

Philosophy 203
History of Modern Western Philosophy

Russell Marcus
Hamilton College
Spring 2015



Class #23-25
Finishing Hume
Induction, the Self, Free Will

Topics in Hume

1. Causation and Induction
2. The Bundle Theory of the Self
3. Free Will and Compatibilism

Three Problems of Induction

The Weak Problem of Induction

WI: We have limited intelligence and experience.

- There is not enough evidence to draw the conclusions that we draw.
- Scientific theories are generally under-determined by the evidence.
- Often there are two or more competing yet equally well-supported theories about the world.
- Such theories agree on all the empirical evidence we have gathered.
- Even if we presume that physical laws will be uniform and stable, we don't know which theory to use.
- If we were smarter or had more time, we could solve the problem of WI by gathering more evidence.
 - E.g. the fine-structure constant
- WI is not Hume's problem of induction.
 - It is just a problem of limitations on evidence.
 - It is not really a philosophical problem.

The Strong Problem of Induction

SI: Even given all possible evidence from the past, we can not know that the laws of nature will not shift radically and unexpectedly.

- SI is Hume's problem.
- Despite Hume's complaints about inductive processes, we do make successful predictions.
- We presume that the laws of nature will remain uniform and stable, even if that assumption is unjustified.
- So, we have a puzzle.

The New Riddle of Induction

from Nelson Goodman

- The very meanings of our words assume induction.
- Consider the property called 'grue'.
 - An object is grue if it has been examined prior to 1/1/2020, and found to be green or not examined and it is blue.
- Consider the competing claims G1 and G2.
 - G1 All emeralds are green.
 - G2 All emeralds are grue.
- All evidence for an emerald being green is also evidence for its being grue.
- G1 and G2 each describe a lawlike generalization.
- They are equally well confirmed by the evidence.
- Goodman's riddle is to determine why we think that G1 is a law and G2 is not.
 - Even given that the laws of nature remain stable, we do not know which predicates are confirmed.

The Persistence of the Problem

- SI and NRI are among the most serious problems in philosophy, especially in the philosophy of science.
- Berkeley shows that Lockean empiricist principles lead to difficulties with our beliefs in an external, material world.
- Hume shows that these problems infect all of science, not merely belief in matter.
- Goodman's riddle shows that the problem infects even our most common uses of language.
- Berkeley believes that we can continue to speak with the vulgar and think with the learned.
- Hume shows that even the most learned beliefs are unjustified.

Laws of Nature and Miracles

- We have been noting the similarities between the Anglican bishop, Berkeley, and the Scottish skeptic and agnostic, Hume.
- Both Hume and Berkeley deny that we know laws of nature, but for different reasons.
- Berkeley thinks that there are some general regularities in nature, and exceptions to these regularities.
 - ▶ “It cannot be denied that God, or the intelligence that sustains and rules the ordinary course of things, might if He were minded to produce a miracle, cause all the motions on the dial-plate of a watch, though nobody had ever made the movements and put them in it” (Berkeley, *Principles* §62).
 - ▶ Joshua and the halting of time
- Hume not only denies that miracles do happen, he denies that they are possible.
 - ▶ There can be no irregularities in nature, because the very notion of a regularity presupposes uniformity.
 - ▶ If there were exceptions to the laws, we wouldn't call them laws.

Hume on Miracles

- “Nothing is esteemed a miracle if it ever happen in the common course of nature. It is no miracle that a man, seemingly in good health, should die on a sudden, because such a kind of death, though more unusual than any other, has yet been frequently observed to happen. But it is a miracle that a dead man should come to life because that has never been observed in any age or country. There must, therefore, be a uniform experience against every miraculous event, otherwise the event would not merit that appellation. And as a uniform experience amounts to a proof, there is here a direct and full proof, from the nature of the fact, against the existence of any miracle, nor can such a proof be destroyed or the miracle rendered credible but by an opposite proof which is superior” (§X, AW 579b).
- If we experience an anomaly, an event inconsistent with what we think are the laws of nature, we will adjust the laws.
- “When any cause fails of producing its usual effect, philosophers ascribe not this to any irregularity in nature, but suppose that some secret causes in the particular structure of parts have prevented the operation” (§VI, AW 556a).

