

Philosophy 203
History of Modern Western Philosophy

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Hamilton College
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Class #22
Finishing the Problem of Induction
Free Will

Business

- Monday, 4:10pm: Prof. Copenhaver's talk
 - Science Center Aud
 - She'll join us in class on Tuesday for Hume and Reid on the self.
 - Lunch in Sadove later
- Next Thursday: Kant RAT
- End of Unit Writing Assignment is due the following Tuesday, April 26.
- Paper #2 (optional) is due on Thursday, April 28

Topics in Hume

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

Skepticism and Regularities

- Hume claims that we have no knowledge of causal laws.
 - ▶ The problem of induction
 - ▶ Skepticism
- He also claims that there are universal regularities in nature.
 - ▶ There can be no exceptions to those regularities, *in principle*.
 - “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” (Hume, *Enquiry*, §VIII.1, AW 565b).
 - ▶ There is no chance in nature.
 - ▶ All probability arises from our ignorance of causal connections.
 - Epistemic, not objective
 - “God does not throw dice” (Einstein).
 - ▶ Universal regularities apply to people, as well as ordinary causal interactions.
 - “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” (Hume, *Enquiry*, §VIII.1, 568a).
 - Determinism

The Skeptical Hume

- Hume's skepticism is a thorough rejection of the justification of our ordinary beliefs.
 - not just Locke's humility
- 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 perhaps inexplicable that we perform so many successful inductions.

Reid's Response



- Reflection and sensation come together.
 - ▶ “Can we form clear and just notions of our sensations any other way than by reflection? Surely we cannot. Sensation is an operation of the mind of which we are conscious; and we get the notion of sensation by reflecting upon that which we are conscious of. In like manner, doubting and believing are operations of the mind whereof we are conscious; and we get the notion of them by reflecting upon what we are conscious of. The ideas of sensation, therefore, are ideas of reflection as much as the ideas of doubting or believing or any other ideas whatsoever... When it is asserted that all our notions are either ideas or sensation or ideas of reflection, the plain English of this is that mankind neither do nor can think of anything but of the operations of their own minds. Nothing can be more contrary to truth or more contrary to the experience of mankind” (Reid, *Inquiry* AW 648a–b).
- Instead, we perceive the world directly, forming judgments at the same time as we have sensations.
 - ▶ “Such original and natural judgments are therefore a part of that furniture which nature has given to the human understanding... They are a part of our constitution, and all the discoveries of our reason are grounded upon them. They make up what is called *the common sense of mankind*...” (Reid, *Inquiry* AW 649a).
- We commonsensically believe in the existence of the external world.
- We commonsensically believe in causal connections in that world.
- Is this a response to Hume, or mere gainsaying?
- Perhaps Prof. Copenhaver will have something to say for Reid, here.
- Hume has a different approach.

Belief in Laws is a Habit

- ▶ Hume provides a psychological account of our beliefs about causation.
 - ▶ naturalism
- ▶ “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.

Team Activity

Hume's Definition of Cause

- 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).
- Consider the following argument:
 1. We have experiences of the sun rising.
 2. These experiences provide insight into our psychology (i.e. our uses of the term 'cause').
 3. Since we could never be justified in ascribing causes to the world, our legitimate uses of 'cause' must refer to our habits.
 4. Our habits are justified as a matter of course.

C. We can be justified in believing or asserting that the sun will rise tomorrow.
- What would be Hume's response?

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, free will and the self, will start from naturalist assumptions.

Topics in Hume

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

Three Positions on Free Will

1. Libertarianism: Our will is free

- ▶ Descartes
- ▶ Our conscious experience feels free.
 - We don't feel the causal pressure of the past.
 - Ice cream
- ▶ The libertarian believes that the future is not fixed.

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

- ▶ Spinoza
- ▶ Theistic determinism
- ▶ Laplacean determinism
- ▶ Our feeling of free will is illusory.
 - We are unable to comprehend the infinitude of God.
 - Or we lack understanding of the laws and the initial conditions.
- ▶ Problem: determinism seems to undermine moral responsibility

3. Compatibilism: We are both free and determined

- ▶ Libertarianism and determinism are both incompatibilist positions.
- ▶ The compatibilist usually accepts determinism and redefines 'freedom'.
- ▶ Finding room for responsibility in a deterministic universe.

