

Hume Handout

I. Some beliefs you might have

- 1) You are taking a philosophy class.
- 2) Your best friend likes you.
- 3) Enron committed accounting fraud.
- 4) Shakespeare wrote *The Tragedy of Macbeth*.
- 5) $2+2 = 4$.
- 6) The sun will rise tomorrow.
- 7) Objects near the surface of the Earth accelerate toward the center of the Earth at 9.8 m/s^2 .
- 8) The future will be like the past.

II. Some questions about those beliefs

- A) Is the belief knowledge?
- B) If it is merely a belief, is your doubt merely skeptical?
- C) On what basis do you believe each?

III. Hume's argument for empiricism

- 1) All of our beliefs about the world are based on our beliefs about cause and effect relations.
 - 2) All of our beliefs about cause and effect relations are based on experience, not reason.
- So, all of our beliefs about the world are based on experience.

IV. Some of what Galileo and Newton did for science, and our common sense world view

- 1) No natural center of the universe.
- 2) Motion is simply change of place, not development toward some fulfilling goal (teleology). There are universal laws of motion that apply both on Earth and elsewhere.
- 3) Rest is simply a limiting case of motion, not the final fulfillment of a goal. Rest, like motion, is a normal state which need not be explained in terms of final causes. Both can be explained by the laws of motion.

V. Newton: Principles of explanation are to be "deduced from the phenomena"

VI. Hume's Skeptical argument about induction

- 1) Our beliefs about future events and unobserved objects are matters of fact.
 - 2) Beliefs about matters of fact are based on experience.
 - 3) Experience tells us how things were, not how they will be; it tells us only about actually observed phenomena.
- So, our beliefs about the future and the unobserved are uncertain.

VII. Example of invalid inductive argument

- 1) I have seen one billiard ball strike another many times.
 - 2) Each time the ball which was struck has moved, momentum was transferred.
- So, the struck ball will move this time.

VIII. Argument in VII becomes deductively valid if we add a third premise

The Principle of the Uniformity of Nature: The future will resemble the past.