



David Hume

David Hume

(1711-1776)

Empiricism

Hume's Philosophy

- Empirical
- Positivistic
- Agnostic
- Humanistic
- Critical

Similar ideas (John Locke and George Berkeley)

Empiricism

Sensation & the Origin of Ideas

- The contents of the mind: (1) ideas & (2) impressions (sensations & feelings) -- Ideas (concepts, beliefs, memories, mental images, etc.) are faint & unclear; impressions are strong & vivid.
- Ideas are derived from impressions: All [all?] ideas are copies of impressions.
- The meaning of ideas depends on impressions

Impression is that alleged idea derived

- No impression, no meaning?
- No impression, no foundation in reality?
- All the objects of human reason or inquiry may naturally be divided into two kinds: *relations of ideas* and *matters of fact*

Judgments concerning relations of ideas

- Intuitively or demonstrably certain
- Discoverable by thought alone [*a priori*]
- Cannot be denied without contradiction

Judgments concerning matters of fact

- "Every judgment concerning matters of fact can be denied without contradiction" (e.g., "the sun will not rise tomorrow").
- Neither intuitively nor demonstrably certain
- Not discoverable by thought alone [*a priori*], but rather on the basis of sense experience [*a posteriori*]

All judgments concerning matters of fact are based on.....

- the [more fundamental] belief that there is "a tie or connection" between cause & effect.
- And why do we believe that there is a "tie or connection" between cause & effect?
- Answer: The belief arises entirely from experience [*a posteriori*, not *a priori*], namely, the experience of finding that two events (cause & effect) are "constantly conjoined" with each other.
- It is not ***logically necessary*** that a particular effect follows a particular cause;
- It is a fact of experience

Experience

- especially the experience of ***constant conjunction***,
- that the idea of a ***necessary connection*** between "cause" & "effect" arises (or is inferred);
- but the "inference" is simply a matter of "custom or habit."
 - This seems to mean that the "inference" here is psycho-logical rather than logical. Actually, there is no experience of the necessary connection between cause and effect.
 - Thus, all factual judgments (which are based on the assumption that there is a necessary connection between cause and effect) are subject to doubt.
 - No necessity, no certainty.