



# “Of The Original Contract”

By David Hume

---

# 1. Overview

- Scottish writer—XVIII
- Knowledge=Progress
- Criticism: Social Contract
  - Social Scientific Approach
    - Look at evidence
    - Support: factual
    - Justification of government: usefulness
- Agnostic → no God= No law of Nature

# 1. Overview

- Two Sources of power
  - God
  - People/Consent
- Objections

## 2. Divine Right Of Kings

- Criticism
  - Origins of Government: God
    - Government→ Sacred
    - Sovereign→ Acts on God's commission
      - Everything that happens→ Plan
      - King, Tyrant, etc.

# 3. Social Contract

- Origin→ consent of people
- Equality of men
- Right to revolution
- Criticism
  - 1. Rudimentary
    - By savages
    - Not explicit
      - Beyond comprehension
  - 2. Power through Force
    - It comes from the force of gov.
    - No force of people
      - Multitude by one
  - 3. Ruling by persuasion

## 4. Reality: Evidence

- Princes
  - Subjects=Property
  - Sovereignty→ conquest or succession
- Subjects
  - Born under obligation and obedience
- Independent of consent
  - No inquiry about origin
- Declaring by Consent→ imprisonment
  - Seditious
- Supposed to be natural→ unknown

## 4. Reality: Evidence

- Original Contract→ ancient
  - Contradictory→ binds children
  - No evidence
- Origin of governments
  - Usurpation or conquest
    - Violence→ mutual agreement?
    - No opposition
  - Elections
    - Few great men
    - Fury of multitude→ unfit
- Revolution
  - Not real change
  - Not everyone involved

## 5. Main Ideas

- Consent
  - Just and most sacred
    - Not allowed by human affairs
    - No authority
- State of Absolute Liberty → HB incapable
  - Regard to justice
  - Property
    - No natural property
      - Origin: fraud and injustice
    - No government or consent
- Government's aim: Protection
  - Comfortable and Secure Subsistence



## 5. Main Ideas

- Equality of men
  - Force
  - Intellect
  - Self-love
    - Pernicious effects→ restrained: reflection and experience
- Government→ utility
  - Fear and necessity
  - **Not natural moral obligation**
- Terrible
  - Dissolution of Gov.→ multitude to establish gov.
    - Unfit to choose

## 6. Hume: Government

- Exigencies→ Authority
  - Utility
    - Necessity
    - **Society needs laws**
      - **Reason: commerce, relationships, limit to instincts**
- Frequent
  - Habitual
    - Voluntary

## 6. Hume: Government

- Consent is not the origin
  - They consent, because lawful
- Not choice → obligation
  - Conform to established constitution
    - Stability (constant influx)
    - Mild innovations → reason, liberty and justice

## 6. Hume: Government

- Origin:
  - Sense of obligation
    - Origin→ interest and necessity of society
      - Commerce
      - Avoid strong over weak
      - Avoid violent upon just

## 7. Moral Duties

- Duties
  - Natural
  - Artificial
- **Natural**: instincts (not rational)
  - Love of children
  - Gratitude
  - Pity
    - **Advantageous** → **approbation**
    - Influence antecedent to reflection

## 7. Moral Duties

- **Artificial:** sense of obligation(checks instinct)
  - Justice→ regard to property
  - Fidelity→ keeping promises
  - Allegiance→ political duty
    - Natural: freedom and dominion
    - Aim→ peace and public order
  - Justified by utility
    - **Necessity of human society**→ **authority**
    - Why? Society will fall apart
      - Need of **magistrates**