizes the utter corruption of human nature, and that celebrates a theodicy in which humans are held accountable to a standard of moral conduct that is acknowledged to be impossible for us to meet.

David Fate Norton has reminded us that Hutcheson, Hume, and their like-minded colleagues aligned themselves as defenders of the "reality" of virtue.¹ By this they meant that ethical egoism and psychological egoism are both false. Ethical egoism is false because to reduce virtue to self-interest is a mean-spirited mockery of the nobility of virtue. And psychological egoism is false because we can in fact act upon benevolent, non-egoistic motives. Hence, it is possible for human beings truly to be morally virtuous. Thus, virtue is "real."

James Moore then explored the notion that, especially as a professor of moral philosophy, Hutcheson was sensitive to the unorthodoxy of his own moral philosophy and indeed toned down his lectures as an effort to be responsible in that role,² with similar work pursued by Knud Haakonssen.³

Mautner, through both impressive textual recovery and philosophical analysis, convincingly documents and argues his case that orthodox Scottish Calvinism is the real concern and target of criticism.

Where Mautner does fall short is in explaining the interest and relevance of Hutcheson's moral philosophy to us today. The brief three pages devoted to this topic are more sketchy and simplistic than this reader would have preferred. Interest in Hutcheson has grown substantially in recent years, as has interest in Hume and Adam Smith. The many reasons for this renewed interest are, I believe, quite complex and merit more extensive exploration and explanation.

The editorial principles seem straightforward and sound enough. The translation of the "Inaugural Lecture" is clean and accurate. There are a handful of typographical errors, but all that I found were in editorial parts of the book, not in the Hutcheson texts, and none led to grammatical ambiguities or confusions. The index is thin, but serviceable. (And anyone who can keep straight all the different John Clarkes deserves some credit on that count alone.)

This is by no means the last word in Hutcheson scholarship, whatever that would be. But it will stand as a nice presentation of the intellectual climate in which Hutcheson (and Hume) wrote and the moral and philosophical motivations that gave impetus to his moral philosophy.

NOTES

1 David Fate Norton, *David Hume: Common-Sense Moralist, Sceptical Metaphysician* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982).

2 James Moore, "The Two Systems of Francis Hutcheson," in *Studies in the Philosophy of the Scottish Enlightenment*, edited by M. A. Stewart (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990).

3 Knud Haakonssen, "Natural Law and Moral Realism: The Scottish Synthesis," in *Studies in the Philosophy of the Scottish Enlightenment*, edited by M. A. Stewart (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990).

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