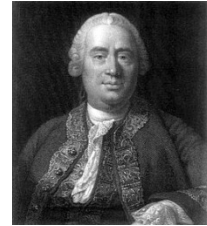

HUME



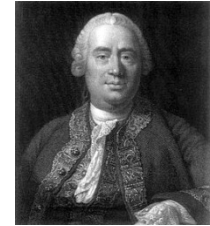
To influence the will, morality must be based on the passions – extended by sympathy, corrected for bias, and applied to character traits or motives that promote utility.

Hume's empiricism



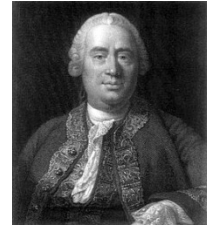
- Hume is a strict empiricist, i.e. he holds that knowledge of the world and ourselves ultimately comes from (inner and outer) experience.
 - Its original elements are *impressions*, from which we form *ideas*.
 - Any supposed idea that can't be traced to an impression is illusory and should be rejected.
- He therefore thinks that causal “necessity” must refer to something we experience, namely
 1. *the constant union/conjunction of events*: events of one type regularly follow or accompany events of another, and
 2. *a habit of inference*: in response to events of one type, we're moved to infer the existence of the other.
- Thus understood, it applies as much to acts as to physical events; cf. his examples, e.g. of an execution..

“Compatibilism”



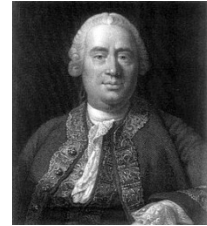
- **Hume’s account of causal necessity (= determinism) renders it compatible with a version of liberty [= free will].**
 - **Liberty as “spontaneity” just amounts to absence of any constraints on action, so that what we do is caused by us, i.e. our character and motives, whatever their prior causes.**
 - **Hume thinks this is wrongly equated with liberty as [causal] “indifference,” on the basis of an illusory feeling we have as agents that we could do something other than what we actually decide to do.**
- **Hume argues that, far from posing a threat to moral responsibility, causal necessity in fact is *presupposed* by it.**
 - **To warrant praising or blaming an agent, an act must be attributable to something durable in him.**
 - **But without a regular causal connection to the agent’s motives and character, an act would amount to no more than a chance occurrence.**

Limiting reason



- Reason alone can't influence the will or oppose a passion, since it's limited to discovering truth or falsity, i.e.
 - relations of ideas, as in logic (= demonstrative use of reason)
 - relations of objects, as revealed in experience (= empirical use of reason)
- Reason therefore can't supply motivation to act, but can merely discover the truth or falsity of certain presuppositions of the passions, or of their role in motivating action:
 - existence of their objects (= what a particular passion is directed toward)
 - means/end causal relations (what act would satisfy a particular passion)
- It's in that sense that Hume famously says that reason is and ought to be the "slave" of the passions. He denies the existence of practical reasoning, understood as reasoning that *makes* us act.

Extending the passions

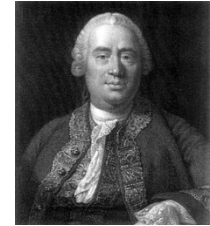


- In themselves, passions can never be true or false, since they don't represent anything. So they can't conflict with reason or be reasonable or unreasonable in themselves (p. 62).

 - Although the term “passions” in Hume's day wasn't limited to turbulent emotions, Hume extends it even more widely, so that preferences, desires, and dispositions count as passions.
 - To explain cases of apparent conflict between reason and the passions, or where reason seems to influence the passions, he allows for “calm” passions, including dispositional traits that needn't be manifested in current feeling, e.g. benevolence.