Skepticism and Regularities

- Note the tension between Hume's claim that we have no knowledge of causal laws, on the one hand, and his insistence that there are universal regularities in nature.
 - ▶ Not only are there regularities, but there can be no exceptions to those regularities.
 - ▶ There is no chance in nature.
 - ▶ All probability arises from our ignorance of causal connections; it is epistemic, rather than objective.
 - ▶ As Einstein (later) said, God does not throw dice.
- Hume does have a psychological account of causation.
 - ▶ The regularities that we find are real, even if among our ideas.
- Hume is not, like Berkeley, leaving room for divine intervention.
- He is taking seriously the empiricist's problem of being cut off from the external world, the veil of ideas.

The The Skeptical Hume

- Hume's skepticism is not just Locke's humility.
- It is a thorough rejection of the justification of our ordinary beliefs.
- We are isolated from causal connections.
 - ▶ We experience only conjunctions of events, certain regularities in the past.
 - ▶ From those regularities we formulate generalities which we ambitiously call laws of nature.
 - ▶ We can not know that the regularity will persist.
- Still, we do believe that there are connections between events.
 - ▶ We exit through the door, not the window.
 - ▶ We do not really doubt that the sun will rise.
- If our beliefs are as unjustified as Hume claims, it would seem odd and perhaps inexplicable that we perform so many successful inductions.
- We need a positive account.
 - ▶ Hume's naturalism

The Naturalist Hume

- Hume's positive account of our practice of induction might be called naturalistic.
 - Natural science is the locus of our best, most serious beliefs.
- Hume's account of successful induction relies on some facts about our psychology.
 - "When one particular species of event has always, in all instances, been conjoined with another, we make no longer any scruple of foretelling one upon the appearance of the other, and of employing that reasoning which can alone assure us of any matter of fact or existence. We then call the one object *cause*, the other *effect*. We suppose that there is some connection between them, some power in the one by which it infallibly produces the other and operates with the greatest certainty and strongest necessity" (§VII.2, AW 563a).

Belief in Laws is a Habit

- After a repetition of similar instances the mind is carried by habit upon the appearance of one event to expect its usual attendant and to believe that it will exist. This connection, therefore, which we *feel* in the mind, this customary transition of the imagination from one object to its usual attendant, is the sentiment or impression from which we form the idea of power or necessary connection...The first time a man saw the communication of motion by impulse, as by the shock of two billiard balls, he could not pronounce that the one event was *connected*, but only that it was *conjoined* with the other. After he has observed several instances of this nature, he then pronounces them to be *connected*. What alteration has happened to give rise to this new idea of *connection*? Nothing but that he now *feels* these events to be *connected* in his imagination, and can readily foretell the existence of one from the appearance of the other. When we say, therefore, that one object is connected with another, we mean only that they have acquired a connection in our thought (§VII.2, AW 563a).

Habits Come from Experience

- Consider a person suddenly brought into the world.
- She would have no habits, and so no beliefs about regularities or causal powers.
- By experience, she would develop certain habits, certain expectations, all while never having any experiences of causal connections.
- “Suppose...that he has acquired more experience and has lived so long in the world as to have observed familiar objects or events to be constantly conjoined together - what is the consequence of this experience? He immediately infers the existence of one object from the appearance of the other. Yet he has not, by all his experience, acquired any idea or knowledge of the secret power by which the one object produces the other, nor is it by any process of reasoning he is engaged to draw this inference. But still he finds himself determined to draw it. And though he should be convinced that his understanding has no part in the operation, he would nevertheless continue in the same course of thinking. There is some other principle which determines him to form such a conclusion. This principle is *custom* or *habit*” (§V.1, AW 549a-b).
- What she has developed is a mental capacity, not an insight into the causal structure of the universe.

The Mental Interpretation of 'Cause'

- Remember, Hume agrees with Berkeley that we experience our sensations, and not their causes.
- We have no experience of the things in themselves.
- Thus, the term 'cause' refers to a mental phenomenon.
 - “The appearance of a cause always conveys the mind, by a customary transition, to the idea of the effect. Of this also we have experience. We may, therefore, suitably to this experience, form [a] definition of cause, and call it *an object followed by another, and whose appearance always conveys the thought to that other*” (VII.2, AW 563b).
- Properly distinguished, causes are internal, rather than external.
 - They are not in nature, but in our minds.
 - Causes are psychological, rather than objective.

