

# Introduction

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David Hume's public life as a philosopher and an intellectual began with the publication of the first two books of *A Treatise of Human Nature* in 1739 when he was only 28 years old. The third book appeared a year later. Although scarce notice was taken of his work at the time, Hume's approach to philosophy was revolutionary. In his Introduction to the *Treatise* and in the abstract of that work, Hume compares his investigations to that of some of his contemporaries who were applying the new methods of the seventeenth-century natural philosopher, Francis Bacon, to "the science of man." Bacon recognized the proper roles of observation and reason in the study of natural phenomena, and he was among the first to formulate a method of inquiry designed to guard against fallacious reasoning due to social and personal biases. Bacon is regarded as one of the important contributors to the development of the modern scientific method. Likewise, Hume adopts an empirical approach to his study of human nature – but with results dramatically different from those contemporaries, John Locke and Francis Hutcheson, whom he cites as allies in this method.

In his lifetime, Hume went on to publish works that received more attention than the *Treatise*: political essays, social commentaries, a history of England, and a reformulation of his theories from the *Treatise* in his two famous books, *An Essay concerning Human Understanding* and *An Essay concerning the Principles of Morals*. As a consequence of his arguments, Hume was accused of skepticism, atheism, and moral corruption – positions whose attribution to Hume is largely due to oversimplifications and misunderstandings of his views. His *Dialogues concerning Natural Religion*, begun around 1751 and revised up until his death in 1776, was thought too controversial to publish in his lifetime. However, from the perspective of almost three centuries later, even Hume's staunchest critics admit that the breadth of Hume's thought is only matched by the genius of his arguments. Twenty-first-century scholars who study Hume's ideas are interested in his theories for much more than the significant role they played in Enlightenment thinking. Contemporary philosophers are also interested in the lasting impact of Hume's thought on philosophy of mind, knowledge, religion, action, morality, economics, and politics.

This volume is an attempt to represent the range of Hume's ideas and the ongoing debates to which his arguments have given rise. It is an attempt at the same time to show how recent close and thoughtful readings of Hume's work lead to very different

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conclusions about the goals and results of his projects from some readings earlier considered standard. I will say more about the debates in Hume interpretation and the contents of this volume later. I begin with a bit about the philosopher himself and his writings. The following is drawn from two well-known Hume biographies, J. Y. T. Greig's *David Hume* and E. C. Mossner's *The Life of David Hume*, plus recent essays by M. A. Stewart and Roger Emerson. The biographers' accounts of Hume's life reveal a man who in his younger years was intense about his beliefs and rigorous in his thinking; and who cared about his literary reputation, but not at the cost of his commitment to reasoned inquiry and intellectual honesty. He was a man with many friends who regarded him with great affection, and he repaid them with deep loyalty. He was passionately opposed to the atrocities committed in the name of institutional religion. He understood the sometimes-odd tension between philosophy and ordinary life, and expressed in his writing the need to emerge from the abstruse thinking of the study to become involved in the social affairs of common life. Readers are fond of quoting his advice: "Be a philosopher; but, amidst all your philosophy, be still a man."

### Hume's Life

David Hume was born in Edinburgh, Scotland, on April 26, 1711 to the lawyer Joseph Home and his wife Katherine Falconer, the daughter of Joseph's stepmother by a previous marriage. Joseph died only two years later, and Katherine raised David and his older brother and sister on the family estate at Ninewells and at their Edinburgh townhouse. The family was not wealthy, but they were moderately comfortable. The children were raised as Scottish Presbyterians and subjected to the rigors of all-day Sunday rituals. As a boy, David took religion very seriously and extracted a list of vices from the eighteenth-century devotional book, *The Whole Duty of Man*, with which he challenged himself. Among the vices noted there were: "not arranging any solemn time for humiliation and confession," "making pleasure, not health, the end of eating," and "wasting the time or estate in good fellowship."

Hume (still "Home" at the time) undertook four years of study at what was then Edinburgh College, starting at age 10 (some biographies say he was 12, but see Stewart 2005, p. 17). As was common then, he did not finish and received no degree. He could not see the benefits of a college education at the time and expressed the view that college professors had nothing to offer that could not be found in books (Stewart 2005: 25). David's family expected him to be a lawyer, but his later attempt to study law floundered because he had no interest in it. He writes, "The Law, which was the Business I design'd to follow, appear'd nauseous to me, & I could think of no other way of pushing my Fortune in the World, but that of a Scholar & Philosopher" (Hume's Letters, Grieg 1932, i, p. 13). From the years 1725–9, David is said to have spent his time in solemn reflection and independent study, reading philosophers like Clarke, Locke, Butler and Berkeley, at which time he seems to have reasoned himself out of religious belief (Mossner 1980: 51, 64; Greig 1931: 72). It also is during this time that he developed some of the philosophical views identified with the empiricism for which he was to become famous. In 1729, he was taken ill by a depression that would linger for four years. He was said to become "lean and raw-boned" and was diagnosed by

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a doctor, probably facetiously, as having “the disease of the learned.” The doctor prescribed anti-hysteric pills and bitters, a daily pint of English claret, exercise on horseback and warned him against isolation. Stewart conjectures that this period was one of religious crisis for Hume and that while he attempted to put his philosophical deliberations in a theistic framework, it was impossible for him to succeed (pp. 30–1).

