

Oxford Lectures on Hume's *Treatise* Book 1, 2010

Hume's *Treatise*, Book 1



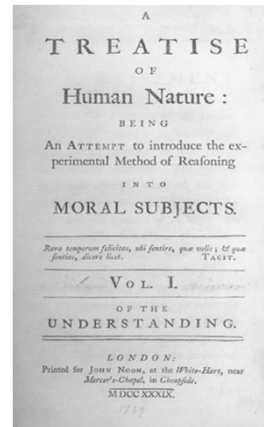
1. Introduction,
Hume's Theory of Ideas,
and the Faculties

Peter Millican
Hertford College, Oxford

1

1(a)

Overview of the *Treatise*



2

A Treatise of Human Nature

- Book 1 "Of the Understanding" and Book 2 "Of the Passions" published January 1739.
- Book 3 "Of Morals" published November 1740, together with an "Appendix" in which Hume gives corrections to Book 1 (and confesses failure over personal identity).
- Hume's first and most ambitious work, presenting a synthesis of epistemology, metaphysics, psychology and morals.

3

3

Treatise Book 1

- Follows Locke's *Essay* by starting with the origin of ideas – a pervasive theme.
- Part 1 ends with an account of general ideas (like Berkeley's account, this denies what he and Hume take to be Lockean "abstraction").
- Part 2, "Of the ideas of space and time" denies infinite divisibility, inferring from the nature of our ideas to the nature of space and time themselves. This part is more metaphysical than most of the rest of the *Treatise*.

4

4

- Part 3, by far the longest part, is mainly devoted to causation and causal inference.
 - Part 3 Section 1 presents an important distinction between types of relations (cf. Part 1 Section 5). Some of these can yield "knowledge" (i.e. certainty, capable of *demonstration*), whereas others cannot.
- The main discussion of Part 3 (from Section 2 to 14) investigates the nature of the *idea* of cause and effect.
 - On the way it discusses induction (or "probable reasoning") and rational judgement.

5

5

- Part 4 discusses various sceptical topics:
 - Section 1: "Scepticism with regard to reason"
 - Section 2: "Scepticism with regard to the senses" (i.e. the nature of our ideas and beliefs about the external world)
 - Section 3: "Of the ancient philosophy"
 - Section 4: "Of the modern philosophy" (i.e. primary and secondary qualities etc.)
 - Section 5: "Of the immateriality of the soul" (argues that matter could cause thought)
 - Section 6: "Of personal identity"
 - Section 7: "Conclusion of this book"

6

6

Oxford Lectures on Hume's *Treatise* Book 1, 2010

Understanding *Treatise* Book 1

- Some of the *Treatise* is rather confusing:
 - 1.4.2 and 1.4.6 seem to mix discussion of the origin and nature of our ideas, bringing in associationist psychological explanations of how our minds are misled, which seem to have deeply sceptical metaphysical implications.
 - In 1.4.2 and 1.4.7, Hume's thought seems dynamic, moving from confident to sceptically confused (and, at least in 1.4.7, back again).
 - The despairing "Appendix" of 1740 leaves us unsure what to make of 1.4.6: what is left?

7

7

The Hume of the *Treatise*?

- Associationist and Destructive Sceptic?
 - The well-known Hume of many textbooks is obsessive about ideas, impressions, and associationist psychology.
 - Major "topics" are the origin of ideas, causation, the external world, and personal identity.
 - Induction is reduced to association of ideas and thus shown to be irrational.
 - Account of the ideas of external objects and personal identity seems to indicate that both are completely incoherent.

8

8

A Constructive Purpose

- But there are plenty of indications that Hume's aims are not primarily destructive:
 - The subtitle of the *Treatise* declares it to be "an attempt to introduce the experimental method of reasoning into moral subjects" (i.e. human science).
 - Book 2 builds a systematic account of the passions, using associationist psychology.
 - Book 3 develops a systematic account of morality and its foundation in human nature.
- All of this evinces a firm commitment to inductive science, as do his *Essays* and other works!

9

9

Hume's Central Concerns?

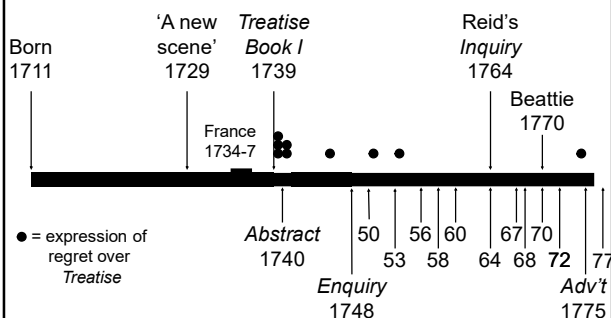
- Hume's *Enquiry concerning Human Understanding* (1748) gives a more consistent picture:
 - Focuses on induction (and probability): its basis, method and application.
 - Can be seen as a manifesto for inductive science.
 - Attacks "superstition" (i.e. religion), but avoids self-destructive scepticism.
 - Hume preferred the *Enquiry* (details in OWC edition pp. 2, 163-4, 167-8).
 - See www.davidhume.org/millican.htm



10

10

A Timeline of Hume's Life



11

11

Hume's 'Advertisement'

'... several writers, who have honoured the Author's Philosophy with answers, have taken care to direct all their batteries against that juvenile work [the *Treatise*]. ... Henceforth, the Author desires, that the following Pieces [EHU, DOP, EPM, NHR] may alone be regarded as containing his philosophical sentiments and principles.'

Enquiry, 'Advertisement', 1775

12

12

Oxford Lectures on Hume's *Treatise* Book 1, 2010

The Importance of the *Treatise*

- The *Enquiry* is more polished, and more consistently excellent, but the *Treatise* ...
 - is more ambitious, covering far more ground;
 - gives more detail of the underlying theory, and is more comprehensively systematic;
 - raises, and contributes to the discussion of, a host of fascinating philosophical problems;
 - is less carefully edited: more unresolved loose ends, which are often very revealing;
 - shows a philosophical genius at work.

13

13

Scepticism, Naturalism, Irreligion?

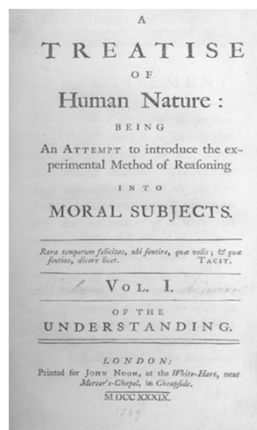
- Scholars debate, seemingly endlessly, regarding whether Hume is “really” a sceptic or a naturalist, and whether these themes can be reconciled.
- Paul Russell has recently argued that *irreligion* is the main unifying theme.
- Rather than getting bogged down in such debates, we are going to examine the text in fairly close detail ...

14

14

1(b)

The Theory of Ideas



15

What is an “Idea”?

- John Locke's *Essay concerning Human Understanding* (1690) defines an *idea* as “whatsoever is the object of the understanding when a man thinks” (I i 8).
- This is supposed to include all types of “thinking”, including perception and feeling as well as contemplation. So our *ideas* include thoughts and sensations, and also “internal” ideas such as feelings.

16

16

Ideas and Impressions

- Hume thinks Locke's usage is too broad, so he adopts different terminology:
 - An *impression* is a *sensation* (e.g. from seeing a blue sky or smelling a flower) or a *feeling* (e.g. being angry, or feeling pain);
 - An *idea* is a *thought* (e.g. about the sky, or about a pain, or about the existence of God);
 - A *perception* is either an *impression* or an *idea*. (So Hume uses the word *perception* to cover everything that Locke calls an *idea*.)

17

17

Sensation and Reflection

- “Impressions [are of] two kinds, those of *sensation*, and those of *reflection*.” (T 1.1.2.1)
- Some impressions come directly from sensation (e.g. colours, smells, pains).
 - Other impressions arise only from things that we *think* or *reflect* about (e.g. thinking about pain can make us feel fear; thinking about someone else's good luck can make us envious). These are *impressions of reflection*, which at T 1.1.6.1 Hume says are either *passions* (e.g. the desire for something) or *emotions* (e.g. happiness).

18

18

Oxford Lectures on Hume's *Treatise* Book 1, 2010

Force and Vivacity

- Hume says that impressions have more *force, vivacity, or liveliness* than ideas:

"All the perceptions of the human mind resolve themselves into two distinct kinds, which I shall call IMPRESSIONS and IDEAS. The difference betwixt these consists in the force and liveliness, with which they strike upon the soul, and make their way into our thought or consciousness. Those ... which enter with most force and violence, we may name *impressions* ..." (T 1.1.1.1).

19

19

An Inconsistency?

- But Hume hints that sometimes a thought can in fact be as lively as a sensation:

"in sleep, in a fever, in madness, or in any very violent emotions of soul, our ideas may approach to our impressions: [And] it sometimes happens, that our impressions are so faint and low, that we cannot distinguish them from our ideas." (T 1.1.1.1)

- Compare, for example, dreaming of an attack of spiders, with watching paint dry!

20

20

Feeling and Thinking

- Hume's distinction is most easily understood as that between *feeling* and *thinking*:

"I believe it will not be very necessary to employ many words in explaining this distinction. Every one of himself will readily perceive the difference betwixt feeling and thinking." (T 1.1.1.1)

- So then impressions (and ideas) are not *defined* as being our more (and less) vivacious perceptions.

21

21

The "Liberty of the Imagination"

- Some of our ideas can be divided up imaginatively into components:

An apple has a particular shape, a colour, a taste, a smell ... Its shape is also complex ...

- We can *put ideas together* in new ways:
gold + mountain = golden mountain;
horse + horn = unicorn;
banana + taste of apple = banana-apple.
- See T 1.1.3.4 on this "second principle".

22

22

Simple and Complex Ideas

- At *Treatise* 1.1.1.2, Hume divides all ideas and impressions into *simple* and *complex*:

"Simple perceptions or impressions and ideas are such as admit of no distinction nor separation. The complex are the contrary to these, and may be distinguished into parts."

- In the *Enquiry*, Hume only hints at this distinction (at 2.6 and 7.4) – perhaps he is doubtful whether every idea is absolutely simple or complex?

23

23

The Origin of Ideas

- Book I of John Locke's *Essay concerning Human Understanding* (1690) argues against "innate" ideas and principles.
- Book II then aims to explain how all our various ideas can arise from experience.
- So Locke is an *empiricist* about ideas.
- Descartes and other *rationalists* claimed that we have innate ideas (e.g. of God, or of extension), yielding a priori knowledge.

24

24

Oxford Lectures on Hume's *Treatise* Book 1, 2010

The Copy Principle

- Hume's version of Locke's empiricism is expressed in what is commonly known as his Copy Principle:

"that all our simple ideas in their first appearance are deriv'd from simple impressions, which are correspondent to them, and which they exactly represent." (T 1.1.1.7)

- At *Enquiry* 2.9 n. 1, Hume suggests that this is really the essence of Locke's empiricist doctrine that there are no innate ideas.

25

25

The Principle as a Weapon

- In the *Enquiry*, the Copy Principle is presented as a weapon against bogus ideas:

"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." (E 2.9)

- In practice, Hume uses it to *clarify* ideas.

26

26

Hume's First Argument for the Copy Principle

- There seem to be no counterexamples:

"After the most accurate examination, of which I am capable, I venture to affirm, that the rule here holds without any exception, and that every simple idea has a simple impression, which resembles it; and every simple impression a correspondent idea." (T 1.1.1.5)

- And the impressions come before the ideas (T 1.1.1.8), so they must cause the ideas.

27

27

Hume's Second Argument for the Copy Principle

"wherever by any accident the faculties, which give rise to any impressions, are obstructed in their operations, as when one is born blind or deaf; not only the impressions are lost, but also their correspondent ideas; ... likewise where they have never been put in action to produce a particular impression [such as] the taste of a pine-apple ..." (T 1.1.1.9)

28

28

Problems with Hume's Arguments

- Hume's first argument doesn't seem to fit very well with his use of the Copy Principle against opponents:

- Suppose someone claims to have an idea which *doesn't* derive from a corresponding impression; he will deny Hume's generalisation and hence his argument for the Principle. Bennett (2002, pp. 100-101) presses this sort of objection.
- Garrett (1997, pp. 46-8) mounts a defence on Hume's behalf.

29

29

- Hume's second argument also has problems. It seems very plausible that a blind man can have no idea of *red*, for example. But *how can Hume know that this is the case?* Might it not be that the man has private mental experiences that involve the colour red?

- Some authors (e.g. Bennett, Dicker) argue that Hume's point is best understood as being not about private mental experience, but about *public meaningfulness*. The blind man *cannot use the word "red" correctly*, and this is the real point of Hume's position.

30

30

Oxford Lectures on Hume's *Treatise* Book 1, 2010

The Missing Shade of Blue

- Immediately after presenting his arguments for the Copy Principle, Hume himself gives a counter-example to them, the famous “missing shade of blue” (T 1.1.1.10).
- Hume seems to think that this example isn't a serious problem for his position, maybe because he sees that even in this case, the “new” idea is being constructed from materials that are provided by impressions?

31

31

The Theory of Ideas

- The central assumption of the Theory of Ideas is that thinking consists in having “ideas” (in Locke's sense) or “perceptions” (in Hume's sense) before the mind, and that different sorts of thinking are to be distinguished in terms of the different sorts of perceptions which they involve.
- This approach makes the mind very passive – its only activity seems to be to *perceive* impressions and ideas ...

32

32

The Mental Stage

- The mind is seen as like a stage, on which “perceptions” are the actors:
 - *seeing* a tree involves having an *impression* of a tree “in front of the mind”;
 - *thinking* of a tree involves having an *idea* of a tree in front of the mind;
 - *feeling* a pain involves having an *impression* of a pain;
 - *thinking* about a pain involves having an *idea* of a pain.

33

33

The Copy Principle and Imagism

- If ideas are copies of impressions, then Hume must take our ideas to be something like mental images (not necessarily visual).
- Together with the theory of ideas, this implies that (at least most) thinking consists in the having of mental images.
- Note in particular this impoverished view of *reflection*, which ought to include both feelings and desires, but also (which Hume neglects) awareness of our mental activity.

34

34

Hume on the Association of Ideas

“all simple ideas may be separated by the imagination, and may be united again in what form it pleases ... [yet there is] some bond of union among them, some associating quality, by which one idea naturally introduces another” (T 1.1.4.1)

- Hume calls this “a gentle force, which commonly prevails”, and which explains why languages “so nearly correspond to each other” in the complex ideas that are represented within their vocabulary.

35

35

Three Principles of Association

- Ideas may be associated in three ways:
 - “The qualities, from which this association arises ... are three, viz. RESEMBLANCE, CONTIGUITY in time or place, and CAUSE and EFFECT.” (T 1.1.4.2)
- Association is “a kind of ATTRACTION, which in the mental world” has remarkable effects like gravity in the physical world (T 1.1.4.6).
- The complex ideas that arise from such association “may be divided into RELATIONS, MODES, and SUBSTANCES” (T 1.1.4.7).

36

36

Oxford Lectures on Hume's *Treatise* Book 1, 2010

Locke on the Association of Ideas

- Hume will appeal to the association of ideas with great enthusiasm, but Locke's attitude to it had been far less positive:

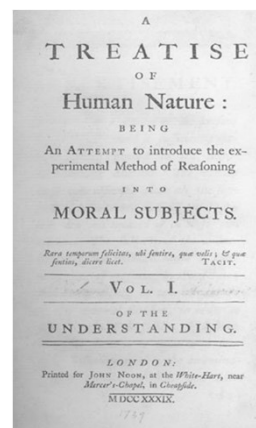
"[3] this sort of Madness ... [4] this ... Weakness to which all Men are ... liable, ... a Taint which ... universally infects Mankind ... [5] ... there is [a] Connexion of *Ideas* wholly owing to Chance or Custom; *Ideas* that in themselves are not at all of kin, come to be so united in some Mens Minds that 'tis very hard to separate them ..." (*Essay II* xxxiii 3-5)

37

37

1(c)

Hume's Faculty Psychology



38

Humean Faculties

- At *T* 1.1.2, Hume distinguishes between impressions of *sensation* and *reflection*.
- At *T* 1.1.3, he distinguishes between ideas of the *memory* and *imagination*.
- Talk of mental faculties (*reason, senses, imagination* etc.) will continue to play a major role in the *Treatise*. Indeed some of Hume's most important and famous results are expressed in these terms ...

