

The background is a light cream color, decorated with various watercolor-style elements. In the top left, there are green leaves and a pinkish circular shape. In the top right, there is a brownish circular shape. In the bottom left, there are green leaves and a brownish circular shape. In the bottom right, there is a dark grey circular shape. Thin, light blue lines curve across the background, connecting some of the shapes.

Sources of Knowledge

Empiricism

Overview

- Intuitive Appeal of Empiricism
- Locke – Arguments against Innate Ideas
- Hume – Hume's Fork, Relations of Ideas VS Matters of Facts
- Counterarguments against Empiricism



Intuitive Appeals

The Wise Traveller

Gaining knowledge through many experiences



Common Sense

Gaining and justifying knowledge through our senses



Science

Huge body of knowledge and widely respected **authority** on knowledge



Against Innate Ideas I

- John Locke: first of the 3 great British empiricists
- Locke: what does it mean for an idea to be innate? That it be in the mind?
- But for idea P to be in the mind = one consciously knows P

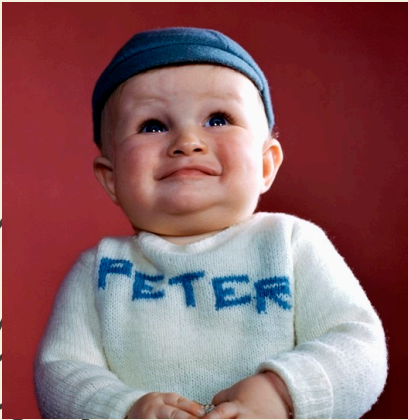
"No proposition can be said to be in the mind, which it never yet knew, which it never yet was conscious of"
(*Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Book I, Chapter II, Section 5, p. 61).

- Locke's test: Innate ideas must be ideas that one is conscious of. If one is not conscious of these ideas, then they are not innate.



Against Innate Ideas I

I am, and I
am not. I
am mighty!



- But there are **no ideas or principles** such that they are already in one's mind from birth and one consciously knows them.
- E.g.: "It is impossible for the same thing to be, and not to be."
- Locke: Babies don't seem to know this consciously.

"They are so far from being brought into the world with us, so remote from the thoughts of infancy and childhood, that I believe, upon examination it will be found that many grown men want them."

Against Innate Ideas II

- Locke: there are no such things as innate ideas because if they did, then babies would **show some signs** that they have **settled ideas**
- i.e. ideas which are not confused and unchanging:

“For, bating perhaps some faint ideas of hunger, and thirst, and warmth, and some pains, which they may have felt in the womb, there is not the least appearance of any **settled** ideas at all in them; especially of ideas answering the terms which make up those universal propositions that are esteemed innate principles.” (emphasis mine)

- Babies don't seem to show such signs of innate knowledge.
- Rather, they seem to GAIN knowledge by DEGREES:

“One may perceive how, by **degrees**, afterwards, ideas come into their minds; and that they get **no more, nor other, than what they experience**, and the observation of things that come in their way, furnish them with” (emphasis mine)

- E.g. learning multiplication tables, Pythagoras' theorem

Against Innate Ideas II

- Indeed, what does Locke hold about babies in particular?
- Locke: Babies' minds are **tabula rasa**, i.e. blank slates
- That explains how babies can gain knowledge by degrees

What's a
BOOGER?



- And how do they gain knowledge? From EXPERIENCE
- Explains why babies like to use all their senses to gain knowledge
- Think of babies eating their own 'snot'!! And licking the ground etc.

Against Innate Ideas III

- Locke: if there were such innate ideas, then they have to be “**universally known and naturally agreed**” so that they can be “subjects of universal and undoubted truths” and not the “unavoidable occasion of perpetual uncertainty”.
- One e.g. of innate ideas is Identity
- But people’s ideas of Identity are different!
- E.g. Cartesian idea of a unified self vs Humean ‘bundle of thoughts’
- So how? Which is true? Which is innate?
- Or are there two different ideas of identity, both innate?



