

AN OUTLINE OF HUME'S *ENQUIRIES*

A. BASIC EMPIRICISM	<u>Sections</u>
Theory: Mental life contains vivid <i>impressions</i> and less vivid <i>ideas</i> . Hume claims that all ideas are derived from impressions (so there are no innate ideas)	12-13
Justification: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • every idea in our minds can be analysed down into its component impressions • if a person hasn't experienced an impression, they can't form the corresponding idea 	14-15
Examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a <i>golden mountain</i> requires the prior impressions of gold and mountains • our idea of <i>God</i> is composed of impressions • blind people can't imagine colours • Laplanders have no idea what <i>wine</i> tastes like 	13-15
Problems: Objectors probably have to defend rationalism and innate ideas. Consider the <i>Meno</i> slave boy, mathematics, logic, morality, the concept of God. Also consider the role of reason in Descartes' wax example, or Plato's understanding of <i>beauty itself</i> .	
B. CONSTRUCTING EMPIRICAL KNOWLEDGE	
Theory: All knowledge is either <i>relations of ideas</i> (e.g. maths) or <i>matters of fact</i> (mainly science). There are just three principles of association built into our minds, which assemble ideas into knowledge: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) <u>Resemblance</u> - we naturally spot similarities between objects, sense experiences and ideas 2) <u>Contiguity</u> - we mentally link things when they are close together in space or time 3) <u>Causation</u> - we link things when we have a sense that one thing causes another 	20,19
Justification: Only the examination of a range of examples can show that these are the only mental associations	19
Examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I think of home whenever I come near it (a <i>contiguity</i> link) • The son of a dead friend conjures up that friend's image (a <i>causation</i> link) • The picture of an absent friend also makes us think of him (a <i>resemblance</i> link) 	41-3
Problems: Kant said Hume's system was much too simple, and Kant describes many complex 'categories of thought'. Modern psychology gives a much more complex account of how we assemble knowledge. It is hard to leave reason <i>completely</i> out of it. We can <i>deliberately</i> make connections when the three principles don't work (e.g. associate the Labour Party with a red rose).	
C. CAUSATION	
Theory: We only think things cause one another when there is a <i>constant conjunction</i> between them. Thus causation is entirely empirical, and there is no reasoning or necessity involved in it. We come to <i>expect</i> one thing to be followed by another.	23-24, 60
Justification: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is no way that our reason could have predicted some of the strange things we experience. • Experience shows no sign of any reason occurring when we decide one thing causes another. 	23-26
Examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • only experience shows that marble sheets stick together, or water drowns us, or magnets attract • our ability to predict billiard balls depends entirely on experience • even the power of our own mind to cause things has to be learnt from experience 	24
Problems: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • occasionally we see constant conjunction, but we <i>don't</i> assume there is causation (papers arrive around sunrise) • occasionally we decide there is causation after one (or very few) conjunction (e.g. an unusual event, like an explosion) • some things seem permanently conjoined without causation (the presence of nitrogen with football) • for all Hume says, the feeling of <i>necessity</i> in causation seems overwhelming 	
D. INDUCTION	
Theory: We arrive at generalisations and scientific laws simply by building up habits and expectations, and once again it is entirely based on experience and the behaviour of our brains, with no reason involved. Thus we come to expect that <i>all swans are white</i> after we have seen a lot of white swans, but we can't <i>prove</i> that they are all white	29-32, 36
Justification: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • if induction was rational one example would be enough (see one white swan, just as we only need to do 3+2=5 once) • animals and children (with little reason) draw inductive conclusions all the time (<i>don't eat mud</i>) • reason is too slow and unreliable for the urgency of normal inductions (<i>duck under flying objects</i>) 	31,45
Examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • we only know that bread nourishes from repeated eating • eggs look identical, but only experience shows which types of eggs are rotten 	29,31
Problems: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Popper shows that at least we are rational when we <i>falsify</i> generalisations, giving science <i>some</i> basis • It certainly <i>seems</i> rational when we jump from a set of coincidences to a full-blown scientific <i>law</i> 	

Minimum reading: *Enquiries* - Sections 11-32 (pages 17-38) [note sections 20 and 27 on maths]