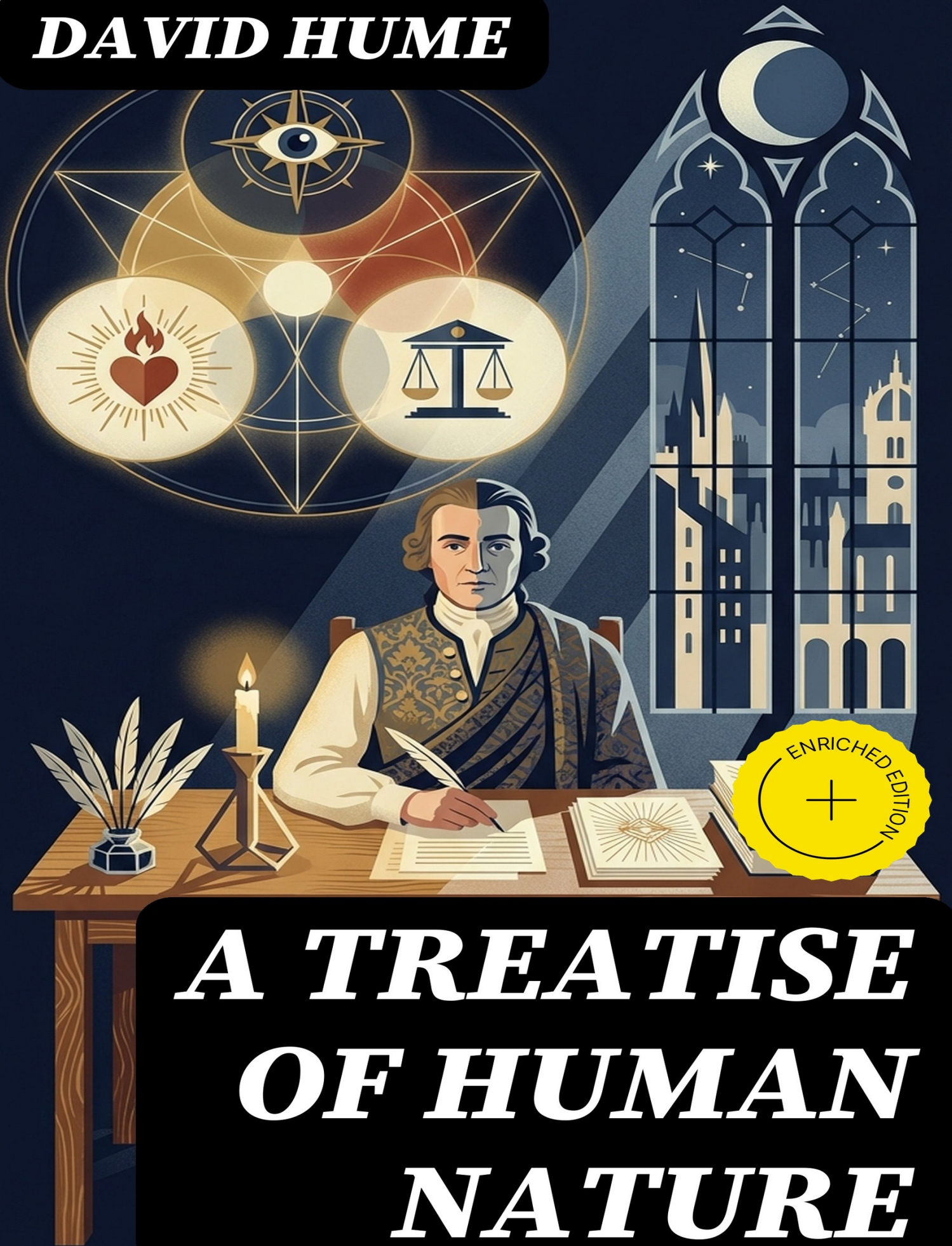
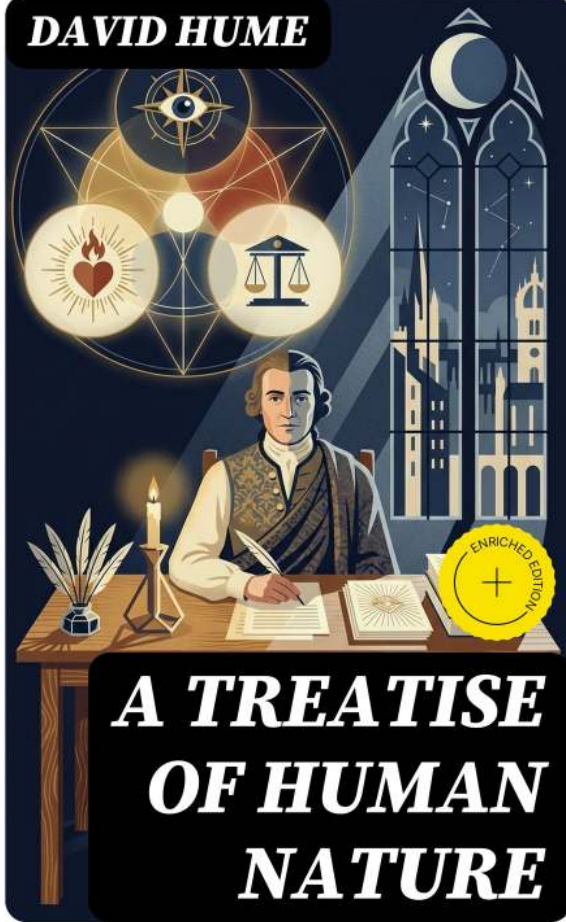