 - The category of “calm passions” also includes what Hume later refers to as “moral sentiments”: approbation/disapprobation, praise/blame, admiration/condemnation, etc.
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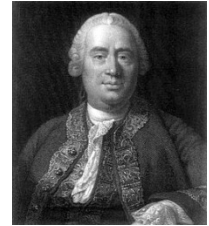
Morality not based on reason (1)



Hume's first argument that morality can't be based on reason (= ideas, rather than impressions) – from the practical force of moral judgments (p. 68):

- 1. Morality is practical, i.e. it influences actions and affections [= feelings].**
 - 2. Reason can't have such an influence (on its own).**
 - 3. Hence morality can't be based (solely) on reason.**
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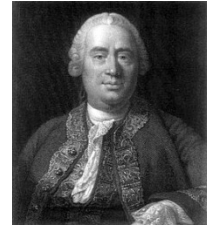
Morality not based on reason (2)



A second argument, from the nature of truth (p. 69):

- 1. Reason deals only with truth or falsehood, which amount to agreement or disagreement with reality [i.e., what a belief represents].**
 - 2. Morality is concerned with action.**
 - 3. Action (along with passion and volition) doesn't represent anything and so can't be true or false.**
 - 4. Hence morality can't be based on reason.**
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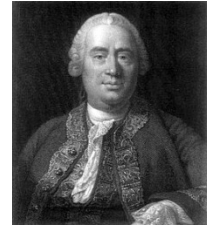
Morality not based on reason (3)



A condensed version of Hume's third argument, from the two uses of reason (pp.72ff):

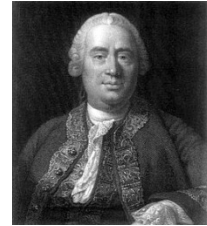
1. Reason has only two uses, *demonstrative* and *empirical*.
 2. In its *demonstrative* use, concerning ideas, reason is limited to discovering a certain set of relations.
 3. But in contrast to morality, all these relations (or others one can think of) apply beyond humans to animals, plants, etc.
 4. In its *empirical* use, concerning impressions, reason is limited to discovering matters of fact revealed in experience.
 5. But we don't have impressions of moral properties such as virtue or vice.
 6. Therefore morality can't be based on reason.
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Skepticism?



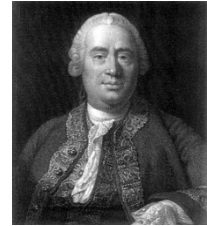
- **Toward the end of III.I.I and the beginning of III.I.II Hume denies that there are real moral properties or facts independent of our minds.**
 - **He compares moral properties to “secondary qualities” of color, sound, etc. (cf. Locke), which he interprets as properties of ourselves, not objects.**
 - **His famous “is/ought” argument (p. 77), which claims that most authors on ethics jump illicitly from how things are to how they ought to be, suggests a sharp distinction between fact and value.**
 - **Many have therefore taken Hume as a skeptic about morality. However, most scholars now interpret him as instead just shifting moral properties/facts from the external world to our psychology.**
 - **He takes our moral sentiments to be grounded in universal human nature – so that they don’t vary with how particular individuals happen to feel.**
-

“Sentimentalism”



- Hume sees our moral sentiments as essentially pleasures and pains.
 - However, since they have to be about other humans (vs. animals or inanimate objects), they must be of a distinctive kind.
 - Later he'll sketch his account of how emotional pleasures and pains give rise to moral sentiments, but at this point he's content just to note that they *feel* different to us.
 - Hume's examples of moral sentiments include variants of praise (approbation, admiration, etc.) and blame (disapprobation, condemnation, etc.) that are
 - directed at the *characters* (and motives) of agents, assessed as virtuous or vicious (rather than applying in the first instance to acts), and
 - based on passions of *love or hate* (when directed at other agents) and pride or humility (when directed at ourselves).
-

Is virtue natural?



- Hume now turns to clarifying the question whether morality is “natural” to humans. He takes the only reasonable alternative to be “artificial” – in the sense of being based on social convention.

 - Hobbes had maintained that all of morality is artificial in that sense, since it depends on a social contract, between people seen as
 1. totally self-interested by nature and equally able to gain at others’ expense
 2. aware that their security depends on everyone’s making a promise, enforced by a sovereign, to limit what they do to others

 - Locke and Rousseau had adopted Hobbes’s contract model of government but claimed that morality has a pre-contractual basis that puts limits on the sovereign.
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