In 1734, at age 23, David broke from his family home at last and went to France, settling in a country retreat at LaFleche. It is at this time, speculates J. Y. T. Greig, that David changed his name to “Hume” (which matched its pronunciation), possibly to signal a break with his past (p. 90). He regularly visited the Jesuit College at LaFleche and engaged some of the Jesuits in conversations. It was during his three years in LaFleche that Hume wrote the manuscript of *A Treatise of Human Nature*, regarded now by some contemporary scholars – although not by Hume himself – as his richest work. *A Treatise of Human Nature* divides into three books; Book I, “Of the Understanding,” and Book II, “Of the Passions,” were published together in 1739. Book III, “Of Morals,” appeared in 1740. The three books were published anonymously. Hume later writes of the unenthusiastic public reception of the *Treatise*, “It fell *dead-born from the Press*” (Hume 1777). It did not sell well, but a few people read it and often misunderstood it. In later years, Hume tried to disown it, leading critics to speculate why – a genuine change of views or wounded pride at being associated with a public failure? Stewart argues:

If there was a humiliation [in the reaction to the *Treatise*] . . . his [Hume’s] own judgement appears to concur with the predominant view of posterity, that it was literary rather than philosophical. He has not overtly retracted any significant body of his philosophy. (Stewart: 54)

Little did Hume know that this work would have a place in history as the most systematic presentation of philosophical empiricism and one of the most prominent works in the whole canon of western philosophy. Despite his disappointment, Hume persisted, and in 1741–2, he published, anonymously again, two volumes of essays, *Essays Moral and Political*, which got a much warmer reaction.

When Hume applied two years later for the vacant chair in Ethics and Spiritual Philosophy at the University of Edinburgh, his authorship of the *Treatise* and the views he expressed were now more widely known. Political, ideological and philosophical factors undermined Hume’s appointment (Emerson 1995: 4). Hume complained of accusations of “Heresy, Deism, Scepticism, Atheism, etc.” (Hume 1932, in Greig, i, p. 57). Popular opinion and much of the professorate were against Hume’s appointment. Francis Hutcheson, a Presbyterian minister who occupied the Glasgow Chair of Moral Philosophy from 1729 until his death in 1746, was a friend and correspondent of Hume, but even he recommended seven other men he thought more suitable (Emerson 1995: 10). Ironically, the Town Council elected Hutcheson himself to the Edinburgh Chair, but Hutcheson declined it.

At some point in the interval up to 1748, Hume rewrote the first book of his *Treatise*, making it into a work more accessible to the public, which he called *Philosophical Essays concerning Human Understanding* and published in 1748. He included with it his

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religiously inflammatory essays “Of Miracles” and “Of a Particular Providence and of a Future State.” The title of the book was changed ten years later to *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*. His rewriting of Treatise Book III, *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*, came in 1751, and critics still consider (the statement from Stewart above notwithstanding) whether the differences between it and the *Treatise* signal any changes in Hume’s moral philosophy (see more on this below).

Hume left Ninewells permanently in 1751, moving to Edinburgh, where he resided for seven years. Hume was once again denied a university post, as Chair of Logic at Glasgow University, in 1752. He was, however, appointed Keeper of the Advocates’ Library, Edinburgh, and published *The History of England* in six volumes, from 1754 to 1762. The appearance of the first volume was greeted with harsh criticism, and Hume writes of his disappointment:

I thought, I was the only Historian, that had at once neglected present Power, Interest, and Authority, and the Cry of Popular Prejudices; and as the Subject was suited to every Capacity, I expected proportional Applause: But miserable was my Disappointment: I was assailed by one Cry of Reproach, Disapprobation, and even Detestation . . .

I was . . . I confess, discouraged; and had not the War been at that time breaking out between France and England, I had certainly retired to some provincial Town of the former Kingdom, have changed my Name, and never more have returned to my native Country. (Hume 1777)

However, within ten years of publication, Hume’s *History* became very popular. For about ten years from 1752, Hume served as chair of Edinburgh’s Philosophical Society.

Hume’s essays on suicide and the immortality of the soul were completed around 1755, and they were printed with three other essays as part of a book called *Five Dissertations*. The collection included “The Natural History of Religion,” which traced the psychological origins of religious belief. After printing, some advance copies were circulated the day before the book was officially to appear, and the outrage on the part of some clerics and politicians at Hume’s critique of theological arguments against suicide, of belief in immortality, and of other religious beliefs caused a change of publication plans. Hume, perhaps partly coerced by his publisher, agreed to excise the two essays, physically, from the copies already in print. They were replaced with the essay, “Of the Standard of Taste,” and the book appeared in 1757 as *Four Dissertations*. Secret copies of the two withdrawn essays appeared anonymously in French (1770) and later, after Hume’s death, in English.

At age 50, Hume resolved to stay in Scotland and pursue his career as writer and philosopher, but in 1763, an appointment to the position of Secretary to the Embassy in Paris lured him away. The French greatly admired David, and he remained in Paris until 1766. An interlude in Hume’s life that has proven the subject of much discussion among historians is his brief and tumultuous relationship with French writer and political theorist Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Rousseau was living in France under persecution and in poverty because of harsh criticisms of the imprudent views expressed in his writings. Rousseau had a reputation for being demanding, and he was unduly suspicious of his benefactors. However, Hume, in sympathy with Rousseau’s

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situation, offered to settle him in the English countryside outside of London and give him financial help. Rousseau eventually took the offer, and Hume was pleased to accompany him to England. Within months of their arrival in January 1766, the irrational Rousseau concluded that Hume brought him to England in order to carry out an international conspiracy against him, a charge with which he went public. Hume felt eventually pushed to defend himself and published first in Paris in October, and then in London in the next month, his narrative, *A Concise and Genuine Account of the Dispute between Mr. Hume and Mr. Rousseau; with the Letters that Passed between Them during their Controversy*. All evidence points to the conclusion that Hume was innocent of Rousseau's accusations and that Rousseau suffered from deep paranoia.

