**Humes Old and New**

I. The Good Old Hume

- Aims to undermine the notion of perceptual reason (e.g., Locke on probability).
- Relations of ideas / matters of fact – roughly analytic / synthetic
- Demonstrative / factual reasoning
  - roughly deductive / inductive
  - (but note that ‘deductive’ here must be understood in an informal sense: the premises guarantee the conclusion)

The Good Old Hume (1)

- Induction presupposes Uniformity Principle (UP), which cannot be founded on any form of rational evidence.
- Instead, induction is founded on ‘custom’, an instinctive extrapolation from observed to unobserved.
- All belief about the unobserved depends on this, so ‘the wise man’ should base his beliefs on consistency with experience.

The Good Old Hume (2)

- When we find ourselves making customary inferences, we ascribe necessity (and hence causation) to the objects concerned.
- All of our understanding of necessary connexion derives from this source. So we can have no other notion of necessity.
- Customary inference is as applicable to the human as to the physical world. Hence so is this same necessity.

The Good Old Hume (3)

- ‘a priori, anything may produce any thing’
- ‘all objects, which are found to be constantly combined, are upon that account only to be regarded as causes and effects.’
  - (T 1.4.5.30-2)
- This empirical, causal, deterministic science involves systematic searching for underlying correlations, ‘reducing principles … to a greater simplicity’. (E 4.12)

The Good Old Hume (4)

- ‘I am indeed of Opinion, that the Author had better delayed the publishing of that Book; not on account of any dangerous Principles contained in it, but because on more mature Consideration he might have rendered it much less imperfect by further Corrections and Revisits. (L 33)’

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II. The Good Old Hume

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IV. The Treatise, the Enquiry ...

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**Humes Old and New**

Disillusion with the Treatise (1)

- January 1739: Treatise published
- June 1st 1739, letter to Kames:
  - ‘My fondness for what I imagined new discoveries, made me overlook all common rules of prudence’
- October/November 1739: Abstract written
  - Completed by March 1740, the Abstract suggests a major rethink and restructuring, anticipating the Enquiry in many ways.

Disillusion with the Treatise (2)

- March 16th 1740, letter to Hutcheson:
  - ‘I wait with some Impatience for a second Edition principally on Account of Alterations I intend to make in my Performance… I am apt, in a cool hour, to suspect, in general, that most of my Reasonings will be more useful by furnishing Hints & exciting People’s Curiosity than as containing any Principles that will augment the Stock of Knowledge that must pass to future Ages.’

Disillusion with the Treatise (3)

- November 1740: Book III is published …
  - together with Appendix, confessing errors.
- May 21st 1745, Letter from a Gentleman:
  - ‘I am indeed of Opinion, that the Author had better delayed the publishing of that Book; not on account of any dangerous Principles contained in it, but because on more mature Consideration he might have rendered it much less imperfect by further Corrections and Revisits. (L 33)’

Disillusion with the Treatise (4)

- Spring 1751, letter to Gilbert Elliot:
  - ‘I give you my Advice against reading [the Treatise].… I was carry’d away by the Heat of Youth & Invention to publish too precipitately. So vast an Undertaking, plan’d before I was one and twenty, & composed before twenty five, must necessarily be very defective. I have repented my Haste a hundred, & a hundred times.’
**Humes Old and New**

### Disillusion with the *Treatise* (5)

- February 1754, letter to John Stewart:
  
  "I shall acknowledge ... a very great Mistake ... viz my publishing at all the Treatise of human Nature; a Book, which pretended to innovate in all the sublimest Parts of Philosophy, & which I compos'd before I was five & twenty. Above all, the positive Air, which prevails in that Book, & which may be imputed to the Auctor of Youth, so much displeases me, that I have not Patience to review it."

- **Experience?** No! Only in quantity and number ...’...’ can't be a matter of pure logic.
- So it can't be a matter of pure logic.
- **Deductive reasoning?** No! Neither of these.
- **Sensory knowledge?** No! Must count as demonstrative for Hume.
- **Induction**

### A Timeline of Hume's Life

- Born 1711
- 'A new scene' 1732
- Treatise Book 1738
- Enquiry 1740
- Abstract 1748
- Reid's Inquiry 1774
- Beattie 1775
- Enquiry, 'Advertisement', 1775

### IV. ... and Induction

- **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.
    - Deductive reasoning? No. Neither of these, because it's clear that extrapolation could fail, so it can't be a matter of pure logic.
    - Experience? No, that would be circular.

### The Four 'Kinds of Evidence'

- So the *Enquiry* argument implicitly reasons:
  
  \[
  \neg \text{FO}(u, R) \land \neg \text{FO}(u, F) \land \neg \text{FO}(u, C) \land \neg \text{FO}(u, D) \\
  \rightarrow \text{FO}(u, E)
  \]

- If UP isn't founded on sensation, intuition, demonstration or factual 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..."

