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0521430895 - On Human Nature: Reflections on our Common Systems of Morality on the Social Nature of Man - Edited by Thomas Mautner

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Francis Hutcheson (1694–1746) was the first major philosopher of the Scottish Enlightenment, and one of the great thinkers in the history of British moral philosophy, influencing Hume, Kant, and his pupil Adam Smith. He firmly rejected the reductionist view, common then as now, that morality is nothing more than the prudent pursuit of self-interest, arguing in favour of a theory of a moral sense. The two texts presented here are the most eloquent expressions of this theory. The *Reflections on our common systems of morality* insists on the connection between moral philosophy and moral improvement, and was a preview of his first major work, the *Inquiry* of 1725. The lecture *On the social nature of man*, arguing against the psychological egoism of Hobbes, appears here in an English translation for the first time. Thomas Mautner's introduction and editorial apparatus provide a mass of new information, helping to give the reader a sense of the intellectual climate in which Hutcheson lived.

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Francis Hutcheson

On Human Nature

Reflections on our common systems of morality

On the social nature of man

Edited by

THOMAS MAUTNER



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

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Published by the Press Syndicate of the University of Cambridge
The Pitt Building, Trumpington Street, Cambridge CB2 1RP
40 West 20th Street, New York, NY 10011-4211 USA
10 Stamford Road, Oakleigh, Melbourne 3166, Australia

© Cambridge University Press 1993

First published 1993
Reprinted 1994, 1995

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress cataloguing in publication data

Hutcheson, Francis, 1694-1746

On Human Nature / Francis Hutcheson ; edited by Thomas Mautner

p. cm

Includes bibliographical references and index.

Contents: Reflections on our common systems of morality—On the social nature of man.

ISBN 0 521 43089 5 (hc)

1. Ethics. Modern—18th century. 2. Social ethics. 3. Man. 4. Hutcheson, Francis, 1694–1746. De naturali hominum socialitate. English. 1993 III. Title.

B1501.05 1993

171'. dc20 92-23820 CIP

ISBN 0 521 43089 5 hardback

Transferred to digital printing 2004

AU

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Preface

Francis Hutcheson (1694–1746) is one of the great names in the history of British moral philosophy, yet his writings are not easily available. Of his writings on moral philosophy, the two pieces here presented have been even more inaccessible than the rest. The first, a preview of his *Inquiry*, here called *Reflections on the Common Systems of Morality*, was omitted from the 1971 facsimile edition of the collected works. The second, his inaugural lecture on man's natural sociality, here given the title *On the Social Nature of Man*, has remained comparatively inaccessible because it was published in Latin. It is presented here in an English translation for the first time.

When researching relevant material for this edition, other pieces by Hutcheson, published in his lifetime but not included in the facsimile edition of the collected works, came to my notice. One is a letter, published in a French translation, in which he protested against some unfavourable remarks by the reviewer in *Bibliothèque Angloise* 13 (1725). It is not included here, as an English version of it has recently been published in an article by David Raynor. For further detail, see p. 82 below. Another item is a letter on conic sections in *Bibliothèque Raisonnée des Ouvrages des Savans de l'Europe* 14 (1735), intended to draw favourable attention to a new work on the subject by his colleague Robert Simson, professor of mathematics. This letter does not fall within the scope of moral philosophy, so it is not included here. It is interesting, however, to note that in geometry, as in moral philosophy, Hutcheson favours the ancients over the moderns. There is also an *exercitatio* of 1740, later included in an Italian anthology designed for students of jurisprudence. For further information, which also explains why it is not included here, see the bibliography under books and articles [Anon.], *Variorum* ... There is also an item attributed to Hutcheson by Caroline Robbins ('When it is that colonies may turn independent', in Caroline Robbins, *Absolute Liberty*, ed. B. Taft, Hamden, Conn.:

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Archon 1982, p. 140). It is a short preface to the three-volume edition of Henry More's (1614–87) *Divine Dialogues, containing disquisitions concerning the attributes and providence of God*, which was published 1743 by the Foulis press in Glasgow. This attribution is, however, very doubtful. The actual text of the preface does not point in Hutcheson's direction, and I am not aware of any other grounds for this attribution. The preface reveals familiarity with the major philosophical writers. It is signed by 'The Editor': no doubt the printer, Robert Foulis, who may well have written it. He was a very able and well-educated person, and after the formation of the Glasgow Literary Society some years later he frequently presented papers on learned subjects at its meetings (see Richard Duncan, *Notices and Documents illustrative of the Literary History of Glasgow*. Glasgow [Maitland Club] 1831, p. 16).

Much of the work on the present edition of the *Reflections* was done during a stay at the Social Values Research Centre of the University of Hull in February 1989. I wish to thank its Director, Professor Brenda Almond, for her great kindness in providing for me a friendly and hospitable working environment, and am greatly indebted to her for her very helpful advice both on the content and on the style and organisation of the rather wide-ranging editorial material.

