

David Hume - Empiricism and The Science of Man

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David Hume

- 1711-1776

An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding

Lecture Plan

- *Lecture 1* Hume's Empiricism and the Science of Man
(Reading, *Sections 2 and 3*)
- *Lecture 2* Scepticism and Causation
(Reading, *Sections 4 and 5*)
- *Lecture 3* Causation and Probability
(Reading, *Sections 6 and 7*)
- *Lecture 4* Hume's Reconciling Project
(Reading, *Section 8*)
- *Lecture 5* Hume's Philosophy of Religion
(Reading, *Enquiries 10 and 11*)

The Mechanical Philosophy

Descartes and the Meditations:

- 1 God and Mind-Body Dualism

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- 2 Rejection of Aristotelian Natural Philosophy

The Mechanical Philosophy

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- ③ A mechanical theory of nature, determined by necessary laws discoverable by mathematics

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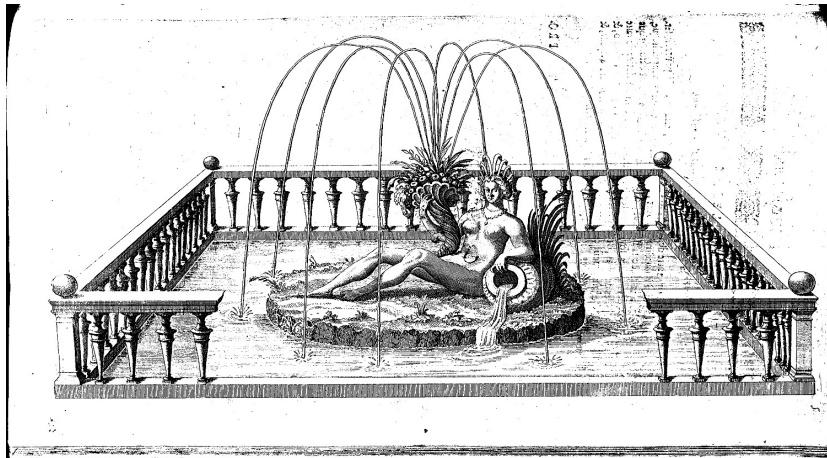
- ① God and Mind-Body Dualism
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- ④ The movements of the body occur 'in the same way as the movement of a watch is produced merely by the strength of its spring and the configuration of its wheels' (CSM 334: AT XI 341-342).

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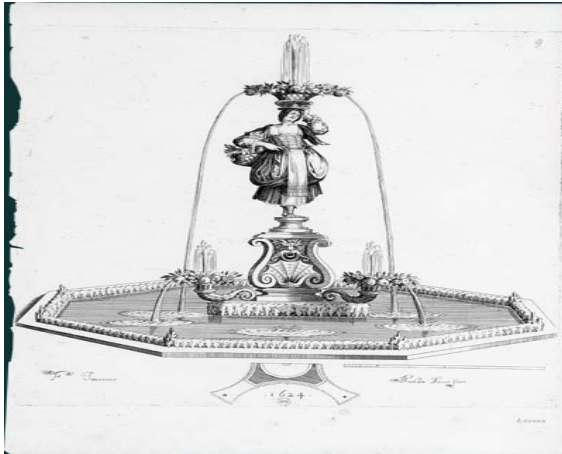
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- ④ The movements of the body occur 'in the same way as the movement of a watch is produced merely by the strength of its spring and the configuration of its wheels' (CSM 334: AT XI 341-342).
- ⑤ Hydraulic systems used to power water fountains in the royal gardens of Saint-Germain-en-Lay

The Francini Brother's Fountains



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The Mechanical Theory of the Human Body

'Similarly, you may have observed in the grottoes and fountains in the royal gardens that the force that drives the water from its source is all that is needed to move various machines, and even to make them play certain instruments or pronounce certain words, depending on the particular arrangements of the pipes through which the water is conducted.

And the nerves of the machine that I am describing can indeed be compared to the pipes in the mechanical parts of these fountains, its muscles and tendons to various other engines and springs which serve to work these mechanical parts, its animal spirits to the water that drives them, the heart with the source of water, and the brains cavities with the apertures. Moreover, respiration and similar actions which are normal and natural to this machine, and which depend on the flow of spirits, are like the movements of a clock or mill, which the normal flow of water can make continuous.' (AT X 130-132: TW 107)

The Mechanist Philosophy

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- Hume's Enlightenment Philosophy and the Mechanical Laws of the Mind

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- ① The easy and obvious philosophy cannot obtain sufficient exactness without the difficult and abstruse
- ② If abandoned, this area of philosophy will be overcome by Religious Superstitions and Dogmas

Hume's Aims in the *Enquiries*

- To Protect the Discipline of Metaphysics from Vile Thieves
- To Present a Mental Geography of the Human Mind
- To Pursue the Difficult and Abstruse Philosophy but to do so without the Jargon of the Previous Metaphysicians
- To Put this Philosophy to Practical Use

Hume's Empiricism

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- ① **Strength** and **Vivacity**
- ② 'By the term *impression*, then, I mean all our more **lively perceptions**, which we hear, or see, or feel, or love, or hate, or desire, or will. And **impressions** are distinguished from **ideas**, which are the **less lively perceptions**, of which we are conscious, when we reflect on any of those sensations or movements above mentioned.' (E II, 18).

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- ⑤ Test the Theory!

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- ⑤ Empiricism Vs. Rationalism - The Idea of God

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- The copy principle is not the same for complex ideas

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The *Critical Force* of the Copy Principle:

- ① 'When we entertain, therefore, any suspicion, that a philosophical term is employed without any meaning or idea (as is but too frequent), we need to enquire, *from what impression is that supposed idea derived?* And if it be impossible to assign any, this will serve to confirm our suspicion' (E II, 22)

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- ⑥ The concept 'Substance' is empty of meaning

The Critical Force of the Copy Principle - Continued

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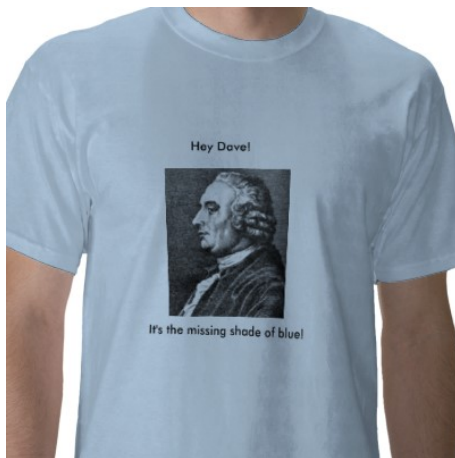
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- ⑥ Don Garrett - The game is not up for Hume

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- Three Principles of Connection - 1) Resemblance 2) Contiguity & 3) Cause or Effect

Hume's Empiricism - Main Points

- ① Hume intends to discover the mechanical laws of the human mind.
- ② Hume's empiricism states that all ideas must be derived from impressions.
- ③ The copy principle is a *first principle* of the science of human nature.
- ④ The copy principle can be used as a critical philosophical tool in order to discover whether or not a given concept has any meaning.
- ⑤ There are for Hume no impressions, and therefore no ideas, of substance and the self.
- ⑥ The principle of association, or of the connection of ideas, is another first principle of human nature, and this can be subdivided into three types: Resemblance, Contiguity, and Cause or Effect.