### Hume's Factual Inference

- **Consider:**
  - The premise and conclusion are matters of fact. So is this reasoning concerning matter of fact?
    - Is the inference merely probable? No!
    - Does it go beyond relations of ideas? No!
    - Does justifying the inference require any appeal to experience or to causal relations? No!
    - Hence Hume would have to count it as demonstrative.

### Demonstration and Probable

- An Lockean distinction:
  - In demonstrative reasoning, each link in the inferential chain is 'intuitively' certain (hence = 'deductive' in the modern non-formal sense).
  - In probable reasoning, some links are merely probable (hence = 'inductive' in a loose sense).
  - For Locke, both involve rational perception.
  - Hume takes over Locke's distinction
    - But the *Enquiry* talks of 'reasoning concerning relations of ideas' or 'concerning matter of fact'.

### Demonstration = Deduction?

- **No Matter of Fact is Demonstrable**
  - Suppose I claim to demonstrate that all crows are black.
    - Ridiculous, you would say! How can I possibly demonstrate such a contingent claim?
  - 'Well, I reply, ’here’s my demonstration’:
    1. All crows are birds.
    2. All birds are black.
    3. All crows are black.
    - That’s a demonstrative argument, isn’t it?

Peter Millican, Hertford College, Oxford
Humes Old and New

What is Demonstrated?
- The crows argument is indeed demonstrative, but that isn’t enough to make it a demonstration of its conclusion.
- To demonstrate Q from P is not the same as demonstrating Q tout court. The latter requires that the argument’s premises are known with certainty to be true.
- Hume denies that any matter of fact can be demonstrated (tout court). He nowhere denies that one matter of fact can be demonstrated from another.

Is Demonstrative Reasoning Limited to Mathematics?
- It seems to me, that the only objects of the abstract sciences or of demonstration are quantity and number, and that all attempts to extend this more perfect species of knowledge beyond these bounds are mere sophistry and illusion.’ (E 12.227)
- But Hume’s account of this limit is in terms of the relative clarity of mathematical and moral ideas.
- So if we want to find a posteriori demonstrative arguments of any complexity, we have to look to applied mathematics …

Hume’s most explicit discussion of ‘mixed mathematics’ is in Enquiry Section IV:
- It is a law of motion, discovered by experience, that the moment or force of any body in motion is in the compound ratio or proportion of its solid contents and its velocity; and consequently, that a small force may remove the greatest obstacle … if, by any contrivance … we can increase the velocity of that force, so as to make it an overmatch for its antagonist.’ (E 4.13)

‘Geometry assists us in the application of this law … but still the discovery of the law itself is owing merely to experience, and all the abstract reasonings in the world could never lead us one step towards the knowledge of it.’ (E 4.13)
- ‘Mathematics, indeed, are useful in all mechanical operations … But it’s not of themselves they have any influence. … Abstract or demonstrative reasoning … never influences any of our actions, but only as it directs our judgment concerning causes and effects.’ (T 2.3.3.2)

VI. Epistemology of Induction

Hume’s Argument concerning Induction
- Starts by showing that all factual inference is founded on the Uniformity Principle.
- Then goes on to undermine every possible rational foundation for UP.
- Then draws from this the conclusion that factual inference has no foundation in reason.
- This way of arguing seems to imply that the conclusion has sceptical intent.

A Sceptical Argument
- Hume’s famous argument concerning induction …
- … starts by pointing out that all factual inference is founded on the Uniformity Principle.
- Then goes on to undermine every possible rational foundation for UP.
- Then draws from this the conclusion that factual inference has no foundation in reason.
- This way of arguing seems to imply that the conclusion has sceptical intent.

The ‘No Argument’ Interpretation
- Don Garrett and Harold Noonan — Garrett (1997) and Noonan (1999) claim that Hume is only concerned to show that inductive inferences are not caused by argument, i.e. that there is no process of ratiocination that leads us to infer inductively.
- David Owen — Owen (1999) claims that Hume is only ruling out inference by intermediate steps, what he understands by Locke’s ‘reason’.

Refuting Garrett, Noonan, and Owen
- The final step of Hume’s argument makes no sense on this interpretation:
  - UP plays a role in the causation of factual inference:
    - UP is not itself caused by a process of ratiocination;
    - Therefore factual inference is not caused by any process of ratiocination.
  - This is a complete non-sequitur. Factual inference could be caused by a process of ratiocination that involves UP!

The Loeb/Beebee Manoeuvre
- Can this objection be side-stepped if Hume is taken to be presupposing that induction is justified, so his argument need consider only normatively appropriate causes?
- No, because this interpretation ignores the elephant in the room — the obviously negative thrust of the argument (and of Hume’s references to 4 ‘sceptical doubts’, the sceptic has ‘ample matter of triumph’).
VIII. The New Hume

Hume has generally been read as denying the existence of any 'power' or 'necessity' in objects that goes beyond his two definitions.

This would make him a 'regularity theorist', anti-realist about (capital 'C') Causation or thick connexions in objects.