39

39

Faculties, Induction, and Body

- ... the next question is, whether experience produces the idea by means of the understanding or imagination; whether we are determined by reason to make the transition, or by ... association ... of perceptions. (*T* 1.3.6.4)
- The subject, then, of our present enquiry, is concerning the *causes* which induce us to believe in the existence of body: ... we ... shall consider, whether it be the *senses, reason, or the imagination*, that produces the opinion of a *continu'd* or of a *distinct* existence. (*T* 1.4.2.2)

40

40

Faculties and Morality

- ... we need only consider, whether it be possible, from reason alone, to distinguish betwixt moral good and evil, or whether there must concur some other principles to enable us to make that distinction. (*T* 3.1.1.3-4)
- There has been a controversy started of late ... concerning the general foundation of MORALS; whether they be derived from reason, or from SENTIMENT ... (*M* 1.3)

41

41

Faculties in the *Treatise* (1)

- *The (external) Senses*
Present impressions to the mind (thus creating ideas which copy them).
- *Reflection*
An *internal sense*, by which we inwardly sense our own mental state.
- *Memory*
Replays ideas vivaciously, reflecting their original order.

42

42

Oxford Lectures on Hume's *Treatise* Book 1, 2010

Faculties in the *Treatise* (2)

- *Imagination (or the Fancy)*
Replays ideas less vivaciously, with freedom to transpose and mix them.
- *Reason (or the Understanding)*
The overall cognitive faculty: discovers and judges truth and falsehood.
- *Will*
The conative faculty: forms intentions in response to desires and passions.

43

43

Hume's on Reason as Cognition

- 'Reason is the discovery of truth or falsehood.' (*T* 3.1.1.9)
- 'That Faculty, by which we discern Truth and Falshood ... the Understanding' (*E* 1.14, note in 1748/1750 editions)
- '... reason, in a strict sense, as meaning the judgment of truth and falsehood ...' (*DOP* 5.1)
- See also *T* 2.3.3.3, 2.3.3.5-6, 2.3.3.8, 2.3.10.6, 3.1.1.4, 3.1.1.19 n. 69, 3.1.1.25-27, 3.2.2.20, *M* 1.7, *M App* 1.6, 1.21.

44

44

Hume on Reason and Understanding

- Hume implicitly identifies Reason with 'the understanding' in many places, e.g.:
'When the mind [makes an inductive inference] it is not determin'd by *reason*, but by certain principles, which associate together the ideas of these objects, and unite them in *the imagination*. Had ideas no more union in *the fancy* than objects seem to have to *the understanding*, ...' (*T* 1.3.6.12)
– See also *T* 1.3.6.4, 1.4.1.1, 1.4.2.46, 1.4.2.57, 1.4.7.7, and compare 2.2.7.6 n. with 1.3.9.19 n.

45

45

Distinguishing Between Faculties

- imagination/reason (*T* 1.4.2.2); imagination/memory (*T* 1.3.5); imagination/the senses (*T* 1.4.2.2); imagination/passions (*T* 2.2.2.16).
- reason/memory (*T* 3.3.4.13); reason/the senses (*T* 1.4.2.2); reason/the will (*T* 2.3.3.4).
- memory/the senses (*T* 1.1.2.1).
- Hume *never* distinguishes between "reason" and "the understanding", or between either of these and "the judgment". And he insists that our "intellectual faculty" is undivided (*T* 1.3.7.5 n.20).

46

46

Locke's Scepticism about Faculties

- Locke ridicules the language of faculties as a source of philosophical error, and declares himself inclined to forego it completely were it not that faculty words are so much in fashion that 'It looks like too much affectation wholly to lay them by' (*Essay* II xxi 17-20).
- When we refer to man's 'understanding', all we can properly mean is that man has a power to understand.
- It is a serious mistake to speak of our faculties 'as so many distinct Agents'.
- 'the understanding, or reason, whichever your lordship pleases to call it ...' (*First Letter to Stillingfleet*, III 70)

47

47

Hutcheson on the Faculties

'Writers on these Subjects should remember the common Division of the Faculties of the Soul. That there is 1. Reason presenting the natures and relations of things, antecedently to any Act of Will or Desire: 2. The Will, or *Appetitus Rationalis*, or the disposition of Soul to pursue what is presented as good, and to shun Evil. ... Below these [the Antients] place two other powers dependent on the Body, the *Sensus*, and the *Appetitus Sensitivus*, in which they place the particular Passions: the former answers to the Understanding, and the latter to the Will.'

Illustrations upon the Moral Sense (1742), SB §450

48

48

Oxford Lectures on Hume's *Treatise* Book 1, 2010

Hume's *Treatise*, Book 1

2. Hume's Theory of Relations



Peter Millican
Hertford College, Oxford

49

Locke on the Types of Relation (1)

- Locke (II xxv-xxviii) emphasises:
 - 'Cause and Effect' (II xxvi 1-2)
 - 'Relations of Time' (II xxvi 3-4)
 - 'Relations of Place and Extension' (II xxvi 5)
 - 'Identity and Diversity' (II xxvii)
 - 'Proportional Relations' (II xxviii 1)
- The last of these categories includes both what Hume calls 'degrees in quality' and 'proportions in quantity or number'.

50

50

Locke on the Types of Relation (2)

- Locke then says there are 'infinite others' of relations (II xxviii 1), notably:
 - '*Natural Relations*' such as '*Father and Son, Brothers ... Country-men*' (II xxviii 2)
 - '*Instituted, or Voluntary*' relations such as '*General ..., Citizen, ... Patron and Client, ... Constable, or Dictator*' (II xxviii 3)
 - Various moral relations (II xxviii 4-16)
- Note that Locke does not mean the same by 'natural relation' as Hume.

51

51

Locke to Hume on Relations (1)

- Locke's 'diversity' apparently becomes Hume's 'contrareity'.
- Hume's 'resemblance' – which he says enters into all relations – fulfils a similar role to Locke's 'agreement' (II xxviii 19).
- Locke doesn't treat 'resemblance' as a single type, but recognises myriad forms of resemblance (e.g. '*Country-men, i.e. those who were born in the same Country*').

52

52

Locke to Hume on Relations (2)

- Hume seems deliberately to subsume Locke's 'natural', 'instituted' and moral relations under cause and effect:
 - ... all the relations of blood depend upon cause and effect ... (T 1.1.4.3)
 - ... the relation of cause and effect ... we may observe to be the source of all the relations of interest and duty, by which men influence each other in society, and are plac'd in the ties of government and subordination. (T 1.1.4.5)

53

53

Locke and Hume on Relations

<i>[Locke doesn't speak of 'agreement' as a relation]</i>	Resemblance <i>[a relation, but also involved in all relations]</i>
Cause and effect	Cause and effect
Natural, Instituted, Moral	
Relations of time	Space and time
Relations of place	
Identity	Identity
Diversity	Contrariety
Proportional relations	Proportions in quantity
	Degrees in quality

54

54

Oxford Lectures on Hume's *Treatise* Book 1, 2010

Hume's Dichotomy

- Hume divides his seven types of relation into two groups (*T* 1.3.1.1):
 - The Four “Constant” Relations
Those relations that ‘depend entirely on the ideas, which we compare together’ (i.e. resemblance, contrariety, degrees in quality, proportions in quantity or number);
 - The Three “Inconstant” Relations
Those relations that ‘may be chang'd without any change in the ideas’ (i.e. identity, relations of time and place, cause and effect).

55

55

Hume's Dichotomy – the motive

- Hume gives his taxonomy of relations in order to facilitate his arguments:
 - That the Causal Maxim cannot be intuitively certain (*T* 1.3.3.2);
 - That relations of virtue and vice are not demonstrable (*T* 3.1.1.19).
- He seems to argue from the principle:
 - Any proposition that is intuitively or demonstratively certain can contain only constant relations.

56

56

The Failure of the Dichotomy

- Sadly, this is nonsense. There are lots of ‘analytic’ propositions involving identity, relations of time and place, or causation:
 - If A=B and B=C, then A=C.
 - Anything that lies inside a small building lies inside a building.
 - Every mother is a parent.
 - Anyone whose paternal grandparents have two sons, has an uncle.

57

57

The Source of Hume's Mistake?

- I suggest that Hume confused, when considering propositions about objects:
 - Supervenience: *what is implied by the properties of the objects themselves* (independently of their relative situation etc.)
 - Analyticity: *what is implied by our ideas of the objects themselves* (independently of ideas about their situation etc.)(See Bennett 1971: 250-6 and 2001: 242-4 for the best published discussions of the issue)

58

58

Hume's Conceivability Principle

- Hume mostly relies not so much on his Dichotomy as on the *Conceivability Principle*:
 - 'Tis an establish'd maxim in metaphysics, *That whatever the mind clearly conceives includes the idea of possible existence*, or, in other words, *that nothing we imagine is absolutely impossible*. (*T* 1.2.2.8)
 - To form a clear idea of any thing, is an undeniable argument for its possibility, and is alone a refutation of any pretended demonstration against it. (*T* 1.3.6.5)
 - whatever we *conceive* is possible, at least in a metaphysical sense: but wherever a demonstration takes place, the contrary is impossible, and implies a contradiction. (*A* 11, cf. *E* 12.28)

59

59

Hume's Fork

- In the *Enquiry* (4.1-2), Hume replaces his Dichotomy with the distinction between ‘relations of ideas’ and ‘matters of fact’.
 - Relations of ideas can be known *a priori* by inspecting ideas; hence their falsehood is inconceivable and they are necessarily true.
 - Hume's ‘reasoning concerning matter of fact’ (factual inference for short) is *ampliative* reasoning, that draws conclusions beyond what can be inferred by relations of ideas.

60

60

Oxford Lectures on Hume's *Treatise* Book 1, 2010

Hume's *Treatise*, Book 1



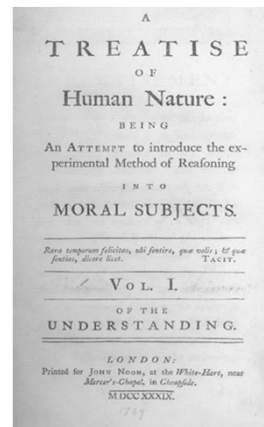
3. *Abstract ideas, Space and Time*

Peter Millican
Hertford College, Oxford

61

3(a)

Hume's theory of general (or abstract) ideas



62

Empiricism and Nominalism

- An empiricist account of the origin of ideas will naturally reject any non-sensory, purely intellectual grasp of abstract essences.
- Sensory experience is of particular things, hence empiricists tend towards *nominalism*, that "all things that exist are only particulars" (Locke, *Essay* III iii 6, cf. *Treatise* 1.1.7.6).
- How, then, do "*general Words come to be made*"? Locke says they "become general, by being made the signs of general *Ideas*".

63

63

Locke on General Ideas

"*Ideas* become general, by separating from them the circumstances of Time, and Place, and any other *Ideas*, that may determine them to this or that particular Existence. By this way of abstraction they are made capable of representing more Individuals than one; each of which, having in it a conformity to that abstract *Idea*, is (as we call it) of that sort." (Essay III iii 6)

64

64

Locke's General Idea of a Person

"the *Ideas* of the Persons Children converse with ... are like the Persons themselves, only particular. ... The Names they first give to them, are confined to these Individuals ... *Nurse* and *Mamma* (etc.)... Afterwards, ... [they] observe, that there are a great many other Things in the World, that ... resemble their Father and Mother ... they frame an *Idea*, which they find those many Particulars do partake in; and to that they give ... the name *Man* ... Wherein they make nothing new, but only leave out of the complex *Idea* they had of *Peter* and *James*, *Mary* and *Jane*, that which is peculiar to each, and retain only what is common to them all." (Essay III iii 7)

65

65

The Notorious Triangle

"For abstract *Ideas* are not so obvious or easie to Children, or the yet unexercised Mind, as particular ones. ... For example, Does it not require some pains and skill to form the *general Idea* of a *Triangle*, (which is yet none of the most abstract, comprehensive, and difficult,) for it must be neither Oblique, nor Rectangle, neither Equilateral, Equicrural, nor Scalenon; but all and none of these at once. In effect, it is something imperfect, that cannot exist ..." (Essay IV vii 9)

66

66

Oxford Lectures on Hume's *Treatise* Book 1, 2010

Berkeley's Attack

"If any man has the faculty of framing in his mind such an idea of a triangle as is here described, it is in vain to pretend to dispute him out of it, nor would I go about it. All I desire is, that the reader would fully and certainly inform himself whether he has such an idea or no. ... What more easy than for any one to look a little into his own thoughts, and there try whether he has, or can attain to have, an idea that shall correspond with the description that is here given of the general idea of a triangle, which is, *neither oblique, nor rectangle, equilateral, equicrural, nor scalenon, but all and none of these at once?*" (*Principles*, Introduction 13)

67

67

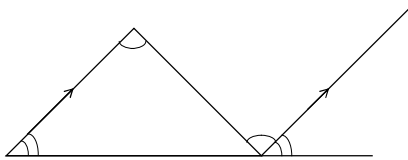
Berkeley's Rival Account

"a word becomes general by being made the sign, not of an abstract general idea but, of several particular ideas, any one of which it indifferently suggests to the mind. For example, when it is said *the change of motion is proportional to the impressed force ...*; these propositions are to be understood of motion ... in general, and nevertheless it will not follow that they suggest to my thoughts an idea of motion without a body moved, or any determinate direction and velocity, ... It is only implied that whatever motion I consider, whether it be swift or slow, perpendicular, horizontal, or oblique, or in whatever object, the axiom concerning it holds equally true." (*Principles*, Introduction 11)

68

68

"though the idea I have in view whilst I make the demonstration, be, for instance, that of an isosceles rectangular triangle, whose sides are of a determinate length, I may nevertheless be certain it extends to all other rectilinear triangles, of what sort or bigness soever. And that, because neither the right angle, nor the equality, nor determinate length of the sides, are at all concerned in the demonstration." (*Principles*, Introduction 16)



69

69

Is Berkeley Fair to Locke?

- Berkeley interprets Locke as believing in special, intrinsically general, abstract ideas (like indeterminate images). But Locke says:

"*I*deas are general, when they are set up, as the Representatives of many particular Things: but universality belongs not to things themselves, which are all of them particular in their Existence, even those ... *I*deas, which in their signification, are general. ... For the signification they have, is nothing but a relation, that by the mind of Man is added to them." (*Essay* III iii 11)

70

70

Treatise 1.1.7: "Of abstract ideas"

- Hume credits Berkeley with "one of the ... most valuable discoveries that has been made ... in the Republic of Letters:"

"that all general ideas are nothing but particular ones, annex'd to a certain term, which gives them a more extensive signification, and makes them recal upon occasion other individuals, which are similar to them." (*T* 1.1.7.1)

- Hume puts more emphasis on the associated "certain term" than Berkeley did.

71

71

General Ideas and Custom

"When we have found a resemblance among several objects ... we apply the same name to all of them ... After we have acquir'd a custom of this kind, the hearing of that name revives the idea of one of these objects, and makes the imagination conceive it with all its particular circumstances and proportions. But as the same word is suppos'd to have been frequently apply'd to other individuals ... the word not being able to revive the idea of all these individuals, only ... revives that custom, which we have acquir'd by surveying them. They are not really ... present to the mind, but only in power ... we ... keep ourselves in a readiness to survey any of them" (*T* 1.1.7.7)

72

72

Oxford Lectures on Hume's *Treatise* Book 1, 2010

The Revival Set

"... after the mind has produc'd an individual idea, upon which we reason, the attendant custom, reviv'd by the general or abstract term, readily suggests any other individual, if by chance we form any reasoning, that agrees not with it." (T 1.1.7.8)

"some ideas are particular in their nature, but general in their representation. A particular idea becomes general by being annex'd to a general term ... which from a customary conjunction has a relation to many other particular ideas, and readily recalls them in the imagination." (T 1.1.7.10)

– Garrett calls this *the revival set* of associated ideas.

73

73

Refuting Abstract General Ideas

■ Hume sets out to argue (against Locke)

"that the mind cannot form any notion of quantity or quality without forming a precise notion of the degrees of each" (T 1.1.7.3)

■ He does so using three considerations:

– The Separability Principle (T 1.1.7.3)

– The Copy Principle: any sensory impression must have determinate qualities (T 1.1.7.4-5)

– The Conceivability Principle: no indeterminate object is possible in fact or thought (T 1.1.7.6).

74

74

The Separability Principle (SP)

■ Hume's statement of the Separability Principle seems to allude back to his "second principle, of the liberty of the imagination to transpose and change its ideas (from T 1.1.3.4):

"We have observ'd, that whatever objects are different are distinguishable, and that whatever objects are distinguishable are separable by the thought and imagination. And ... these propositions are equally true in the *inverse*, and that whatever objects are separable are also distinguishable, and that whatever objects are distinguishable are also different." (T 1.1.7.3)

75

75

The Argument for the Separability Principle

■ Hume's argument for the Separability Principle is extremely cursory:

"For how is it possible we can separate what is not distinguishable, or distinguish what is not different?" (T 1.1.7.3)

■ This makes the SP look trivially true, but in fact it seems to conceal potentially debatable assumptions about ideas, as sensory atoms that can be moved around like pixels in a computer image.

76

76

Separability and Abstraction

■ SP implies that thinking of an abstract line without a specific length is impossible:

"'tis evident at first sight, that the precise length of a line is not different nor distinguishable from the line itself, nor the precise degree of any quality from the quality" (T 1.1.7.3).