The Radical Hume

- Berkeley, when faced with the limits of what we can know, interpreted the terms we use that seem to refer to objects as referring to our mental states.
- Hume, rejecting Berkeley's idealism, assumes that there is a material world.
- Still, we can not know about the laws which govern the interactions of objects in the world.
- Instead of internalizing the world, Hume internalizes cause and effect.
- Hume recognizes that we speak as if the world and the causal laws are objective, existing independently of us.
- But he argues that we are unjustified in believing that.
- Thus, we are left as skeptics with unjustified though explicable habits.



Two Humes



- The skeptical Hume argues that we have no knowledge of the future or unobserved.
- The naturalist Hume presumes our beliefs in universal scientific laws, and explains them in terms of our natural psychological capacities.
- But to explain is not to justify and the problem of induction persists.
- Our next two topics, the self and free will, will start from naturalist assumptions.

Topics in Hume

- ✓1. Causation and Induction
- ☛2. **The Bundle Theory of the Self**
- 3. Free Will and Compatibilism

Locke and Berkeley on the Self

- Locke argued that we identify with our conscious experience, linked by memory.
 - ▶ The prince and the cobbler
 - ▶ The day/night man
- Berkeley worried that given Locke's constraints on our capacities to acquire beliefs, we have no sense of self.
 - ▶ "There can be no idea formed of a soul or spirit; for all ideas whatever, being passive and inert... they cannot represent unto us, by way of image or likeness, that which acts... The words *will*, *soul*, *spirit* do not stand for different ideas or, in truth, for any idea at all, but for something which is very different from ideas, and which, being an agent, cannot be like or represented by any idea whatsoever - though it must be admitted at the same time that we have some notion of soul, spirit, and the operations of the mind, such as willing, loving, hating, inasmuch as we know or understand the meaning of those words" (Berkeley, *Principles* §27, AW 452b).
 - ▶ Berkeley abandoned his strict policy of never admitting an object that was not first in the senses to posit the self in order to unify our experiences.
- Hume worries that the common notion of self outruns our memories.
 - ▶ Memory does not so much *produce* as *discover* personal identity by showing us the relation of cause and effect among our different perceptions. It will be incumbent on those who affirm that memory produces entirely our personal identity to give a reason why we can thus extend our identity beyond our memory (*Treatise* I.4.6, AW 530b).

Hume's No-Self View

- Since we have no idea of the self, we have no reason to believe in any such thing.
 - ▶ “If any impression gives rise to the idea of self, that impression must continue invariably the same through the whole course of our lives, since self is supposed to exist after that manner. But there is no impression constant and invariable. Pain and pleasure, grief and joy, passions and sensations succeed each other and never all exist at the same time. It cannot, therefore, be from any of these impressions or from any other that the idea of self is derived, and, consequently, there is no such idea” (*Treatise* I.4.6, AW 526a).
- There is no underlying, unifying object which we can call the self.
- There are just perceptions.
 - ▶ “When I enter most intimately into what I call *myself*, I always stumble on some particular perception or other, of heat or cold, light or shade, love or hatred, pain or pleasure. I never can catch *myself* at any time without a perception and never can observe anything but the perception” (*Treatise* I.4.6, AW 526a).
- Again, a positive account would be useful.

A Functional View

- Hume's claim that there is no self relies on his premise that a self should be precisely identical over time.
 - Too strong
 - As we age and acquire more experiences, we have different properties.
 - Certain experiences are cathartic, change us.
 - Metaphoric?
- A biological theory of the self can accommodate these changes without giving up on an enduring self by relying on the functional organization of the body as a criterion for identity over time.
- The self as a collection of loosely-related individual instances of bodies, each just a moment of time wide
 - Related biological entities
- Hume's account of our ordinary conception of self is similar to this functional view.

