

Hume's Science of Commerce
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Hume's science of commerce (economics) was part of a larger project to establish the moral sciences, one that much intensified in the middle decades of the eighteenth century. The term science had a much wider range at the time, including the study of theology, music, and fortification. Newtonian physics did not yet hold its hegemonic position in the 1740s and 50s, when Hume composed his main philosophical works. As I will argue, Hume did not seek to be the Newton of the moral sciences; he admired Newton but was also cognizant of the many limitations to his system of thought and as a result took inspiration from others. Furthermore, Hume believed that testimony, introspection, and historical research provided resources for his science of commerce that were not available in the physical sciences. This meant that one could arrive at theoretical propositions, causal relations, and robust correlations of an epistemic standing comparable or superior to those in physics, where one had to appeal to invisible forces and powers that would remain enigmatic.