

David Hume

Unmasking the Pretensions of Reason

The Enlightenment

18th Century is often considered the *Age of Enlightenment*.

- Not enlightened age.
- The focus is progress. Maturing, not maturity.



Isaac Newton

Newton revolutionized

Analysis and ***Synthesis***, not ***hypothesis***.

Stay close to the ***phenomena***.

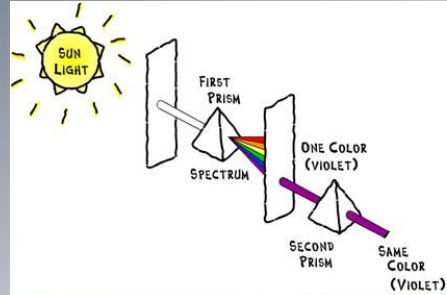
We can't begin with what *seems* right, we have to start with what we observe.

Rejects Descartes: "One man's intuitive certainty is another man's absurdity."

Rejects ***rationalism***, embraces ***empiricism***.

Newton's Ideas

Sir Isaac Newton was able to isolate one color of the spectrum.



The legend is that Newton saw an apple fall, and had a moment of inspiration in which he realized that the motion of the Moon around the Earth could also be thought of as "falling."



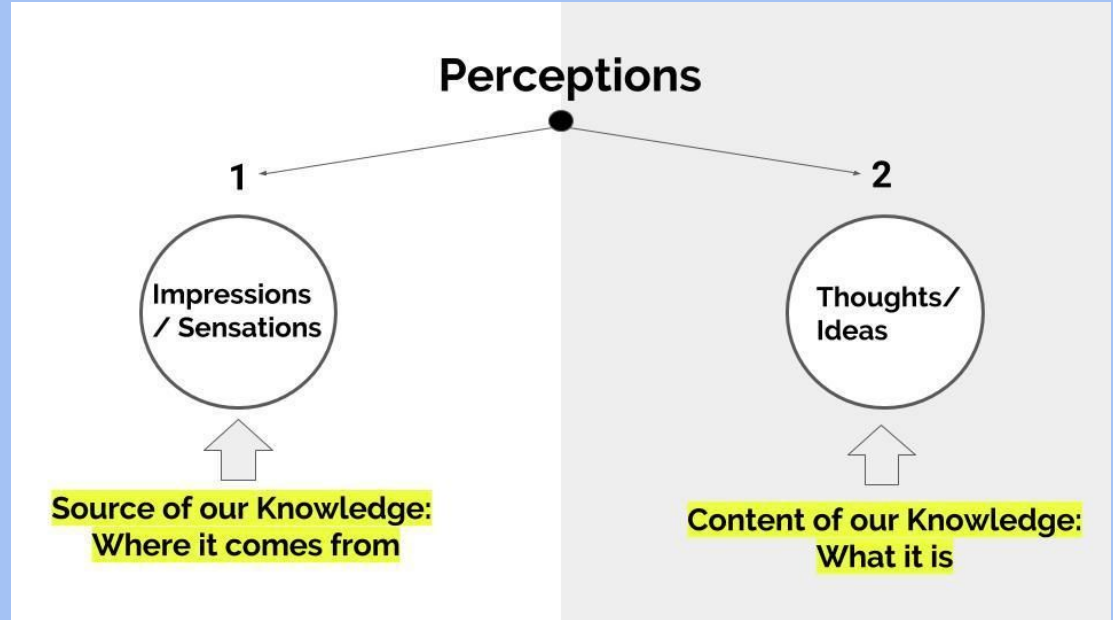
David Hume

Wanted to take what Newton did for natural sciences, and apply it to Human Nature

What are we *capable* of understanding?

Hobbes had assumed Objects were real, Descartes had assumed the mind was real, Hume rejects both:

Only *Perceptions* are real.



