

Hume

Biography / Overview

David Hume, a Scottish philosopher, historian, economist, and essayist, is considered one of the most important figures in the history of Western philosophy. Born in Edinburgh in 1711, Hume was raised by his widowed mother after the death of his father. He studied law at the University of Edinburgh but soon discovered his passion for philosophy and literature. Hume's works encompass a wide range of topics, including epistemology, metaphysics, ethics, political philosophy, and economics. His writing is characterized by its clear, accessible style and its skepticism toward traditional philosophical doctrines.

Hume's most famous works include *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1739–1740), *Enquiries Concerning Human Understanding* (1748), and *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* (1779). Throughout his life, Hume was a controversial figure, facing criticism from both religious and philosophical circles for his skeptical views on religion and metaphysics. Despite this, his influence on subsequent philosophers, including Immanuel Kant and Adam Smith, cannot be overstated. Hume passed away in 1776, leaving behind a legacy that continues to shape philosophical discourse to this day.

Sources:

Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy - <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/hume/>

Britannica - <https://www.britannica.com/biography/David-Hume>

Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy - <https://iep.utm.edu/hume/>

Bibliography / Primary Sources

A Treatise of Human Nature (1739–1740)

Enquiries Concerning Human Understanding (1748)

Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion (1779)

Essays, Moral, Political, and Literary (1741–1777)

The History of England (1754–1762)

Sources:

Project Gutenberg - <https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/author/393>

Early Modern Texts - <https://www.earlymoderntexts.com/authors/hume>

The Online Library of Liberty - <https://oll.libertyfund.org/people/david-hume>

Birth Date / Death Date

Birth Date: April 26, 1711

Death Date: August 25, 1776

Sources:

Encyclopedia Britannica - <https://www.britannica.com/biography/David-Hume>

Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy - <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/hume/>

Notable / Best-Known For

David Hume is best known for his contributions to empiricism, skepticism, and naturalism in philosophy. His works challenged traditional philosophical views and laid the groundwork for modern philosophical thought. Hume's critiques of causality, induction, and the concept of the self have had a lasting impact on the field of epistemology. Additionally, his political and economic writings, including his advocacy for free trade and limited government intervention, have influenced the development of liberal political theory.

Sources:

Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy - <https://iep.utm.edu/hume/>

Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy - <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/hume/>

The British Library - <https://www.bl.uk/people/david-hume>

Famous Quotes

"Reason is, and ought only to be, the slave of the passions."

"To be a philosophical skeptic is, in a man of letters, the first and most essential to being a sound, believing Christian."

"Beauty is no quality in things themselves: it exists merely in the mind which contemplates them."

"Generally speaking, the errors in religion are dangerous; those in philosophy only ridiculous."

Sources:

An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding by David Hume

A Treatise of Human Nature by David Hume

Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion by David Hume

Major Works / Textual Contents

Hume's major works include *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1739–1740): A comprehensive exploration of human cognition and the nature of knowledge.

Enquiries Concerning Human Understanding (1748): An examination of the limits of human understanding and the role of reason in belief.

Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion (1779): A critical dialogue on the nature of religion and the limits of human knowledge.

Essays, Moral, Political, and Literary (1741–1777): A collection of essays on various topics, including ethics, politics, and aesthetics.

The History of England (1754–1762): A multi-volume work that traces the history of England from the Roman conquest to the Glorious Revolution.

Sources:

Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy - <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/hume/>

Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy - <https://iep.utm.edu/hume/>

Britannica - <https://www.britannica.com/biography/David-Hume>

Influences / Intellectual Context

Hume was influenced by a wide range of thinkers, including John Locke, who built upon Locke's empiricist philosophy and theory of knowledge. Isaac Newton inspired Hume with his scientific method, which Hume sought to apply to the study of human nature. Francis Hutcheson's ideas on ethics and aesthetics shaped Hume's moral philosophy. Pierre Bayle influenced Hume's skepticism and critical approach to religious belief. Montesquieu's political philosophy also informed Hume's writings on government and liberty.

Sources:

Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy - <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/hume/>

Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy - <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/newton/>

Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy - <https://iep.utm.edu/hume/>

Legacy and Modern Significance

David Hume's legacy lies in his profound impact on the development of modern philosophy. His skeptical and empiricist views have influenced generations of philosophers, including Immanuel Kant, who credited Hume with awakening him from his "dogmatic slumber." Hume's contributions to ethics, epistemology, and political theory continue to be studied and debated in philosophical circles around the world. His emphasis on the role of experience and observation in shaping human understanding has had a lasting impact on the fields of psychology and cognitive science.

Sources:

Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy - <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/hume/>

Britannica - <https://www.britannica.com/biography/David-Hume>

Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy - <https://iep.utm.edu/hume/>

Modern Moments / Impact on 21st Century Society

In 2011, the tercentenary of Hume's birth was celebrated with conferences, exhibitions, and academic events around the world.

The publication of new scholarly editions and translations of Hume's works continues to expand our understanding of his philosophy in the 21st century.

Digital resources such as online archives and databases make Hume's writings more accessible to a global audience, further cementing his influence on contemporary philosophical discourse.

Sources:

The Hume Society - <https://www.humesociety.org/>

University of Edinburgh - <https://www.ed.ac.uk/>

Project MUSE - <https://muse.jhu.edu/journal/238>