■ But if this is right, how is it that we can apparently distinguish "between figure and the body figur'd; motion and the body mov'd" (T 1.1.7.17)?

77

77

The Distinction of Reason

■ Hume appeals to his theory of general ideas: in a single object, we can see "many different resemblances and relations ..."

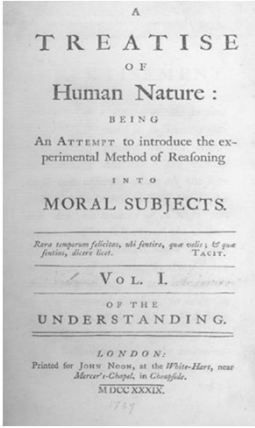
"Thus when a globe of white marble is presented, we receive only the impression of a white colour dispos'd in a certain form. ... But observing afterwards a globe of black marble and a cube of white, ... we find two separate resemblances, in what formerly seem'd, and really is, perfectly inseparable. ... we ... distinguish the figure from the colour by a *distinction of reason* ... view[ing] them in different aspects, according to the resemblances ..." (T 1.1.7.18)

78

78

Oxford Lectures on Hume's *Treatise* Book 1, 2010

3(b)
Space and Time



A
T R E A T I S E
O F
Human Nature :
B E I N G
AN ATTEMPT to introduce the ex-
perimental Method of Reasoning
I N T O
M O R A L S U B J E C T S .
*Rara temporum felicitas, ubi sentis, que nulli, et que
faciles, diu sint licet.*
V O L . I .
O F T H E
U N D E R S T A N D I N G .
L O N D O N :
Printed for JOHN NEWMAN, at the White-Hart, near
Alders'-Chapel, in Great-Britain.
M D C C X X X I X .

79

Treatise Book 1 Part 2

- Treatise 1.2 is often ignored in the Hume literature, and considered very dubious.
- In it he applies his theory of ideas to draw ambitious conclusions about the nature of our ideas of space and time, and hence the nature of space and time themselves.
- He starts by arguing that neither our ideas, nor – consequently – space and time themselves, can be infinitely divisible.

80


Treatise 1.2.1: “Of the infinite divisibility of our ideas of space and time”

- It is “evident from the plainest observation” “that the capacity of the mind is limited, and can never attain a full and adequate conception of infinity”.
- Hence “the *idea*, which we form of any finite quantity, is not infinitely divisible” (T 1.2.1.2).
- If we divide our ideas in imagination, we must eventually reach “a *minimum*” (T 1.2.1.3).
- The same goes for sensory impressions, as illustrated by the experiment in which we view an ink spot then gradually retreat from it until the point *just before* it becomes invisible. (T 1.2.1.4)

81

An Interesting Speculation

- Rolf George (in *Hume Studies*, 2006) suggests that Hume’s confidence in the Separability Principle might well have been shaken by Jurin’s *Essay Upon Distinct and Indistinct Vision* (1738).
- If we retreat until the red dot just disappears, the (thinner) red line will still be visible. So our visual field does not in fact appear to be made up of a grid of “pixels”.
- SP does not feature in the *Enquiry* of 1748, where Hume also seems far less committed to the simple/complex distinction.



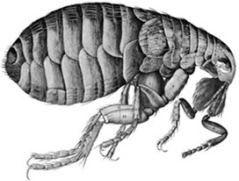
82

Conceiving of Tiny Things

- Because our minimal perceptions are atomic (without any parts),
“Nothing can be more minute, than some ideas, which we form in the fancy; and images, which appear to the senses; since these are ideas and images perfectly simple and indivisible. The only defect of our senses is, that they give us disproportion’d images of things, and represent as minute and uncompounded what is really great and compos’d of a vast number of parts.” (T 1.2.1.5)

83

“This however is certain, that we can form ideas, which shall be no greater than the smallest atom of the animal spirits of an insect a thousand times less than a mite: And we ought rather to conclude, that the difficulty lies in enlarging our conceptions so much as to form a just notion of a mite, or even of an insect a thousand times less than a mite. For in order to form a just notion of these animals, we must have a distinct idea representing every part of them ...” (T 1.2.1.5)



Hooke, *Micrographia*, 1665

84

Oxford Lectures on Hume's *Treatise* Book 1, 2010

Treatise 1.2.2: "Of the infinite divisibility of space and time"

- *Treatise* 1.2.2 starts with a bold statement:
"Wherever ideas are adequate representations of objects, the relations, contradictions and agreements of the ideas are all applicable to the objects; ... But our ideas are adequate representations of the most minute parts of extension; and thro' whatever divisions and sub-divisions we may suppose these parts to be arriv'd at, they can never become inferior to some ideas, which we form. The plain consequence is, that whatever *appears* impossible and contradictory upon the comparison of these ideas, must be *really* impossible and contradictory, without any farther excuse or evasion." (T 1.2.2.1)

85

85

From Inconceivability to Impossibility

- Hume appears to be arguing here from the *inconceivability* of certain relations of ideas to the *impossibility* of things in the world (this is the *converse* of the Conceivability Principle).
- In general this seems dubious: why should our powers of conception (with our limited stock of ideas derived from experience etc.) reach to everything that's possible in nature?
- But Hume restricts use of this Inconceivability Principle to where "our ideas are adequate".

86

86

The Adequacy of Our Ideas

- Since Hume thinks "our ideas are adequate representations of the most minute parts of extension", he argues that the impossibility of infinite division of our ideas implies the impossibility of infinite division of space:
"I first take the least idea I can form of a part of extension, and being certain that there is nothing more minute than this idea, I conclude, that whatever I discover by its means must be a real quality of extension. I then repeat this idea once, twice, thrice, &c. ..." (T 1.2.2.2)

87

87

The Impossibility of Infinite Divisibility

- Although each of our minimal ideas is indivisible and therefore not *extended*, when we place them adjacent to each other we get an extended pattern.
- Repeating this *in infinitum* would produce an infinite extension, so it follows that no finite extension can accommodate an infinite number of such minima:
"the idea of an infinite number of parts is ... the same idea with that of an infinite extension".

88

88

A Mathematical Objection

- Mathematically, Hume's argument seems dubious. Imagine dividing an extension in two and taking the first half, then dividing that in two and again taking the first half, and so on ...
- It seems that one could potentially go on forever, yielding an infinite number of *proportional* (rather than *aliquot* i.e. equal-sized) parts. In a footnote to T 1.2.2.2, Hume calls this objection "frivolous", insisting that even proportional parts "cannot be inferior to those minute parts we conceive".

89

89

Rebutting the Mathematicians

- Later in the section, Hume appeals to the Conceivability Principle to rebut the arguments of mathematicians in favour of infinite divisibility:
"Here then is an idea of extension, which consists of parts or inferior ideas, that are perfectly indivisible: Consequently this idea implies no contradiction: Consequently 'tis possible for extension really to exist conformable to it ..." (T 1.2.2.9)

90

90

Oxford Lectures on Hume's *Treatise* Book 1, 2010

The Actual Parts Metaphysic

- Hume's argument seems to beg the question, because if space is infinitely divisible, then our minimal ideas of it (which are indivisible) are *not* adequate.
- Tom Holden (2004) suggests that Hume is presupposing an "actual parts" metaphysic, whereby anything that is divisible must *in advance* consist of the actual parts into which it is divided.

91

91

Fundamental Parts

- Holden's suggestion is supported by Hume's appeal to an argument by Nicholas de Malezieu:
"Tis evident, that existence in itself belongs only to unity, and is never applicable to number, but on account of the unites, of which the number is compos'd. ... 'Tis therefore utterly absurd to suppose any number to exist, and yet deny the existence of unites; and as extension is always a number ..." (T 1.2.2.3)

92

92

The Experienced Manifold

- Don Baxter (2009) provides an alternative suggestion, that Hume's (somewhat Kantian) aim "was to find out about objects *as they appear to us* by examination of the ideas we use to represent them" (p. 117).
- On this account, Hume's ambition goes no further than "knowing perfectly the manner in which objects affect my senses, and their connexions with each other, *as far as experience informs me of them*" (T 1.2.5.26)

93

93

Space and Time

- "All this reasoning takes place with regard to time", and besides, it is of the essence of temporal moments to be successive (rather than co-existent). (T 1.2.2.4)
- "The infinite divisibility of space implies that of time, as is evident from the nature of motion. If the latter, therefore, be impossible, the former must be equally so." (T 1.2.2.5)

94

94

Extension as a "Manner of Appearance"

- The Copy Principle should reveal the nature of our idea of extension (T 1.2.3.1), but we don't seem to have any distinct *impression* from which it could be derived.
- The idea of extension is *abstract* (in Hume's sense of a revival set linked to a general term) and derived from the resemblance in the "manner of appearance" of our spatially disposed impressions, whether of coloured points or impressions of touch (T 1.2.3.5).

95

95

Time and Perceivable Succession

- "The idea of time [is] deriv'd from the succession of our perceptions ... ideas as well as impressions ... of reflection as well as of sensation, ... [it is] an abstract idea, which comprehends a still greater variety than that of space, and yet is represented in the fancy by some particular individual idea of a determinate quantity and quality." (T 1.2.3.6)
- So the idea of duration "must be deriv'd from a succession of [perceivably] changeable objects" (T 1.2.3.8), and – since it is not separable from such a succession (T 1.2.3.10) – cannot properly be applied to anything unchangeable (T 1.2.3.11).

96

96

Oxford Lectures on Hume's *Treatise* Book 1, 2010

Spatial Atoms

- “The idea of space is convey'd to the mind by ... the sight and touch ... That compound impression, which represents extension, consists of several lesser impressions, that are indivisible to the eye or feeling, and may be call'd impressions of atoms or corpuscles endow'd with colour and solidity. ... There is nothing but the idea of their colour or tangibility, which can render them conceivable by the mind.” (T 1.2.3.15)
- “We have therefore no idea of space or extension, but when we regard it as an object either of our sight or feeling.” (T 1.2.3.16)

97

97

Geometry, and the Vacuum

- T 1.2.4.17-32 argues that geometrical ideas, deriving from visual and tangible appearances, cannot achieve a precision beyond the limits of possible perception. So we cannot conclude, for example, that the diagonal of an isosceles right triangle will be *exactly* $\sqrt{2}$ times the other sides.
- “If ... *the idea of space or extension is nothing by the idea of visible or tangible points distributed in a certain order*; it follows, that we can form no idea of a vacuum, or space, where there is nothing visible or tangible.” (T 1.2.5.1)

98

98

Humean “Fictions”

- We imagine we have an exact standard of equality, applicable even to a supposed infinitely divisible space, but that imaginary standard is a “fiction” which arises from the tendency of our imagination to over-extrapolate (T 1.2.4.24).
- The “idea” of a vacuum is a fiction, whose origin Hume traces to natural tendencies to confuse of ideas and use words without ideas (T 1.2.5.19-23). Likewise duration as applied to unchanging objects, which cannot be a genuine impression-copied idea (T 1.2.5.28-9, cf. 1.2.3.11).

99

99

Is Hume Denying a Vacuum?

- At T 1.2.5.25-6, Hume addresses the objection that he discusses “only the manner in which objects affect the senses, without endeavouring to account for their real nature and operations”.
“I answer this objection, by pleading guilty, and by confessing that my intention never was to penetrate into the nature of bodies, or explain the secret causes of their operations. ... I am afraid, that such an enterprize is beyond the reach of human understanding, and that we can never pretend to know body otherwise than by those external properties, which discover themselves to the senses.”

100

100

Our Idea of Existence

- The final section of Part 2 applies similar considerations to our idea of existence:
“The idea of existence ... is the very same with the idea of what we conceive to be existent. To reflect on any thing simply, and to reflect on it as existent, are nothing different” (T 1.2.6.4)
- The Copy Principle also implies that we cannot think of external objects as anything “*specifically* different from our perceptions” (T 1.2.6.7-9) – this is important in T 1.4.2.

101

101

Afterword on Space and Time

- In January 1772, Hume wrote to his printer, William Strahan:
“... about seventeen Years ago ... I intended to print four Dissertations, the natural History of Religion, on the Passions, on Tragedy, and on the metaphysical Principles of Geometry. ... but before the last was printed, I happend to meet with Lord Stanhope who was in this Country, and he convinced me, that either there was some Defect in the Argument or in its perspicuity; I forget which; and I wrote to Mr Millar, that I woud not print that Essay; ... I wrote a new Essay on the Standard of Taste ...”
- Lord Philip Stanhope was a notable mathematician, and Hume was friendly (perhaps related) with his wife. Space and time feature very little in Hume's later works, playing only a minor role in the first *Enquiry*, Section 12 Part 2.

102

102

Oxford Lectures on Hume's *Treatise* Book 1, 2010

Hume's *Treatise*, Book 1



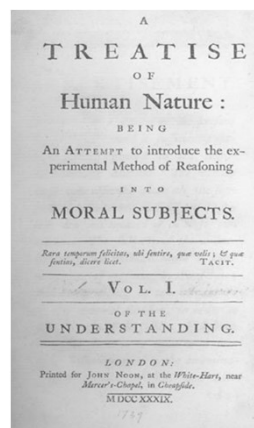
4. Of Knowledge and Probability

Peter Millican
Hertford College, Oxford

103

4(a)

Relations, and a detour via the Causal Maxim



104

"Of Knowledge and Probability"

- Despite the title of *Treatise* 1.3:
 - Only *T* 1.3.1 deals with "Knowledge" (a word Hume uses in a strict sense, as meaning *deductive* knowledge).
 - Apart from the *title* of *T* 1.3.2, "probability" doesn't make an entrance until *T* 1.3.6.4.
- The real unifying theme is the idea of *causation*, and causal reasoning. But Hume's route to his account of it is rather circuitous ...

105

105

Hume's Dichotomy Again

- Hume divides his seven types of relation into two groups (*T* 1.3.1.1):
 - The Four "Constant" Relations
Those relations that 'depend entirely on the ideas, which we compare together' (i.e. resemblance, contrariety, degrees in quality, proportions in quantity or number);
 - The Three "Inconstant" Relations
Those relations that 'may be chang'd without any change in the ideas' (i.e. identity, relations of time and place, cause and effect).

106

106

A Taxonomy of Mental Operations

- Hume argues, rather simplistically, that his seven relations map neatly onto four different mental operations:
 - *resemblance*, *contrariety*, and *degrees in quality* are "discoverable at first sight" (*T* 1.3.1.2)
 - *proportions of quantity or number* are susceptible of demonstration (*T* 1.3.1.2-5)
 - *identity* and *relations of time and place* are matters of perception rather than reasoning (*T* 1.3.2.1)
 - *causation* is the only relation "that can be trac'd beyond our senses, [to] existences and objects, which we do not see or feel" (*T* 1.3.2.3)

107

107

Constant relations *Inconstant relations*

	<u>Intuition</u>	<u>Sensory Perception</u>
Perception	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ <i>resemblance</i> ■ <i>contrariety</i> ■ <i>degrees in quality</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ <i>identity</i> ■ <i>situations in time and place</i>
	<u>Demonstration</u>	<u>Probability</u>
Reasoning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ <i>proportions in quantity and number</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ <i>causation</i>

108

108

Oxford Lectures on Hume's *Treatise* Book 1, 2010

The Idea of Causation

- To understand reasoning to the unobserved (i.e. *probable* reasoning, though Hume has not yet used the term), "we must consider the idea of *causation*, and see from what origin it is deriv'd" (*T* 1.3.2.4).
- The search for the origin of this idea will shape the remainder of *Treatise* 1.3.
- There is no specific quality that characterises causes and effects, so it must be some *relation* between the two. (*T* 1.3.2.5-6)

109

109

Contiguity and Priority

- We find causes and effects to be *contiguous* in space and time (*T* 1.3.2.6), though a footnote hints at a significant reservation (explored in *T* 1.4.5 which points out that many perceptions have no spatial location).
- We also find causes to be *prior* to their effects (*T* 1.3.2.7), though again Hume seems to indicate that this isn't a particularly crucial matter (*T* 1.3.2.8).
- There still seems to be something missing ...

110

110

Necessary Connexion

- There follows a famous passage, which is commonly misunderstood:
"Shall we then rest contented with these two relations of contiguity and succession, as affording a compleat idea of causation? By no means. An object may be contiguous and prior to another, without being consider'd as its cause. There is a NECESSARY CONNEXION to be taken into consideration; and that relation is of much greater importance, than any of the other two above-mention'd." (*T* 1.3.2.11)

111

111

To Neighbouring Fields

- Hume is looking for the crucial extra component (beyond *single-case* contiguity and succession) that makes up our idea of cause and effect
- It seems elusive, so he proceeds like those who "beat about all the neighbouring fields, without any certain view or design, in hopes their good fortune will at last guide them to what they search for" (*T* 1.3.2.13).
- There are two such fields ...