Loose Connections of Experiences

- Though we never perceive a self, we do have experiences.
- Whatever we call ourselves must be related to our series of experiences.
- Our experiences are joined by a variety of psychological connections among our ideas.
 - resemblance, contiguity, cause and effect
- These psychological connections govern all of our thoughts.
- They do not connect our ideas in some underlying substance.
- They conjoin our experiences over time.
- Memory too demonstrates mere conjunctions.

The Diverse Self

- Instead of being a paradigm of unity, Hume thus argues that the self is an exemplar of diversity.
- Just as Berkeley argues that the apple is merely a bundle of independent sense experiences, its taste independent from its roundness and its crunch, we are just a collection of various, separate experiences.
- As far as we know, even the world itself is just a loose collection of events unconnected by causal laws.
- Everything is particular and all the particulars are independent.
 - ▶ “Every distinct perception which enters into the composition of the mind is a distinct existence and is different and distinguishable and separable from every other perception, either contemporary or successive” (AW 529b).
- The self is dissolved.
 - ▶ “When we attribute identity, in an improper sense, to variable or interrupted objects, our mistake is not confined to the expression, but is commonly attended with a fiction, either of something invariable and uninterrupted, or of something mysterious and inexplicable, or at least with a propensity to such fictions. What will suffice to prove this hypothesis to the satisfaction of every fair enquirer, is to show from daily experience and observation, that the objects, which are variable or interrupted, and yet are supposed to continue the same, are such only as consist of a succession of parts, connected together by resemblance, contiguity, or causation...” (AW 527b).

The No-Self Theory and the Bundle Theory

Two ways to view Hume's theory of the self

- It is a no-self theory because he denies any experience of a self.
 - There is no I, beyond the experiences.
 - Against the Cartesian claim that the cogito yields the existence of a thinker.
 - We are just thought.
 - Buddhist view
- We can call it the bundle theory of self for his claim about our loose connections.
 - A bit misleading: it might be interpreted as claiming that there is an enduring self which unites the bundle.
- We have a practical interest in maintaining a notion of the self over time.
- But the claim that there is a self underlying the experiences, some haecceity, is, strictly speaking, false.
 - Or anyway we can have no knowledge of any self.

Topics in Hume

- ✓1. Causation and Induction
- ✓2. The Bundle Theory of the Self
- ☛3. **Free Will and Compatibilism**

Three Positions on Free Will

1. Libertarianism: Our will is free

- ▶ We have reasons to believe that we are free: our conscious experience feels free.

2. Determinism: Our will is not free, but determined

- ▶ We have reasons to believe that we are determined.
- ▶ Theistic determinism
- ▶ Laplacean determinism
- ▶ Libertarianism and determinism are both incompatibilist positions.

3. Compatibilism: We are both free and determined

Libertarian Freedom

- Descartes attributed our ability to err to our freedom.
- The libertarian believes that the future is not fixed.
- Phenomenology of human action
 - We don't feel the causal pressure of the past.
- Indeterminacy of quantum physics?
 - Quantum indeterminacy does not seem to rise to the observable level.
 - Random indeterminacies
- Our freedom does not seem to consist of random moments inconsistent with the laws.
- Our freedom is rooted in our ability to choose among various options.

The Deterministic Response

- To avoid libertarianism, the determinist tries to show that our feeling of free will is illusory.
- Appearances of free will might, say, be attributed to a lack of understanding of the laws and the initial conditions.
- Or, they can be attributed to the inability of a finite mind to comprehend the infinitude of God.

Problems with Determinism

- The thought that I don't have the freedom I appear to have is unpleasant.
- Determinism seems to undermine our ordinary notions of moral responsibility.
 - ▶ Ordinarily, we think that we are morally responsible only for behavior that we could have avoided.
 - ▶ We are not responsible when we have no ability to do otherwise.
 - ▶ I am not personally responsible for stopping climate change, tidying the surface of Jupiter, or preventing the great Chicago fire of 1871.
 - ▶ In contrast, since I can contribute to the reduction of carbon in our atmosphere, I may be responsible for doing so.
- If determinism is true, and if it entails that I can never do otherwise than what I do, it seems that I can never be morally responsible for any of my actions.
- Intuitively, we do think people are morally responsible for some of their actions.
- So, determinism clashes with these intuitions.

