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Part II

Lesson 1

Introduction: Hume on Testimony & Miracles.

Should You Believe What You Hear?

Enlightenment: 1700 - 1800

Reason, liberation, science on the rise

Religion & monarchy fading out
of ~~this~~ popularity!

Intellectual Autonomy

Scottish enlightenment figures.

David Hume (1711 - 1776)

Thomas Reid (1710 - 1796)

Hume developed a naturalistic philosophy meaning it doesn't appeal to God in giving explanations of things and lots of things to say about all the different areas of philosophy and doesn't believe in the supernatural

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He is well-known for his spirited critiques of religion.

Book : Essays & Treatises on Several Subjects by David Hume.

An Enquiry concerning Human Understanding (Miracles)

Hume's conclusion on Miracles is that you should never believe that a miracle has occurred on the basis of a testimony.

- ① What's testimony?
- ② What's a miracle?

Testimony: refers to a situation in which you believe in something based on what someone else asserts, either verbally or in writing.

A tense of what we believe is based on testimony.

"there is no species of reasoning more common, more useful, and even necessary to human life,

than that which is derived from the testimony of man.

Ex: think what a place you've never been to and you've got a set of beliefs about that place which are based on testimony articles, news, videos,

Testimony is a really important source for creatures like us.

To believe testimony you have to have evidence that the person who is speaking or writing is likely to be right.

You have to have evidence of the person testifying to you.

(A testimony of the evidence this could end up in a genuine leap of thought produces extending to the start of time to see if who claimed this testimony is actually right).

This follows from an innocuous sounding assumption philosophical call Evidentialism.

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Evidentialism

A wise man proportion his belief to evidence.

You need evidence when people in general assert things if they are even reliable.

"The credit that we give testimony

* admits of a diminution, greater or less, in proportion as the fact is more ~~for~~ or less unusual".

Ex: Order a coffee and the waiter says the machine broke down so in that case you believe what the waiter says and trust his testimony.

But if he told you aliens broke in & stole the coffee you won't believe him. You shall be doubtful / skeptical.

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"A miracle is a violation of the laws of nature" i.e.
Something that has never happened
"in the common course of nature".

A miracle is an exception to a previously exceptionless regularity.
It's something that has never happened.

Ex: Someone rises from the dead.

Hume says you should never believe that miracles occur on the basis of testimony.

"no testimony is sufficient to establish a miracle, unless the testimony be of such a kind that its falsehood would be more miraculous than the fact, which it endeavours to establish."

Only trust testimony you've got evidence that the testifier is likely to be right.

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The more unusual the event
the less trusting you should be
of the testimony.

People are often wrong, they
might sincerely believe both
they are wrong or they
could be intentionally wrong too.

- Testimony
- Miracles
- Unreliability
of
humans.

Hume's Argument

- ① You should only trust testimony when you have evidence that the testifier is likely to be right..
- ② A miracle is an exception to a previously exceptionless regularity - i.e. something unlikely to have occurred.
- ③ People often assert falsehoods - i.e. false testimonies aren't unlikely.
- ④ Therefore, you should never believe that a miracle has occurred on the basis of testimony.

Are videos testimony?

Videos can be manipulated now but that can be detected.

Reid's Challenge to Hume

Many ways to challenge Hume's argument. You could say that the definition of a miracle is wrong.

You should challenge the assumption that you can collect most testimony & that you've got evidence for it if the testimonial is likely to be right.
(Other evidence would also be just testimony.)

This is the premise of Hume's argument:

Bird was a minister in the church of Scotland & a professor and challenged Hume in the book # Book: Inquiry into the Human Mind on the principles of common sense.

The challenge comes in the section entitled

- Of the analogy between perception, and the credit we give to human testimony

Reid argued that trusting your senses is just like trusting your senses. Believing something on the basis of what someone else says is just like seeing it through your own eyes.

Also, we don't have any kind of evidence that our senses are often right

Reid challenges Hume's assumption that we have a reason to trust in testimony only if provided we know that it is likely to be right. According to Reid, we have a reason to trust in testimony even if we don't know the likelihood of its being true.

Hume & Reid both thought there were three separate innate feelings that governed how we think & how we feel. It was sort of hard wired to trust our senses & believe what we see in front of our eyes.

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Reid thought we were also hardwired to trust testimony. This is an innate principle called Credibility.

Principle of Credibility

"a disposition to confide in the veracity of others & to believe what they tell us."

Reid's Argument

Hume & Reid thought differently about testimony.

Reid - innate hard-wired principle to trust other people

Hume - we need to have evidence.

Which picture is right?

Reid - imagine children and to what extent would they trust the testimony of other ppl? Principle of credibility is strongest in small children. They are much likely to be disposed to the truth of other ppl.