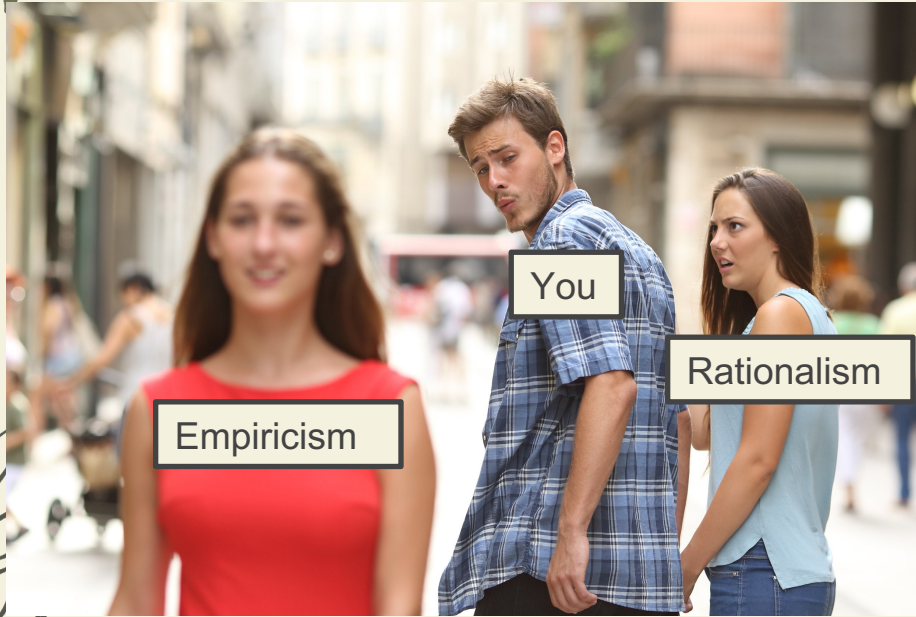
Consider also how a baby doesn't appear to recognize him/herself when first encountering a mirror (like a cat)

Counterargument I: epistemic progress



- Is Locke making a strawman out of the Rationalists' argument?
- Rationalist: the lack of universal agreement is because we are still in the process of arriving at the C&D idea,
- i.e. we are **progressing** to a better understanding of the idea/form
- Also, one/all sides could be wrong and the idea nonetheless remains C&D even though we don't know it
- Descartes: our Will is more powerful than our Intellect – we want to know more than our intellect (currently) allows us and that is where we fall into error
- Explains 'progress' of knowledge. E.g. scientific paradigms?

Sense Data — Source of Knowledge



- If knowledge does not come from innate ideas, then where?
- Locke: sense experience!
- “In experience all our knowledge is founded; and from experience knowledge ultimately derives itself.”
- Qn: Does this mean that the mind is not involved at all?

The Mind in Empiricism

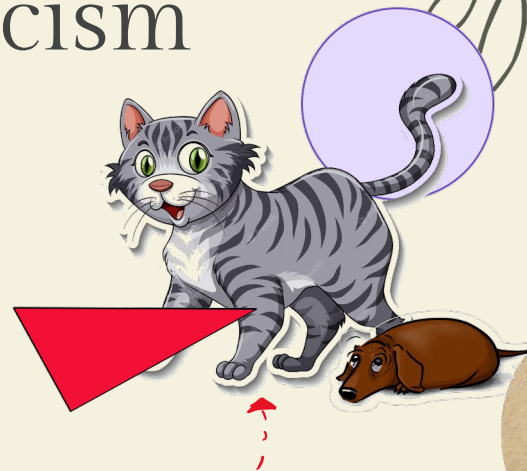
- Locke's empiricism is **not** a mindless reception of sense data
- Rather, the mind **actively works** with the sense data

"There are two ways in which experience supplies us with all the materials of thinking: first, when we experience something, we observe external sensible objects that provide us with data; second, when we experience something, there are **internal operations inside our minds to help us perceive and reflect on that thing**. These two are the fountains of knowledge, from which springs all the ideas we have or can naturally have."