Compatibilism

- Compatibilism: determinism is not opposed to free will.
- Leibniz defended determinacy with contingency
 - Caesar example
 - implausible
- Hume: an act is free if it is done in accordance with our will, even if the act is also determined.
 - It is universally allowed that matter, in all its operations, is actuated by a necessary force and that every natural effect is so precisely determined by the energy of its cause that no other effect, in such particular circumstances, could possibly have resulted from it (*Enquiry*, §VIII.1, AW 565b).
- People do not generally surprise us with their actions.
 - When they do, it is due to our ignorance rather than any unpredictability in their behavior.
 - “The philosopher, if he is consistent, must apply the same reasoning to the actions and volitions of intelligent agents. The most irregular and unexpected resolutions of men may frequently be accounted for by those who know every particular circumstance of their character and situation” (§VIII.1, 568a).
- The dispute between libertarians and determinists is mainly verbal.
 - The freedom that we really care about is not opposed to determinism.

'Freedom' and Necessity

- Hume's claim is that 'freedom' is ambiguous.
- In the libertarian sense, 'freedom' is opposed to 'determinism', or 'necessity'.
- But freedom in that sense is not even desirable.
- Libertarian free acts are uncaused, without reasons.
 - Random and chaotic
- Worse, since libertarian free actions are not determined by our will, we seem to be blameless.
 - We do not hold the lion morally culpable for killing the wildebeest.

How Libertarian Freedom Prevents Moral Responsibility

- “The actions themselves may be blamable; they may be contrary to all the rules of morality and religion. But the person is not answerable for them and, as they proceeded from nothing in him that is durable and constant and leave nothing of that nature behind them, it is impossible he can, upon their account, become the object of punishment or vengeance. According to the principle, therefore, which denies necessity, and consequently causes, a man is as pure and untainted after having committed the most horrid crime as at the first moment of his birth, nor is his character any way concerned in his actions, since they are not derived from it, and the wickedness of the one can never be used as a proof of the depravity of the other” (§VIII.2, 572b).
- Hume has turned the table on the determinist.
- We were worried that determinism prevents ascriptions of moral responsibility.
- Hume argues that free will, in the sense opposed to determinism, also prevents ascriptions of moral responsibility.

'Freedom' and Constraint

- Hume claims that an action is done freely, properly understood, when it is done without external constraint.
- I act compatibilist freely if I am not dragged, pushed, or held at gunpoint to perform an action.
- “For what is meant by liberty when applied to voluntary actions? We cannot surely mean that actions have so little connection with motives, inclinations, and circumstances that one does not follow with a certain degree of uniformity from the other and that one affords no inference by which we can conclude the existence of the other. For these are plain and acknowledged matters of fact. By liberty, then, we can only mean *a power of acting or not acting according to the determinations of the will* -that is, if we choose to remain at rest, we may; if we choose to move, we also may. Now this hypothetical liberty is universally allowed to belong to everyone who is not a prisoner and in chains” (§VIII.1, AW 571a).

Moral Responsibility in a Deterministic World

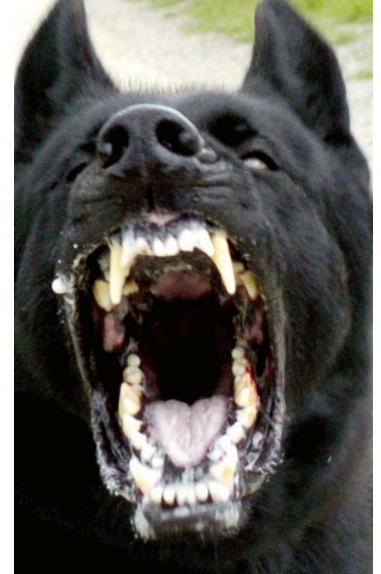
- If I do something only because I could not have done otherwise, I do not do it freely.
 - ▶ I do not return to the ground when I jump in the air of my free will.
 - ▶ If I pay my taxes because I am afraid of being fined or imprisoned, or if I refrain from cheating only out of fear of punishment, or if I am forced by threat to do any action I do not wish to perform, I do not act freely.
- If I want to pay taxes, since I approve of their uses in building and maintaining roads, schools and armed forces; or if I refrain from cheating because I believe it to be wrong, then I am acting in accordance with my will, freely.
- Consequently, we can hold people morally responsible for those acts they perform freely, in Hume's sense, and not for those they perform under constraint.

