



# Essays: Moral, Political and Literary

*David Hume*

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## Essays: Moral, Political and Literary David Hume

This edition contains the thirty-nine essays included in *Essays, Moral, Political, and Literary* that made up Volume I of the 1777 posthumous *Essays and Treatises on Several Subjects*. It also includes ten essays that were withdrawn or left unpublished by Hume for various reasons.

**Eugene F. Miller** was Professor of Political Science at the University of Georgia from 1967 until his retirement in 2003.

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## Essays: Moral, Political and Literary Details

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## Lisa says

Published 1758. Of the Dignity or Meanness of Human Nature: He argues that genuine human virtue is possible. By comparing one person to another, we can argue that some have virtue (wisdom, beauty, etc.). Even if that virtue is constrained by a measure of self-love and other vices, it's still possible to argue that people have true virtue.

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## Brandon says

Grade: 85% / 'B'

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## John says

Absolutely phenomenal. This collection contains more history and philosophy than many books of essays three times its size. David Hume was a genius. Even when I do not agree with his positions, I can find his arguments persuasive and complete. Of particular note are "On Avarice" and "On the Meanness of Human Nature"

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## Craig Bolton says

"Essays: Moral, Political, and Literary by DAVID HUME (1985)"

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## Einzige says

[Just a heads up my review isnt taking into account his essays on religion and suicide as I plan to tackle them separately]

Ever wondered what noted philosopher David Hume thought about trade deficits and the status of the Jacobite controversy in the 18th century? Well boy you are in for a treat.

Jokes aside like any collection of works not all of them are equal some are certainly 5 star worthy others less so, my ranking is therefore a rough average.

The general format he takes is - Introduction of an issue-description of the issue as it currently exists - lengthy and precise comparisons to that issue as it was in ancient Rome/Greece - conclusion. All wrapped up in erudite prose with sprinklings of dry wit.

Whilst some of the essays are universal lot of them are very specific to the time and place they were published in - great if that insight is what you are after - and whilst its possible to squeeze out some lessons and useful insight if you are going to that much effort you may as well read fiction.

Some of the essays I would recommend are"

- Of eloquence
- The epicurean
- The stoic
- The platonist
- The sceptic
- Of polygamy and divorces

Would recommend to Humeboos or people who think all literary innovation after Montaigne was a mistake.

Bonus quote for reading all this -Hume tricking a woman into studying history

"I remember I was once desired by a young beauty, for whom I had some passion, to send her some novels and romances for her amusement in the country; but was not so ungenerous as to take the advantage, which such a course of reading might have given me, being resolved not to make use of poisoned arms against her. I therefore sent her PLUTARCH'S lives, assuring her, at the same time, that there was not a word of truth in them from beginning to end. She perused them very attentively, 'till she came to the lives of ALEXANDER and CÆSAR, whose names she had heard of by accident; and then returned me the book, with many reproaches for deceiving her."

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## **T says**

Reading for class now along with some of Hume's other works. Pretty good reading, interesting "historical philosophy"

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## **Rodrigo says**

While I consider Empiricism as a whole to be excessively close-minded and fundamentally wrong as a philosophic approach (not that it isn't useful; it is a vital part of the scientific method, after all), most of Hume's attacks against traditional knowledge are extremely well constructed, and pretty much correct in every way. Not only that, they're also hilariously offensive, but only after a little reflection. The man was a pro at insulting peoples, races and genders. Such subtlety, such delicate delivery!

If I had to point one thing I haven't liked about this book, it'd be just how disgustingly moderate he is about everything. It's like reading "Nicomachean Ethics" all over again. "The middle ground this, the middle ground that, the middle ground is always the best because blah, blah, blah"

Ugh.

(also, he's hilariously wrong when predicting future political developments.)

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### **Stan says**

I won't pretend that I am so erudite this all made sense to me. Maybe, with time and further study of old classics more will become clear. There were portions of this book that were clear, concise, and really profound; there were portions that I simply could not understand. No doubt differences between the world and English of the mid 1700s and the early 2000s had much to do with it. Still I gained much from this reading, enough so to finish the book. I'll keep my copy and after more study, in a few years perhaps, I'll have another go at this.

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### **ZaRi says**

"It is a very comfortable reflection to the lovers of liberty, that this peculiar privilege of Britain is of a kind that cannot easily be wrested from us, but must last as long as our government remains, in any degree, free and independent. It is seldom, that liberty of any kind is lost all at once. Slavery has so frightful an aspect to men accustomed to freedom, that it must steal upon them by degrees, and must disguise itself in a thousand shapes, in order to be received. But, if the liberty of the press ever be lost, it must be lost at once. The general laws against sedition and libelling are at present as strong as they possibly can be made. Nothing can impose a farther restraint, but either the clapping an Imprimatur upon the press, or the giving to the court very large discretionary powers to punish whatever displeases them. But these concessions would be such a bare-faced violation of liberty, that they will probably be the last efforts of a despotic government. We may conclude, that the liberty of Britain is gone for ever when these attempts shall succeed."

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### **Paul Barone says**

Hume's ethical and political writings in a single collection.

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