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Hume and the Intellectual Virtues

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For Hume virtues are character traits that are useful and agreeable to ourselves and to others. Such traits are wide-ranging, from moral virtues such as benevolence to intellectual virtues such as courage of mind and penetration. This paper focuses on Hume's account of the latter. I argue that Hume is a virtue epistemologist, principally interested in the role that intellectual character traits play in social interactions rather than in the justifiedness of particular beliefs. I shall argue that this interpretation is consonant with his mitigated skepticism, and that it calls for a reappraisal of the marshalling of Hume and Reid into the contemporary debate between reductionists and non-reductionists with respect to the epistemology of testimony.