Perceptions

Impressions

Ideas

Simple

Complex

Simple

Complex

Hand Slap

Melody

Horses / Horns

Unicorns

PERCEPTIONS

Ideas

(created by the imagination)

Impressions

of sensation

(unknown causes)

of reflection

(caused by ideas)

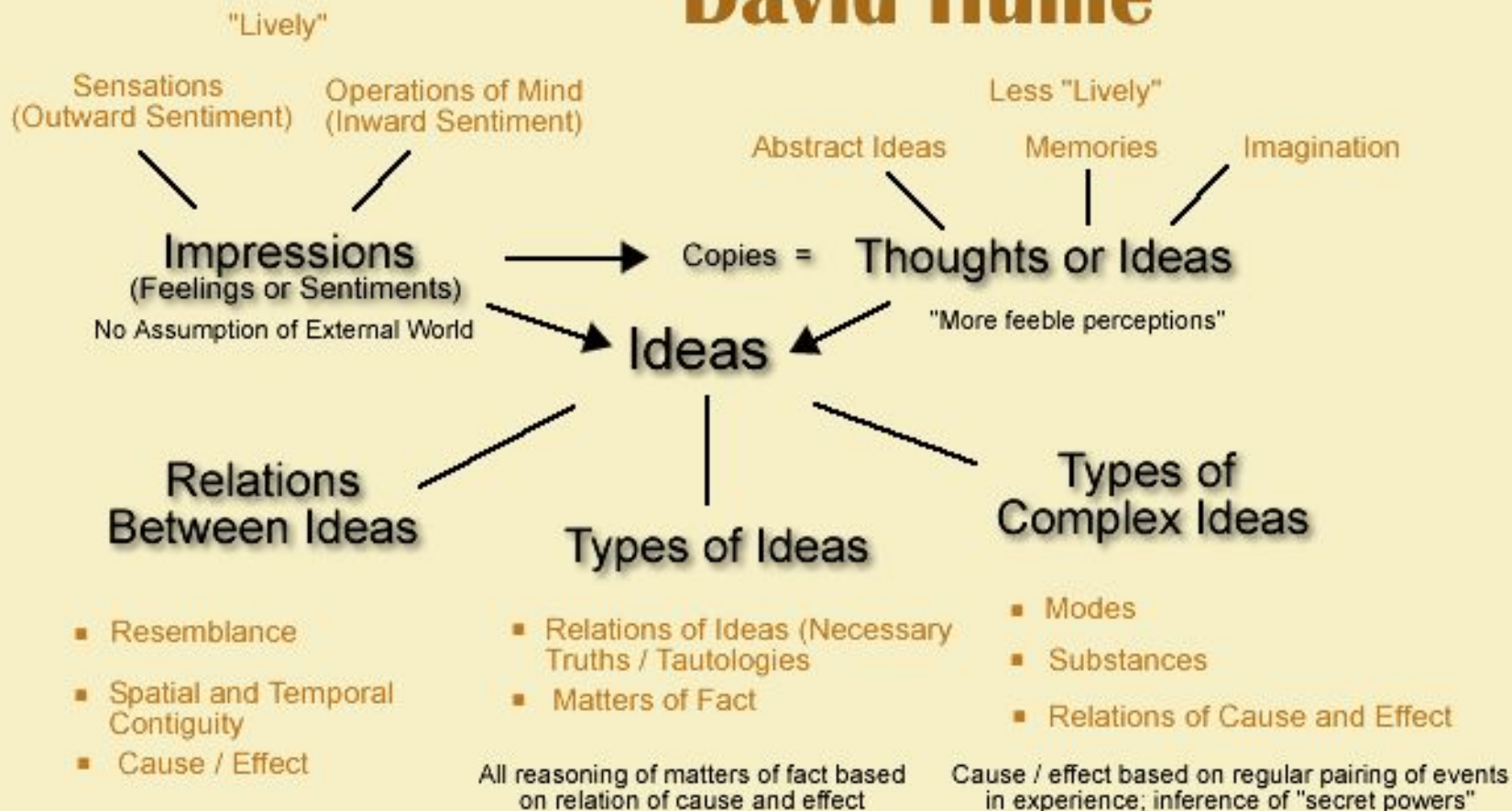
first kind

second kind

third kind

(figure, bulk, etc.) (colours, tastes, etc.) (pleasure and pain)

