

Beauchamp's Student Editions of the *Enquiries*

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As a particular enthusiast for the first *Enquiry*, Hume's definitive presentation of his epistemology and metaphysics ☺, I eagerly awaited the new Oxford editions for many years (from when they were initially announced under the aegis of Princeton). Although the Selby-Bigge edition of the *Enquiries* has done good service, most notably in its role of providing a widely agreed convention for references to Hume's texts, I have always found it a bit strange that it should be generally thought of as a relatively reliable edition - *if* this is so, then I think it says more about the competition than it does about the Selby-Bigge edition itself. For example:

- (a) The Selby-Bigge edition is often routinely mentioned as being relatively accurate, perhaps on the strength of Nidditch's preface to his revised third edition: "It can fairly be claimed, I believe, that the resulting text is closer to historical accuracy than the texts in other inexpensive and widely-used editions of either *Enquiry*." However it is clear from pp. 348-9 of Nidditch's notes that this is a fairly modest claim given the quality of his rivals (moreover he indicates that he has left the text largely uncorrected, given that he has a critical edition in mind, of which we were presumably robbed by his premature death.) In fact Selby-Bigge's text contains, in my estimation (based on checks against the 1777 edition carried out when preparing my own electronic edition some years ago – now freely available on the Web), well over 1,000 small inaccuracies, mostly admittedly of unimportant punctuation, but inaccuracies nonetheless.
- (b) Selby-Bigge's appallingly opinionated "Editor's Introduction" to the *Enquiries* volume should, to my mind, only ever be put in front of a student if accompanied by a prominent "health warning":

Beware: reading this "Editor's Introduction" could significantly compromise your ability to appreciate the *Enquiry* as a major, integrated, work of philosophy in its own right!

- (b) Selby-Bigge omits textual variants, which include in particular two passages which Hume indeed deleted from the final 1777 edition of the first *Enquiry*, but which nevertheless are of significant interest. These are the note praising Hutcheson's and Butler's achievements in "mental geography" near the end of Section I (present only in the 1748 and 1750 editions), and the long ending of Section III discussing the application of the principles of association to literature, removed only from that final posthumous edition.

In respect of the first two of these issues – textual accuracy and editorial contribution – there is no doubt whatever that Beauchamp's student editions totally supersede the Selby-Bigge edition; indeed they are simply in a different class altogether. In respect of the last issue the judgement is less clear, because Beauchamp like Selby-Bigge generally ignores textual variants, though his first *Enquiry* does incorporate the deleted long ending of Section III *as part of the main text*, because he takes as his copytext the 1772 rather than the posthumous 1777 edition. I'll turn to this last point in a moment, after inserting a brief request: Tom, when you come to prepare a second edition (as surely will be required after your Supplementary Reading section has aged a decade or two), please could you quote the whole of Hume's note on Hutcheson and Butler in your "Annotations", instead of just alluding to it? It's not vital, but it would be useful!

In passing it is appropriate to mention here an even more important event for Hume scholars than the appearance of the Beauchamp 1998-9 student editions – namely, the appearance in 2000 [EPM date perhaps 1998??] of the magnificent Beauchamp critical editions (which in my view merit their own book session at a future Hume Conference, there being insufficient time to discuss them here). These, of course, include all textual variants, and I have only praise for how they have been treated. However having a strong personal preference for the 1777 edition of the first *Enquiry* in particular, I was very interested to read Beauchamp’s account of why he had chosen the 1772 as his copytext: obviously it does have the virtue of being “The last edition seen through the press with Hume’s supervision” (p. 80), but against that the 1777 contains further authorial corrections, which Hume prepared in full awareness that this would be the text left to posterity. Now is not the time to discuss this matter in depth; suffice it to say that Beauchamp’s policy, as explained in detail in his critical edition, seems to me to follow an almost ideal balance between the claims of the two editions – he justifies taking the 1772 as the copytext, but allowing this to be overridden in cases where the genuine authorial voice can be heard in the corrections of 1777. My sole quibble, unfortunately quite a significant one, concerns that long ending of Section III. In short, I believe that this ending should have been relegated in the student edition to the status of a note, annotation, or appendix, or clearly ruled off from the main text (the last of which would be compatible with retaining the paragraph numbering), rather than being included bodily within it. Though Beauchamp properly draws attention to the deletion in an asterisked editorial note, and by enclosing the relevant material in square brackets, these appear of little significance given the layout of the text; moreover the way in which he alludes to the deletion gives me at least the clear impression that he considers the original ending to be the more authoritative.¹ But I am not aware of any evidence that the deletion was anything other than Hume’s settled intention (surely it would be extraordinary for such a drastic modification to be made without authorial insistence, and Hume apparently remained of sound mind to the very end). Moreover I believe there were excellent philosophical grounds for the deletion; hence I also find it *educationally* regrettable that students should be presented with a text which gives a misleading impression of Hume’s final intentions. Consider, for comparison, what we would lose if the *Dialogues* were to be published without Hume’s deathbed corrections!