**DAVID HUME**



**A TREATISE  
OF HUMAN  
NATURE**

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***A TREATISE  
OF HUMAN  
NATURE***

**David Hume**

# **A Treatise of Human Nature**

**Enriched edition.**

*Introduction, Studies and Commentaries by Lucas Alder*

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# Introduction

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Against the turbulence of inherited doctrines and the quiet confidence of common sense, this book stages an audacious experiment: it asks the human mind to examine itself with the same patient scrutiny that natural philosophers apply to the world, and to remake our most basic convictions only as far as experience will bear them, thereby inviting readers to travel from familiar certainties into a landscape where belief, emotion, and morality must prove their credentials before the tribunal of observation rather than authority, custom, or metaphysical fiat, and where the very tools of inquiry become the subject of inquiry.

A Treatise of Human Nature holds classic status because it rewrote the agenda of philosophy in a single sustained work. Its reach is literary as well as intellectual: the prose marries patient analysis with imaginative examples, crafting a persuasive voice that remains accessible while reshaping foundational questions. The book's enduring themes—how we know, why we act, what we value—have never lapsed into irrelevance. Its influence radiated across centuries, challenging subsequent writers to measure arguments by their roots in experience and to reassess the powers and limits of reason in human life.

David Hume, a leading figure of the Scottish Enlightenment, composed and published this work early in his career. The Treatise appeared in three parts in 1739 and

1740, when Hume was in his twenties. It sought to present a comprehensive account of the faculties of understanding, the dynamics of the passions, and the foundations of morals. Initial reception was modest, and Hume later revised portions of the project in more concise works. Yet the *Treatise* itself remains the fullest statement of his early program, offering the breadth and ambition of a systematic study of human nature.

The *Treatise* is architected into three books whose order matters. The first investigates the understanding: the building blocks of thought, the formation of belief, and the ways we infer beyond immediate impressions. The second analyzes the passions: the patterns of emotion and motivation that animate choice and conduct. The third examines morals: the sources of obligation, the meaning of virtue and vice, and the social frameworks that stabilize cooperative life. Together they aim to connect the psychology of belief with the ethics of action, showing how a science of mind informs a science of morals.

At the center of Hume's project stands a methodological wager. Rather than beginning from abstract principles and deriving a world, he starts from experience and asks what can be reliably constructed upon it. He treats observations of mental life—perception, memory, imagination, habit—as data for careful scrutiny, drawing cautious inferences and testing their reach. The aim is to replace speculation with disciplined inquiry and to align our accounts of knowledge, motivation, and morality with what a reflective survey of everyday life makes available, correcting grand systems by the patient accumulation of small insights.

The first book, on the understanding, subjects the mechanisms of thought to close inspection. It distinguishes immediate sensory episodes from the ideas composed out of them, studies how association links our thoughts, and probes the grounds on which we move from what is present to what is absent. Questions about belief, certainty, testimony, and causal inference are treated not as logical puzzles alone but as features of human psychology. The result is a portrait of reasoning as a natural process whose strengths and weaknesses must be uncovered by observing how minds actually work.

