David Hume
David Hume (1711-1776)
Simple Ideas

Simple ideas

come from simple impressions

Represent them exactly

Hume: "all our simple ideas in their first appearance are deriv'd from simple impressions, which are correspondent to them, and which they exactly represent."
Empiricists’ Method

Analyze complex ideas into simple ideas

Find origins of simple ideas in experience

Content of the idea lies in simple impression(s) from which it comes
Ideas are Weak

“All ideas, especially abstract ones, are naturally faint and obscure: The mind has but a slender hold of them: They are apt to be confounded with other resembling ideas; and when we have often employed any term, though without a distinct meaning, we are apt to imagine it has a determinate idea, annexed to it.”
Impressions are Strong

“On the contrary, all impressions, that is, all sensations, either outward or inward, are strong and vivid: The limits between them are more exactly determined: Nor is it easy to fall into any error or mistake in regard to them.”
Hume’s Method

“When we entertain, therefore, any suspicion, that a philosophical term is employed without any meaning or idea (as is but too frequent), we need but enquire, from what impression is that supposed idea derived? And if it be impossible to assign any, this will serve to confirm our suspicion. By bringing ideas into so clear a light, we may reasonably hope to remove all dispute, which may arise, concerning their nature and reality.”
Rationalism? Empiricism?

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## Judgment Rationalism

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# Judgment Empiricism

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Kinds of Knowledge

1. Analytic *a priori*:
   - Logic
   - Definitions
   - Mathematics

2. Synthetic *a posteriori:
   - Natural science
Test for Nonsense

Hume: “When we run over libraries, persuaded of these principles, what havoc must we make? If we take in our hand any volume; of divinity or school metaphysics, for instance; let us ask, Does it contain any abstract reasoning concerning quantity or number? No. Does it contain any experimental reasoning concerning matter of fact and existence? No. Commit it then to the flames: For it can contain nothing but sophistry and illusion.”
Laughter Is the Language of the Soul
Hume's Argument vs. Self

Source of idea of self?

We do not find it in experience

All identity through change is imposed by us, not there in the world
Bundle Theory of the Self

“I may venture to affirm of the rest of mankind, that they are nothing but a bundle or collection of different perceptions, which succeed each other with an inconceivable rapidity, and are in a perpetual flux and movement. . . .”
No Experience of Self

“For my part, when I enter most intimately into what I call myself, I always stumble on some particular perception or other, of heat or cold, light or shade, love or hatred, pain or pleasure. I never can catch myself at any time without a perception, and never can observe any thing but the perception.”
No Experience of Self

“. . . nor have we any idea of self, after the manner it is here explain'd. For from what impression cou'd this idea be deriv'd?”

Note the assumption, central to Hume’s empiricism: ideas come from impressions (sensations, perceptions)
Variation

“. . . If any impression gives rise to the idea of self, that impression must continue invariably the same, thro' the whole course of our lives; since self is suppos'd to exist after that manner. But there is no impression constant and invariable. . . . and consequently there is no such idea.”
Nothing but Perceptions

They are the successive perceptions only, that constitute the mind; nor have we the most distant notion of the place, where these scenes are represented, or of the materials, of which it is compos'd.”
Fictitious Identity

“The identity, which we ascribe to the mind of man, is only a fictitious one. . . .”
Imposed Identity

Mental states link to other mental states: memory, intention, desire, similarities

We construct the idea of self

Self is not a unified thing—best compared to a *commonwealth*

Questions about identity aren’t about the world, but about language
Arguments for Rationalism

Universality

All experience is particular

Particular $\rightarrow$ universal

Necessity

All experience is contingent

Contingent $\rightarrow$ necessary
Universality

We move from particular to universal in *induction*

Instances —> generalization

What justifies this move?

It doesn’t follow; not logic

Rationalist: innate idea or principle

Hume: nothing
Inductive Inferences

All observed ravens have been black; so, all ravens are black

When I’ve eaten bread, I’ve found it nourishing; so, bread is nourishing

When the sun sets, it rises the next morning; so, the sun always rises
Scandal of Induction

Justification for inductive reasoning is not *a priori*

Not necessary; the next raven might be white

Justification is not *a posteriori*

That would be an appeal to experience

But that’s just what’s at issue!
Hume’s Circle

“We have said, that all arguments concerning existence are founded on the relation of cause and effect; that our knowledge of that relation is derived entirely from experience; and that all our experimental conclusions proceed upon the supposition, that the future will be conformable to the past.”
“To endeavor, therefore, the proof of this last supposition by probable arguments, or arguments regarding existence, must be evidently going in a circle, and taking that for granted, which is the very point in question.”