In 1767, Hume accepted an invitation to become under-secretary of state in London. However, because he had sympathies with the American colonies, it was not an ideal appointment for him. He wrote: "I am an American in my Principles, and wish we would let them alone to govern or misgovern themselves as they think proper" (Hume, 1932, in Greig, 1932, ii, pp. 303–6). Still he kept the post for a year and then retired to Edinburgh and built a house in St. Andrews Square, where Ben Franklin was among his first house guests.

Beginning around 1772, Hume's health started slowly to decline. Within a few years he showed symptoms of an intestinal disorder, perhaps the same from which his mother died, and doctors debated whether his malady was of the colon or the liver. One of Hume's concerns was to insure that his *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, which he had written twenty years earlier and revised again in the last months of his life, be published after his death. Hume thought that by willing all of his manuscripts to his good friend, Adam Smith, author of *The Wealth of Nations*, the *Dialogues* would be published. Because of the provocative nature of the book, which criticizes the foundations of some traditional religious beliefs, Smith was indecisive. Hume tried instead to publish the book before he died, but his deteriorating health prevented him. So, he added a codicil to his will, specifying that his publisher should bring out the *Dialogues* within two years of his death; furthermore, if the *Dialogues* were not published within two-and-a-half years, they should pass to his nephew, David, who would arrange for their publication.

Biographers write that Hume's last days were serene ones. He invited friends to a farewell dinner on July 4, 1776. Hume was unaware that this was also the day on which the American Declaration of Independence was being signed in Philadelphia. Mossner remarks that, unlike most of his friends, Hume would have been pleased to hear the news when it reached Edinburgh a few days before his death (p. 596). Hume also had visits from acquaintances who tried to convert him to some form of religious belief or another. One notable visitor was James Boswell, who grilled Hume about possible covert hopes for an afterlife. Hume, however, stood on his philosophical convictions and claimed to be no more distressed at the thought of his passing out of existence than he would be at the thought that he had never existed at all. Boswell writes, "The truth is that Mr. Hume's pleasantry was such that there was no solemnity in the scene; and Death for the time did not seem dismal. It surprised me to find him talking of different matters with a tranquility of mind and a clearness of head, which few men possess at any time" (Boswell 1928–34: xii, 227–32).

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David Hume died on August 25, 1776. In 1779, David's nephew saw to the publication of *The Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*. In 1783 the two suppressed essays were published with Hume's name attached. Along with the two essays, the anonymous editor of the 1783 edition included his own critical notes to Hume's two pieces, and excerpts from Rousseau's *La Nouvelle Heloise*, on the subject of suicide. The title page read,

ESSAYS ON SUICIDE, AND THE IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL, ASCRIBED TO THE LATE DAVID HUME, Esq. Never before published. With REMARKS, intended as an Antidote to the Poison contained in these Performances, BY THE EDITOR. TO WHICH IS ADDED, TWO LETTERS ON SUICIDE, FROM ROUSSEAU'S ELOISA. (Fieser 1995)

The event of this publication, however, was hardly the last time readers would pay attention to the writings of David Hume.

### A Chronology of Hume's Significant Published Writings

1739 Books I and II of *A Treatise of Human Nature*

1740 Book III of *A Treatise of Human Nature*

1740 *An Abstract of a Book Lately Published* (abstract of the *Treatise*)

1741–2 *Essays Moral and Political* (in 2 volumes)

Volume 1 contains: (1) Of the Delicacy of Taste and Passion; (2) Of the Liberty of the Press; (3) Of Impudence and Modesty; (4) That Politicks may be Reduce'd to a Science; (5) Of the First Principles of Government; (6) Of Love and Marriage; (7) Of the Study of History; (8) Of the Independency of Parliament; (9) Whether the British Government inclines more to Absolute Monarchy, or to a Republick; (10) Of Parties in General; (11) Of the Parties of Great Britain; (12) Of Superstition and Enthusiasm; (14) Of the Dignity of Human Nature; (15) Of Liberty and Despotism. Volume 2 contains: (1) Of Essay-writing; (2) Of Eloquence; (3) of Moral Prejudices; (4) Of the Middle Station of Life; (5) Of the Rise and Progress of the Arts and Sciences; (6) The Epicurean; (7) The Stoic; (8) The Platonist; (9) The Sceptic; (10) Of Polygamy and Divorces; (11) Of Simplicity and Refinement; (12) A Character of Sir Robert Walpole.

1745 "A Letter from a Gentleman to his Friend in Edinburgh"

1748 *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*

First published as *Philosophical Essays Concerning Human Understanding*

1751 *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*

1752 *Political Discourses*

Contains: (1) Of Commerce, (2) Of Luxury, (3) Of Money, (4) Of Interest, (5) Of the Balance of Trade, (6) Of the Balance of Power, (7) Of Taxes, (8) Of Public Credit, (9) Of Some Remarkable Customs, (10) Of the Populousness of Antient Nations, (11) Of the Protestant Succession, (12) Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth.

1753 *Essays and Treatises on Several Subjects*

Brings together previously published works: (1) *Essays Moral and Political*, (2) *Philosophical Essays Concerning Human Understanding*, (3) *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*, and (4) *Political Discourses*.