The second book, on the passions, considers what stirs human beings to act. It maps emotions such as pride, humility, love, hatred, hope, and fear, tracing their springs in perception, comparison, and social interaction. It investigates motivation, political allegiance, and practical deliberation, taking seriously the ways feeling informs choice without collapsing into caprice. By embedding moral psychology within ordinary life—family ties, reputation, property, and power—it reveals action as the outcome of complex interplays between sentiment and judgment within particular contexts.

The third book, on morals, explores how rules, virtues, and institutions arise and gain authority. It examines the grounds of justice and the role of convention in coordinating expectations, the appeal of benevolence and other virtues, and the manner in which approval and disapproval shape conduct. Rather than detaching ethics from human life, the discussion situates evaluation within social practices and shared sentiments. This move supports a vision of morality

as both natural and cultivated, something learned and sustained in communities while still subject to critical assessment.

Beyond its arguments, the *Treatise* exhibits a distinctive literary discipline. Hume develops theses step by step, uses concrete cases to illuminate abstractions, and openly revisits points that demand clarification. The prose is sober yet agile, avoiding ornament when precision is needed and offering examples when a principle risks becoming opaque. Although he later produced shorter expositions to reach a broader audience, the *Treatise* preserves the exploratory cadence of the original enterprise, where careful pacing, frank self-critique, and an eye for everyday detail carry readers through demanding terrain.

The book's impact can be traced through later philosophy and the human sciences. It helped shape empiricism and set problems that became central to modern epistemology and ethics. Immanuel Kant, utilitarian thinkers, and many strands of analytic philosophy engaged with its claims, whether to develop them or to contest them. Its attention to psychological explanation influenced moral philosophy, political theory, and nascent social science. Debates over causation, personal identity, practical reason, and the sources of normativity often begin by addressing a challenge first posed with clarity here.

What endures in the *Treatise* is not a catalogue of doctrines but a habit of inquiry. It teaches readers to respect the claims of experience without surrendering to them, to balance skepticism with common life, and to connect mental description with ethical reflection. Contemporary

discussions in cognitive science, behavioral economics, legal theory, and moral psychology still test assumptions about inference, bias, emotion, and cooperation in ways that echo Hume's approach. The book's themes thus continue to organize research across disciplines that seek to understand how people think, feel, decide, and live together.

To approach this classic today is to meet a work that remains alive to current concerns. It asks how a finite creature can navigate a world of risk and uncertainty, how communities build trust, and how reflection can discipline belief without extinguishing practical commitment. By binding philosophy to observation and keeping grand theory answerable to ordinary life, the *Treatise* offers a durable method as well as a set of questions. Its lasting appeal lies in that union of ambition and restraint, which still invites readers to think with care about themselves and their world.

# Synopsis

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David Hume's *A Treatise of Human Nature* seeks to found a systematic science of man by applying experimental reasoning to mental life. Organized in three books (on the understanding, the passions, and morals), it proceeds from basic features of perception to motivation and social order. Hume insists that philosophical claims be tied to experience and that complex notions be traced to simpler constituents. He aims to show how belief, action, and ethical evaluation arise from the same psychological principles that also set limits on what we can know. The *Treatise* unfolds as a sequence of interlocking analyses, moving methodically from elementary observations to wide-ranging implications.

Book 1 begins with an inventory of perceptions, divided into impressions (lively, forceful experiences) and ideas (fainter copies). From this starting point Hume formulates a copy principle, explaining how ideas derive from impressions and combine into complex thoughts. He then identifies basic associative ties (resemblance, contiguity, and cause or effect) that link ideas in the imagination and structure reasoning. Abstract ideas are explained without positing mysterious universals, instead emerging from habits of attention and use. Throughout, Hume tests the legitimacy of disputed notions by asking whether a clear originating impression can be found, and he distinguishes demonstrative relations from factual claims grounded in experience.

Turning to causal reasoning, Hume analyzes how we infer unobserved effects from observed regularities. He argues that necessary connection is not perceived but projected through custom when constant conjunctions lead us to expect similar outcomes. Belief, on this account, is a particular manner of conceiving an idea with heightened force, produced by habituated transitions of thought. He examines probability, distinguishing chances from causal probabilities that arise from uneven experiences and weighing of evidence. This inquiry culminates in a measured skepticism about induction: no demonstrative proof secures our reliance on the future resembling the past, yet natural propensities make such reliance inescapable.

