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Hume's Aesthetic Theory of Probability
Abstract

Three hundred years after his birth, David Hume is more celebrated for his philosophy than for his aesthetic criticism; but from his earliest correspondence on, the two fields of endeavor were inextricably intertwined in his thinking. Not only does each properly inform the other, in his view, but aesthetic criticism also serves as a model for the evaluation of philosophy itself. Thus he writes, “the imagination, by my own confession, [is] the ultimate judge of all systems of philosophy.” The imagination plays this role, I suggest, by judging the *probable truth* of those systems—including his own—in a way that is modeled on judgments of beauty.