1754–62 *History of England* (in 4 volumes)1757 *Four Dissertations*

The original collection, usually called *Five Dissertations*, contained these five pieces: (1) The Natural History of Religion, (2) Of the Passions, (3) Of Tragedy, (4) Of Suicide, (5) Of the Immortality of the Soul. When the last two essays were physically removed from the printed versions, Hume added “Of the Standard of Taste,” and the book was then titled *Four Dissertations*.

1758 *Essays Moral, Political and Literary*

*Essays Moral and Political* combined with *Political Discourses*. Essays added in 1758 edition: “Of the Original Contract” and “Of Passive Obedience” (taken from *Three Essays*, 1748). Essays added in 1760 edition: “Of Jealousy of Trade” and “Of the Coalition of Parties” (also published as *Two Additional Essays*, 1758).

## 1777 “My Own Life”

Hume’s brief autobiography written in 1776, shortly before his death in August of 1776.

1779 *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*

Hume began working on the *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* around 1751. The main revisions of the work occurred between then and around 1757. He did some further revisions in 1761 and one significant paragraph was altered two or three weeks before his death.

1783 *Essays on Suicide and Immortality*

These essays were removed from *Five Dissertations*. A manuscript copy of the essays circulated. A somewhat corrupted version of the two essays appeared in 1777; this was more widely reprinted in 1783 with critical commentary.

### The Themes and Authors in this Volume

This volume is organized topically, rather than by work, to reflect the array of topics on which Hume wrote and to explore each one individually. The emphasis is on Hume’s philosophy, although his work as a historian is represented as well. The first three parts of the volume roughly follow the organization of *A Treatise of Human Nature* and its three books, on knowledge, the passions, and morality. Hume returned to some of these themes later in his two *Enquiries*, so the discussions in many of the essays here contain references to both the *Treatise* and the *Enquiries*. The fourth part is devoted to Hume’s views on religious belief, a theme in many of his works, but most prominent in the *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*. The fifth part, on Hume’s economics, politics, and historical writings, draws from many of his works, but

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notably from his *Essays Moral and Political*, his *Political Discourses*, and the *History of England*. This volume also includes as its sixth part some critical discussions centered on specific issues of interpretation done in a contemporary vernacular, including essays that show the influence of Hume's theories on contemporary philosophy.

Many of the essays contained here, all original, are written by an emerging generation of Hume scholars, who are now shaping and will continue to influence the understanding of Hume's thought for many years to come. (By no means does it contain essays by all who fit under this description.) At the same time, this book has contributions from a sprinkling of renowned, established scholars whose work has founded a framework for many discussions of Hume in print today. This mix was deliberate. There are also many venerated scholars of Hume whose contributions to the field are beyond estimation and for whose research and expertise we are all in great debt. Their many essays and studies can be found in various prominent volumes that have been published over the years. The influence of scholars such as David Fate Norton and M. A. Stewart (to name just two, at the risk of offending others not named here) has an abiding presence in this volume in both the discussions that depend on their interpretations and in the repeated citations to their published works in the bibliographies found here. I might mention that while I cannot do justice in the short space of this introduction to all of the themes in Hume's writings, David Fate Norton's introduction to his and Mary Norton's Oxford Philosophical Texts edition of Hume's *Treatise* has an excellent overview of Hume's philosophical theories, and Tom Beauchamp's introductions to the Oxford Clarendon Editions of each *Enquiry* offer invaluable background. The Oxford Clarendon Edition (critical edition) of the *Treatise*, edited by the Nortons, has only just appeared at the time of this writing, and it promises to be an essential enduring resource for the scholar.

This *Companion to Hume* opens with Stephen Buckle's essay (ch. 1) situating Hume in the tradition of Enlightenment thinking. The Enlightenment was an era of increasing confidence in the human mind and in the experimental method, an era in which secular values based on nature and notions of social reform were gaining currency. Buckle explains that on stereotypical views of both the Enlightenment and Hume, Hume's theories are only coincident with the period, and he has no essential connection with the trends that were created by the social critics and reformers in France who defined the era. This is because Hume's interests have often been narrowly defined in terms of epistemology and more specifically in terms of epistemological skepticism. Buckle's essay is an excellent starting point for this collection because it corrects this mistaken branding of Hume as a destructive philosopher and opens up discussion to the ways in which Hume held constructive views in many areas – not only in epistemology, but in psychology, ethics, and politics. The theme of Hume as a naturalist, as a philosopher who, Buckle writes, proposes to replace “old metaphysical dreams with a new system of empirical studies which aim at usefulness for human lives” is prominent throughout the papers in this volume.

### *Mind and Knowledge*

The first part, on Mind and Knowledge, starts with a discussion of Hume's theory of ideas, which is the foundation for Hume's philosophical views in almost all arenas

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– not only knowledge, but psychology, ethics, and religious belief. Hume calls any content of the mind a “perception.” To understand Hume’s project is to understand why he distinguishes the contents of the mind on the grounds of their phenomenal “feel,” how they feel to us, rather than by the supposed mental processes or external objects that might be the causes of the perceptions: We are immediately aware of the quality of an experience, but not of its cause, whether mental or extramental. So, to begin with something *not* inferred, as an empirical inquiry should, we must start by studying the perceptions themselves.