Hume extends his scrutiny to space, time, and the external world. He probes debates about divisibility and the limits of geometry when applied to sensible extension. On perception, he argues that the mind's tendency to posit continuous and independent objects outstrips what immediate impressions deliver, arising from imaginative propensities rather than strict reason. Relatedly, his account of personal identity treats the self not as a simple substance but as a succession of interrelated perceptions unified by memory and associative ties. These analyses illustrate how reasoning is bounded, how natural beliefs persist despite philosophical doubt, and how explanation proceeds by psychological economy.

Book 2 turns to the passions, offering a detailed taxonomy of emotions and their springs. Hume distinguishes calm from violent passions, and direct from indirect ones. Pride and humility, love and hatred, serve as principal

cases: they arise through a double relation of ideas and impressions, where qualities connected with a subject or object, combined with pleasure or pain, generate characteristic responses. Comparison and association amplify or diminish feelings. The account aims to show how evaluative attitudes grow from the same mechanisms that govern belief, without postulating distinct faculties. In this framework, character, circumstance, and attention jointly shape the passions we experience.

Sympathy plays a central role by transmitting sentiments from one person to another, enabling shared emotions and concern for reputation. Hume examines motivation and the will, arguing that reason informs us of facts and relations but does not, by itself, produce action; practical agency depends on desires and aversions. He develops a compatibilist account of liberty and necessity: human conduct exhibits regularities sufficient for explanation and responsibility, while freedom consists in acting according to one's motives without external compulsion. This naturalistic picture of action ties accountability to the predictability of character and situates practical deliberation within the same associative processes.

Book 3 addresses morals, contending that moral distinctions are founded in sentiment, namely feelings of approval and disapproval, rather than derived solely from reason. Because private perspectives are partial, we adopt a common point of view that corrects for bias and stabilizes moral language. Hume classifies natural virtues, such as benevolence and prudence, whose value lies in their agreeableness or usefulness to self and others. Character

evaluation takes precedence over isolated acts, and sympathy extends our regard beyond narrow interests. By embedding ethics in human psychology, the Treatise seeks to explain how moral judgment can be authoritative without invoking abstract, self-evident principles.

Hume then analyzes artificial virtues, especially justice, allegiance, and fidelity to promises, that arise from convention rather than innate inclination. In conditions of limited generosity and scarce resources, society converges on rules that stabilize possession, enable transfer by consent, and secure performance of promises. The obligation here is not primitive but grows from the utility of the system and the expectations it creates. Government is introduced to maintain these norms where private interest would otherwise undermine them. Moral approval tracks the public interest promoted by these practices, and education and custom entrench the rules, integrating individual motives with social cooperation.

Across its three books, the Treatise advances a unified, naturalistic program: explain understanding, motivation, and morality by tracing them to experience, habit, and social convention, while acknowledging the limits of proof. Hume's project invites a modest skepticism that tempers speculative excess without paralyzing practical life. Its enduring importance lies in clarifying how belief is formed, how agency depends on sentiment, and how justice and virtue can be grounded without appeal to metaphysical certainties. By recasting philosophy as careful attention to human nature, the Treatise leaves readers with questions

that continue to shape debate about knowledge, selfhood, responsibility, and the basis of norms.

# Historical Context

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David Hume's *A Treatise of Human Nature* emerged from the intellectual and institutional world of early eighteenth-century Britain and France. The 1707 Act of Union had consolidated the Kingdom of Great Britain, while Scotland retained distinctive ecclesiastical and educational structures. Universities at Edinburgh and Glasgow trained clergy and lawyers and fostered moral philosophy. In England, the Royal Society promoted experimental natural philosophy. London's commercial book trade and Edinburgh's learned culture linked scholars to a growing reading public. In France, Jesuit colleges maintained vast libraries and scholastic traditions. Within this cross-Channel context, Hume sought to craft a "science of man" that would parallel the rigor of natural philosophy.

The political settlement after the 1688-1689 Revolution and the Hanoverian succession in 1714 produced relative stability under long Whig ascendancy, notably during Robert Walpole's tenure. England's Licensing Act had lapsed in 1695, removing prepublication censorship and enabling bold works in philosophy and religion, though blasphemy and sedition remained prosecutable. This legal context mattered for Hume: the *Treatise* could be printed in London without official licensing, even if public or clerical backlash was possible. The combination of a secure regime and a competitive press supported large-scale philosophical

projects while encouraging strategic anonymity for potentially controversial authors.