The 'New Hume' is the view of Wright, Craig, Strawson, Buckle, Kail and others that Hume is instead a 'Causal realist'.

The Copy Principle

According to (what is commonly called) Hume's Copy Principle (T 1.1.1.6), 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 and E 7, he accordingly sets out to identify the impression from which the idea of necessity is copied.

Empiricism and Anti-Realism

Hume identifies the source of the idea of necessity as the customary inference of the mind in response to regular succession in the objects, hence his two definitions.

His Copy Principle has generally been assumed to go along with an empiricist theory of meaning: finding the impression-source of an idea gives its meaning.

So 'necessity' has an anti-realist meaning.

'Meaning' Quotations

"when we talk of any being ... as endow'd with a power of force ... when we speak of a necessary connexion ... in all these expressions, so apply'd, we have really no distinct meaning, and make use only of common words, without any clear and determinate ideas." (T 1.3.14.14)

"either we have no idea at all of force and energy, and these words are altogether insignificant, or they can mean nothing but that determination of the thought ..." (A 26)

"We shall ... endeavour ... to fix, if possible, the precise meaning of these terms" (E 7.3)

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; it is 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 ..." (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 7.24)

'The necessity of any action, whether of matter or of mind, is not, properly speaking, a quality in the agent, but in any thinking or intelligent being, who may consider the action." (E 8.22 n. 18)

IX. Hume and Inductive Science

Hume is not denying that there is some kind of full-blooded Necessity, but that it applies only to events in the mind. Rather ...

We find ourselves inferring from A to B, and then naturally attribute this consequential relation to the objects themselves, 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).

The Spreading of the Mind

Hume is not saying that there is some kind of full-blooded Necessity, but that it applies only to events in the mind. Rather ...

We find ourselves inferring from A to B, and then naturally attribute this consequential relation to the objects themselves, 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).

The Principle is a tool for deciding questions of meaning (T 1.1.6.1, A 47, E 2.9).

He talks of finding causal terms: meaning or significance (T 1.3.14.14 & 27, A 26, E 7.28 & 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.

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 47, E 2.9).

He talks of finding causal terms: meaning or significance (T 1.3.14.14 & 27, A 26, E 7.28 & 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.

Liberty and Necessity

'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 show, that we have an idea of something else in the actions of matter which, according to the foregoing reasoning, is impossible." (A 34, d. T 2.3.1.3-18, T 2.3.2.4, E 6.4-22, E 6.27)

Hume's solution to the problem of free will requires that his analysis of 'necessity' sets a limit to what we can coherently think: Only a semantic, anti-realist interpretation will do.

Is Hume an Inductive Sceptic?

Hume is not denying that inductive inference is founded on any sort of rational insight into why nature should be uniform ...

--YES!

Does Hume think that all inferences about 'matter of fact' are equally hopeless, so that there's no rational ground for preferring one to another ...

--NO!
Hume on Induction: Negative

- We can infer the unobserved only through causal reasoning, and we can learn about causes only through experience. But all learning from experience presupposes that the unobserved will resemble the observed.
- This presupposition (UP or the Uniformity Principle) cannot be given any rational support, either from intuition, sensation, demonstration or probable reasoning.

Hume on Induction: Positive

- We naturally assume that the unobserved resembles the observed (UP), and cannot help spontaneously making inferences on that basis: a process called custom.
- Since (a) All inference to the unobserved requires UP, and (b) We cannot help taking UP for granted anyway, it seems that... the appropriate reaction is to proceed on the basis that UP is true, and do our best to reason consistently with that assumption.

Hume on Causation: Negative

- Our idea of necessary connexion or causal power derives from our experience of seeing one thing A repeatedly followed by another B, then naturally inferring B by custom when we next see an A.
- We tend to think that we infer B through an awareness of A's having a power to cause B, but in fact the customary inference is prior: we attribute the power because we find ourselves making the inference.

Hume on Causation: Positive

- Having clarified the nature of our idea of cause, we should proceed to reason on that basis: genuine causation should be understood in terms of (functional relationships of)* constant conjunction:
  - all objects, which are found to be constantly conjoined, are upon that account alone to be regarded as causes and effects' (T1.4.5.32)
  * The bracket accommodates laws expressed in terms of quantitative forces: E 4.13, 7.25n, 7.29n.

Hume on Science – Negative

- In advance of experience, we cannot know anything about what causes what.
  - So experience is our only basis for making predictions about the unobserved.
- The causal maxim – whatever begins to exist, must have a cause of existence – cannot be demonstrated (though it can be supported by experience).
- Intelligibility is an impossible dream.

Hume on Science – Positive

- Aim for simple causal explanations
  - to reduce the principles, productive of natural phenomena, to a greater simplicity... resolve [them] into a few general causes' (E 4.12)
- Discover constant causal laws underlying the inconstant superficial phenomena
  - upon an exact scrutiny, a contrariety of effects always betrays a contrariety of causes' (E 8.13)
- If necessary, use empirical probability ...
  - ... as exemplified in the case of miracles.