Don Garrett’s essay (ch. 2) examines in detail the most basic distinctions Hume draws among kinds of perceptions and the fundamental principles he identifies describing their operations. Hume divides perceptions into the classes of impressions and ideas. Impressions are the vivid and forceful experiences we have when we see, hear, taste, smell, or touch (impressions of sensation) or when we feel passions such as love, pride, envy, or desire (impressions of reflection, the products of reflecting on the sources of pleasure and pain). Ideas, on the other hand, are the less vivid and less lively mental states we have when we think about the original ones. Garrett’s chapter investigates the distinction Hume draws between mental states that are representations of something outside themselves and those that are not, a difference which, Garrett suggests, does not correspond to Hume’s basic distinction between ideas and impressions, as some critics have thought. All agree that our ideas represent the objects they are about, but so can sense impressions represent the objects that cause them, Garrett argues, and he explains many senses of representation that can be culled from Hume’s discussions. Furthermore, just as physicists can formulate laws of physics to describe the regularities we find in nature, Hume offers principles of the mind to capture all the features of human cognition. Garrett identifies and explains several. These fundamental distinctions and principles articulated in Hume’s philosophy of mind have numerous critical implications for the whole of his philosophical system, which are explored in the essays that follow Garrett’s.

For instance, impressions return to the mind as ideas, but how we distinguish ideas of memory from those of imagination is an intriguing question in Hume’s philosophy, which Saul Traiger (ch. 3) takes up. One way to make the distinction is to say that memory preserves the order of ideas as they came in experience, while imagination does not; however, we have no way of applying such a criterion to make the distinction, since we cannot conjure up the past impressions and compare their order to our present ideas. Instead, Hume says, an idea of memory “retains a considerable degree of its first vivacity, and is somewhat intermediate betwixt an impression and an idea;” an idea of imagination “entirely loses that vivacity, and is a perfect idea” (Treatise, Book 1, part 1, section 3). Traiger investigates the quandaries to which Hume’s characterization gives rise. Another crucial question is how Hume’s principles can account for our acquisition of the ideas of space and time. Wayne Waxman (ch. 4) argues for understanding Hume as employing all three of the natural relations that derive from the three principles of association in his explanation how the ideas of space and time originate in experience.

Hume’s system, of course, goes beyond an account of idea acquisition to an analysis of belief formation. Since, as he argues, all beliefs in facts about the world are based on the relation of cause and effect, he offers an analysis of the how the mind originates

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the causal connection. That analysis, discussed here in Francis Dauer's essay (ch. 5), was one that dramatically changed the way philosophers viewed causality, and those who could not accept Hume's theory were compelled to respond to it (most notably, the German philosopher, Kant). On Hume's theory, one component in our idea of causality is necessary connection, but, Hume shows, the idea of necessity cannot be traced to any impression. Rather, Hume describes the psychological process that produces belief in causal connections this way: The constant conjunction of perceived events produces in us an association of the two perceptions, until the association becomes so strong that we feel a "determination of the mind" to pass from the perception of the first to a thought of the second (an effect of custom and habit). When we reach this point, we posit a necessary connection between the events. Our imagination fills in the gaps in our experience by supplying the notion that the two events are necessarily bound to each other, even though they are experienced distinctly. Dauer considers three interpretations of Hume's analysis that commit him to theses of various strengths about the status and existence of necessity in the world and in laws of nature.

Louis Loeb's essay on induction (ch. 6) continues the discussion of Hume's study of belief: How do we *ever* arrive at beliefs concerning causes and effects, which are supposed to take us beyond present experience, when such beliefs have to be based on present experience? If I can add to my present experience and my memory of past experience a belief that the future will be like the past, then I could formulate an argument with a conclusion about the future. It would go like this: (1) in the past, my experience of fire has been conjoined with the experience of heat; (2) the future will resemble the past; (3) therefore, my experiences of fire and heat will be conjoined in the future. The conclusion gets us to the future, as causal connections should; so it is indicative for us of causality. But, as Hume points out, the second premise is itself based on experience, namely, on experience of past pasts and past futures, and so its justification is circular. This leads to what Loeb labels the traditional interpretation of Hume as an inductive skeptic. Loeb's essay highlights the reasons to doubt this interpretation and offers in its place evidence that Hume thought inductive inference justified.

So far, then, we have Hume's account of how we attribute qualities to objects; but we have no account of how we come to believe that objects exist outside the mind. Causal reasoning can only make correlations between perceptions, and never between external objects and perceptions, so we cannot make an inference to the existence of objects in that way. And this issue is connected with another vexing question: How do I arrive at the idea of myself, or of my mind, as the subject, or possessor, of these perceptions, when all the perceptions in my mind, on which my ideas must be based, are presumably of other objects? These discussions are taken up, respectively, by Michel Malherbe (ch. 7) and Donald Ainslie (ch. 8).

In his analyses, Hume concludes that we have ideas of external objects and of the self (and of other selves), but that these ideas have a special status like that of necessity. The mind does not derive these ideas directly from experience, but by operating on the ideas that do come directly from experience; they are "fictions" the mind creates for the sake of coherence and consistency. As Malherbe points out, Hume's theory of how we come to believe in the existence of bodies (objects) makes for an interesting mix of naturalism and skepticism. Ainslie's article on the self focuses on the

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interpretative problem Hume's account of personal identity poses. Hume explains in Book I of the *Treatise* that our notion of self is a product of our bundling our individual perceptions into a whole because we feel they are unified. However, in a puzzling passage in his Appendix, published a year or so later with Book III, Hume contents that his own account is mistaken. In what way Hume thinks it is misguided has been the subject of much debate, which Ainslie explores. Ainslie argues for a reading of Hume that retains the bundle theory and instead interprets Hume's concern as one over the explanation of a belief about consciousness: Hume's worry is how can we explain our belief that the ideas in virtue of which we are aware of our own perceptions are themselves part of the same mind as the perceptions we observe within us.