The Compatibilist Wins!

- By focusing on a sense of 'freedom' that is not opposed to determinism, Hume makes free will compatible with determinism.
- He also makes both the acceptance of both free will and determinism compatible with ascriptions of moral responsibility.
- He allows us an account of moral responsibility which aligns with our belief that we are responsible only for that which we choose.
- Hume's definition is consistent with the doctrine that ought implies can, that our moral responsibilities do not exceed our powers.
- Everyone should be happy.

Not So Fast!

- The reflective determinist will be unsatisfied with Hume's definition.
- The determinist can pursue the question of whether we are free or determined by asking whether we are free to choose what we choose, or whether we are constrained.
- If our thoughts are themselves the products of physical processes, mainly brain processes along with their inputs (from perception), then the same problem of determinism recurs with regard to our will.
- That is, we do seem to distinguish between cases in which our will is constrained and cases in which it is not.



The
incompatibilist

Freedom and Constraint of the Will

- If our wills are constrained, then there is a deep sense in which we are not free, even if we are not under external constraint.
- We excuse children from legal responsibility, because we think that they are not free to choose otherwise, even when they are not constrained by an external force.
- Mental disorders
 - The differences between adults, on the one hand, and children and people with dementia, on the other, may not be as significant as is ordinarily assumed.
 - More of our actions are seen as the result of mental predispositions than as the result of free choice.
 - DSM-V
- Neuroscientific progress and advances in genetics
 - Such scientific progress will include, eventually, substantial predictive power.
 - fMRI and mindreading
- Can we maintain, as the compatibilist does, that we are free, if a computer can predict our behavior?
 - The absence of free will implied by the predictability of our actions seems to excuse.
 - That is the essence of incompatibilism.