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Reid thought this was incompatible with Hume's picture of testimony.

Reid —

"If credulity were the effect of reasoning and experience [as Hume claims], it must grow up & gather strength in the same proportion as reason & experience do. But, if it is the gift of Nature it will be strongest in children and limited & restrained by experience; and most superficial view of human life shews, that the last is really the case, and not the first.

If Hume was right then credulity would be weakest in children but such is not the case. So we concludes our trust must be a gift of nature.

Reid's Argument

- ① The principle of credulity is strongest in children.
- ② But if our trust in testimony were based on experience (as Hume claims), it would be weakest in children.
- ③ Therefore, the principle of credulity

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is innate and not based on experience.

Reid talking about how children trust other people's testimony but Hume is talking about what ppl ought to do.

So it's counterintuitive to say that children should not be so trusting.

Reid -

"If Hume were right, "no proposition that is uttered in discourse would be believed [and] such distrust in credibility would deprive us of the greatest benefit of society and place us in a worse condition than that of the savages"

Hume & Reid disagree on the reliability of information and how truthful people are.

Reid says there's another principle

The Principle of Veracity

- "a propensity to speak the truth so as to convey our real sentiments."

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- "lying ... is doing violence to our nature".

Reid says we're naturally honest creatures.

Hume challenges this by stating all kinds of situations in which humans end up falsely testifying.

Hume -

People often have motives to lie, as when they "have an interest in what they affirm." There are "advantages" to "startling an imposture among an ignorant people".

Think here of politicians.

Human beings are prone to believe "the tales of travellers" because human beings generally find the feelings of "surprise and wonder" agreeable.

In Hume's day, there were surprising stories arriving in Europe from all over the world - many of them completely inaccurate.

Human beings are prone to testify, regardless of whether they have good evidence or what they're saying because "the pleasure of telling a piece of news so interesting, of propagating it, and of being the first reporter of it."

This Hume argued is why gossip and rumor spread so quickly.

Hume thought the principle of credibility was true but of veracity false.

Kant, the Enlightenment and Intellectual Autonomy

Immanuel Kant

Essay: "On answering the question: What is Enlightenment?" 1784

(That essay is a book).

- Kant

Enlightenment is man's emergence from his self-included immaturity. Immaturity is the inability to use one's own understanding without the guidance of

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another. [...]

The motto of enlightenment is therefore:
Sapere aude! (dare to be wise)

Have courage to use your own understanding.

Kant talks about the extent we trust other people's testimony, which means to allow your own understanding to be guided by that other person. Not trusting another person is in some sense a virtue.
This virtue is called Intellectual Autonomy

- Not trusting other people's testimony
- Not forming beliefs because of what other people say but in some sense forming them on your own.
- Not believing just because religious & political authorities tell you to believe them.

In the same essay Kant says you should obey what the authorities ask you to do but not believe what they tell you to think

Intellectual Autonomy epitomized by

a person who believes something unproven and everyone tells her the way she thinks is false but she believes it anyway.

Intellectual Autonomy is sometimes virtuous, going against conventional wisdom and disagreeing with most people.

Hume is a fan of Intellectual Autonomy because he says don't trust other people's testimony unless you have some evidence that they are likely to be right. It's not like you shouldn't trust other people all the time, but you got to have some evidence that the testimony is legitimate. Don't blindly trust other people for Reid Intellectual Autonomy is in some sense in violation with our human nature. Our beliefs should naturally be guided by other people. The virtue is Intellectual Solidarity

for Reid Intellectual Autonomy is in some sense in violation with our human nature. Our beliefs should naturally be guided by other people. The virtue is Intellectual Solidarity

Autonomy
Solidarity
disposition to form dispositions to trust beliefs 'on your own' true testimony of i.e. not on the basis of your community of testimony.

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The Value of Intellectual Autonomy

Who's right? Hume & Kant or Reid

Intellectual Autonomy

- sapere aude! (dare to be wise / dare to know)

Kant suggests people who base their knowledge on other people's testimony don't have knowledge. Dare to base your belief on something other than testimony

If someone tells you they are out for the weekend, they are you aren't going to check on them.

Philosophy of knowledge dates back to Plato on the requirements of knowledge to give accounts, explain etc. what you can't get from testimony (need to get wisdom by yourself)

Person who has read only a Wikipedia article doesn't really know but the person who has actually been there does. This is a way to defend intellectual autonomy.

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People have a tendency for their beliefs to be formed by people in their community. Thus, we inherit our views.

Conservatism

Conservatism and intellectual matters

New ideas overthrowing the old ones,
— Hume & Kant

Tradition & conservation of community beliefs — Reid.