*Passions and Action*

In his psychology of the passions, Hume distinguishes the direct from the indirect passions. The direct passions are those which arise immediately from reflection on pleasures and pains, without the need to call upon other perceptions. (What this means is more easily explained after we have before us an account of the opposite set, the indirect passions.) The indirect passions are those which are caused in us by reflection on pleasure and pain, but in cooperation with other perceptions.

Hume explains the production of the indirect passions in terms of what he calls a double relation of impressions and ideas. His analysis is explored in careful detail here in an essay by Rachel Cohon (ch. 9). Among the indirect passions are pride, humility, ambition, vanity, love, hatred, envy, pity, malice, and generosity. For instance, when I think of my beautiful pottery, the idea of myself, which I associate with the pottery, transports my mind to the idea of the self that is the object of the passion of pride (an association of ideas); likewise, the pleasure I take in the beautiful quality of the pottery moves my mind along to the similar sensation of pleasure that is essential to pride (an association of impressions). The cause is doubly related to the effect, and both lines of mental association contribute to the generation of the passion of pride. Cohon argues that there is ample evidence to think that Hume's moral sentiments are among the indirect passions as well, even though he never explicitly says so.

The direct passions, on the other hand, occur with no introduction of an idea of self or others; we simply feel a certain way about an object that causes us pleasure or about one that causes us pain. Among the direct passions Hume lists desire, aversion, grief, joy, hope, despair, security, and volition. There are also, however, a few passions that Hume discusses as direct passions that do not arise from perceptions of pleasure and pain. These he identifies as natural impulses or instincts. Among the natural impulses or instincts Hume at one point includes "benevolence and resentment, the love of life, and kindness to children" (T 2.3.3.8) and at another "desire of punishment to our enemies, and of happiness to our friends; hunger, lust, and a few other bodily appetites" (T 2.3.9.8). Some of the passions serve as motives or potential causes to action and some do not.

Tito Magri's essay (ch. 10) develops a reading of Hume's arguments concerning the direct passions in which he uncovers two different theories of motivation in Hume. One depends on the "noncognitive" characterization of the direct passions as feelings that are caused directly by impressions of pleasure and pain, and are themselves causes of

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action. However, this theory, Magri argues, does not account for the common-sense view of conduct and of agency that Hume himself seems to share – one that includes the idea that beliefs motivate action, that agents control their conduct, and that agents consider and choose intrinsic values. Magri shows that Hume suggests another theory of motivation in which our original propensities to certain objects interacts with beliefs to produce motives, and argues that in this sense, beliefs motivate. Magri also finds in Hume the materials for an account of practical choice and control over action by appealing to Hume’s characterization of the “calm” passions. The calm passions are the reactions we experience when we take a more distant view of things and respond to the greatest possible good or to the general and stable features of objects that make them intrinsically desirable.

The third essay in this part, by John Bricke (ch. 11), takes up Hume’s views on determinism and responsibility for action. On Hume’s view (and others’ as well), if our actions were not necessitated, they would be uncaused, and to be uncaused is to be random and left to chance. So, if we are to be held responsible for our actions, they must be caused, and Hume thinks they are caused by our motives. However, our motives are caused as well. Bricke explores the question how Hume attempts to combine his naturalistic view of a human being as subject to causal laws with the notion of moral responsibility.

### *Morality and Beauty*

Moral philosophers in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were engaged in debates over how we derive our moral distinctions: Do we make them by the rational part of our nature or by the sensitive part? Hume’s way of putting this question was: “Do we make the distinction between virtue and vice by means of our ideas or by means of our impressions?” Hume thinks our moral evaluations are ultimately about character, even though we can only observe the actions of others, which we then take as signs of their motivations, and motivations comprise character. Now, when Hume asks whether we distinguish virtue from vice by means of ideas or by means of impressions, he is not asking whether the idea of virtue or the idea of vice derives from experience; we already know that all legitimate ideas (non-fictions) originate in experience and are copies of impressions. He is asking instead whether, after we have acquired the ideas involved, our regarding, for instance, malice as vicious and kindness as virtuous, is something we do merely by the use of reason, or whether it requires experience. He offers the following argument: (1) Reason alone never motivates. (2) Morals excite passions and produce or prevent actions; that is, they motivate. (3) Therefore, morality cannot be derived from reason alone (T 457).

The part opens with Charlotte Brown’s careful account of Hume’s ethics (ch. 12). She begins with a discussion of the views of Hume’s rationalist opponents and then explains the arguments Hume offers against the view that morality cannot be based on reason by itself. Her essay explores Hume’s positive views on sentiment, sympathy and judgment of character. Hume’s own account says that we derive our moral distinctions from our sentiments. In the attempt to explain our mental life in terms of a few natural principles, Hume finds that a fundamental human principle, sympathy, underlies our moral judgments. Why do we feel pleasure at the thought of some

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actions or characters, and pain at the thought of others? Hume's answer is that it is natural for us to sympathize with the feelings of others. In so doing, we consider the effects of an action or character in isolation from our personal connections to the actor. More specifically, the general point of view from which we make moral distinctions is the viewpoint of one who sympathizes with the circle of people most directly affected by the agent's actions. Kate Abramson's chapter (13) then focuses on a distinctive feature of Hume's ethics, namely, its spectator-based account of virtue. What traits are virtuous or vicious is determined by the reactions of approval and disapproval of a judicious spectator to the actions others perform. Hume's view makes explanations of phenomena, like the motivating effect of moral distinctions and the action-guiding or normative force of moral judgments on actors, trickier. Various commentators have raised difficult questions about the implications of moral judgment's originating in this third-person perspective, and Abramson responds to three of them: (1) that such sentiments are inappropriate as that through which we hold one another accountable; (2) that Humean sentiments of moral disapproval lead to exclusion of those we condemn and destroys Hume's otherwise "gentle" morality, and (3) that the standard of virtue in Hume's spectatorial account of moral evaluation allows practically any trait to qualify as a virtue.