(emphasis added)

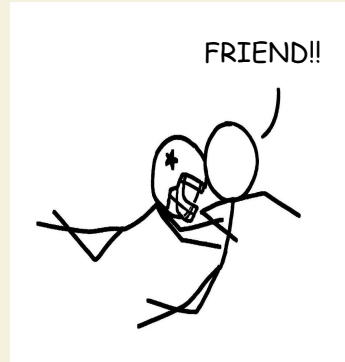
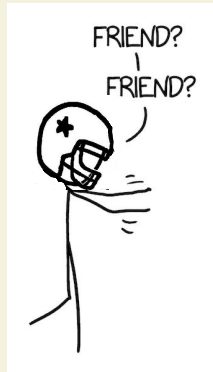
The Mind in Empiricism

- Locke: "there are some ideas we arrive at that **don't** come directly from external objects."
- "Instead, they come about **after** our minds have reflected on and considered the objects we perceive." (emphasis added)
- "Such reflection and consideration can include perception, thinking, doubting, believing, reasoning, knowing, willing, and all the different actions of our own minds."
- So, for Locke, you still need primary sense data BEFORE the mind can do these mental operations.
- Would these mental operations be then able to explain away Plato's Forms, say the Form of a Cat?





Sense Data vs Concepts

- Essentially, there is an important difference between what we are actually sensing **right now** and concepts of things which we have experienced **before**.
- E.g. I am now seeing you in front of me. But I can think of the **concept** that is you even when you are not in front of me.
- Importance: it allows us to think of things when we are not actually sensing it.
- Consequence: allows us to **recognise** things the next time we experience it.



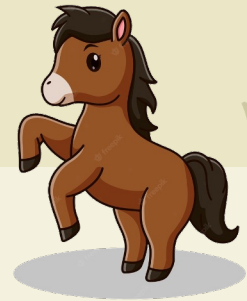


Counterargument II: Recognition

- Rationalist: I can recognise a Chihuahua to be a dog even though I have never seen one before.
 - But if knowledge is gained via experience, this is not possible.
 - Since it is possible, then knowledge is not gained via experience i.e. Platonic Forms, Cartesian Innate Ideas
 - If p then q , $\sim q$, therefore $\sim p$
- 
- 

Counterargument II: Recognition

- **Rejoinder:** Not because of Forms or Innate Ideas. Believing in that requires believing in something mystical.
- Instead, I have seen many different breeds of dogs.
- I then apply my mind to extract the common attributes of dogs to arrive at a mental concept of Dog.
- This is no form. It is an idea based on sense perception and not any Form.
- Same for Hume's missing shade of blue.
- But what of those concepts of things that we have **never** experienced before?
- Rejoinder: their parts are made up of basic concepts and those basic concepts we **HAVE** experienced before.
- E.g. Unicorns = Horn + Horse
- Does this sound more intuitive than Plato's Forms?



Intuitive Appeal

- Essentially, the Empiricists argue that our knowledge is made up of two things: sense data and concepts
- But since concepts are **built on sense data**, then the foundations of knowledge is sense data!
- Consequence: without the particular sense datum, someone would not be able to have knowledge of that thing in question.
- E.g. a blind person would not know what the colour red is.
- Seems intuitive!