112

112

The Causal Maxim

- The first field is the Causal Maxim:
"Tis a general maxim in philosophy, that *whatever begins to exist, must have a cause of existence*" (*T* 1.3.3.1)
- Hume argues that this is neither intuitively nor demonstratively certain (*T* 1.3.3.1-8)
- "Since it is not from knowledge or any scientific reasoning, that we derive [this] opinion ..., [it] must necessarily arise from observation and experience. ... (*T* 1.3.3.9)

113

113

The Sinking of the Causal Maxim

... The next question, then, shou'd naturally be, *how experience gives rise to such a principle?* But as I find it will be more convenient to sink this question in the following, *Why we conclude, that such particular causes must necessarily have such particular effects, and why we form an inference from one to another?* we shall make that the subject of our future enquiry. 'Twill, perhaps, be found in the end, that the same answer will serve for both questions." (*T* 1.3.3.9)

114

114

Oxford Lectures on Hume's *Treatise* Book 1, 2010

Does Hume Accept the Causal Maxim?

- Unfortunately Hume never returns explicitly to the Causal Maxim, and some of his contemporaries took him to be denying it.
- But there is significant evidence that he accepts it, deriving both from his general deterministic outlook (as we'll see later), and from letters that he wrote to those contemporaries who misunderstood ...

115

115

Letter from a Gentleman (1745)

- "it being the Author's Purpose, in the Pages cited in the Specimen, to examine the Grounds of that Proposition; he used the Freedom of disputing the common Opinion, that it was founded on demonstrative or intuitive Certainty; but asserts, that it is supported by moral Evidence, and is followed by a Conviction of the same Kind with these Truths, That all Men must die, and that the Sun will rise To-morrow." (LFG 26)

116

116

Letter to John Stewart (1754)

- "... But allow me to tell you, that I never asserted so absurd a Proposition as that any thing might arise without a Cause: I only maintain'd, that our Certainty of the Falshood of that Proposition proceeded neither from Intuition nor Demonstration; but from another Source. That Caesar existed, that there is such an Island as Sicily; for these Propositions, I affirm, we have no demonstrative nor intuitive Proof. Woud you infer that I deny their Truth, or even their Certainty?" (HL i 186)

117

117

Leading Up to Induction

- *Treatise* 1.3.4 argues that causal reasoning, if it is to result in real belief, must start from something perceived or remembered.
- T 1.3.5.1 sets out a corresponding agenda: "Here therefore we have three things to explain, viz. *First*, The original impression. *Secondly*, The transition to the idea of the connected cause or effect. *Thirdly*, The nature and qualities of that idea."

118

118

"Of the impressions of the senses and memory"

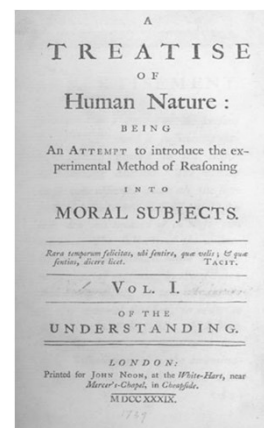
- The title of *Treatise* 1.3.5 seems odd, since memory presents *ideas*, not *impressions*.
- But Hume's main point here is that the perceptions of the senses and memory are alike in being more *strong and lively* – having more *force and vivacity* – than the ideas of the imagination.
- That force and vivacity, apparently, is what enables them to act as a "foundation of that reasoning, which we build ... when we trace the relation of cause and effect" (T 1.3.5.7)

119

119

4(b)

The Argument Concerning Induction



120

Oxford Lectures on Hume's *Treatise* Book 1, 2010

Three Versions of the Argument

- *Treatise* 1.3.6 contains the famous argument concerning induction, though Hume doesn't seem entirely to appreciate its significance – it is mainly a staging post in his search for the origin and nature of our idea of causation.
- In the *Abstract* of 1740 it is elevated to a much more prominent position, as the centre-piece of Hume's "Chief Argument".
- The fullest and clearest version is in the first *Enquiry*, Section 4.

121

121

A Very Brief Overview

- Suppose we see *A* followed by *B* again and again. When we next see an *A*, we naturally infer a *B*. But why?
 - *A Priori* insight? No: *a priori*, we can know nothing whatever about what causal effects *A* will have. "Intelligibility" is just an illusion.
- Such causal/probable/moral inference is based on *extrapolating* into the future the associations that we have observed.

122

122

Inferring Uniformity

- What ground can we give for extrapolating from observed to unobserved?
 - Sensory knowledge? No: what we perceive of objects gives us no insight into the basis of their powers, hence no reason to extrapolate.
 - Logical intuition? No.
 - Demonstrative reasoning? No: neither of these, because it's clear that extrapolation *could* fail, so it can't be a matter of pure logic.
 - Probable reasoning? No: would be circular.

123

123

Treatise and *Enquiry*

- In the *Treatise*, Hume doesn't explicitly rule out sensation and intuition as possible foundations for this "Uniformity Principle".
- There, he seems just to assume that demonstrative and probable reasoning provide the only available options.
- So the *Enquiry* argument is apparently more complete in this respect (but otherwise very similar in spirit).

124

124

A Simplified Version

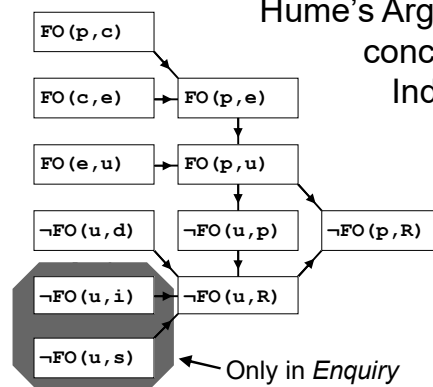
- The essential logic of the argument can be represented using the 'founded on' relation (FO), together with:

p Probable inference (to the unobserved)
 c Causal reasoning
 e (Reasoning from) Experience d Demonstration
 u Uniformity Principle i Intuition
 R Reason s Sensation

125

125

Hume's Argument concerning Induction



126

126

Oxford Lectures on Hume's *Treatise* Book 1, 2010

The Four "Kinds of Evidence"

- So the *Enquiry* argument implicitly reasons:
 $\neg\text{FO}(u,s) \ \& \ \neg\text{FO}(u,i) \ \& \ \neg\text{FO}(u,d) \ \& \ \neg\text{FO}(u,p) \ \rightarrow \ \neg\text{FO}(u,R)$
If UP isn't founded on sensation, intuition, demonstration or probable inference, then it isn't founded on Reason.
- Compare this passage from Hume's *Letter from a Gentleman* (1745):
"It is common for Philosophers to distinguish the Kinds of Evidence into *intuitive*, *demonstrative*, *sensible*, and *moral*"

127

127

A Sceptical Argument?

- Hume's famous argument concerning induction ...
 - Starts by showing that all probable inference is founded on the Uniformity Principle;
 - Then goes on to undermine every available "kind of evidence" for UP;
 - Then draws from this the conclusion that probable inference is not founded on reason.
- This way of arguing seems to imply that the conclusion has sceptical intent ...

128

128

Treatise 1.3.6 – A Closer Look

- Recall Hume's aim here:
 - He is seeking to understand our idea of necessary connexion (cf. *T* 1.3.2.11).
 - This leads him to ask "Why we conclude, that ... particular causes must necessarily have ... particular effects, and why we form an inference from one to another?" (*T* 1.3.3.9).
 - The key part of this process is "the inference from the impression to the idea" (cf. *T* 1.3.5.1); call this "causal inference" for short.

129

129

Causal Inference Is Not A Priori

- Hume first argues that causal inference can't be a priori (*T* 1.3.6.1), because we can conceive things coming out differently.
- Here he makes the [common] assumption that any a priori inference would have to yield complete certainty.
- "'Tis therefore by EXPERIENCE only, that we can infer the existence of one object from that of another" (*T* 1.3.6.2).

130

130

Experience and Constant Conjunction

- The kind of experience on which causal inference is based is repeated patterns of one thing, *A*, followed by another, *B*:
"Without any farther ceremony, we call the one *cause* and the other *effect*, and infer the existence of the one from that of the other." (*T* 1.3.6.2)
- "Thus ... we have ... discover'd a new relation betwixt cause and effect, when we least expected it ... This relation is their **CONSTANT CONJUNCTION.**" (*T* 1.3.6.3)

131

131

"Perhaps 'twill appear in the end ..."

- The capitalisation in *T* 1.3.6.3 clearly links back to *T* 1.3.2.11, as does the text:
"Contiguity and succession are not sufficient to make us pronounce any two objects to be cause and effect, unless ... these two relations are preserv'd in several instances [i.e. there's a constant conjunction]."
- But how can this give rise to the new idea of necessary connexion? Anticipating *T* 1.3.14.20,
"Perhaps 'twill appear in the end, that the necessary connexion depends on the inference, instead of the inference's depending on the necessary connexion".

132

132

Oxford Lectures on Hume's *Treatise* Book 1, 2010

A Question of Faculties

- Since causal reasoning from [impression of] cause *A* to [idea of] effect *B* is founded on “past *experience*, and ... remembrance of ... *constant conjunction*” (T 1.3.6.4),
“the next question is, whether experience produces the idea [of the effect *B*] by means of the understanding or imagination; whether we are determin'd by reason to make the transition, or by a certain association and relation of perceptions?”
- Hume will now argue that it can't be reason.

133

133

UP: The Uniformity Principle

- In the *Treatise*
 - “If reason determin'd us [to infer effect *B* from cause *A*], it wou'd proceed upon that principle, *that instances of which we have had no experience, must resemble those of which we have had experience, and that the course of nature continues always uniformly the same.*” (T 1.3.6.4)
 - This seems *conditional*: IF reason is involved, THEN it must be based on this principle.
 - The principle seems implausibly strong: surely we don't have to believe in complete uniformity!

134

134

UP in the *Enquiry*

- In the *Enquiry*
 - “all our experimental [experiential] conclusions proceed upon the supposition, that the future will be conformable to the past”. (E 4.19)
 - No suggestion of conditionality (cf. also E 5.2: “in *all* reasonings from experience, *there is a step taken by the mind*” corresponding to UP).
 - Much vaguer than UP in *Treatise*, and so more plausible: we expect the future to “resemble” (E 4.21) the past, but not copy exactly.

135

135

The Role of the Uniformity Principle

- Hume is not suggesting, even in the *Enquiry*, that we think of UP *explicitly* when making inductive inferences (cf. T 1.3.8.13).
- Rather, in making an inductive inference, we *manifest* the assumption of UP, in basing our inferential behaviour on past experience.
 - So inferring from past to future is *ipso facto* treating “the past [as a] rule for the future” (cf. E 4.21)
 - Hence the question arises: can this assumption be founded on reason, or is there some other explanation for why we make it?

136

136

Demonstrative and Probable

- Hume takes for granted a Lockean framework, recognising two types of reasoning:
 - In demonstrative reasoning (which potentially yields “knowledge” in the strict sense), each link in the inferential chain is “intuitively” certain.
 - In probable reasoning, some links are merely probable. [Note that in the *Enquiry*, Hume also calls this “moral reasoning” or “reasoning concerning matter of fact and existence”]
- Our modern terms are *deduction* and *induction*.

137

137

UP Not Founded on Reason

- “let us consider all the arguments, upon which [UP] may be suppos'd to be founded; ... these must be deriv'd either from *knowledge* [i.e. demonstration] or *probability*”. (T 1.3.6.4)
- We can conceive a change in the course of nature, so UP cannot be demonstratively proved. (T 1.3.6.5)
- Probable reasoning must be causal, and hence founded on UP. So it cannot provide a foundation for UP, on pain of circularity. (T 1.3.6.6-7)

138

138

Oxford Lectures on Hume's *Treatise* Book 1, 2010

The Gap in Hume's Argument

- The Uniformity Principle is not founded on:
 - demonstrative argument from past experience
 - because a change in the course of nature is possible, whereas any demonstrative argument would have to yield total certainty;
 - probable argument from past experience
 - because any probable argument is itself founded on experience and hence on the Uniformity Principle.
- But what if we could find a way of arguing *probabilistically* but *a priori*?
 - Hume just assumes this to be impossible.

139

139

The Sceptical [?] Conclusion

"Thus not only reason fails us in the discovery of the *ultimate connexion* of causes and effects, but even after experience has inform'd us of their *constant conjunction*, 'tis impossible for us to satisfy ourselves by our reason, why we shou'd extend that experience beyond those particular instances, which have fallen under our observation. We suppose, but are never able to prove, that there must be a resemblance betwixt those objects, of which we have had experience, and those which lie beyond the reach of our discovery." (T 1.3.6.11)

140

140

Hume's Alternative Explanation

- Reason can't explain inductive inference; so instead, it must arise from associative principles of the imagination:

"When the mind, therefore, passes from the idea or impression of one object [the cause A] to the idea or belief of another [the effect B], it is not determin'd by reason, but by certain principles, which associate together the ideas of these objects, and unite them in the imagination." (T 1.3.6.12)

141

141

Custom and General Ideas

- Hume later calls this associative principle "custom" (T 1.3.7.6, 1.3.8.10, 1.3.8.12-14).
- His attitude to it is not entirely negative:

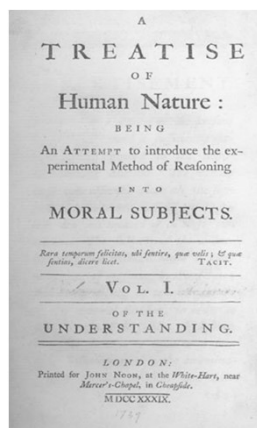
"Custom, then, is the great guide of human life. It is that principle alone, which renders our experience useful to us ..."

 (E 5.6, cf. A 16)
- At T 1.3.6.14, Hume says this is essentially the same sort of custom as that which explained general ideas at T 1.1.7.7 ff.

142

142

4(c) Belief and Probability



143

"Of the nature of the idea or belief"

- Recall the agenda set at T 1.3.5.1:

"Here therefore we have three things to explain, viz. *First*, The original impression [T 1.3.5]. *Secondly*, The transition to the idea of the connected cause or effect [T 1.3.6]. *Thirdly*, The nature and qualities of that idea."
- Accordingly, T 1.3.7 – "Of the nature of the idea or belief" – focuses on the idea [of the effect B] that we infer from the impression [of the cause A] in causal inference.

144

144

Oxford Lectures on Hume's *Treatise* Book 1, 2010

An Idea Associated with an Impression

- Since all belief about the unobserved arises from causal inference (T 1.3.2.3, 1.3.6.7), and causal inference moves “from the impression to the idea”,
“we may establish this as one part of the definition of an opinion or belief, *that 'tis an idea related to or associated with a present impression*” (T 1.3.6.15)
- Hume now goes on to investigate the nature of the associated idea.

145

145

“a new question unthought of by philosophers” (A 17)

- Hume finds himself asking a profound question: “*Wherein consists the difference betwixt incredulity and belief?*” (T 1.3.7.3).
- This anticipates Frege:
“two things must be distinguished in an indicative sentence: the content ... and the assertion. The former is the thought ... it is possible to express the thought without laying it down as true.” (1918, p. 21).

146

146

A Manner of Conception

- T 1.2.6.4 argued that we have no separate idea of existence; so that can't make the difference between belief and unbelief, and nor does any other idea (T 1.3.7.2).
- If I believe proposition *P*, and you don't, the same ideas must be involved, or it wouldn't be the same proposition (T 1.3.7.3-4).
- So the difference must lie in the *manner of conception*, or *force and vivacity* (T 1.3.7.5).

147

147

The Definition of Belief

- The initial sketch of belief as
“*an idea related to or associated with a present impression*” (T 1.3.6.15)
can now be filled out:
“An opinion, therefore, or belief may be most accurately defin'd, A LIVELY IDEA RELATED TO OR ASSOCIATED WITH A PRESENT IMPRESSION.” (T 1.3.7.5)

148

148

What is “Force and Vivacity”?

- This isn't entirely satisfactory:
 - A fictional story can be much more “forceful and lively” than a dull historical account.
 - “Force and vivacity” isn't a separate impression, so how does it fit into Hume's theory of ideas?
 - If it's part of the ideas believed, then how can we distinguish between the belief in a dull red door and the imagination of a bright red door?
 - “Manner of conception” suggests an *attitude* change, rather than a change in the ideas.

149

149

Symptoms of Unease

- In a paragraph added in the 1740 Appendix, Hume expresses discomfort with his account:
“An idea assented to *feels* different from a fictitious idea ... And this different feeling I endeavour to explain by calling it a superior *force*, or *vivacity*, or *solidity*, or *firmness*, or *steadiness*. ... 'tis impossible to explain perfectly this feeling or manner of conception. We may make use of words, that express something near it. But its true and proper name is *belief*, which is a term than every one sufficiently understands ...” (T 1.3.7.7)

150

150

Oxford Lectures on Hume's *Treatise* Book 1, 2010

"Of the causes of belief"

- *Treatise* 1.3.8 draws a natural conclusion from two of Hume's "discoveries":
 - T 1.3.5.3 concluded that causal reasoning has to start from an "impression" of the senses or memory, distinguished from mere ideas of the imagination by their "force and vivacity". This constitutes their "*belief* or *assent*" (T 1.3.5.7).
 - T 1.3.7.5 concluded that something inferred by causal inference becomes a *belief* in virtue of its force and vivacity.

