Introduction to Philosophy Queens College
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Hume Handout

I. How do you know? (Or, Why do you believe?)

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) F=ma?
8) Every effect has a cause?

II. Hume's argument for empiricism:

1) Our beliefs about the world are based on our beliefs about cause and effect relations.
2) Our beliefs about cause and effect relations are based on experience, not reason.
:. All beliefs about the world are based on experience.
That is, empiricism is true.

III. 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 doesn't need to be explained in terms of final causes. Both can be explained by the laws of motion.

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

V. "When we run over libraries, persuaded of these principles, what havoc must we make? If we take in hand any volume - of divinity or school metaphysics, for instance - let us ask, D*oes it contain any abstract reasoning concerning quantity or number?* No. *Does it contain any experimental reasoning concerning matter of fact and existence?* No. Commit it then to the flames, for it can contain nothing but sophistry and illusion. (*Enquiry*, Hackett, 114)

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.
:. Our beliefs about the future and the unobserved are uncertain.

VII. Example of invalid inductive argument

1) I have seen one ball strike another many times.
2) Each time the ball which was struck has moved, motion was transferred.
:. 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.