David Hume



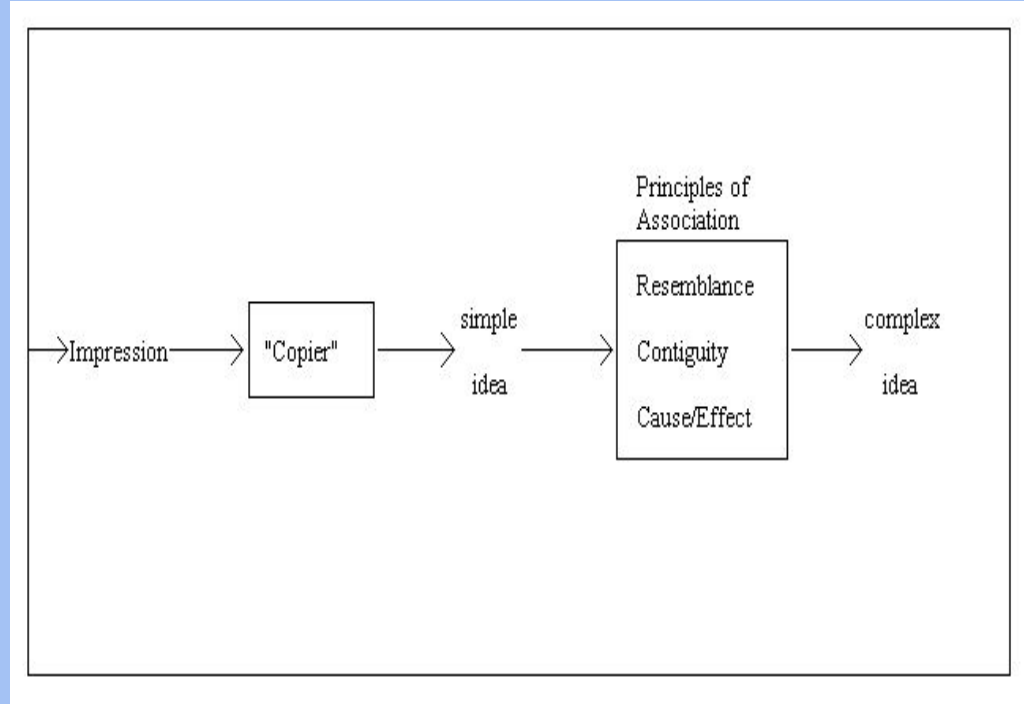
Association of Ideas

Which comes first? Impression before idea.

Proof? Can you imagine a sound you've never heard? A color you've never seen? One cannot *imagine* the taste of pineapple. You've tasted it or you haven't.

Every meaningful word is associated with an idea. If not, it's nonsense and you should disregard it.

In the same way that gravity pulls objects together, reason pulls ideas together.



Association of Ideas

There are relations of ideas

- Most math (triangles have three sides, etc.)

And there are matters of fact

- Truth must be experienced (the sun will rise tomorrow)

Try it and see:

- Two plus three is six
- The sun won't rise tomorrow

Hume's fork

| Relations of ideas | Matters of fact |
|---|--|
| Analytic Necessary A priori Certain | Synthetic Contingent A posteriori Probable |
| <i>Examples: Pythagoras's theorem; All Bachelors are unmarried men.</i> | <i>Examples: the sun will rise tomorrow; all bachelors are rich men.</i> |

Principles of the Association of Ideas

- Hume thinks there are 3 principles of association:
 - “To me, there appear to be only three principles of connexion among ideas, namely *Resemblance, Contiguity in time or place, and Cause or Effect.*” (Enquiry, 101)
- Resemblance:
 - “A picture naturally leads our thoughts to the original.” (Enquiry, 102)
- Contiguity in time or place:
 - “The mention of one apartment in a building naturally introduces an enquiry or discourse concerning the others.” (Enquiry, 102)
- Cause and effect:
 - “And if we think of a wound, we can scarcely forbear reflecting on the pain which follows it.” (Enquiry, 102)

So...What does this all mean in real life?

Select ONE of the following topics (pages 451-462, and be able to provide your peers with a summary and an explanation.