Eugenio Lecaldano's essay (ch. 14) continues the discussion of Hume's ethics by exploring his theory of justice, or artificial virtue. The notions of the just and the unjust are different from those who exemplify natural virtue because acts of justice are ones we approve, not because they are the immediate sources of pleasure to those directly affected by the actor, but because we derive a kind of pleasure from the system in which they play a part. If Hume's account of justice works, then sympathy must be transformed beyond the capacity to take on the pleasures and pains of the agent's close circle into the capacity to feel approval at actions that serve the long-term good of all persons in society. Commentators have spent much effort working out Hume's answer to two key questions: (1) From what motive are the rules of justice established? (2) Why do we consider observance of these rules virtuous, and violation of them vicious? Lecaldano argues that Hume's theory of justice is a form of sentimental conventionalism, distinct from contractarian, natural law and utilitarian accounts.

Jacqueline Taylor's contribution (ch. 15) treats questions surrounding Hume's theory of beauty, which is in many ways analogous to his spectator theory of morality. After tracing the sentimentalist tradition out of which Hume's aesthetic theory arises, Taylor shows first how the *Treatise* account of beauty and morality appeals to sympathy as the bases of evaluation, offering a causal account of the origin of our sentiments. She then argues that Hume, in his later *Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals* (often called "the second *Enquiry*") and his essay "Of the Standard of Taste," alters his views, giving more emphasis to reflection and to delicacy of taste in moral and artistic discrimination and showing an appreciation of the historical and cultural diversity in moral and aesthetic values.

Finally, Annette Baier (ch. 16) discusses an issue that has long fascinated Hume commentators: Just how is the *Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals* account of ethics different from that of the *Treatise*, and why did Hume himself write that the second *Enquiry* was his best book published to that point? Baier herself is not sure who should judge whether Hume's assessment was correct, but she explains her

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admiration for the *Enquiry*, due to several pleasing features, including its “intellectual acuteness,” “gentle morality,” “literary craft,” “lightness of touch,” and “playful wit.” Baier explores in great depth the ideas of the second *Enquiry*, the thinkers who influences Hume in its writing, and why Hume might have been so pleased by it.

### *Religion*

Scholars debate the question whether Hume was an atheist, an agnostic, or perhaps even a deist. Hume’s perspective on religion is introduced here with Terence Penelhum’s essay (ch. 17) on the intellectual and cultural factors that set the backdrop against which Hume’s own views on religion were developed. Penelhum identifies four influences on Hume: (1) his own experience with Scottish Presbyterianism and its doctrines of predestination and original sin; (2) the skepticism of the Ancient philosopher, Cicero; (3) the writings of Pierre Bayle, who attempted to undermine the notion that atheism entailed moral depravity; and (4) the debate between the Deists and Joseph Butler, over whether God intervenes in the natural order. Penelhum shows how certain views in Hume’s writings on religion are in interesting ways either responses to or developments of the influences he identifies.

Martin Bell’s essay (ch. 18) focuses on Hume’s treatment of beliefs about the nature and existence of God. His discussion draws from a section of Hume’s first *Enquiry* (section 11), where Hume argues that natural religion (religious beliefs based on reasoning) can have no practical consequences, and thus no implications for the moral life. Bell’s discussion, however, highlights Hume’s *Dialogues concerning Natural Religion*, examining the debate among the characters in the dialogues over arguments for God’s existence. The *Dialogues* have been the source of endless interpretive debates, key among them which character actually represents Hume’s views, and Bell addresses some of these interesting questions. The final essay of the part, by Michael Levine (ch. 19), analyzes Hume’s arguments concerning belief in miracles and in immortality. Levine shows how Hume’s discussion of miracles is based on his theory of ideas and his analysis of causation, which do not warrant the positing of supernatural causes. He also examines the details of Hume’s several arguments against belief in immortality, a belief that Hume attributes ultimately to the work of the passions of hope and fear and over reason.

### *Economics, Politics, and History*

Hume occupies a prominent place in the history of classical economic theory. He is best known for his anti-mercantilist arguments; that is, for arguments against the view that a country’s wealth was determined by the amount of money (gold) it held and that it should sell and export more than it imports. Hume held, instead, in a country taking in increasingly large amounts of money, the price of goods there would increase, thus forcing a demand for imported items. Thus, exports are susceptible to an economic limiting mechanism, which became known as the price – specie – flow mechanism. It was Hume’s view that all nations were wealthier as a result of mutual foreign trade. Tatsuya Sakamoto here (ch. 20) explains the sometimes-paradoxical content of Hume’s economic theory, developed mostly in Hume’s *Political Discourses*. Sakamoto

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offers insights not only into the content of Hume's views on topics like luxury, money, and foreign trade, but also into the reasons why Hume's writings have received great and lasting acclaim in the history of economics, despite the fact that some of his predecessors had attempted to promote similar ideas.