Hume was formed by the distinctive milieu of the Scottish Lowlands, where a rigorous Presbyterian Church shaped public life and university curricula. Educated at the University of Edinburgh as a teenager, he left without a degree but absorbed classical learning, mathematics, and moral philosophy. Scottish universities blended scholastic inheritance with modern debates about natural law, civility, and commerce. The Church of Scotland exercised wide moral oversight, yet Scottish intellectuals also sought polite culture and improvement. The tensions between clerical authority, civic humanism, and emergent commercial society supplied the social texture against which Hume would question inherited certainties about mind, morals, and religion.

The Treatise was conceived under the shadow and inspiration of the Scientific Revolution. Isaac Newton's success in natural philosophy, codified in the *Principia* and the *Opticks*, furnished a model for inquiry grounded in observation, experiment, and cautious inference. The Royal Society and its continental counterparts had elevated the experimental ethos. Hume aimed to bring analogous methods to the study of understanding, passions, and morals, replacing speculative metaphysics with an analysis of mental operations and social practices. By invoking the prestige of Newtonian method, he positioned his work within a culture that prized systematic explanation without reliance on innate ideas or scholastic essences.

Hume also inherited the English-language tradition of empiricism. Francis Bacon's program for inductive knowledge, John Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690), and George Berkeley's immaterialism set the terms for debate about ideas, perception, and abstraction. Locke's theory of ideas and his cautious account of knowledge became a starting point for Hume's more radical analysis of belief, causation, and personal identity. Berkeley's critique of abstract ideas and his emphasis on perception sharpened issues Hume would recast. The *Treatise* thus stands at a crossroads: it extends empiricism while testing its limits, drawing broader skeptical conclusions than many contemporaries were ready to accept.

The book was largely drafted in France, where Hume sought quiet and affordable living after a brief, unsuccessful venture in commerce at Bristol in 1734. He settled for a time at La Flèche in Anjou, home to a Jesuit college with an extensive library and remembered for René Descartes's education there. This setting placed Hume amid Catholic scholastic traditions and the broader Republic of Letters, including the skeptical legacies of Pierre Bayle. The resources of La Flèche and the relative calm of provincial France helped Hume forge an ambitious, systematic treatise that could later be launched into the competitive London book market.

Religion was a central public force across Britain and remained a delicate topic for writers. Deists such as John Toland and Anthony Collins had tested theological boundaries, prompting robust rebuttals by Anglican and

Presbyterian clergy. Joseph Butler's *Analogy of Religion* (1736) offered a sophisticated defense of Christianity against deist critiques. Scotland remembered the execution of Thomas Aikenhead for blasphemy in 1697, emblematic of earlier severity even as norms changed. Hume's decision to publish the *Treatise* anonymously reflects this environment: philosophical scrutiny of belief and morality could be pursued, but authors navigated it cautiously to avoid clerical censure and social ostracism.

Debates about moral philosophy were particularly vibrant. The moral sense tradition, associated with Anthony Ashley Cooper, third Earl of Shaftesbury, and systematized by Francis Hutcheson at Glasgow, argued that humans possess an internal sense approving virtue. In contrast, rationalists such as Samuel Clarke and William Wollaston grounded morality in reason or the nature of things. Natural law frameworks stemming from Grotius and Pufendorf informed university teaching and legal education. Against this backdrop, Hume's *Treatise* examined the roles of sentiment, convention, and utility in moral judgment, challenging rationalist derivations while engaging, sometimes critically, with Hutcheson's emphasis on benevolence.

The printing and distribution of philosophical works depended on London's dynamic book trade and the periodical press. Coffeehouses, circulating libraries, and reviews created a public sphere where new ideas were discussed and contested. Hume brought the *Treatise* to London in 1739, publishing the first two books anonymously, followed by the third in 1740. The work initially attracted

little attention. To stimulate interest, Hume issued the anonymous *Abstract* in 1740, summarizing key arguments for a broader audience. The episode illustrates the commercialization of learning: even bold philosophical systems had to compete for readers' attention amid pamphlet wars and polite entertainment.

The broader British economy was in transition, characterized by expanding Atlantic trade, the growth of credit and finance, and intermittent crises such as the South Sea Bubble of 1720. Scotland, integrated into British markets after 1707, pursued agricultural improvement and urban growth, especially in Edinburgh and Glasgow. Everyday life increasingly involved trust in strangers, credit arrangements, and standardized practices. Hume's analyses of convention, property, and the artificial virtues of justice intersect with these conditions, offering a naturalistic account of norms needed in a commercial society. His attention to passions and interest reflects a world where economic motivations and social coordination were visible and controversial.