Why think the future will resemble the past?

“Well—it has up to now!”
“... after the constant conjunction of two objects, heat and flame, for instance, weight and solidity, we are determined by custom alone to expect the one from the appearance of the other. This hypothesis seems even the only one, which explains the difficulty, why we draw, from a thousand instances, an inference, which we are not able to draw from one instance, that is, in no respect, different from them. Reason is incapable of any such variation.”
Hume’s Tangent

“The conclusions, which it draws from considering one circle, are the same which it would form upon surveying all the circles in the universe. But no man, having seen only one body move after being impelled by another, could infer, that every other body will move after a like impulse. All inferences from experience, therefore, are effects of custom, not of reasoning.”
Two inductive arguments

This flame is hot
So, all flames are hot  ???

Unacceptable

This flame is hot
That flame is hot
That one is too!

...  
So, all flames are hot

Acceptable
Homer and the Stairs
Hume’s Skeptical Solution

There is no rational justification for inductive inference

Based on habit or custom, not reason
Necessity

We make causal inferences:

Cause $\rightarrow$ effect

Effect $\rightarrow$ cause

What justifies them?

Not \textit{a priori}: We can imagine it otherwise

Not \textit{a posteriori}: We don’t experience the causal link
“When we look about us towards external objects, and consider the operation of causes, we are never able, in a single instance, to discover any power or necessary connexion; any quality, which binds the effect to the cause, and renders the one an infallible consequence of the other.”
“We only find, that the one does actually, in fact, follow the other. The impulse of one billiard-ball is attended with motion in the second. This is the whole that appears to the outward senses. . . .”
Necessity

“So that, upon the whole, there appears not, throughout all nature, any one instance of connexion which is conceivable by us. All events seem entirely loose and separate. One event follows another; but we never can observe any tie between them. They seem conjoined, but never connected.”
Don't give me that "constant conjunction doesn't imply causal connection" hokum - it's yours!
• From one instance, we can infer nothing
• From repeated instances, we infer causal link
• But nothing in the world changes
• What does? Our feeling of expectation
Origin of Idea of Causation

Constant conjunction of events —> 
Feeling of expectation (internal impression) —> 
Ideas of causation and necessity
The Source Within

• Necessity and causation aren’t in the world
• These ideas come from something in us
• “Necessity . . . Exists in the mind, not in objects.”
• We project regularity onto the world
Projection

• “Tis a common observation, that the mind has a great propensity to spread itself on external objects, and to conjoin with them any internal impressions, which they occasion, and which always make their appearance at the same time that these objects discover themselves to the senses.”
Projection

- Empiricism: source of all ideas is experience
- We can’t find sources for certain ideas in experience of the world
- Examples: self, identity, morality, universality, necessity
- Source is an internal impression
- We project these things onto the world
Hume’s Ethics

- Morals have an influence on actions and affections
- Reason alone can have no such influence
- So, morality is not a conclusion of reason
- It consists of no matter of fact
David Hume

• In every system of morality I have met with I have noticed that the author proceeds for some time reasoning in the ordinary way to establish the existence of a God, or making points about human affairs, and then he suddenly surprises me by moving from propositions with the usual copula ‘is’ (or ‘is not’) to ones that are connected by ‘ought’ (or ‘ought not’).
• This seems like a very small change, but it is highly important. For as this ‘ought’ (or ‘ought not’) expresses some new relation or affirmation, it needs to be pointed out and explained; and a reason should be given for how this new relation can be—inconceivably!—a deduction from others that are entirely different from it.
Is —> Ought

- Moral “reasoning” goes from is and is not to ought and ought not
- How can we go from is to ought?
- Reason supplies no connection
Is  =>  Ought?

• Phase 1, Description: ... is ....
• Phase 2: ????????????????????????
• Phase 3, Normativity: ... ought ....
Is $\Rightarrow$ Ought?

- Why is cruelty wrong?
- Why is generosity good?
- No fact of the matter to be found in them
Feelings

• “’tis the object of feeling, not of reason. It lies in yourself, not in the object.”

• “An action or sentiment, or character is virtuous or vicious; why? Because its view causes a pleasure or uneasiness of a particular kind.”
Is => Ought?

- Sentiment or feeling takes us from is to ought

- Phase 1, Description: ... is ....

- Phase 2: Feelings: That arouses a feeling of approbation or disapprobation in me....

- Phase 3, Normativity: ... ought ....
Slave of the passions

- “Reason is, and ought to be, the slave of the passions.”
- Moral sense: capacity for the feelings that constitute the basis for our moral judgments