



Tom L. Beauchamp, ed. *David Hume: A Dissertation on the Passions; The Natural History of Religion.*

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Hume Studies Volume 36, Number 2 (2010), 233-235.

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Tom L. Beauchamp, ed. *David Hume: A Dissertation on the Passions; The Natural History of Religion*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2007. Pp. cxxxv + 317. ISBN 978-0-19-925188-9, cloth, \$150. ISBN 978-0-19-957574-9, Paper, \$45.

The present volume is the fifth out of eight total projected for the Clarendon Edition of the Works of David Hume. Its editor, Tom Beauchamp, is one of the general editors of the Clarendon Hume, together with David Fate Norton and M. A. Stewart. Beauchamp served as the editor for the Clarendon editions of *An Enquiry concerning the Principle of Morals* (1998) and *An Enquiry concerning Human Understanding* (2000), both of which have garnered critical acclaim. Like the previous volumes, this new edition of *A Dissertation on the Passions* and *The Natural History of Religion* has been prepared with erudition and meticulous attention to detail. It becomes without question the definitive critical edition of these texts.

The volume begins with a superb editorial introduction, giving a detailed account of the publication history of the two texts included in the volume, including an overview of contemporary reviews and a note explaining how the various editions of the texts were collated and the text prepared. These are followed by the texts of *A Dissertation on the Passions* and *The Natural History of Religion*, together comprising eighty-seven pages. The edition includes both line and paragraph numbers for easy reference. A section titled “Editor’s Annotations” extends to nearly the same length and offers not only definitions of obscure terms, translations of non-English quotations, and explanations of references that are incomplete or unclear but also identification of related material elsewhere in Hume’s corpus and information on the broader intellectual context of Hume’s thought. A subsequent “Editorial Appendix” gives a detailed account of the decisions made in arriving at the critical text, which is based primarily on the 1772 edition (the final edition made during Hume’s lifetime) but which does make some departures, in both orthography and punctuation, from Hume’s original. The “Editorial Appendix” also includes a register of all non-systematic editorial changes and all substantive variants among successive editions of the texts. The “Editorial Appendix” is followed by an essay on the intellectual background of both *A Dissertation on the Passions* and *The Natural History of Religion*, a “Biographical Appendix” with brief biographies of all the persons mentioned by Hume in the two dissertations, a bibliography of works cited by either Hume or the editor, and a short-title index of Hume’s own references. The volume concludes with Hume’s index, compiled for the 1758 edition of *Essays and Treatises on Several Subjects*, followed by the editor’s index.

The two texts comprising this volume are two of the *Four Dissertations* published by Hume in 1757. *A Dissertation on the Passions* was for the most part extracted

from Book 2 of *A Treatise of Human Nature*. Thus, its publication completed Hume's project of reworking the material from the *Treatise* into a more essayistic style, a project Hume had commenced with *Philosophical Essays concerning Human Understanding* (in 1748, reworking Book 1 of the *Treatise*) and *An Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals* (in 1751, reworking Book 3). The fact that Hume left *A Dissertation on the Passions* for last suggests that he regarded it as less central to his own original philosophical contribution than the other two. This impression is reinforced by the fact that he refers to it in "My Own Life" simply as one of "some other small pieces" published with *The Natural History of Religion* (xxvii), as well as by the fact that while Books 1 and 3 were completely re-written, nearly three-quarters of *A Dissertation on the Passions* was taken verbatim from Book 2 of the *Treatise* (li). One of the great merits of the present edition is the inclusion of a section devoted to presenting, in parallel columns, all *Treatise* passages preserved in *A Dissertation on the Passions*, thereby facilitating an easy comparison of the two texts.

Scholars of Hume's religious thought might have preferred to see *The Natural History of Religion* published together with the *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*. However, it is appropriate to a critical edition that Hume's works be published chronologically, with the *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* thus scheduled to appear, together with other posthumously published materials, in volume 8 of the Clarendon Hume. The decision to include just two of the *Four Dissertations* in this volume is an innovation that calls for some justification. Beauchamp offers only an oblique defense of this move to separate the present texts both from the other two of the *Four Dissertations* and from the remainder of Hume's essays. He takes note of Hume's express hope in the Advertisement of 1777 that the particular volume of *Essays and Treatises on Several Subjects* in which *The Natural History of Religion* and *A Dissertation on the Passions* appeared be alone regarded as containing his philosophical sentiments (xv). The reader must wait until page xxii of Beauchamp's introductions for any reference to the other two dissertations, "Of Tragedy" and "Of the Standard of Taste," which are presumably destined for volume 6 or 7 of the Clarendon Hume. At work here is apparently a privileging of the narrowly philosophical over not only Hume's literary but also his aesthetic works, following an understanding of the "philosophical" revealed in the opening sentence of the editor's introduction: "*Four Dissertations* (1757) was the last philosophical book written and seen through the press by Hume" (xi). This questionable understanding of the philosophical can be seen also in the editorial decision not to include the *History of England* in the Clarendon Hume, which sadly means that this will not be an edition of Hume's complete works.

The decision on the part of the editors of the Clarendon Hume to relegate to Editorial Appendices all indications of Hume's editorial changes over the years has been criticized by some reviewers for obscuring important information (e.g., John

P. Wright, Review of *A Treatise of Human Nature: A Critical Edition*, *Hume Studies* 34.2 [2008]: 300) and praised by others in light of the complexity of collating and comparing the many editions involved and the desirability of a clean critical text (e.g., Peter S. Fosl, "On the 2007 Clarendon Critical Edition of David Hume's *A Treatise of Human Nature*," *Hume Studies* 33.2 [2007]: 292). In the case of the present texts, the changes are sufficiently minor that the editorial decision is justified.

While for the most part this volume seeks to provide resources for interpreting Hume's thought rather than itself offering an interpretation, Beauchamp does emphasize the fact that Hume's reputation as a religious skeptic was firmly in place well before his decision to publish the *Natural History of Religion*. He also seeks to correct a longstanding impression, reinforced by some remarks of E. C. Mossner, that Hume made amendments to the text in order to avoid prosecution. Beauchamp effectively dismisses this argument and thereby defends his decision not to follow the practice established by some previous editors (Richard Wollheim, James Fieser, and Antony Flew) of restoring two cancelled passages (xxvi).

A Dissertation on the Passions has been reprinted in various facsimile editions of the *Four Dissertations* but has received very little independent critical attention. *The Natural History of Religion*, in contrast, has appeared in a number of different modern editions, often together with the *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*. A quick survey of these previous editions underscores the qualitative leap made with the present edition. The 1976 Clarendon edition of the two texts, edited by A. Wayne Colver and John Vladimir Price, described its approach as "bibliographical and textual, not philosophical or critical" (v). It did seek to trace Hume's references and note textual variations. Anthony Flew sought to bring together all of Hume's works specifically on religion, including both *The Natural History of Religion* and the *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*. A very useful student edition, Flew's volume offered a very brief introduction, scanty notes and bibliography, and did not aspire to being a critical edition. While other editions of Hume's religious works will continue to be useful in the classroom, none of the existing editions can begin to compare with Beauchamp's new edition as a tool for serious scholars of Hume's thought.

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