

Background Info

Hume was grasped by "a new scene of thought".

He was influenced by empiricism, especially in the thought that there are no innate ideas or external structures and no necessary ethics

He wrote two works concerning human nature:

1. *A Treatise of Human Nature, Being an Attempt to introduce the Experimental Method of Reasoning into Moral subjects* (1739)

-> goal: become the Newton of the human sciences, to use the experimental method of the natural science to investigate human beings

2. *Enquiry concerning Human Understanding* (1758)

-> goal: instead of justifying knowledge (Descartes), he wants to investigate the nature and boundaries of human knowledge, to save us from the false claims of metaphysics and theology

Hume is most of the time applied to and compared to Descartes and Kant

Causality

causality is useful for expanding our knowledge of the external world and concerns matter of fact, and we learn causality through experience

However, since matters of facts are contingent causality could still be different; we can't see causality, only events (*i.e. just because the sun rose today and yesterday, does not guarantee it will rise tomorrow; cause does not guarantee effect*)

Requirements for causality:

1. spatial contiguity
2. temporal contiguity
3. causation
4. similarity

-> we only see the 1 and 2

example: billard balls A and B

Causality (cont)

1. *A touches B*
2. *changes in A happen simultaneously with B*
3. *a necessarily caused the movement B*
4. *this is how billiard balls move*

* our knowledge can be expanded through:

- hearsay "Japan exists"
- connecting events: "there were people here"
- identifying universalia: "water drowns us"
- experience: "i saw an apple because of the apple"

Political nature

According to Hume, there are two types of philosophers:

1. philosophers of action:

- they participate in life
 - sentiment/mode of expression is important: they are more focused on style (rather than content)
 - strive to promote the notion of virtue
 - were well-liked by the public
 - not so concerned with argumentation
- > *ancient example: stoicists*

2. philosophers of reason:

- concerned with gaining an understanding of the human being, rather than cultivating the human being.
 - try to find a foundation of knowledge in principles
 - claim that abstract principles are unrelated to actual life
 - lends itself to enduring error because willing to accept strange and unpopular ideas
- > *ancient example: Socrates*

Investigation of Human Understanding

Humes investigation starts with perceptions, these perceptions are divided into two main categories:

1. impressions: are direct experiences of the world or reflections of ourselves
 2. ideas: are derived from impressions
- > Simple ideas come directly from simple impressions
- > Complex ideas can be formed erroneously; complex ideas can be formed by simple ideas (e.g. a pegasus comes from the idea of a horse and wings)
- both ideas and impressions can either be simple or complex:*
- simple idea: e.g. the colour red*
- complex idea: e.g. an apple*

Uniformity of Nature

Uniformity of Nature entails that "things stay the same" and is required for induction, natural laws, and inductive empirical knowledge (aka any kind of causality)

But, Hume claims, uniformity of nature is a matter of fact which is contingent; so saying that things have been uniform in the past is circular

He argues that causality* is not in the world (as far as we know), but in us (custom and habit)

Hence, empirical knowledge are just expectations that allow us to live the relationship between problematizing causality and the two types of philosophers: Recent philosophy/philosophers cannot get us anywhere and there are things that we cannot gain knowledge about (causality)

* with the PUN Hume tries to save causality; If causal reasoning is a reliable way to reach truths in the world, then the principle of the uniformity of nature must be true, if not then causal reasoning cannot be true



By faminconnue
(faminconnue)

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Depence of reason on action

According to Hume, man has a craving for knowledge/science.

But, science is limited, and alone always leads to unhappiness

Hence, we need a better understanding of the human being, as it will allow us to have a better appeal to virtue

-> we can gain this understanding through anatomy and painting

A better understanding will eventually save us from our tendency to do metaphysics

Moral philosophy

= the study of the human

it studies the human being's capacity to study and focuses on understanding requirements, rather than debating positions

scepticism

According to Hume, dogma (fixed beliefs) brings suffering, as it fixates us on things that are wrong or makes us spend time and worries on topics that are outside of our capacities. (also known as problem of induction)

-> thus we should be sceptical

He was influenced in his scepticism by Pyrrho and Sextus Empiricus:

-> we can only reach a state of ataraxia by suspending our judgement

-> while we are skeptic practical life and subjectivism remains: we can know about the human mind through research, we can find out what it means for us to know (partial scepticism)

Descartes argued that the requirement for being sceptical was thinking.

Hume, however, does not agree, as according to him the mind is not a substance but a bundle of properties

Propositions

Hume introduces two types of propositions:

- *propositions concerning relations of ideas* which are necessary but don't teach us anything about the world and can be either true or false

e.g. $1+1=2$, a bachelor is unmarried, the ball is round

- *propositions concerning matters of fact* which are not necessary but teach us something about the world

e.g. it's raining today, the apple is red

3 principles of association of ideas

1. resemblance
2. contiguity of time and place
3. causation

-> causation is the strongest as it establishes links between our present and past experiences and our expectations about the future

Results

Hume claimed that from his research a few results followed:

- external world is no proper topic for science
- internal mind is a proper topic for science
- knowing the mind is being able to work the mind
- knowing the mind is limiting the mind for its own good



By **faminconnue**
(faminconnue)

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