151

151

The Hydraulic Theory of Belief

- "I wou'd willingly establish it as a general maxim in the science of human nature, *that when any impression becomes present to us, it not only transports the mind to such ideas as are related to it, but likewise communicates to them a share of its force and vivacity.*" (T 1.3.8.2)
- The remainder of T 1.3.8 gives various "experiments" to illustrate that the three associational relations also convey force and vivacity to the associated ideas, confirming this as a general phenomenon of human nature.

152

152

"Nothing But a Species of Sensation"

- Hume sums up his theory of belief in dramatic terms at T 1.3.8.12:

"Thus all probable reasoning is nothing but a species of sensation. 'Tis not solely in poetry and music, we must follow our taste and sentiment, but likewise in philosophy. When I am convinc'd of any principle, 'tis only an idea, which strikes more strongly upon me. When I give the preference to one set of arguments above another, I do nothing but decide from my feeling concerning the superiority of their influence."

153

153

UP is (Typically) Unconscious

- At T 1.3.8.13, Hume observes that:

"the past experience, on which all our judgments concerning cause and effect depend, may operate on our mind in such an insensible manner as never to be taken notice of. ... The custom operates before we have time for reflection. The objects seem so inseparable, that we interpose not a moment's delay in passing from the one to the other. ... the understanding or imagination [sic.] can draw inferences from past experience, without reflecting on it, much more without forming any principle concerning it"

154

154

Fast Forward to *Treatise* 1.3.14

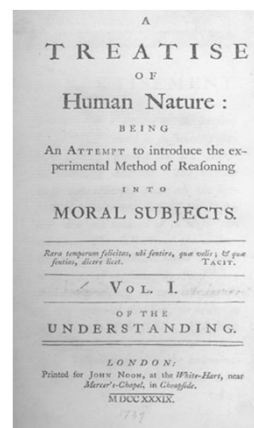
- Hume's discussions in *Treatise* 1.3.9-13 mainly concern various types of rational and irrational beliefs, and the psychological mechanisms underlying them.
- These sections are commonly ignored, but we'll return to them briefly when considering the nature of Hume's "scepticism".
- The main narrative of *Treatise* 1.3 resumes at Section 14, its culmination.

155

155

4(d)

"Of the Idea of Necessary Connexion"



156

Oxford Lectures on Hume's *Treatise* Book 1, 2010

Reminder 1: The Idea of Cause

- In *Treatise* 1.3.2, Hume identifies the components of the idea of causation as *contiguity*, *priority in time* (of A to B), and *necessary connexion* (see especially *T* 1.3.2.11).
- At *T* 1.3.6.3, he identifies *constant conjunction* (i.e. *regular* succession) as the basis of our ascription of necessary connexion.
- In the remainder of 1.3.6, he argues that causal reasoning is founded on *custom*.

157

157

Reminder 2: The Copy Principle

- According to (what is commonly called) Hume's *Copy Principle* (*T* 1.1.1.7), all our simple ideas are copied from impressions.
- This provides "a new microscope" (*E* 7.4) for investigating the nature of ideas, by finding the corresponding impressions.
- In *Treatise* 1.3.14, he accordingly sets out to identify the impression from which the idea of necessary connexion is copied.
- See 1.3.14.1 for a preview of the argument.

158

158

Synonymy and Definition

- Hume begins his quest for the impression:
"I begin with observing that the terms of *efficacy*, *agency*, *power*, *force*, *energy*, *necessity*, *connexion*, and *productive quality*, are all nearly synonymous; and therefore 'tis an absurdity to employ any of them in defining the rest. By this observation we reject at once all the vulgar definitions, which philosophers have given of power and efficacy; and instead of searching for the idea in these definitions, must look for it in the impressions, from which it is originally deriv'd. If it be a compound idea, it must arise from compound impressions. If simple, from simple impressions." (*T* 1.3.14.4)

159

159

Two Puzzles

- Why does Hume assume that "necessity", "power", "force" etc. are virtual synonyms?
- Why does he assume that the idea of "necessary connexion" is *simple*, and hence cannot be explicitly defined?
- Suggested solution: Hume's interest lies in a *single common element* of the relevant ideas, what we might call the element of *consequentiality*.

160

160

A Third Puzzle

- If *necessary connexion* is a key component of our idea of cause, then how can anyone even *believe* that causes could be less than absolutely necessitating?
"The vulgar ... attribute the uncertainty of events to such an uncertainty in the causes as makes the latter often fail of their usual influence ..." (*T* 1.3.12.5, *E* 8.13)
- This too is explained if the key idea is not *necessity*, but rather *consequentiality*: a *force* or *agency* need not be compelling.

161

161

"Power", or "Necessary Connexion"?

- In *Treatise* 1.3.14, Hume refers to the idea of "power" or "efficacy" around three times more often than to the idea of "necessity" or "necessary connexion"!
- My suggestion makes the former more appropriate, so why emphasise the latter in the section's title, and when summing up?
- Suggested explanation: The key result is to shed light on "liberty and necessity", the problem of free will (*T* 2.3.1-2, *E* 8).

162

162

Oxford Lectures on Hume's *Treatise* Book 1, 2010

Refuting Locke and Malebranche

- Locke is wrong to suggest we can get the idea of power from “new productions in matter” (*T* 1.3.14.5).
- Malebranche is right to deny that “the secret force and energy of causes” can be found in bodies (*T* 1.3.14.7).
- But the Copy Principle refutes Malebranche's claim that we acquire the idea of an “active principle” from our idea of God (*T* 1.3.14.10).

163

163

No Idea from Single Instances

- Powers cannot be found among the known or perceived properties of matter (*T* 1.3.14.7-11).
- Nor among the properties of mind (added in the *Appendix* of 1740, *T* 1.3.14.12, SB 632-3).
- We cannot find any *specific* impression of power in these various sources, hence they cannot possibly yield any *general* idea of power either (*T* 1.3.14.13; cf. the theory of “general or abstract ideas” of 1.1.7).

164

164

Repeated Instances

- The actual source of the key impression is revealed when we turn to *repeated* instances of observed conjunctions of “objects”. In these circumstances,
“... we immediately conceive a connexion betwixt them, and ... draw an inference from one to another. This multiplicity of resembling instances, therefore, constitutes the very essence of power or connexion, and is the source, from which the idea of it arises.” (*T* 1.3.14.16)

165

165

An *Internal* Impression

- Repeated instances supply no new impression *from the objects*; to find the elusive impression of power we must look inside ourselves to the habitual transition of the mind (i.e. the operation of custom).
- *T* 1.3.6.3 anticipated this result:
“Perhaps 'twill appear in the end, that the necessary connexion depends on the inference, instead of the inference's depending on the necessary connexion.”

166

166

Is the Impression a *Feeling*?

- “This connexion ... which we *feel* in the mind, this customary transition of the imagination from one object to its usual attendant, is the sentiment or impression, from which we form the idea of power or necessary connexion.” (*E* 7.28).
- Stroud and others take the impression to be a *feeling* of compulsion that accompanies the operation of customary inference.
 - But Hume's own arguments seem to rule out the possibility that mere feelings could be the source of the idea (*T* 1.3.14.12, *E* 7.15 n. 13).

167

167

Is “Determination of the Mind” an *Impression*?

- Why does Hume equate *inference* from *A* to *B* – a transition of thought from *A* to *B*, with *another*, third, “perception”?
“This determination is the only effect of the resemblance; and therefore must be the same with power or efficacy, whose idea is deriv'd from the resemblance. ... Necessity, then, is ... nothing but an internal impression of the mind, or a determination to carry our thoughts from one object to another.” (*T* 1.3.14.20)
- Hume needs an “impression” to satisfy his Copy Principle, but this may be misleading ...

168

168

Oxford Lectures on Hume's *Treatise* Book 1, 2010

Reflexive Awareness of Inference

- *Consequentiality* may be the key here ...
- *Inference* is genuinely consequential:
"that inference of the understanding, which is the only connexion, that we can have any comprehension of" (E 8.25)
- Hume should be taken literally: the source of the idea is the *reflexive awareness of making causal inference*, and not a feeling.
- This awareness is very dubiously an "impression"; here Hume's theory of the mind is far too crude in limiting our awareness to ideas and impressions.

169

169

Necessity in the Mind, not in Objects

"[customary inference] is the essence of necessity. ... necessity is something, that exists in the mind, not in objects; nor is it possible for us ever to form the most distant idea of it, consider'd as a quality in bodies. ... necessity is nothing but that determination of the thought to pass from causes to effects and from effects to causes, according to their experienc'd union." (T 1.3.14.22)

"When we say, therefore, that one object is connected with another, we mean only, that they have acquired a connexion in our thought, and give rise to this inference ..." (E 7.28)

170

170

Hume's Anti-Realism

- Hume is not saying that there is some kind of full-blooded "thick" necessity, but that it applies only to events in the mind. Rather ...
- We find ourselves inferring from *A* to *B*, and this consequential relation is all that we can understand by "necessity". We can't even make sense of any more "full-blooded" necessity.
- This seems incredible to us because "the mind has a great propensity to spread itself on external objects, and to conjoin with them any internal impressions, which they occasion" (T 1.3.14.25).

171

171

An Outrageous Conclusion ...

"But tho' this be the only reasonable account we can give of necessity ... I doubt not that my sentiments will be treated by many as extravagant and ridiculous. What! the efficacy of causes lie in the determination of the mind! As if causes did not operate entirely independent of the mind, and wou'd not continue their operation, even tho' there was no mind existent to contemplate them ... to remove [power] from all causes, and bestow it on a being, that is no ways related to the cause or effect, but by perceiving them, is a gross absurdity, and contrary to the most certain principles of human reason." (T 1.3.14.26)

172

172

... Which Hume Defends!

"I can only reply to all these arguments, that the case is here much the same, as if a blind man shou'd pretend to find a great many absurdities in the supposition, that the colour of scarlet is not the same with the sound of a trumpet, nor light the same with solidity. If we really have no idea of a power or efficacy in any object, or of any real connexion betwixt causes and effects, 'twill be to little purpose to prove, that an efficacy is necessary in all operations. We do not understand our own meaning in talking so, but ignorantly confound ideas, which are entirely distinct from each other." (T 1.3.14.27)

173

173

Objective Causes, in a Sense ...

"As to what may be said, that the operations of nature are independent of our thought and reasoning, I allow it; and accordingly have observ'd, that objects bear to each other the relations of contiguity and succession; that like objects may be observ'd in several instances to have like relations; and that all this is independent of, and antecedent to the operations of the understanding." (T 1.3.14.28)

- There is an objective and a subjective side to our idea of power or necessity; hence two definitions of "cause".

174

174

Oxford Lectures on Hume's *Treatise* Book 1, 2010

Two "Definitions of Cause"

- Hume's main discussions of "the idea of necessary connexion" (*Treatise* 1.3.14 and *Enquiry* 7) both culminate with two "definitions of cause".
- The first definition is based on *regular succession* of the "cause" *A* followed by "effect" *B* (plus contiguity in the *Treatise*).
- The second definition is based on the mind's tendency to *infer B* from *A*.

175

175

"There may two definitions be given of this relation, which are only different, by their presenting a different view of the same object ... We may define a CAUSE to be 'An object precedent and contiguous to another, and where all the objects resembling the former are plac'd in like relations of precedency and contiguity to those objects, which resemble the latter.' If this definition be esteem'd defective, because drawn from objects foreign to the cause, we may substitute this other definition in its place, viz. 'A CAUSE is an object precedent and contiguous to another, and so united with it, that the idea of the one determines the mind to form the idea of the other, and the impression of the one to form a more lively idea of the other.' Shou'd this definition also be rejected for the same reason, I know no other remedy ..."

(T 1.3.14.31)

176

176

The Confused Vulgar Idea of Power

- "as we *feel* a customary connexion ... we transfer that feeling to the objects; as nothing is more usual than to apply to external objects every internal sensation, which they occasion" (E 7.29 n. 17)
- At T 1.3.14.25 n. 32, referring to 1.4.5.13, this is compared to our propensity to objectify taste impressions: "All this absurdity proceeds from our endeavouring to bestow a place on what is utterly incapable of it".
- Necessity involves "the same propensity" (T 1.3.14.25).
- "the sentiment of *nisus* or endeavour" also "enters very much into" the vulgar idea (E 7.15 n. 13, 7.29 n. 17).

177

177

The More Precise Humean Idea

- "'tis probable, that these expressions do here lose their true meaning by being *wrong apply'd*, than that they never have any meaning" (T 1.3.14.14).
- Hume takes his analysis and definitions to *vindicate* a more precise idea of power, by revealing that there is a *bona fide* impression from which it is derived.
- He seems to be saying we should apply that idea according to the first definition (constant conjunction), and understand its application as implying willingness to draw inferences accordingly (as in the second definition).
- This is close to a kind of "quasi-realism" (Blackburn's term), parallel with Hume's moral theory.

178

178

"Corollaries" of the Definitions

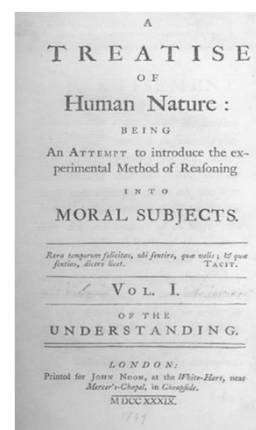
- "All causes are of the same kind ... For the same reason we must reject the distinction betwixt *cause* and *occasion* ... If constant conjunction be imply'd in what we call occasion, 'tis a real cause. If not, 'tis no relation at all ..." (T 1.3.14.32)
- "there is but one kind of *necessity* ... and ... the common distinction betwixt *moral* and *physical* necessity is without any foundation in nature." (T 1.3.14.33)
- It is now easy to see why the Causal Maxim of T 1.3.3 is not intuitively or demonstratively certain. (T 1.3.14.35)
- "we can never have reason to believe that any object exists, of which we cannot form an idea." (T 1.3.14.36)

179

179

4(e)

Understanding Hume on Causation



180

Oxford Lectures on Hume's *Treatise* Book 1, 2010

The "New Hume"

- Hume has generally been read as denying the existence of any causal "power" or "necessity" going beyond his two definitions (i.e. any upper-case Causation or "thick connexions").
- The "New Hume" is the view of John Wright, Edward Craig, Galen Strawson and others that Hume is instead a "Causal Realist".
- Their most persuasive argument: *Hume's texts show him to be taking causation, causal power and causal necessity very seriously ...*

181

181

"Sceptical Realism"

- John Wright coined the term "Sceptical Realism" for this point of view:
 - Realism: Causation in things goes beyond functional relations of regular succession, involving a full-blooded necessity which, if we knew it, would license a priori inference.
 - Sceptical: In so far as Causation goes beyond what is captured by Hume's two definitions, it cannot be known or understood.

182

182

Hume's Advocacy of Causal Science

- Hume seems in general to have a very positive attitude towards causal science:
 - a) He says that causation is the basis of all empirical inference;
 - b) He proposes "rules by which to judge of causes and effects";
 - c) He talks of "secret powers";
 - d) He advocates a search for hidden causes underlying inconstant phenomena.

183

183

(a) The Basis of Empirical Inference

- "The only connexion or relation of objects, which can lead us beyond the immediate impressions of our memory and senses, is that of cause and effect ..." (*T* 1.3.6.7)
- "'Tis evident, that all reasonings concerning *matter of fact* are founded on the relation of cause and effect" (*A* 8)
- "All reasonings concerning matter of fact seem to be founded on the relation of Cause and Effect." (*E* 4.4, cf. *E* 7.29)

184

184

(b) The Rules of *Treatise* 1.3.15

- "Since therefore 'tis possible for all objects to become causes or effects to each other, it may be proper to fix some general rules, by which we may know when they really are so." (*T* 1.3.15.1)
- "[Phenomena] in nature [are] compounded and modify'd by so many different circumstances, that ... we must carefully separate whatever is superfluous, and enquire by new experiments, if every particular circumstance of the first experiment was essential to it" (*T* 1.3.15.11)

185

185

(c) Hume's Talk of "Secret Powers"

- Most prominent in *Enquiry* 4-5:
 - "the ultimate cause of any natural operation ... that power, which produces any ... effect in the universe ... the causes of these general causes ... ultimate springs and principles" (*E* 4.12);
 - "the secret powers [of bodies] ... those powers and principles on which the influence of ... objects entirely depends" (*E* 4.16);
 - "those powers and forces, on which this regular course and succession of objects totally depends" (*E* 5.22);

186

186

Oxford Lectures on Hume's *Treatise* Book 1, 2010

Necessity as Essential to Causation

- “Power” is a term from the same family – derived from the same impression – as “necessity”, which Hume sees as an essential part of our idea of causation:
 - “According to my definitions, necessity makes an essential part of causation” (*T* 2.3.1.18, cf. also 1.3.2.11, 1.3.6.3).
 - “Necessity may be defined two ways, conformably to the two definitions of *cause*, of which it makes an essential part.” (*E* 8.27, cf. 8.25)

187

187

(d) The Search for Hidden Causes

- “philosophers, observing, that, almost in every part of nature, there is contained a vast variety of springs and principles, which are hid, by reason of their minuteness or remoteness, find, that it is at least possible the contrariety of events may ... proceed ... from the secret operation of contrary causes. ... they remark, that, upon an exact scrutiny, a contrariety of effects always betrays a contrariety of causes, and proceeds from their mutual opposition.” (*E* 8.13, copied from *T* 1.3.12.5)

188

188

Causal Science and Causal Realism

- We have seen that Hume indeed takes causal science very seriously. All science must be causal; causal relations can be established by rules; explanation involves reference to secret powers; and we should search for hidden causes.
- But the presumption that this implies Causal Realism that goes beyond the two definitions can be challenged ...