Richard Dees suggests in his chapter (21) on Hume's politics that Hume's theory of the origin and justification of government has been appropriated by conservatives and liberals alike, and many factions in between. Hume was liberal in his valuing of liberties, like freedom of the press, and conservative in his discouraging reforms that departed from well-entrenched customs. On the other hand, he did believe in a right to revolution under circumstances in which the abuse of authority undermined the security that governments exist in order to guarantee. He refused to affiliate with either of Britain's two political parties, the Whigs and the Tories. As Dees shows, drawing from Hume's *Treatise, Essays* and the *History of England*, Hume's theory of government is very subtle and complex, perhaps best thought of as a form of pragmatism, a theory in which government exists to solve certain problems whose solutions require familiarity with local details and specific circumstances.

Mark Phillips remarks in his piece (ch. 22) on Hume's *History of England* that "by the time he died in 1776, Hume was better known to British readers as a historian than as a philosopher." Because of its style and national narrative, the *History* finally brought Hume the literary fame he claimed to crave; and yet it is much less known to Hume's contemporary readers than his philosophical writings. Phillips's essay offers insights into several facets of Hume's *History*: the events preceding the "moment" in which Hume wrote the *History*; Hume's development of a new historiographic style with government, manners, finances, arms, trade, learning as central themes; the maxims to which Hume adhered in his historical interpretations; and Hume's own recasting of British history and characters. I hope readers find Phillips's essay a fitting conclusion to a volume featuring the contributions of the most influential empiricist in the history of modern thought.

### *Contemporary Themes*

The final part of this volume presents some critical discussions framed in contemporary terms. Admittedly, such a characterization of essays is somewhat arbitrary, given that many of the other chapters here also introduce contemporary debates in Hume scholarship and all cite recent literature. Nonetheless, these particular essays ask questions about Hume that come from our twenty-first-century perspective, using concepts that philosophers have developed since Hume as tools of critical discussion.

Janet Broughton (ch. 23) confronts directly the question broached in several previous essays, whether Hume is a skeptic or a philosophical naturalist. That is, is Hume's philosophy meant to undermine our beliefs in causality, the self, and the external world, showing them philosophical or rationally unjustified? Or is his aim to reveal how the mind arrives naturally at certain beliefs that employ fictions, with the purpose of developing standards of belief-acquisition for these beliefs, knowing they are useful in ordinary life and that we cannot get along without them? Peter E. Kail (ch. 24) addresses a related interpretive question, one also suggested in Dauer's essay on causality: Does Hume think that talk of causality, external objects, and the self reduces

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to (is nothing more than) talk of perceptions experienced in certain patterns (the “Old Hume” interpretation), or is there something else, something extra-mental that these claims are about, even though we cannot access that something else (the “New Hume” interpretation, prominent in the last century)? Kail’s essay shows that what constitutes the realist, New Hume interpretation is intricate, and the answer to the question posed is even more so.

William E. Morris (ch. 25) continues part VI with his discussion of Hume’s influence in contemporary epistemology. Morris shows how Hume’s thought has informed current debates over the problems of induction and causation, and how his views have affinities with contemporary naturalized epistemology and cognitive science. Morris claims that Hume’s most significant and underappreciated contribution to epistemology is his firm refusal to do metaphysics. Many critics either consciously or unwittingly commit Hume to metaphysical positions, when, in fact, Morris argues, Hume’s rejection of traditional approaches to philosophy partly “consists in shifting the ground of discussion from what he regards as incoherent metaphysics to the only area where he believes we can have a fruitful discussion – where we have a clear understanding of the cognitive contents of the central ideas involved.”

Elizabeth Radcliffe then explains the roots in Hume of the contemporary Humean theory of motivation, the “belief/desire” model, which has become the standard theory of motivation for naturalists. One is said to have a reason for action when one has a desire for something and a belief about how to attain it. This theory of reasons for action has set up one side of an ongoing philosophical debate between the present-day Humeans and present-day rationalists, with the latter claiming that reasons for action need not always depend on desires and that they can even have authority over one’s desires. This live debate in motivational psychology is an impressive illustration of Hume’s enduring impact on central philosophical concerns.

This volume concludes with two essays on major contemporary interpretive questions arising out of the study of Hume’s moral theory. First, Tom Beauchamp (ch. 27) addresses a deep concern of moralists: does Hume have a theory of normativity whereby he prescribes a certain moral system for human beings, or is his project meant to be only descriptive of the moral practices to which we adhere? Many scholars understand it in the latter way, and Beauchamp corrects this perception by arguing that Hume’s whole philosophical system offers norms for developing both causal judgments about the world and moral judgments about character. Second, because of Hume’s emphasis on sentiment as the origin of morality, readers often ask the question whether Hume intended to identify moral judgments with feelings, a view which implies that our claims about morality do not describe anything real; instead, they are just expressions of the feelings we have toward actions and characters. This reading makes Hume’s ethics a version of what contemporary philosophers have called moral non-cognitivism, and some critics have taken for granted that his is the view with which Hume would identify. Nicholas Sturgeon (ch. 28) concludes the volume by addressing this interpretation of Hume and asking about its ties to twentieth-century emotivism. He shows that an interpretation of Hume on this score relies on answers to complex questions – on interpreting Hume’s theses that morality is not a matter of fact discovered by reason but rather by sentiment, that an “ought” conclusion cannot be deduced from an “is” premise, and that moral judgments affect motives and actions.

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In the end, as one might expect from a philosopher as nuanced as Hume, his moral theory defies clear categorization.

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