Scientific and medical inquiry into mind and body gained momentum in the early eighteenth century, even if psychology was not yet a formal discipline. Locke's discussion of personal identity, debates over association of ideas, and occasionalist metaphysics on the continent supplied frameworks Hume reworked. Without claiming to discover hidden essences, he cataloged mental habits and expectations, especially regarding causation and belief. This approach aligned with the experimental, anti-dogmatic temper of the age. While later associationist theories, such

as David Hartley's (1749), would develop the theme, the *Treatise* captured an earlier moment when philosophers sought lawful regularities in mental life without speculative physiology.

Scottish legal and political thought furnished another crucial context. Natural jurisprudence was taught in universities, with figures like Gershom Carmichael at Glasgow earlier in the century transmitting Grotius and Pufendorf to students who would become ministers, lawyers, and officials. Questions about the foundations of property, obligation, and political authority were actively debated. Hume's account of justice as a human convention responding to scarcity and limited generosity challenged efforts to derive detailed duties from reason alone or from a supposed natural order. In doing so, the *Treatise* contributed to a broader conversation about the sources of social order in a post-feudal, commercializing society.

The embers of Jacobitism smoldered in the background, erupting in armed risings in 1715 and again in 1745. Even before the later rebellion, anxieties about allegiance and ecclesiastical authority colored Scottish public life. Heterodox thinkers could be portrayed as threats to moral or political stability. After the *Treatise* appeared, Hume's 1744-1745 bid for the Edinburgh chair of moral philosophy met organized clerical opposition, a sign of the risks associated with skeptical philosophy. The political-religious climate helps explain both the *Treatise*'s anonymity and its cautious rhetoric, even as it ventured far-reaching claims about belief, morality, and social conventions.

The Treatise belonged to an international Republic of Letters. Scholarly journals and correspondence carried summaries and disputes across borders. Hume corresponded with Francis Hutcheson, receiving criticism that prompted reflection on style and clarity. French and Dutch publishers tracked British philosophical trends, and Bayle's skeptical compendium remained influential across Europe. Although the Treatise initially drew limited notice, its themes resonated with ongoing continental debates about certainty, method, and the limits of reason. The work's eventual reach demonstrates the porous boundaries of eighteenth-century intellectual life, in which ideas moved through reviews, letters, and translated extracts as much as through first editions.

Reception shaped Hume's subsequent strategy. He later recast parts of the Treatise as the Enquiry concerning Human Understanding (1748) and the Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals (1751), adopting a more accessible style. His remark that the Treatise "fell dead-born from the press" captures the gap between systematic ambition and market realities. This trajectory underscores a key feature of the age: large philosophical systems were increasingly judged in the court of polite readers as well as among scholars. The Treatise's fate illustrates how Enlightenment thought navigated between rigor, readability, and the sensitivities of religious and civic audiences.

Material infrastructures also mattered. Expanding turnpike roads, stagecoach routes, and an organized postal system improved the circulation of books and letters within Britain. Coffeehouses, clubs, and learned societies provided

venues for discussion and polite sociability. In Scotland, the burgeoning improvement ethos encouraged conversation about agriculture, trade, and manners. Such environments favored experimental inquiry into human conduct and belief, exactly the kind of inquiry the Treatise proposed. The social habits of reading, conversation, and debate supplied both the audience and the tacit model for Hume's analysis of custom, testimony, and the formation of shared norms.

The Treatise reflects a period reorienting from theological and metaphysical foundations to naturalistic accounts of mind, morals, and society. By analyzing belief as a product of custom, and justice as a convention responsive to human limitations, Hume mirrored the pragmatic, secular temper of Britain's commercial Enlightenment. At the same time, his skepticism toward necessary connections and rationalist ethics critiqued inherited certainties that still held institutional power. The work's historical importance lies in how it simultaneously drew on, and challenged, the dominant forces of its age: scientific method, religious authority, legal naturalism, and the emerging culture of polite, commercial modernity.