189

189

Hume's Anti-Realism: an Initial Case

1. Berkeley's example proves that a positive attitude to science need not imply Causal Realism. Hume's attitude seems quite similar.
2. Hume's argument concerning the origin of the idea of necessary connexion, in *Treatise* 1.3.14 and *Enquiry* 7, has standardly been read as implying that he is a Causal anti-Realist.
3. An important footnote connects the power references in *Enquiry* 4-5 with the apparently anti-Realist argument of *Enquiry* 7, in such a way as to undermine their apparent force.

190

190

1. Berkeley's Instrumentalism

- ... the difference there is betwixt natural philosophers and other men, with regard to their knowledge of the *phenomena*, ... consists, not in an exacter knowledge of the efficient cause that produces them, for that can be no other than the *will of a spirit*, but only in a greater largeness of comprehension, whereby analogies, harmonies, and agreements are discovered in the works of Nature, and the particular effects explained, that is, reduced to general rules ... which rules grounded on the analogy, and uniformness observed in the production of natural effects (*Principles* i 105)

191

191

Science as Simplification

- “the utmost effort of human reason is, to reduce the principles, productive of natural phaenomena, to a greater simplicity, and to resolve the many particular effects into a few general causes, by means of reasonings from analogy, experience, and observation. But as to the causes of these general causes, we should in vain attempt their discovery ... and we may esteem ourselves sufficiently happy, if, by accurate enquiry and reasoning, we can trace up the particular phaenomena to, or near to, ... general principles.” (*E* 4.12, cf. *T* intro 8)

192

192

Oxford Lectures on Hume's *Treatise* Book 1, 2010

2. An Argument for Anti-Realism

- Hume's entire argument is structured around the Copy Principle quest for an impression.
- The Principle is a tool for deciding questions of *meaning* (T 1.1.6.1, A 7, E 2.9).
- He aims to find causal terms' *meaning* or *significance* (T 1.3.14.14 & 27, A 26, E 7.3, 26 & 28).
- When the *subjective* impression is identified, the apparently anti-Realist implication is stated.
- The discussion culminates with two *definitions* of "cause", incorporating this anti-Realism.

193

193

3. Kames and a Footnote

- Kames (1751) quoted Hume's references to powers in the *Enquiry* (at 4.16) against him, as evidence of inconsistency; they knew each other well and swapped manuscripts prior to publication.
- In 1750 Hume added a footnote to E 4.16:
 - “* The word, Power, is here used in a loose and popular sense. The more accurate explication of it would give additional evidence to this argument. See Sect. 7.”

194

194

Quantitative Forces

- In the *Enquiry*, Hume is clear that mechanics involves *forces*: theoretical entities that can be quantified and enter into equations describing objects' behaviour. (e.g. E 4.12-13)
- “Force” is in the same family as “power” etc.
- This, rather than Causal Realism, explains the *Enquiry*'s prominent “power” language.
- E 7.25n and E 7.29n both suggest an attitude to such forces corresponding exactly to the anti-realist spirit of *Enquiry* 7. Forces are to be treated *instrumentally* (cf. Newton and Berkeley).

195

195

Why Two Definitions?

- The argument of T 1.3.14 and E 7 ends, notoriously, with two definitions of cause:
 - The first definition is based on *regular succession* of the “cause” A followed by “effect” B (plus contiguity in the *Treatise*).
 - The second definition is based on the mind's tendency to *infer B* from A.
- These don't coincide: constant conjunctions can be unseen, and we can (mistakenly) infer when the conjunctions are inconstant.

196

196

- To make sense of the definitions, we should not assume that they are intended to specify necessary and sufficient conditions.
- Hume's conception of *meaning*, associated with his Copy Principle, suggests a different view. The meaning of causal necessity can only be understood through the impression from which its idea is derived: *reflexive awareness of our own inferential behaviour* in response to observed constant conjunctions.
- The second definition, accordingly, specifies a paradigm case in which we experience this impression and thus can acquire the idea.

197

197

- Nothing in Hume's theory requires that, *having once acquired the idea*, we must restrict its application to those paradigm cases that characteristically generate it.
- Indeed his advocacy of “rules by which to judge of causes and effects” etc. implies that he must think we can go beyond these cases by *systematising* our application of the idea (cf. his discussion of the “system of realities” at T 1.3.9.3-5).
- Accordingly the two definitions can be seen as *complementary* rather than conflicting. The second identifies the relevant idea; the first specifies the criterion for applying it.

198

198

Oxford Lectures on Hume's *Treatise* Book 1, 2010

- There is a parallel case in Hume's treatment of *virtue or personal merit* in the *Moral Enquiry*. Here again he gives two definitions:
 - "PERSONAL MERIT consists altogether in the possession of mental qualities, *useful or agreeable* to the *person himself or to others*. ... The preceding ... definition ..." (M 9.1, 9.12)
 - "[My] hypothesis ... defines virtue to be *whatever mental action or quality gives to a spectator the pleasing sentiment of approbation*; ..." (M Appendix 1.10)
- Again we have a characteristic idea, whose application is then to be systematised.

199

199

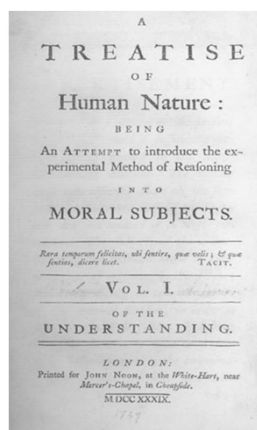
- This understanding of the paired definitions tells strongly in an anti-Realist direction. For it suggests that the system of causes, like the system of virtues, is essentially being read *into* the world rather than being read *off* it.
- We thus have a process of systematisation in which our natural judgement, refined and applied more systematically in accordance with the relevant rules, "raises, in a manner, a new creation", by "gilding or staining natural objects with the colours, borrowed from internal sentiment" (M Appendix 1.21).

200

200

4(f)

The Point of Hume's Analysis of Causation



201

Hume's Use of his Two Definitions

- If we search for subsequent paragraphs in the *Treatise* that mention the definition of "cause", "power" or "necessity", we find just three, at T 1.4.5.31, 2.3.1.18, and 2.3.2.4
- If we search instead for "constant conjunction" or "constant union", we find mainly T 1.4.5.30-33, 2.3.1.416, and 2.3.2.4 (T 1.4.1.2 and 1.4.3.2 also mention "constant union" briefly).
- Similar searches in the *Enquiry* point very clearly to Section 8 (10.5 is the only other).

202

202

Causation and the Mind

- Hume is especially keen to establish causality and necessity in respect of the mind:
 - In principle, matter could be the cause of thought (T 1.4.5, "Of the Immateriality of the Soul")
 - The "doctrine of necessity" applies as much to the mental world as to the physical world (T 2.3.1-2 and E 8 "Of Liberty and Necessity")
- Both arguments crucially turn on the claim that there is nothing to causal necessity beyond the two definitions ...

203

203

Of the Immateriality of the Soul

- The standard anti-materialist argument insists that material changes cannot cause thought, because the two are so different.
 - "... and yet nothing in the world is more easy than to refute it. We need only to reflect on what has been prov'd at large ... that to consider the matter *a priori*, any thing may produce any thing, and that we shall never discover a reason, why any object may or may not be the cause of any other, however great, or however little the resemblance may be between them" (T 1.4.5.30)

204

204

Oxford Lectures on Hume's *Treatise* Book 1, 2010

- Hume then goes further to insist that material motion *is indeed* found to be the cause of thought:

– “we find ... by experience, that they are constantly united; which being *all the circumstances, that enter into the idea of cause and effect* ... we may *certainly* conclude, that motion may be, and *actually is*, the cause of thought and perception.” (T 1.4.5.30, my emphasis)

– “as *the constant conjunction of objects constitutes the very essence of cause and effect*, matter and motion may often be regarded as the causes of thought, as far as we have any notion of that relation.” (T 1.4.5.33, my emphasis)

205

205

Of Liberty and Necessity

- Hume's argument that the same necessity is applicable to the moral and physical realms depends on taking our understanding of necessary connexion to be completely exhausted by the two factors of constant conjunction and customary inference.
- These two factors can be shown to apply in the moral realm, and he insists that we can't even *ascribe* any further necessity to matter:

206

206

“the ... advocates for [libertarian] free-will must allow this union and inference with regard to human actions. They will only deny, that this makes the whole of necessity. But then they must shew, that we have an idea of something else in the actions of matter; which, according to the foregoing reasoning, is impossible.” (A 34, cf. T 2.3.1.3-18, T 2.3.2.4, E 8.4-22, E 8.27)

- Here Hume is arguing against the Causal Realist, who thinks that “we have an idea of something else in the actions of matter”.

207

207

“A New Definition of Necessity”

- Even more explicitly than with “Of the Immateriality of the Soul”, Hume portrays his argument here as turning on his new understanding of necessity:

“Our author pretends, that this reasoning puts the whole controversy in a new light, by giving a new definition of necessity.” (A 34)

- This requires that his definitions are understood as specifying “the very essence of necessity” (T 2.3.1.10, 2.3.2.2).

208

208

Anti-Realism supporting realism

- all objects, which are found to be constantly conjoin'd, are *upon that account only* to be regarded as causes and effects. ... the constant conjunction of objects constitutes *the very essence* of cause and effect ... (T 1.4.5.32, my emphasis)
- two particulars [are] essential to necessity, *viz.* the constant *union* and the *inference* of the mind ... wherever we discover these we must acknowledge a necessity. (T 2.3.1.4)

209

209

Reconstructing Hume's Vision

- The “chief argument” of the *Treatise* (as summarised in the *Abstract* of 1740) is almost entirely devoted to causation etc. – *Treatise* 1.3 is the central part of the work.
- Applying the Copy Principle to the idea of necessary connexion reveals the nature of causal necessity, settling fundamental issues about causation in the moral sphere, and eliminating aprioristic causal metaphysics.

210

210

Oxford Lectures on Hume's *Treatise* Book 1, 2010

The Cosmological Argument

- Hume told Boswell that he “never had entertained any belief in Religion since he began to read Locke and Clarke”
- Both Locke and Clarke advocated the Cosmological Argument, and insisted that matter cannot give rise to thought.
- *Treatise* 1.3.3 – which disputes the basis of the Causal Maxim – identifies both Locke and Clarke by name (in footnotes).

211

211

The Origin of Ideas

- Locke's empiricism naturally raises the issue of the origin of the idea of causal necessity, central to the Cosmological Argument.
- Locke's “Of Power” (*Essay* II xxi) gives an inadequate account: Hume sees this, and attempts to remedy the omission.
- Locke's chapter focuses also on Free Will. Hume sees his account as supporting Collins against Clarke (a debate very familiar to him through Dudgeon, Baxter, Desmaizeaux).

212

212

An Integrated Vision

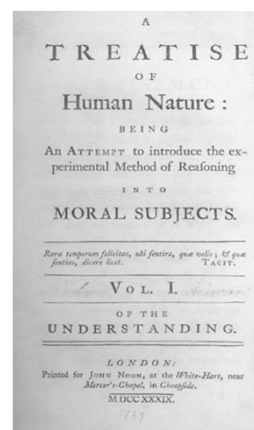
- Hume's causal anti-Realism refutes:
 - The Cosmological Argument;
 - Anti-materialist arguments;
 - The Free Will Theodicy (cf. Hume's early memoranda, from the late 1730s);
 - Aprioristic causal metaphysics in general.
- At the same time it supports:
 - Empirical, causal science: the *only* way to establish anything about “matters of fact”;
 - Extension of causal science into moral realm.

213

213

4(g)

Hume, Determinism, and Liberty



214

Hume's Determinism

- Hume is a determinist, in the sense that he thinks everything happens in conformity with universal, exceptionless causal laws.
- Note that this is entirely compatible with:
 - Hume's view that the uniformity of nature cannot be proved.
 - Hume's analysis of causal necessity.
- However the basis for his determinism is not entirely clear.

215

215

Evidence for Hume's Determinism

- We have seen that Hume's letters evince a commitment to the Causal Maxim:
 - “Whatever begins to exist, must have a cause of existence” (*T* 1.3.3.1).
- In his sections “Of Liberty and Necessity” (*T* 2.3.1-2 and *E* 8), Hume argues for the Doctrine of Necessity (*T* 2.3.2.3, *E* 8.3).
 - It seems fairly clear from how he describes it that Hume takes this “doctrine” to be the thesis of determinism ...

216

216

Oxford Lectures on Hume's *Treatise* Book 1, 2010

Hume's Statement of Necessity

"'Tis universally acknowledg'd, that the operations of external bodies are necessary, and that in the communication of their motion, in their attraction, and mutual cohesion, there are not the least traces of indifference or liberty. Every object is determin'd by an absolute fate to a certain degree and direction of its motion, and can no more depart from that precise line, in which it moves, than it can convert itself into an angel ...

217

217

The Necessity of Human Behaviour

... The actions, therefore, of matter are to be regarded as instances of necessary actions; and whatever is in this respect on the same footing with matter, must be acknowledg'd to be necessary. That we may know whether this be the case with the actions of the mind, we shall begin with examining matter, and considering on what the idea of a necessity in its operations are founded ..." (T 2.3.1.3)

- Hume then goes on to appeal to his two definitions, as we saw earlier.

218

218

The Doctrine of Liberty: A Contrast between *Treatise* and *Enquiry*

- In the *Enquiry*, Hume famously pursues 'a reconciling project' (E 8.23), presenting a *compatibilist* solution to the problem of free will and determinism.
- Following Hobbes, he sees *the doctrine of necessity* as entirely compatible with *the doctrine of liberty* – i.e. the claim that some of our actions are *free*.
- But in the *Treatise*, Hume understands "liberty" as *chance*., which he denies.

219

219

- "... this fantastical system of liberty ..." (T 2.3.1.15)

- "According to my definitions ... liberty ... is the very same thing with chance. As chance is commonly thought to imply a contradiction, and is at least directly contrary to experience, there are always the same arguments against liberty or free-will." (T 2.3.1.18)
- "... the doctrine of liberty, however absurd it may be in one sense, and unintelligible in any other." (T 2.3.2.1)

220

220

The Evidence for Determinism

"philosophers ... find, that it is at least possible the contrariety of events may not proceed from any contingency in the cause, but from the secret operation of contrary causes. This possibility is converted into certainty by farther observation; when they remark, that, upon an exact scrutiny, a contrariety of effects always betrays a contrariety of causes, and proceeds from their mutual opposition." (T 1.3.12.5; E 8.13)

221

221

Determinism and Morality

- It is commonly assumed that determinism would undermine moral responsibility, but Hume argues that on the contrary,

"this kind of necessity is so essential to religion and morality, that without it there must ensue an absolute subversion of both ... as all human laws are founded on rewards and punishments, 'tis suppos'd as a fundamental principle, that these motives have an influence on the mind, and both produce the good and prevent the evil actions. ... common sense requires it shou'd be esteem'd a cause, and be look'd upon as an instance of that necessity" (T 2.3.2.5)

222

222

Oxford Lectures on Hume's *Treatise* Book 1, 2010

Hume's *Treatise*, Book 1

5. *Of the Sceptical and Other Systems of Philosophy*



Peter Millican
Hertford College, Oxford

223

The Structure of Book 1 Part 4

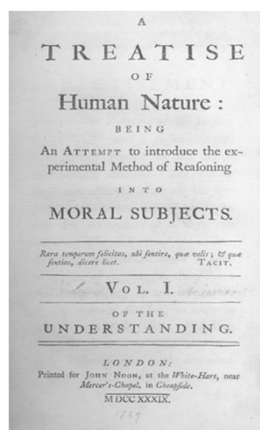
- Section 1: "Of scepticism with regard to reason"
- Section 2: "Of scepticism with regard to the senses" (i.e. the nature of our ideas and beliefs about the external world)
- Section 3: "Of the antient philosophy"
- Section 4: "Of the modern philosophy" (i.e. primary and secondary qualities etc.)
- Section 5: "Of the immateriality of the soul" (argues that matter could cause thought)
- Section 6: "Of personal identity"
- Section 7: "Conclusion of this book"

224

224

5(a)

Of Scepticism with Regard to Reason



225

From Knowledge to Probability

- *Treatise* 1.4.1 contains a famous – and very radical – sceptical argument which, however, seems problematic.
- Its first stage argues that, even if we assume that in "demonstrative sciences the rules are certain and infallible" (*T* 1.4.1.1), an element of doubt is still appropriate because our faculties sometimes make mistakes.
- Thus "knowledge [i.e. in the strict sense] degenerates into probability" (*T* 1.4.1.3).