The only other significant complaint that I have against Beauchamp’s student editions also concerns a matter of editorial policy rather than quality, namely, his omission of any method of cross-reference to the hitherto standard Selby-Bigge edition. I have no objection to his method of reference (by section and paragraph number), but feel that it would have been extremely helpful to have in addition marginal numbers to enable students to find references made using the Selby-Bigge page numbers; or failing that, at least a cross-table of references. Here are some considerations that have been or might be adduced against such a policy:²

- (a) Cross-references can anyway easily be sorted in the other direction, by adding paragraph numbering to copies of the Selby-Bigge editions.
- (b) Such cross-referencing would give the Selby-Bigge edition a spurious authority, hindering adoption of the new edition.
- (c) It would be arbitrary, because Selby-Bigge is little better than all the other available editions, but marginal numbers for all of them would clearly not be practicable.

¹ His asterisked note says “The remainder of this section did not appear in the 1777 edition. The material did appear in all editions from 1748 to 1772. Ed.” His earlier note on the text (p. 80) comments that the 1777 edition “has been consulted for evidence of late changes by the author and has almost always been followed for substantive changes (with the exception of a major and unexplained deletion in Section 3 that occurred in the 1777 edition).”

² Those that have been adduced are from private correspondence with David Fate Norton, and Terence Penelhum’s *Hume Studies* review (November 2000) of Norton’s edition of the *Treatise*.

The first response (a) misses the point, because the idea of marginal numbers is not to enable readers to cross-reference between *editions* of the *Enquiry* (how many will want to do *that?*), but rather, to enable them to cross-refer from *references* in books and scholarly articles to the edition that they happen to be using. Those books and scholarly articles are already sitting in thousands on library shelves, and nobody is ever going to go through them adding paragraph numbers to every reference, so any user of Beauchamp's edition who wants to follow up these references quickly and easily is going to have to add Selby-Bigge numbering to that edition. For the same reason, response (b) gets things the wrong way round: having such numbering added in the margins of the Beauchamp edition would *assist* its adoption rather than the reverse, because it would remove the one strong motivation that remains for continuing to use Selby-Bigge instead. Finally, the claim of arbitrariness (c) also misses the point, because the value of Selby-Bigge page reference derives not from the *quality* of the Selby-Bigge edition, but from its *ubiquity* as a reference standard (long endorsed, for example, by the Hume Society and its journal). To confirm my subjective impression of this ubiquity, I tested two sources: David Owen's recent collection of facsimile reprints of 20 articles on Hume's "General Philosophy" (which being facsimiles, faithfully reproduce the original references); and the first few sections of my own recent "Critical Review of the Literature on Hume and the *Enquiry*", which was put together for my forthcoming OUP collection and also for Web publication, without any regard for the method of reference to Hume's works. The results were striking:

- In Owen's collection, 2 of the 20 papers make no textual reference to Hume's *Treatise* or *Enquiry*. Of the 18 that do, every single one references the Selby-Bigge editions.
- Of the first 30 items in my own critical review, one makes no textual reference to Hume's *Treatise* or *Enquiry*, while 2 (both by Mossner) make reference to Green and Grose. The other 27 all reference the Selby-Bigge editions, though 2 of them also mention one other edition (Hendel in one case, and Everyman in the other).

I conclude from all this that the page numbering of the Selby-Bigge edition will continue to be important for the foreseeable future, given the sheer number of books and articles on Hume which use it to make reference to the two *Enquiries*.³ Readers of other editions are therefore well advised to write the Selby-Bigge page numbers at the relevant points in the margin of whatever edition they use, and it is a shame that this was not done for them in the Beauchamp editions.

For obvious reasons, I have devoted most attention here to a couple of criticisms of Beauchamp's student editions, but it would be quite wrong to end on a negative note. Not only is his text of very high quality, but also, his editorial material is in general first rate. It includes a detailed introduction describing the background to the *Enquiry* and giving an outline of each section; an excellent survey of supplementary reading (by some distance the best I came across in preparing my own Critical Review); an extensive and well-organised appendix of annotations to the text; and a useful glossary. For both scholars and students, the only remaining use for Selby-Bigge, once those page numbers have been pencilled into the margins of Beauchamp, is occasional use of his *Treatise/Enquiry* correspondence table and his useful, albeit uneven, "critical index". So keep Selby-Bigge on your shelves, and you will no doubt keep many of his page numbers in your heads, but for all else, turn to Beauchamp!

1800 words (150 in notes)

³ Given the ubiquity of the Selby-Bigge numbering, it seems to me that previous scholars have been totally right to use it, so Penelhum's criticism of "Older scholarly works whose authors were unwise enough to make references solely by SBN page-numbers" (p. 340) is misplaced.