

1 Hume on ideas

All perceptions are either impressions or ideas.

- Impressions come from sensation, ideas come from reflection.
- They are distinguished by liveliness.
- “But though our thought seems to possess this unbounded liberty, we shall find upon a nearer examination that it is really confined within very narrow limits and that all this creative power of the mind amounts to no more than the faculty of compounding, transposing, augmenting, or diminishing the materials afforded us by the senses and experience.” (539)

Copy Principle: “...all our ideas or more feeble perceptions are copies of our impressions or more lively ones.” (539)

- Empirical thesis
- First argument
 - We always find that every idea resolves itself into simple ideas (copied from earlier impressions).
 - Therefore every idea is copied from impressions.
- Second argument
 - When the sense organs are defective, we notice corresponding deficiencies in ideas.
 - When they are restored, the ideas are restored.
 - Thus there is some dependence of ideas on impressions.
 - Namely, every idea is copied from impressions.
- The missing shade of blue

Three principles of association among ideas:

- Resemblance
- Contiguity: nearness in space or time
- Cause and effect

Hume: We find only three essential components of the causation relation.

- One is contiguity: nearness in space and in time
- Another is succession: temporal priority of cause over effect
- But we seem to think there is some third notion, because the first two aren't sufficient for causation to occur.
- Hume rejects that we can find a Necessary Connection between X and Y.
 - The repetition of contiguity and succession alone can never get us there.
 - More specifically, Hume thinks that all there is to our idea of necessary connection between cause and effect is **constant conjunction**.

Two objects of the understanding:

- Relations of ideas
- Matters of fact

2 Hume on substance

Hume, like Locke and Berkeley, are skeptical of corporeal substance. But Hume is also skeptical of mental substance.

“As every idea is derived from a precedent impression, had we any idea of the substance of our minds, we must also have an impression of it, which his very difficult, if not impossible, to be conceived. For how can an impression represent a substance otherwise than by resembling it? And how can an impression resemble a substance, since, according to this philosophy, it is not a substance and has none of the peculiar qualities or characteristics of a substance?” (517)

The traditional definition of substance: that which depends on nothing else for its existence.

- Hume’s argument that by the traditional definition, all perceptions are substances:
 - If X is conceivable without Y, then X can exist without Y.
 - If X is distinct from Y, then X can be conceived without Y and vice versa.
 - Every perception is distinct from every other perception.
 - Therefore, every perception is a substance.
- He takes this as reason to reject the traditional definition.

In brief: “We have no perfect idea of anything but of a perception. A substance is entirely different from a perception. We have, therefore, no idea of a substance. Inhesion in something is supposed to be requisite to support the existence of our perceptions. Nothing appears requisite to support the existence of a perception. We have, therefore, no idea of inhesion.” (518)

Next, Hume discusses the “local conjunction” of objects.

- This refers to not just the *relating* of ideas, but of *spatiotemporally* joining them.
 - But Hume argues that thought and extension cannot be conjoined.
- Principle: An object may exist without being spatially located.
 - This refers to particular tastes, smells, and sounds.
- We mistakenly take tastes, smells, and sounds to be located in spatial objects.
 - We *relate* the ideas with the principles of cause and contiguity.
 - This means only that when we see a fig, for example, we are accustomed to think of the idea of sweetness.
 - But, Hume contends, we feel the further need to “strengthen their connection.’

“I assert that the doctrine of the immateriality, simplicity, and indivisibility of a thinking substance is a true atheism and will serve to justify all those sentiments for which *Spinoza* is so universally famous.” (521)

“We have no idea of any quality in an object which does not agree to and may not represent a quality in an impression, and that because all our ideas are derived from our impressions. We can never, therefore, find any repugnance between an extended object as a modification and a simple uncompounded essence as its substance, unless that repugnance takes place equally between the perception or impression of that extended object and the same uncompounded essence.” (522)

Hume next suggests that we take thought as an action rather than as a mode.

- This doesn't seem right – motion, for example, involves only a change in relations among bodies, not in the bodies themselves. But emotions seem to be more than this.
- Furthermore, if we allow this maneuver, the Spinozist can equally well take ordinary objects to be actions of a single substance.

Another argument: Thought cannot be caused by matter, so it must be caused by thinking substance.