226

226

The First Reflex Judgement

- Hence when we consider what confidence to place in a mathematical argument, we need to make a judgement about the reliability of our reason or understanding:

"we ought always to correct the first judgment, derived from the nature of the object [i.e. the mathematical judgement], by another judgment, deriv'd from the nature of the understanding." (*T* 1.4.1.5)

227

227

The Second Reflex Judgement

- The same sort of correction is appropriate for probable judgements (*T* 1.4.1.5)
- So how good are we in judging the reliability of our own faculties? That first [probable] reflex judgement is itself subject to error, so we need to make a second correction:

"we are oblig'd by our reason to add a new doubt deriv'd from the possibility of error in the estimation we make of the truth and fideity of our faculties." (*T* 1.4.1.6)

228

228

Oxford Lectures on Hume's *Treatise* Book 1, 2010

Iterative Weakening

- The second reflex judgement can only weaken the evidence left by the first:

"this decision, tho' it should be favourable to our preceding judgment, being founded only on probability, must weaken still farther our first evidence, and must itself be weaken'd by a fourth doubt of the same kind, and so on *in infinitum*; and even the vastest quantity ... must in this manner be reduc'd to nothing. ... all the rules of logic require a continual diminution, and at last a total extinction of belief and evidence." (T 1.4.1.6)

229

229

Does Hume Accept the Argument?

"Shou'd it be ask'd me, whether I sincerely assent to this argument ... and whether I be really one of those sceptics, who hold that all is uncertain, and that our judgment is not in *any* thing possess of *any* measures of truth and falshood; I shou'd reply, that this question is entirely superfluous, and that neither I, nor any other person was ever sincerely and constantly of that opinion. Nature, by an absolute and uncontrollable necessity has determin'd us to judge as well as to breathe and feel; ..." (T 1.4.1.7)

230

230

The Irresistibility of Belief

"... nor can we any more forbear viewing certain objects in a stronger and fuller light, upon account of their customary connexion with a present impression, than we can hinder ourselves from thinking as long as we are awake, or seeing the surrounding bodies when we turn our eyes towards them in broad sunshine. Whoever has taken the pains to refute the cavils of this *total* scepticism, has really disputed without an antagonist ..." (T 1.4.1.7)

231

231

Hume's Intention Here

"My intention then in displaying so carefully the arguments of that fantastic sect, is only to make the reader sensible of the truth of my hypothesis, *that all our reasonings concerning causes and effects are deriv'd from nothing but custom; and that belief is more properly an act of the sensitive, than of the cogitative part of our natures.* ... I have prov'd, that ... If belief ... were a simple act of the thought, without any peculiar manner of conception, or the addition of a force and vivacity, it must infallibly destroy itself, and in every case terminate in a total suspense of judgment." (T 1.4.1.8)

232

232

How Does Hume Escape?

- So how does Hume's own account of belief escape this iterative weakening and eventual reduction to complete suspension?

"I answer, that after the first and second decision; as the action of the mind becomes forc'd and unnatural, and the ideas faint and obscure; tho' the principles ... be the same ...; yet their influence on the imagination [weakens] ..." (T 1.4.1.10)

- Hume goes on to remark that we are familiar with the difficulty of following and being moved by abstruse arguments. (T 1.4.1.11)

233

233

A Trivial Property of the Fancy

- Later, at T 1.4.7.7, Hume will note the significance of our being saved "from ... total scepticism only by means of that singular and seemingly trivial property of the fancy [i.e. the imagination], by which we enter with difficulty into remote views of things".
- This raises serious doubts about the adequacy of his response to scepticism in the *Treatise*.

234

234

Oxford Lectures on Hume's *Treatise* Book 1, 2010

Is Hume's Argument Strong?

- The *T* 1.4.1 argument seems dubious:
 - Suppose I make a mathematical judgement.
 - Experience suggests to me that I go wrong about 1% of the time in such judgements, so I adjust my credence to 99%.
 - Then it occurs to me that my estimate of 1% might be wrong ... but why should this make me assume that my estimate is likely to be too *optimistic* rather than *pessimistic*? Maybe my credence should be *greater than 99%*?

235

235

Why Iterate?

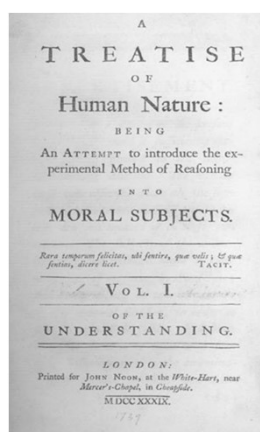
- Some defenders of Hume admit that reduction is not forced, but suggest the iteration implies a "spreading" of the probability estimate, so it becomes completely non-specific.
- But the case for iteration also seems weak. My appropriate credence in a mathematical judgement should depend on my reliability [and hence remembered track record] in judging *mathematics*, not on my reliability in judging my reliability in judging ... (etc.).

236

236

5(b)

Of Scepticism with Regard to the Senses



237

Presupposing the Existence of Body

- *Treatise* 1.4.2 is complex, difficult, and confusing, but nevertheless rewarding.
- Hume starts out by repeating the message of *T* 1.4.1, that the sceptic continues to believe even when his beliefs cannot be defended:

"We may well ask, *What causes induce us to believe in the existence of body?* But 'tis in vain to ask, *Whether there be body or not?* That is a point, which we must take for granted in all our reasonings." (*T* 1.4.2.1).

238

238

Doubts About the Existence of Body

- Hume accordingly announces that his agenda is to explain "the causes which induce us to believe in the existence of body" (*T* 1.4.2.2)
- But by the end of the section, his explanation of these causes is generating sceptical doubts:

"I begun ... with premising, that we ought to have an implicit faith in our senses ... But ... I feel myself *at present* of a quite contrary sentiment, and am more inclin'd to repose no faith at all in my senses, or rather imagination, than to place in it such an implicit confidence." (*T* 1.4.2.56).

239

239

Analysing the Belief

- Hume analyses the belief in body into two aspects, each of which is to be explained:
 - "why we attribute a CONTINU'D existence to objects, even when they are not present to the senses"
 - "why we suppose them to have an existence DISTINCT from the mind and perception"
 - He goes on to explain that the *distinctness* of bodies involves both their *external* position and also their *independence*. (*T* 1.4.2.2)

240

240

Oxford Lectures on Hume's *Treatise* Book 1, 2010

Which Faculty?

- Having distinguished *continuity* from *distinctness*, Hume remarks that each implies the other. He then declares his aim, to:

“consider, whether it be the *senses*, *reason*, or the *imagination*, that produces the opinion of a *continu'd* or of a *distinct* existence. These are the only questions, that are intelligible on the present subject. For as to the notion of external existence, when taken for something specifically different from perceptions, we have already shown its absurdity [in *T* 1.2.6]”

241

241

Eliminating the Senses

- In discussing the *senses* as a potential source of the belief in body, Hume seems to treat them as bare sources of impressions. As such,
 - They obviously cannot “give rise to the notion of the *continu'd* existence of their objects, after they no longer appear to the senses”. (*T* 1.4.2.3)
 - Nor can they “offer ... their impressions as the images of something *distinct*, or *independent*, and *external* ... because they convey to us nothing but a single perception, and never give us the least intimation of any thing beyond.” (*T* 1.4.2.4)

242

242

Fallacy, Illusion, and Transparency

- “If our senses, therefore, suggest any idea of distinct existences, they must convey the impressions as those very existences, by a kind of fallacy and illusion.” (*T* 1.4.2.5)
- This is an illusion because the perceptions of the senses are, so to speak, *transparent*:
 - “all sensations are felt by the mind, such as they really are” (*T* 1.4.2.5)
 - “since all actions and sensations of the mind are known to us by consciousness, they must ... appear in every particular what they are ...” (*T* 1.4.2.7)

243

243

Externality to the Body

- It might seem relatively unproblematic for our senses to present things as external to our body, but this presupposes that we have identified our body to start with:
 - “ascribing a real and corporeal existence to [our limbs etc.] is an act of the mind as difficult to explain, as that which we examine at present.” (*T* 1.4.2.9)
- Hume adds considerations from the nature of our various senses, and the primary/secondary quality distinction (*T* 1.4.2.12-13).

244

244

Reason and the Vulgar View

- Children, peasants, and the “vulgar” in general clearly believe in the external world without consulting philosophical reason (*T* 1.4.2.14):
 - “For philosophy informs us, that every thing, which appears to the mind, is nothing but a perception, and is interrupted, and dependent on the mind; whereas the vulgar confound perceptions and objects, and attribute a distinct continu'd existence to the very things they feel or see. This sentiment, then, as it is entirely unreasonable, must proceed from some other faculty than the understanding.”

245

245

Eliminating Reason

- Even if we adopt the philosophers' view, and “distinguish our perceptions from our objects”, we still can't reason from one to the other.
- Hume spells this out at *T* 1.4.2.47 (cf. *E* 12.12), arguing that since we are directly acquainted only with the perceptions, we are unable to establish any causal correlation with objects, and so cannot infer the latter by causal reasoning, the only kind of “argument ... that can assure us of matter of fact” (*T* 1.4.2.14).

246

246

Oxford Lectures on Hume's *Treatise* Book 1, 2010

Turning to the Imagination

- With the senses and reason eliminated, our belief in “the continu'd and distinct existence of body ... must be entirely owing to the IMAGINATION” (*T* 1.4.2.14).
- Most of the rest of the section is devoted to an explanation of how the imagination generates the belief.
- At *T* 1.4.2.18-19, Hume identifies *constancy* and *coherence* as the key factors that induce us to judge perceptions as external to us.

247

247

Constancy and Coherence

- *Constancy* of perceptions involves their similarity, when they “return upon me” (e.g. after closing then opening my eyes) “without the least alteration” (*T* 1.4.2.18).
- *Coherent* perceptions change, but in regular (and hence expected) or explicable patterns – at *T* 1.4.2.19, Hume seems to gesture towards what is now known as Inference to the Best Explanation (IBE), whereby we infer the existence of unperceived objects to give a coherent explanation of our observations.

248

248

Explaining the Vulgar View

- Hume summarises the account he is about to give at *T* 1.4.2.24:

“When we have been accustom'd to observe a constancy in certain impressions, and have found, that the perception of the sun or ocean, for instance, returns upon us after an absence or annihilation with like parts and in a like order, as at its first appearance, we are not apt to regard these interrupted perceptions as different, (which they really are) but on the contrary consider them individually the same, upon account of their resemblance. ...”

249

249

“But as this interruption of their existence is contrary to their perfect identity, and makes us regard the first impression as annihilated, and the second as newly created, we find ourselves somewhat at a loss, and are involv'd in a kind of contradiction. In order to free ourselves from this difficulty, we disguise, as much as possible, the interruption, or rather remove it entirely, by supposing that these interrupted perceptions are connected by a real existence, of which we are insensible. This supposition, or idea of continu'd existence, acquires a force and vivacity from the memory of these broken impressions, and from that propensity, which they give us, to suppose them the same; and ... the very essence of belief consists in the force and vivacity of the conception.”

250

250

The Four-Part Account

- At *T* 1.4.2.25 (cf. *T* 1.4.2.43), Hume summarises the four parts of this account, which he then discusses in depth:
 - The principle of individuation, *T* 1.4.2.26-30
 - How resemblance leads us to attribute identity to interrupted perceptions, *T* 1.4.2.31-36
 - Why we unite interrupted perceptions by supposing a continu'd existence, *T* 1.4.2.37-40
 - Explaining the force and vivacity of conception, which constitutes belief, *T* 1.4.2.41-42

251

251

A Problematic Assumption?

- In Hume's complex discussion of parts two to four of his “system” – from paragraphs 31 to 46 – he speaks with the vulgar by supposing “that there is only a single existence, which I shall call indifferently *object* or *perception*, according as it shall seem best to suit my purpose”.
- But one might expect the scientific explanation of the vulgar belief – given that it is not a *rational* explanation – to be *subcognitive*, and hence not expressible in vulgar terms.

252

252

Oxford Lectures on Hume's *Treatise* Book 1, 2010

Fallacy and Fiction

- Having explained how the vulgar view arises, Hume emphasises (T 1.4.2.43) how much falsehood and error it involves:
 - False attribution of identity, into which we are “seduced” by the resemblance of perceptions.
 - The fiction of a continued existence, which “is really false” but serves “to remedy the interruption of our perceptions”.
 - “experiments [reveal that] ... the doctrine of the independent existence of our sensible perceptions is contrary to the plainest experience” (T 1.4.2.44).

253

253

The Key Experiment

- “When we press one eye with a finger, we immediately perceive all the objects to become double” (T 1.4.2.45)
 - “But as we do not attribute a continu’d existence to both these perceptions”
 - “and as they are both of the same nature”
 - “we clearly perceive that all our perceptions are dependent on our organs, and the disposition of our nerves and animal spirits.”
- A similar argument will come at T 1.4.4.4.

254

254

The Philosophical System

- Philosophers realise that perceptions are not independent, but they are very reluctant (or unable) to give up belief in the continued and distinct existence of body.
- Hence they invent a new theory “of the double existence of perceptions and objects” as a “palliative remedy” (T 1.4.2.46).
- This “has no *prima* recommendation either to reason or the imagination”, and acquires all its imaginative appeal from the vulgar view.

255

255

Recapitulation and Overview

- In spelling out these points, Hume repeats or expands some of his earlier arguments:
 - Reason cannot establish continuing objects causing our perceptions (T 1.4.2.47).
 - The imagination leads naturally to the vulgar, rather than philosophical, view (T 1.4.2.48).
 - Hence the philosophical view must acquire its force from the vulgar view (T 1.4.2.49-52).
 - This explains various aspects of the philosophical view (T 1.4.2.53-55).

256

256

The Despairing Conclusion

“I cannot conceive how such trivial qualities of the fancy, conducted by such false suppositions, can ever lead to any solid and rational system. ... Philosophers deny our resembling perceptions to be identically the same, and uninterrupted; and yet have so great a propensity to believe them such, that they arbitrarily invent a new set of perceptions, to which they attribute these qualities. I say, a new set of perceptions [because] ... 'tis impossible for us distinctly to conceive, objects to be in their nature any thing but exactly the same with perceptions. What then can we look for from this confusion of groundless and extraordinary opinions but error and falsehood? And how can we justify to ourselves any belief we repose in them?” (T 1.4.2.56)

257

257

Carelessness and Inattention

“As long as our attention is bent upon the subject, the philosophical and study’d principle may prevail; but the moment we relax our thoughts, nature will display herself, and draw us back to our former opinion.” (T 1.4.2.51 cf. 53)

“’Tis impossible upon any system to defend either our understanding [cf. T 1.4.1] or senses; and we but expose them farther when we endeavour to justify them in that manner. As the sceptical doubt arises naturally from a profound and intense reflection on those subjects, it always increases, the farther we carry our reflections, whether in opposition or conformity to it. Carelessness and in-attention alone can afford us any remedy.” (T 1.4.2.57)

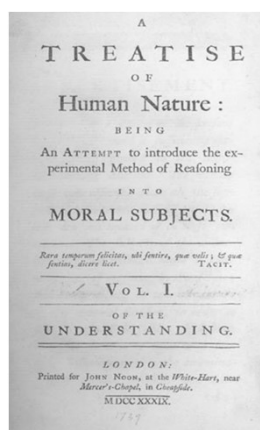
258

258

Oxford Lectures on Hume's *Treatise* Book 1, 2010

5(c)

Of the Antient and Modern Philosophies



259

Of the Antient Philosophy

- Section 1.4.3 of the *Treatise* is largely devoted to debunking Aristotelianism:

“the fictions of the antient philosophy, concerning *substances*, and *substantial forms*, and *accidents*, and *occult qualities*; which, however unreasonable and capricious, have a very intimate connexion with the principles of human nature.” (T 1.4.3.1)

- Hume explains these “fictions” as naturally arising from the imagination, by which the “Peripatetics” allowed themselves – far too easily and naively – to be seduced.