The idea of preparing an English version of Hutcheson's lecture on man's social nature first occurred to me in connection with work undertaken during a stay as a Fellow in the Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humanities at the University of Edinburgh in 1981. The sojourn offered much intellectual stimulation in an agreeable setting, and I am very happy to have this opportunity to acknowledge my gratitude to the Institute.

The translation of the *Lecture* began life as a draft of my own, but for its present publishable form I am heavily indebted to Colin Mayrhofer of the Department of Classics, the Australian National University, who also identified the classical poetry quoted in that text. I am most grateful to him for his generous assistance.

I also wish to express my sincere gratitude to M. A. Stewart of the Department of Philosophy, University of Lancaster, who, in response to many inquiries, kindly and knowledgeably provided information on many obscure points.

David Fate Norton of the Department of Philosophy, McGill University, and Knud Haakonssen, of the Department of the

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History of Ideas, the Australian National University, each took great trouble to review, with great care and great expertise, an earlier draft for the introductory essay. They gave very generously of their time and offered much helpful advice, for which I am most grateful.

Sylvia Deutsch, Research Assistant in the Department of Philosophy, the Australian National University, was of great help in tracking down source material, and provided much support through her friendly, intelligent, and highly professional work.

The final version of the translation of the *Lecture* benefited from extensive comments, based on a meticulous review by an anonymous publisher's reader which I had the good fortune to receive; they were offered 'in the spirit of a collaborator and contributor', and so were the very helpful comments on the other parts of the penultimate version of this book. The name of this generous reader was subsequently communicated to me, and I am pleased to be able to address my warmest thanks to Michael Seidler, of the Western Kentucky University, to whom I remain much obliged.

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Method of reference

It was the custom of the time to give books lengthy descriptive titles. They served the same purpose as that now served by publishers' blurbs, and newspaper advertisements would usually reproduce the wording of the title-page. Hutcheson followed this convention, as can be seen in the bibliography, and this is why convenient abbreviations are needed for his writings. Hutcheson himself used this method and explained:

In the References [...] the Inquiry into Beauty is called Treatise I. That into the Ideas of Moral Good and Evil, is Treatise II. The Essay on the Passions, Treatise III. And the Illustrations on the moral Sense, Treatise IV. (*Essay...*, 1st edn, 1728 p. xxii; 3rd edn, 1742 p. xx.)

In this book, his first major work will be referred to as *T1&T2*, or as *Inquiry*. The first part will be called *T1*, or *Inquiry into Beauty*, and its second part *T2* or *Inquiry into Virtue*. The second major work will be referred to as *T3&T4* or as *Essay and Illustrations*. Its first part will be called *T3*, or *Essay*, and its second part *T4* or *Illustrations*. *Reflections* will refer to the two instalments in *The London Journal* of November 1724, as reproduced here, and *Lecture* to the present translation of *De naturali hominum socialitate oratio inauguralis*, the inaugural lecture on the social nature of man, delivered in November 1730 and published in the same year. I shall also use *System* for his *System of Moral Philosophy*, posthumously published in 1755 but finished in 1737, and, when appropriate, 'Compend' for the Latin and English versions of his *Short Introduction to Moral Philosophy*.

All eighteenth-century dates are given in the new style only, so that the calendar year is taken as beginning on 1 January, and not 25 March.

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In other respects, standard conventions are adopted, among them the use of square brackets to indicate editorial additions, omissions, comments, etc. Quotation marks are used to indicate that an expression is mentioned rather than used, though occasionally italics are employed for this purpose. In quotations, spelling and punctuation has been preserved, whilst the use of capitals and italics has been modernised.

I have tried to keep the footnotes short. For this reason, some notes have been made into appendices. Some of these deal with matters which, although peripheral to the main argument, may be of interest to some readers. There is also some additional information in the bibliography.

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Abbreviations

BLC	The British Library, <i>General Catalogue of Printed Books</i>
DNB	<i>Dictionary of National Biography</i>
ING	Pufendorf, <i>De iure naturae et gentium</i>
NUC	<i>The National Union Catalog (U.S.A.)</i>
OHC	Pufendorf, <i>De officio hominis et civis</i>

The following refer to Hutcheson's works. See p. xii above, and for further particulars, the bibliography

<i>Compend</i>	<i>Short Introduction to Moral Philosophy (1747) and the Latin originals (1742; 1745) .</i>
T1	<i>Inquiry into Beauty</i>
T1&T2	<i>Inquiry</i>
T2	<i>Inquiry into Virtue</i>
T3	<i>Essay</i>
T3&T4	<i>Essay and Illustrations</i>
T4	<i>Illustrations</i>