- We also do normally justify our knowledge of things and events via our senses and not reason.
- E.g. pointing to a table to justify that it is in front of you

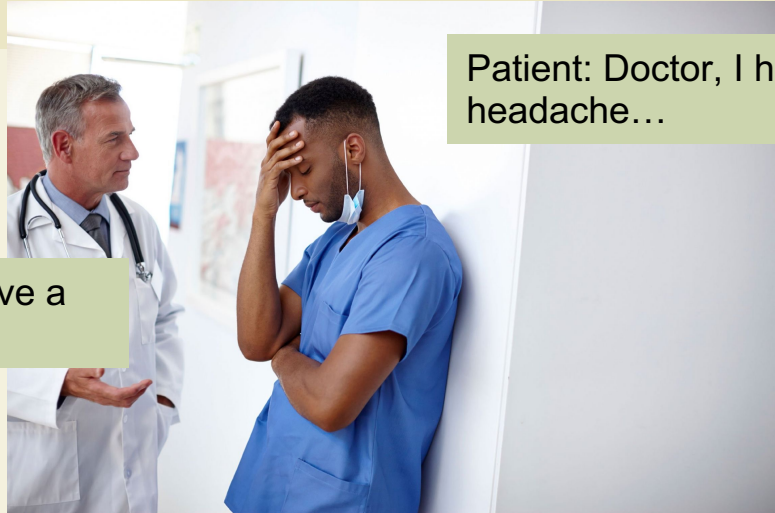
Counterargument III: Sense Deception

- Descartes: our senses can deceive us!
- **Rejoinder:** Ok, you can doubt my senses but you cannot deny that I am actually having sense experiences.
- So whether or not there are pink elephants galloping in front of me, **you cannot deny that I am sensing it right now**
- I am the **final arbiter** of what I am sensing
- So I can grant the sceptic that the physical world might simply be a figment of my imagination
- Still, the sceptic cannot take away the fact that I am now experiencing pink elephants



Incorrigibility of Sense Data

- Indeed, who would argue with me that I am now experiencing a headache?
- Sounds silly to question: “how do you *know* that you have a headache?”
- **Incorrigibility** of Sense Experience
- i.e. sense experience **cannot be corrected**; there is no room for error.
- In this way, sense data can be the bedrock of our knowledge (TB 53-55)



Doctor: No... you have a
foot ache.

Patient: Doctor, I have a
headache...

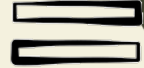
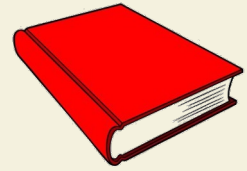
David Hume

- 2nd of the Great British Empiricists (Scottish really)
- Known for his sceptical attacks on Induction and Causation (Constant Conjunction)
- Argued that Rationalism was incapable of granting much knowledge



Hume's Fork

- There are only two kinds of Propositions:
- **Relations of Ideas** (Analytic) or **Matters of Fact** (Synthetic)
- Relations of Ideas: Justification is **not** found in Experience as predicate is contained in Subject
- Matters of Fact: Justification is found in **Experience** as predicate is **not** contained in Subject
- Note: All judgments of experience are synthetic as I put together two things that do not imply each other and can exist apart
- E.g.: the book is on the table



Relations of Ideas

- Once you understand the meaning of the subject (bachelor), you know the predicate (unmarried man)
- You can never negate the statement without contradicting yourself.
- E.g. 'All bachelors are unmarried men.'
- Negation: Not all bachelors are unmarried men – contradiction!



Matters of Fact

- Understanding the meaning of the subject is not enough to give you knowledge of the predicate
- Negating the statement doesn't result in contradiction.
- E.g. 'Mr Jarrod Lee is wearing a yellow shirt' may be false but it is not a contradiction.
- There is NOTHING in Mr Jarrod Lee that he HAS to wear a white-striped shirt.
- The statement can only be proven true or false by Experience.