260

260

False Simplicity and Identity

- “The most judicious philosophers” (cf. Locke, *Essay* II xxiii) consider “that our ideas of bodies are nothing but collections form'd by the mind of the ideas of the several distinct sensible qualities, of which objects are compos'd”.
- But the sorts of confusions outlined in T 1.4.2 lead us naturally to think of objects as *simple* things that retain their *identity* through time:

“The smooth and uninterrupted progress of the thought ... readily deceives the mind, and makes us ascribe an identity to the changeable succession ...” (T 1.4.3.3)

261

261

Inventing Substance

- When we realise these supposedly identical things have actually changed over time,

“the imagination is apt to feign something unknown and invisible, which it supposes to continue the same under all these variations; and this unintelligible something it calls a *substance*, or *original and first matter*.” (T 1.4.3.4)

- We likewise imagine this *original substance* to be simple and uncompounded:

“a principle of union or cohesion among [the object's] qualities” (T 1.4.3.5)

262

262

Substantial Forms and Accidents

- The Peripatetics [i.e. Aristotelians] then ascribe the differences between substances to their different *substantial forms* (T 1.4.3.6).
- Qualities of objects such as colour and figure are then considered as *accidents* [accidental as opposed to essential qualities] “inhering in” the substance, so these philosophers:

“suppose a substance supporting, which they do not understand, and an accident supported, of which they have as imperfect an idea. The whole system, therefore, is entirely incomprehensible.” (T 1.4.3.8)

263

263

Faculties and Occult Qualities

- Men naturally “imagine they perceive a connexion” between constantly conjoined objects. Philosophers who investigate further cannot find any such connexion,

“But ... instead of drawing a just inference from this observation, and concluding, that we have no idea of power or agency, separate from the mind, and belonging to causes ..., they ... [invent] the words *faculty* and *occult quality*. ... They need only say, that any phaenomenon, which puzzles them, arises from a faculty or an occult quality ...” (T 1.4.3.10)

264

264

Oxford Lectures on Hume's *Treatise* Book 1, 2010

Sympathies, Antipathies etc.

"But among all the instances, wherein the Peripatetics have shown they were guided by every trivial propensity of the imagination, no one is more remarkable than their *sympathies, antipathies, and horrors of a vacuum*. There is a very remarkable inclination in human nature, to bestow on external objects the same emotions, which it observes in itself ... This inclination, 'tis true, is suppress'd by a little reflection, and only takes place in children, poets, and the antient philosophers. ... what excuse shall we find to justify our philosophers in so signal a weakness?" (*T* 1.4.3.11)

265

265

Imaginative Principles, Good and Bad

- Hume has criticised the Aristotelians for founding their philosophy on the imagination. But this might seem very unfair, when he has earlier (in *T* 1.3.6) argued that all inductive "experimental reasoning" – which he advocates as the only legitimate basis of science (e.g. the *Treatise* subtitle) – is itself founded on custom, a principle of the imagination.
- He addresses this objection in a famous passage right at the start of *T* 1.4.4, distinguishing between two sorts of imaginative principles, one sort philosophically respectable and the others disreputable:

266

266

"In order to justify myself, I must distinguish in the imagination betwixt the principles which are permanent, irresistible, and universal; such as the customary transition from causes to effects, and from effects to causes: And the principles, which are changeable, weak, and irregular; such as those I have just now taken notice of. The former are the foundation of all our thoughts and actions, so that upon their removal human nature must immediately perish and go to ruin. The latter are neither unavoidable to mankind, nor necessary, or so much as useful in the conduct of life; but on the contrary are observ'd only to take place in weak minds, and being opposite to the other principles of conduct and reasoning, may easily be subverted by a due contrast and opposition. For this reason the former are receiv'd by philosophy, and the latter rejected." (*T* 1.4.4.1)

267

267

Two Senses of "Imagination"

- This same distinction informs a footnote inserted while the *Treatise* was in press:

"as our assent to all probable reasonings is founded on the vivacity of ideas, it resembles many of those whimsies and prejudices, which are rejected under the opprobrious character of being the offspring of the imagination. By this expression it appears that the word, *imagination*, is commonly us'd in two different senses; and ... in the following reasonings I have often [fallen] into [this ambiguity]." (*T* 1.3.9.19 n. 22)

268

268

Of the Modern Philosophy

- Modern (Lockean) philosophy claims to be based on the "solid, permanent, and consistent principles of the imagination" (*T* 1.4.4.2).
- But now Hume will argue – through an attack on the primary/secondary quality distinction – that it has no such secure foundation.
- He suggests that the only "satisfactory" argument for the distinction "is deriv'd from the variations of [sensory] impressions", depending upon such things as our health, constitution, and external situation (*T* 1.4.4.2).

269

269

A Causal Argument

"'Tis certain, that when different impressions of the same sense arise from any object, every one of these impressions has not a resembling quality existent in the object. ... Now from like effects we presume like causes. Many of the impressions of colour, sound, &c. are confest to be nothing but internal existences, and to arise from causes, which in no way resemble them. These impressions are in appearance nothing different from the other impressions of colour, sound, &c. We conclude, therefore, that they are, all of them, deriv'd from a like origin." (*T* 1.4.4.4)

270

270

Oxford Lectures on Hume's *Treatise* Book 1, 2010

A Berkeleian Objection

- Hume focuses on one objection, which takes inspiration from George Berkeley:

"If colours, sounds, tastes, and smells be merely perceptions, nothing we can conceive is possess'd of a real, continu'd, and independent existence; not even motion, extension and solidity, which are the primary qualities chiefly insisted on [by Lockeans]." (T 1.4.4.6)
- To form an idea of a moving extended body, my idea of extension must have some content, which can only come from sight or touch, ultimately from coloured or solid simples.

271

271

Annihilating Matter

- Colour "is excluded from any real existence" (as a subjective secondary quality).
- "The idea of solidity is that of two objects, which ... cannot penetrate each other" (T 1.4.4.9). So understanding solidity requires some *antecedent* grasp of what an object is, and with colour and solidity itself excluded, there's nothing left which can give this.
- "Our modern philosophy, therefore leaves us no just nor satisfactory idea ... of matter."

272

272

Reason Against the Senses

- Hume elaborates this argument further from T 1.4.4.10-14, and then concludes:

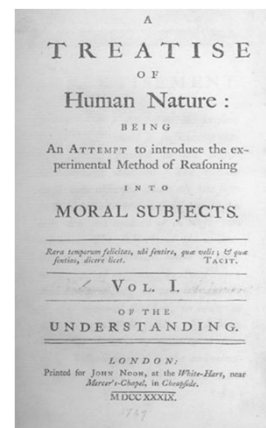
"Thus there is a direct and total opposition betwixt our reason and our senses; or more properly speaking, betwixt those conclusions we form from cause and effect, and those that persuade us of the continu'd and independent existence of body."
- Causal reasoning concludes that secondary qualities aren't objective; but without appeal to impressions of colour, we cannot form any coherent notion of an extended body.

273

273

5(d)

The Soul and the Self



274

Turning to the Internal World

- "Of the Immateriality of the Soul" marks a turn to "the intellectual world". This, "tho' involv'd in infinite obscurities", is not perplex'd with any such contradictions, as those we have discovered in the natural" (T 1.4.5.1).
- From T 1.4.5.2-6, Hume attacks the notion of mental *substance* (and the related notion of *inhesion*) in various ways, including an appeal to the Copy Principle (at T 1.4.5.4). The notion is condemned as meaningless.

275

275

The Location of Perceptions

- From T 1.4.5.7-16, Hume discusses the issue of the location and extension of perceptions:
 - Note in particular his insistence that only perceptions of sight and feeling have spatial location (T 1.4.5.10). Other, non-spatial, perceptions prove that "*an object may exist, and yet be no where*". And causation cannot require spatial contiguity (cf. T 1.3.2.6 n. 16).
 - Note also the illusion whereby we are seduced by the imagination into ascribing sensations of taste (which have no physical location) to the object – e.g. a fig – that produces them (T 1.4.5.13-14); this discussion is referenced by the footnote at 1.3.14.25 n. 32.

276

276

Oxford Lectures on Hume's *Treatise* Book 1, 2010

A Spinozistic Parody

- From *T* 1.4.5.17-28, Hume parodies the standard arguments against the “hideous hypothesis” (*T* 1.4.5.19) of Spinoza, deploying them against the orthodox theological idea of a simple soul.
- Spinoza sees “the universe of objects” as being modifications of a “simple, uncompounded, and indivisible” substance (*T* 1.4.5.21). This is supposed to be outrageous. And yet theologians see “the universe of thought” – my impressions and ideas – as being all modifications of a simple, uncompounded and indivisible soul.

277

277

Defending Materialism

- The standard anti-materialist argument insists that material changes cannot cause thought, because the two are so different.
“... and yet nothing in the world is more easy than to refute it. We need only to reflect on what has been prov'd at large ... that to consider the matter *a priori*, any thing may produce any thing, and that we shall never discover a reason, why any object may or may not be the cause of any other, however great, or however little the resemblance may be between them ” (*T* 1.4.5.30)

278

278

- Hume then goes further to insist that material motion *is indeed* found to be the cause of thought:

– “we find ... by experience, that they are constantly united; which being *all the circumstances, that enter into the idea of cause and effect* ... we may *certainly* conclude, that motion may be, and *actually is*, the cause of thought and perception.” (*T* 1.4.5.30, my emphasis)

– “as *the constant conjunction of objects constitutes the very essence of cause and effect*, matter and motion may often be regarded as the causes of thought, as far as we have any notion of that relation.” (*T* 1.4.5.33, my emphasis)

279

279

The 1.4.5 Dilemma

- Hume starts paragraph 1.4.5.31 with a dilemma, before arguing for its second horn in the remainder of the paragraph:
“There seems only this dilemma left us ... either to assert, that nothing can be the cause of another, but where the mind can perceive the connexion in its idea of the objects: Or to maintain, that all objects, which we find constantly conjoin'd, are upon that account to be regarded as causes or effects.” (*T* 1.4.5.31)

280

280

Applying the Definition of Cause

- Thus at the end of *Treatise* 1.4.5 – just as in the discussion of “Liberty and Necessity” which is to come in 2.3.1 and 2.3.2 – Hume is applying his (first) definition of cause in terms of constant conjunction.
- These are *positive* (rather than sceptical) implications of his definition: they *vindicate* the application of causation to mental phenomena.
- *Treatise* 1.3.14 has thus served the purpose of supporting materialism and determinism.

281

281

A Puzzling Conclusion

- The final paragraph of *Treatise* 1.4.5 starts by emphasising Hume's key lesson (cf. *T* 1.3.15.1) that causes and effects can be known only by experience, since *whatever we can imagine, is possible* from an *a priori* point of view.
- However the last two sentences refer to “the immortality of the soul”, which hasn't so far been mentioned! This seems to be a trace of one of the “noble parts” on religion which Hume excised from the *Treatise* manuscript when he “castrated” it in 1737 (cf. letter to Henry Home, *NHL* 2)

282

282

Oxford Lectures on Hume's *Treatise* Book 1, 2010

Of Personal Identity

- *Treatise* 1.4.6 addresses the topic of personal identity, wielding the Copy Principle (*T* 1.4.6.2) to deny that we have any idea of the self which is anything like the conventionally presumed notion with its "perfect identity and simplicity" (*T* 1.4.6.1).
- When I look inside 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." (*T* 1.4.6.3)

283

283

The Bundle Theory

- Hence the only genuine idea of self is that of:
"nothing but a bundle or collection of different perceptions [impressions and ideas], which succeed each other with an inconceivable rapidity, and are in a perpetual flux and movement. ... The mind is a kind of theatre, where several perceptions successively make their appearance ... There is properly no *simplicity* in it at one time, nor *identity* in different. ... The comparison of the theatre must not mislead us. 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 ..." (*T* 1.4.6.4)

284

284

Explaining the Attribution of Identity

- Hume now goes on to explain our "propension to ascribe an identity to these successive perceptions, and to suppose ourselves possess of an invariable and uninterrupted existence" (*T* 1.4.6.5).
- He takes this to involve the same sort of imaginative principles that are at play when we attribute identity "to plants and animals", based on our tendency to be seduced by an easy associative transition of ideas.

285

285

Confusion and Absurdity

- Just as with external objects (cf. *T* 1.4.2 and 1.4.3), when we consider a gradually changing sequence of perceptions, we are apt to confuse this with an ongoing identity (*T* 1.4.6.6).
- Reflection on the changing sequence shows this to be absurd, so to resolve "this absurdity, we ... feign some new and unintelligible principle, that connects the objects together ... Thus we ... run into the notion of a *soul*, and *self*, and *substance*, to disguise the variation."

286

286

Association and Identity

- "To prove this hypothesis", Hume aims "to show ... that the objects, which are variable or interrupted, and yet are suppos'd to continue the same, are such only as consist of a succession of parts, connected together by resemblance, contiguity, or causation", that is, by the association of ideas (*T* 1.4.6.7).
- We tend to attribute identity when changes are *proportionately* small and *gradual* (*T* 1.4.6.9-10), or when the changing parts are relevant to "some *common end* or purpose", and all the more so when they bear "the reciprocal relation of cause and effect" to each other (*T* 1.4.6.11-12).

287

287

Explaining Personal Identity

- The attribution of personal identity is just another instance of this phenomenon: "The identity, which we ascribe to the mind of man, is only a fictitious one, and of a like kind with that which we ascribe to vegetables and animal bodies." (*T* 1.4.6.15)
- Hume backs this up by appeal to his Separability Principle and his theory of causation, which tells us "that the understanding never observes any real connexion among objects, and that even the union of cause and effect ... resolves itself into a customary association of ideas". So identity cannot *really* apply between our perceptions (*T* 1.4.6.16).

288

288

Oxford Lectures on Hume's *Treatise* Book 1, 2010

Resemblance, Causation, Memory

- So "our notions of personal identity, proceed entirely from the smooth and uninterrupted progress of the thought along a train of connected ideas" (*T* 1.4.6.16).
- Contiguity plays little role here, so it is the mutual *resemblance* and *causation* between our perceptions that are crucial (*T* 1.4.6.17-19).
- Memory produces resemblance between our perceptions, and our concern about our future adds to their causal linkages. Memory also reveals the sequence of linked perceptions to us, and so is the chief "source of personal identity" (*T* 1.4.6.18-20).

289

289

Notorious Second Thoughts

- In the *Appendix* to the *Treatise*, published with Book 3 in late 1740 (just 21 months after Books 1 and 2), Hume famously expressed despair about his account:

"upon a more strict review of the section concerning *personal identity*, I find myself involv'd in such a labyrinth, that, I must confess, I neither know how to correct my former opinions, nor how to render them consistent." (*T App* 10).

- Unfortunately, Hume leaves it very obscure what exactly he takes the problem to be:

290

290

Two Inconsistent Principles?

"In short there are two principles, which I cannot render consistent; nor is it in my power to renounce either of them, viz. *that all our distinct perceptions are distinct existences, and that the mind never perceives any real connexion among distinct existences*. Did our perceptions either inhere in something simple and individual, or did the mind perceive some real connexion among them, there would be no difficulty in the case." (*T App* 21)

- But the two cited principles aren't apparently inconsistent! So this has left an intriguing puzzle for Hume's interpreters.

291

291

"Conclusion of This Book"

- *Treatise* 1.4.7 is another major puzzle for Hume interpreters, presented as a dynamic sequence of thoughts on the position in which he has been left by the sceptical results from earlier sections.
- Most of our mental processes have been revealed as dependent on the imagination and its mechanisms, which generate "the vivacity of ideas" (*T* 1.4.7.3).
- Worse, *T* 1.4.4 has found a "manifest contradiction" between our causal reasoning and the continued existence of matter (*T* 1.4.7.4).
- The analysis of causation in *T* 1.3.14 also shows our thoughts about it to be deeply confused (*T* 1.4.7.5).

292

292

A "Dangerous Dilemma"

- So how far should we allow ourselves to be seduced by the imagination?

"For if we assent to every trivial suggestion of the fancy; beside that these suggestions are often contrary to each other; they lead us into such errors, absurdities, and obscurities, that we must at last become asham'd of our credulity." (*T* 1.4.7.6)

- But if we resolve to reject all "trivial suggestions of the fancy", we will have no answer to the radical scepticism of *T* 1.4.1. So it seems that we have "no choice left but betwixt a false reason and none at all" (*T* 1.4.7.7)

293

293

Dealing with Scepticism

- In *Treatise* 1.4.7, it seems that Hume's only answer is something like the "carelessness and in-attention" to which he appealed at the end of *T* 1.4.2:

"I dine, I play a game of back-gammon, I converse, and am merry with my friends; and [afterwards] these speculations ... appear so cold, and strain'd, and ridiculous, that I cannot find it in my heart to enter into them any farther." (*T* 1.4.7.9)

- For Hume's mature and settled answer to scepticism, we must look to his *Enquiry* ...

294

294