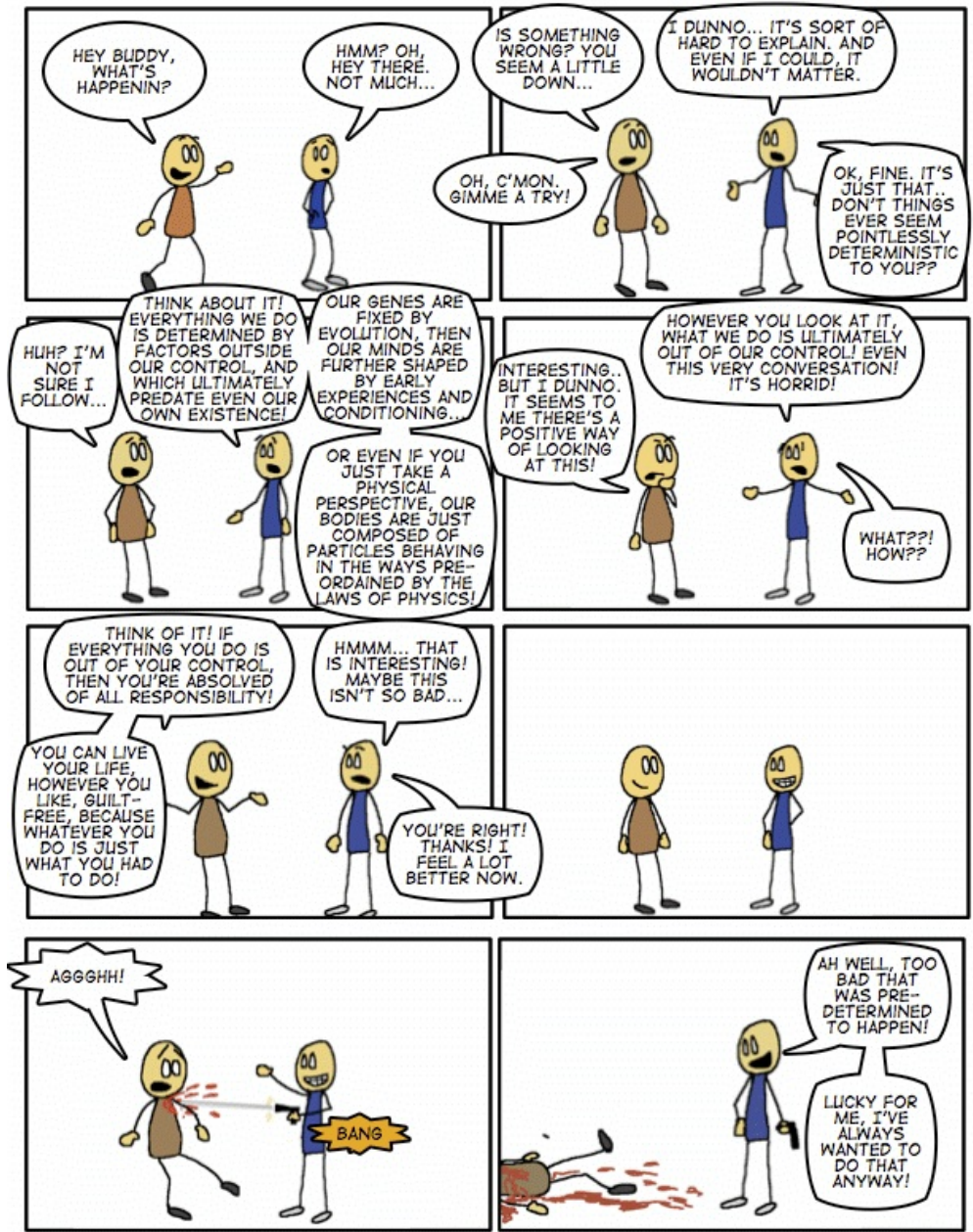
Frankfurt Cases

Contemporary Version of Hume's Compatibilism

- One can be morally responsible even if one could not have done otherwise.
 - ▶ Suppose someone - Black, let us say - wants Jones₄ to perform a certain action. Black is prepared to go to considerable lengths to get his way, but he prefers to avoid showing his hand unnecessarily. So he waits until Jones₄ is about to make up his mind what to do, and does nothing unless it is clear to him (Black is an excellent judge of such things) that Jones₄ is going to decide to do something other than what he wants him to do. If it does become clear that Jones₄ is going to decide to do something else, Black takes effective steps to ensure that Jones₄ decides to do, and that he does do, what he wants him to do... Now suppose that Black never has to show his hand because Jones₄, for reasons of his own, decides to perform and does perform the very action Black wants him to perform. In that case, it seems clear, Jones₄ will bear precisely the same moral responsibility for what he does as he would have borne if Black had not been ready to take steps to ensure that he do it. It would be quite unreasonable to excuse Jones₄ for his action...on the basis of the fact that he could not have done otherwise. This fact played no role at all in leading him to act as he did... Indeed, everything happened just as it would have happened without Black's presence in the situation and without his readiness to intrude into it (Harry Frankfurt, "Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibility," 835-6).
- Jones₄ could not have done otherwise, since Black was prepared to force him to act.
- But Jones₄ still bears moral responsibility.
- Thus we have a case in which someone bears responsibility despite not being able to do otherwise, which PAP denies.

Hume's Compatibilism

- Compatibilism: determinism is not opposed to free will.
 1. Libertarianism: Our will is free.
 2. Determinism: Our will is not free, but determined.
 3. Compatibilism: We are both free and determined.
- Hume: an act is free if it is done in accordance with our will, even if both the act and the will are also determined.
 - ▶ Freedom, in its important sense, is not opposed to determinism.
 - ▶ Freedom is opposed to external constraint.
- Moral responsibility is compatible with determinism.
 - ▶ That's useful for both the determinist and the compatibilist, both of whom accept that we can not do other than what we do.
 - ▶ it does not settle the question of whether we have free will, in the libertarian sense opposed to determinism.
 - ▶ The compatibilist recovers moral responsibility while avoiding the metaphysical question about freedom.



Topics in Hume

- ✓1. Causation and Induction
- ✓2. The Bundle Theory of the Self
- ✓3. Free Will and Compatibilism