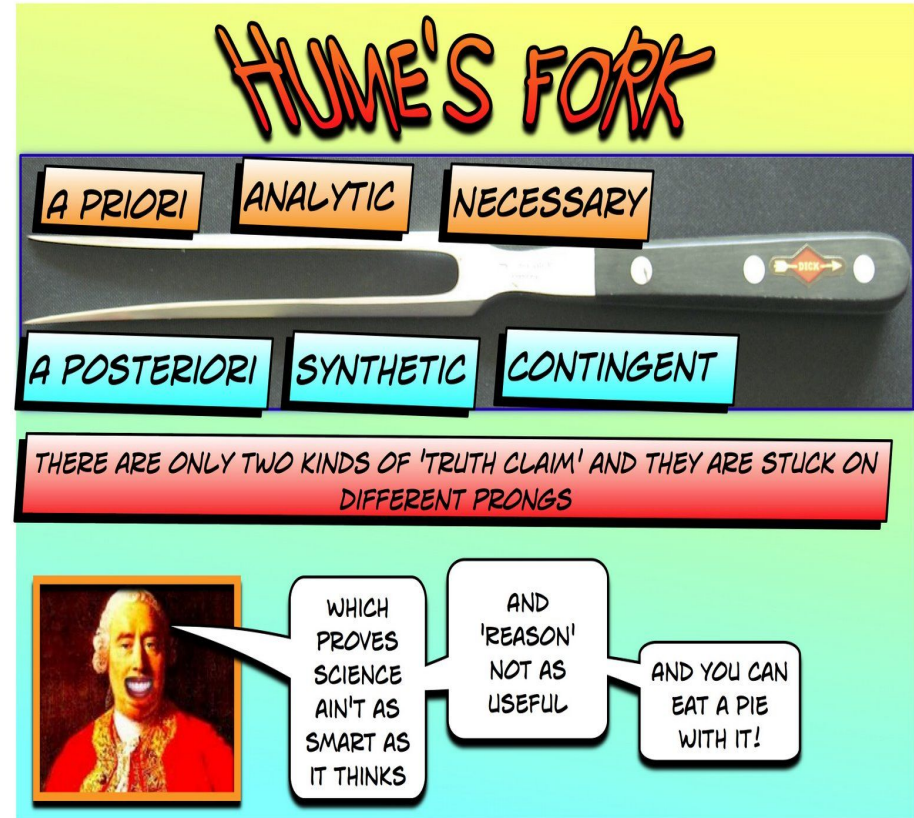
1. The Disappearing Self
2. Rescuing Human Freedom
3. Is it Reasonable to Believe in God?
4. Understanding Morality



Hume's Fork

Hume's fork

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Hume on Skepticism

Reason is limited, but not a total skeptic


Rejects the *Antecedent skepticism* of Descartes:

- You can't doubt everything.
- If you could, the only way back would be to use your own reason...which you doubt

Embraces *mitigated skepticism*:

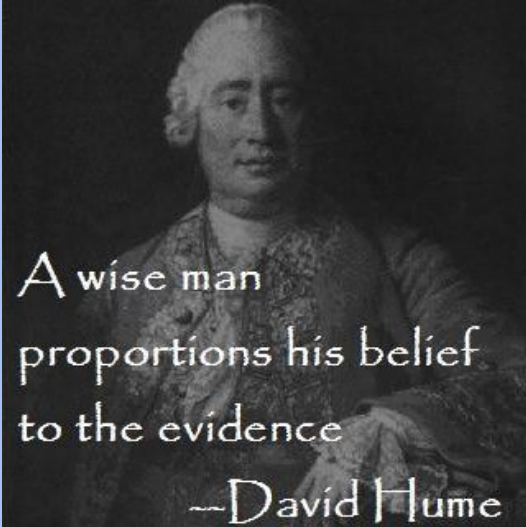
- You can't be certain about complicated metaphysics.
- Devote your efforts of understanding to practical matters.

David Hume



There is, indeed a more mitigated scepticism or academical philosophy, which may be both durable and useful, and which may, in part, be the result of this Pyrrhonism, or excessive scepticism, when its undistinguished doubts are corrected by common sense and reflection.

AZ QUOTES



A wise man
proportions his belief
to the evidence
—David Hume