Quick Review

- **Skeptic’s Challenge**
  - Knowledge is not possible b/c always possibility for doubt
  - Descartes’ reply: I can’t doubt I exist (cogito argument)
    - Foundationism and rationalism
  - What does this leave us with epistemologically?
    - Solipsism and External World
    - Certainty vs. Probability in knowledge

- **Today: Empiricism & Induction**
  - Hume’s empiricism as an alternative to Descartes’ rationalism
  - The problem of induction
  - Solutions?

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Rationalism & Empiricism

- **Rationalism**
  - Knowledge is derived from reason or the intellectual grasp of ideas (Descartes’ “clear and distinct ideas”), not through perception/experience per se. Emphasis on certainty.

- **Empiricism**
  - Knowledge is derived from experience or perception. Emphasizes probability, not certainty.

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Hume’s Empiricism

- **Impressions and ideas (Psychology?)**
  - Impressions (aka, perception)
  - Ideas (aka, thoughts)
    - No idea without a corresponding impression (simple vs. complex)
    - Idea of God?

- **Two types of knowledge**
  - Relations of ideas (a priori): truths known by the intellect alone; logical truth whose opposite is a contradiction.
  - Matters of fact (a posteriori): truths that depend on facts about the world; the opposite is not a logical contradiction.

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Skepticism and Certainty

- **Hume criticizes Descartes**
  - Descartes mistakenly applying the standards of certainty (relations of ideas) to matters of fact – knowledge of external world is not a relation of ideas, but based on experience.
  - Thus we should reject Descartes’ (and the skeptic’s) demand for certainty in knowledge.

- **How then do we show (reliable) knowledge of external world is possible?**

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External World?

- **Open your eyes and you can’t help but perceive something:** there is a world external to our minds. Problem: doesn’t tell me my perceptions are correct or reliable.

- **We are justified in accepting our perceptions as reliable because experience tends to be “self-correcting”, misperceptions can be detected because of inconsistencies; coherent perception provides some reliability.**

- **Also, we probably wouldn’t survive very long if our perceptions were entirely unreliable...**

*Note: these arguments are not found in your reading*
General Knowledge?

• Hume’s empiricism holds for particular bits of knowledge, but what about knowledge that goes beyond particulars?
  
  – Generalizations
    • I see a number of crows that are black, so I infer that probably all or most crows are black.
  
  – Prediction
    • The sun has risen numerous times in the past, so I infer that tomorrow the sun will probably rise again.

PUN

• Hume thinks knowledge about matters of fact are based on knowledge about causation – the principle of the uniformity of nature (PUN):
  – “similar effects will have similar causes” or
  – “the future will be like the past”.

But, what are our reasons for thinking PUN is reliable?

Problem of Induction

P1: Either there is a demonstrative (a priori) argument or an inductive (a posteriori) argument for PUN.

P2: No demonstrative argument because PUN is a matter of fact, not a relation of ideas.

P3: No inductive argument because this would be circular (begging the question); using PUN to justify PUN.

C: There is no rational justification for PUN.

Solutions?

• Hume: we are not rationally justified in PUN, but we are psychologically (habitually) compelled to rely on PUN.
  – Problem: makes knowledge accidental, not justifiable (JT8?), and thus suspect.

• Pragmatic: We can accept PUN because it seems to work, the best thing going.
  – Problem: either is circular or simply doesn’t address the problem of justification (JT8?).

Coherentism?

• Hume and Descartes are both foundationalist. What if we avoid foundationalism?

• Coherentism: in order for belief to be justified it doesn’t have to ultimately rest on foundational beliefs, but it does need to cohere (be consistent) with other beliefs, like a network or web of beliefs.
  
  – Problem: how do we know our coherent set of beliefs is reliable about the world?

Next Time

• Science as a model for reliable knowledge
  – A coherent set of beliefs about the world that are ultimately testable by experience;
  – A web of beliefs is adjusted to fit experiential tests.

Will science save the day?