Team Activity

Leibnizian Compatibilism

The Caesar Example

If someone were able to carry out the whole demonstration by virtues of which he could prove this connection between the subject, Caesar, and the predicate, his successful undertaking, he would in fact be showing that Caesar's future dictatorship is grounded in his notion or nature, that there is a reason why he crossed the Rubicon rather than stopped at it and why he won rather than lost at Pharsalus and that it was reasonable, and consequently certain, that this should happen. But this would not show that it was necessary in itself nor that the contrary implies a contradiction... For it will be found that the demonstration of this predicate of Caesar is not as absolute as those of numbers or of geometry, but that it supposes the sequence of things that God has freely chosen, a sequence based on God's first free decree always to do what is most perfect and on God's decree with respect to human nature, following out of the first decree, that man will always do (although freely) that which appears to be best. But every truth based on these kinds of decrees is contingent, even though it is certain; for these decrees do not change the possibility of things...it is not its impossibility but its imperfection which causes it to be rejected. And nothing is necessary whose contrary is possible (Leibniz, *Discourse on Metaphysics* §13, AW 231b).

Leibnizian Compatibilism

Choose which of each of the following pairs Leibniz holds.

- ▶ 1A. God can choose freely.
- ▶ 1B. God is constrained to do what is perfect.
- Descartes?
- Spinoza?

Leibnizian Compatibilism

Choose which of each of the following pairs Leibniz holds.

- ▶ 2A. God knows that Caesar will cross the Rubicon before he does it.
- ▶ 2B. God does not know that Caesar will cross before he does so.
- Descartes?
- Spinoza?

Leibnizian Compatibilism

Choose which of each of the following pairs Leibniz holds.

- ▶ 3A. Before Caesar crosses, we can know that he will cross.
- ▶ 3B. Before Caesar crosses, we can not know that he will cross.
- Descartes?
- Spinoza?

Leibnizian Compatibilism

Choose which of each of the following pairs Leibniz holds.

- ▶ 4A. Caesar's crossing is necessary.
- ▶ 4B. Caesar's crossing is contingent.
- Descartes?
- Spinoza?

Leibnizian Compatibilism

Choose which of each of the following pairs Leibniz holds.

- ▶ 5A. Caesar is constrained to cross.
- ▶ 5B. Caesar is free to choose whether to cross or not.
- Descartes?
- Spinoza?

Leibniz and Hume and Freedom

- Leibniz gives us a kind of compatibilism.
 - ▶ God already knows what we will freely choose.
 - ▶ Our choices are still choices, since they proceed from our natures.
- Hume's view improves on Leibniz's in part by thinking more carefully about the nature of freedom.
 - ▶ 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 the sense we care about most, is opposed to external constraint.



Team Activity

Humean Compatibilism

- “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....
- “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...
- “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... (Hume, *Enquiry*, §VIII.2, AW 571–72).
- Which of the following is the best interpretation of Hume’s view about freedom?
 - A. We have libertarian freedom, but that’s not the important kind of freedom.
 - B. We lack libertarian freedom, which we want, so we have to settle for a lesser sort of freedom.
 - C. The libertarian fails to describe the kind of freedom we care about, which concerns not being forced to do what we don’t want to do.
 - D. We have libertarian freedom, and it is consistent with determinism.
 - E. All notions of freedom are incoherent.

Moral Responsibility in a Deterministic World

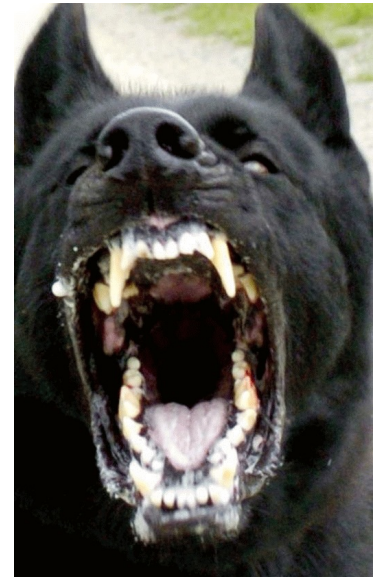
- If I do something only because I could not have done otherwise, I do not do it freely.
 - ▶ I do not return to the ground when I jump in the air of my free will.
 - ▶ If I pay my taxes because I am afraid of being fined or imprisoned, or if I refrain from cheating only out of fear of punishment, or 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.

Topics in Hume

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