# Author Biography

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David Hume (1711–1776) was a Scottish philosopher, historian, and essayist, a central figure of the Scottish Enlightenment. Renowned for a rigorous empiricism and a careful, naturalistic approach to mind and morals, he reshaped early modern philosophy after Locke and Berkeley. His writings questioned the pretensions of metaphysics, reframed causation and induction, and grounded ethics in human sentiments rather than divine command or pure reason. Alongside technical treatises, he produced essays aimed at a broad readership and a monumental history that made him one of the best-known writers in Britain. His work remains foundational for epistemology, moral philosophy, political economy, and religious debate.

Hume grew up in Edinburgh's intellectual milieu and pursued advanced study at the University of Edinburgh in his youth. Uninterested in a conventional professional path, he devoted himself to independent reading and sustained self-education. Classical historians and moralists shaped his prose style, while contemporary science, particularly the Newtonian ideal of experimental reasoning, informed his philosophical method. He engaged with the British empiricist tradition associated with Locke and Berkeley, yet pressed it toward a distinctive skepticism about the reach of reason. The salons, clubs, and publishing networks of the Scottish Enlightenment provided a public sphere in which he refined arguments and cultivated a clear, accessible style.

In the 1730s Hume concentrated on philosophy and completed most of what became *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1739–1740). He proposed that all knowledge traces to experience, distinguishing vivid impressions from fainter ideas, and explained mental life by principles of association. Famously, he argued that causal inference rests on habit formed by repeated conjunctions, not on rational insight into necessary connection, thereby exposing the problem of induction. The *Treatise* met a cool reception, so he recast parts for a wider audience in *Essays, Moral and Political* (1741–1742) and *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (1748), sharpening his account of probability, belief, and skepticism.

Hume's ethics advanced a "moral sense" or sentimentalist view that grounds virtue in human feelings and the social usefulness of character traits. *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals* (1751) presents this position with special emphasis on benevolence, justice, and the role of utility and agreeableness in moral approval. He held that reason on its own does not motivate action; passions and sentiments move us, while reason guides by informing means. He also wrote influential essays on taste and aesthetics, including "Of the Standard of Taste," arguing for cultivated judgment within shared human responses. His clear prose sought to unite philosophical depth with literary grace.

Religion remained a recurring focus. In *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, the section "Of Miracles" assesses testimony for miraculous events with an exacting standard of evidence. *The Natural History of Religion* (1757)

approaches belief as a human phenomenon arising from fear, hope, and cognitive habits, tracing shifts between polytheism and monotheism. *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, published posthumously in 1779, stages a debate about the limits of analogical reasoning in natural theology. These works, cautious in tone yet uncompromising in analysis, drew public controversy. Hume's strategy was not to claim certainty against religion, but to disclose how modest evidential standards should govern assent.

Beyond philosophy, Hume wrote important works in political economy and history. *Political Discourses* (1752) examines commerce, money, and public credit, advocating policies friendly to trade and analyzing how economic mechanisms shape modern societies. In the mid-1750s he began the multi-volume *History of England* (1754–1762), a bestseller that secured his reputation and financial independence; its narrative range and interpretive ambition influenced historical writing for generations. His post as a librarian in Edinburgh gave access to sources that aided this project. During the 1760s he also held diplomatic and civil service positions in Paris and London, participating directly in the public life he analyzed.

Hume spent his later years largely in Edinburgh, revising essays, corresponding with leading figures, and enjoying the stature earned by his historical and philosophical writings. He composed a brief autobiographical sketch, *My Own Life*, near the end of his career. He died in 1776. His influence has been profound: Kant credited Hume with awakening him from “dogmatic slumber”; utilitarian and sentimentalist traditions developed themes Hume articulated; and debates

over induction, causation, personal identity, and the is-ought gap remain central. Hume's psychological naturalism resonates with contemporary cognitive science, while his economic essays and political reflections continue to inform modern liberal thought.

the owner of the adjoining property. Hume points out that such slow, natural accretion was thought to help the imagination join things and so justify extending property rights.

**102** Transubstantiation is the Roman Catholic doctrine that, in the Eucharist, the substance of bread and wine is transformed into the body and blood of Christ while retaining the accidents (appearance) of bread and wine. Hume invokes this term as an analogy for a mysterious metaphysical change claimed to follow from certain words and intentions, contrasting it with the social invention of promises.

**103** Holy Orders refers to the Christian sacrament or rite by which individuals are ordained as clergy (deacons, priests, bishops), traditionally thought to impart an enduring, 'indelible' spiritual character. Hume mentions Holy Orders to compare theological claims about permanent effects of rites with the apparently more variable social effects of promises and conventions.