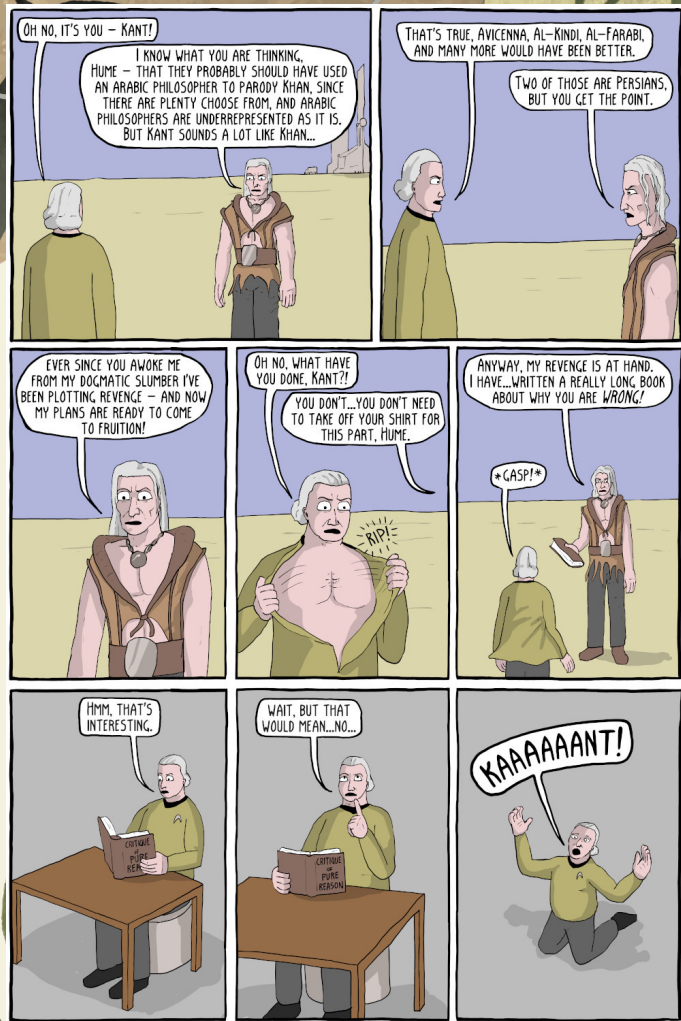
The Need for Experience

- Rationalism can only give us Relations of Ideas. By thinking about the meaning of the Subject, we can come to know its Predicate without experience.
- Rationalism **CANNOT** give us Matters of Fact since thinking about the meaning of the Subject cannot give us the Predicate
- But Knowledge of the External World are not Relations of Ideas but Matters of Fact
- Why? Truths of the World are merely CONTINGENT, not necessary.
- But Relations of Ideas are Necessary Truths and Rationalism can only give us Relations of Ideas.
- Hence, Rationalism cannot give us Contingent Truths, i.e. Matters of Fact.
- Upshot? Rationalism as an Epistemology is extremely limited.
- Further Upshot? We need Experience if we are to find out truths of this (contingent) world, i.e. Matters of Fact.



Counterargument IV: Truths of the World as Necessary

- Spinoza and Leibniz: Truths of this World are not contingent but are necessary.
- Just because we cannot see the reason(s) behind certain events does not mean that they are entirely random.
- For them, God knows why and how every event is connected and necessary.
- We merely get the feeling that it is contingent because our minds are not powerful enough to see why everything is the way it is.
- **Rejoinder:** But you need God in that argument! But why should I believe in God?
- Even the non-God version has to use Cause and Effect but we cannot experience causation; it is merely Constant Conjunction
- Consider how C&E isn't an analytic idea
- "Every event has a cause" -> subject doesn't include the predicate "has a cause;" can always be otherwise



Summary

- Empiricism does have some strengths
- Unlike Rationalism, it can give us a lot of knowledge via Matters of Fact statements/ truths about the external world
- But it also has some (fatal) flaws
- For Kant, the failure of Foundationalism is a scandal for Philosophy.
- Awakened from his dogmatic slumber by Hume, Kant will show how both are wrong AND right.



Homework

- Online Discussion 4 Part 1 by Thursday
- Read TB 51 to 70
- [Optional] Locke's reading

Danke!

Gibt es noch Fragen?

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