**104** "Batchelor" is an archaic spelling of 'bachelor', meaning an unmarried man, used in the text to characterize one of two hypothetical disputants. The spelling reflects historical orthography rather than a distinct concept, and Hume employs the contrast (rich/unmarried vs. poor/with family) to illustrate differing motivations in justice-related choices.

**105** Hume refers broadly to Indigenous peoples of North America as observed in 18th-century travel accounts; he uses them as examples of societies that often lived without centralized, permanent government and where wartime

leaders (captains) held only temporary authority. His description generalizes many diverse cultures and reflects the period's limited ethnographic knowledge rather than a detailed anthropological account.

**106** This phrase denotes a theory that political authority originates in the authority of a father over his family and then extends to larger polities. Hume invokes and critiques this traditional account of monarchical origins, treating it as one of several historical explanations for why early governments were often single-person ruled.

**107** Hume alludes to a historical tyrant named Dionysius of Syracuse, a Greek ruler (there were two rulers of Syracuse with this name) traditionally remembered for autocratic rule in the 4th century BC. He is commonly invoked in political history as an example of oppressive or tyrannical government against which resistance was celebrated.

**108** Nero was a Roman emperor (reigned AD 54–68) often cited in early modern political thought as a symbol of imperial cruelty and misrule. Hume uses Nero as a paradigmatic tyrant whose suppression justified resistance in historical narratives.

**109** In this context Hume means Philip II of Spain (reigned 1556–1598), whose policies and wars—including efforts to suppress Dutch independence—made him a frequent example of a powerful monarch opposed by subject resistance. Hume cites him alongside classical tyrants to illustrate cases where rebellion was considered legitimate by contemporaries and later historians.

**110** This refers to William of Orange (William III), who invaded England in 1688 in the Glorious Revolution and later became joint monarch with Mary II; his accession was contested at first but later accepted as legitimate. Hume is discussing how disputed claims to the throne can acquire authority over time through succession and political settlement.

**111** The Salic law was a medieval Frankish legal tradition later interpreted in France as excluding women from succession to the crown; Hume cites it as an example of a constitutional or "fundamental" law that people treat as inalterable. In his discussion it illustrates how positive laws come to be seen as deep foundations of authority even though their scope and limits are debated.

**112** This phrase refers to what is now called international law (Latin: *jus gentium*) — the customary and diplomatic rules that govern relations among states, including treaties, the status of ambassadors, and declarations of war. In Hume's time the term encompassed both customary practice and emerging scholarly discussion about the rights and duties of sovereigns.

**113** An 18th-century polite expression for women, 'the fair sex' carries paternalistic and gendered connotations common to the period. Hume uses it to introduce discussions of chastity and modesty as social expectations specifically imposed on women.

**114** This phrase denotes a personal promise or pledge whose force is sustained by social honour rather than legal enforcement. In the eighteenth century a gentleman's 'word of honour' was an important informal guarantee in social

and political dealings, distinct from contractual or judicial obligations.

**115** Marcus Junius Brutus was a Roman senator famous for his leading role in the assassination of Julius Caesar in 44 BCE and later celebrated in early modern thought as a model of republican virtue and patriotism. Hume invokes Brutus as an exemplar whose historical reputation illustrates how esteem and moral judgment are shaped by long-standing narratives.

**116** This Latin line, quoted from the Roman poet Lucretius (Titus Lucretius Carus, c. 99–55 BCE), expresses the idea that watching another's danger from the safety of shore can be pleasurable because it highlights one's own security. Hume cites it to illustrate how a vivid but detached image can produce comparative satisfaction without delighting in another's suffering.

**117** Alexander the Great (Alexander III of Macedon, c. 356–323 BCE) was the ancient Macedonian ruler famed for conquering a large part of the known world. Hume invokes a traditional anecdote about Alexander's pride to show how self-esteem and grand ambition can motive heroic action and command admiration.

**118** The 'prince of Conde' denotes a hereditary title in the French Bourbon-Condé line, held by several prominent nobles in the 16th–17th centuries. Hume refers to a member of this family as someone who admired the anecdote about Alexander, using the title to signal contemporary readers' recognition of high social rank.

**119** 'St Evremond' refers to Charles de Saint-Évremond (approx. 1610–1703), a French essayist, soldier, and literary