

An
ENQUIRY
CONCERNING
HUMAN
UNDERSTANDING

David Hume



CLASSICAL TEXT: WESTERN

**(AN ENQUIRY CONCERNING HUMAN UNDERSTANDING:
DAVID HUME)**

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PHI-DSC-302

CLASSICAL TEXT: WESTERN (AN ENQUIRY CONCERNING HUMAN UNDERSTANDING: DAVID HUME)

Course Objective : To explore the nature and scope of Hume's philosophical enquiry and its significance in modern philosophy. To explore and analyse some of the fundamental concepts of Hume's philosophy, such as, impressions and ideas, association of ideas, relation of ideas and matters of fact, liberty and necessity, probability, theory of causation etc. To explore Hume's insights into the reasoning abilities of animals compared to humans, and analyse Hume's views on religion and skepticism, and their implications for belief and knowledge.

Course Outcome: Upon completion of the course, students will be able to delve into the intricacies of Hume's philosophical inquiries, with a comprehensive understanding of key concepts such as impressions, ideas, and causation. This course will enhance critical thinking about the nature of knowledge, belief, and skepticism, fostering an appreciation of Hume's lasting impact on modern philosophy and encouraging students to engage with these themes in contemporary discussions.

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Religion and Skepticism (Sections X, XI and XII)

Suggested Readings:

1. Hume, David, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, (ed.) by Tom L. Beauchamp, Oxford/ New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.
2. Buckle, Stephen, *Hume's Enlightenment Tract: The Unity and Purpose of "An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding"*, Oxford Clarendon Press, 2001
3. Radcliffe, E.S.(ed.) *A Companion to Hume*, Oxford: Blackwell, 2008

Unit I

Nature of Hume's Philosophical Enquiry, Historical Background, Distinction between Easy and Obvious Philosophy and Accurate and Abstract Philosophy (Section I)

Q.1. Write a note on Hume's Enquiry of Human Understanding.

Ans: David Hume is sometimes considered to be the greatest philosopher ever to have written in the English language. He was born on April 26, 1711 in Edinburgh, Scotland to a prosperous and devoutly Calvinist family. In 1737 Hume returned to London to arrange for the publication of his first book. While today we appreciate this text as Hume's greatest work, it was not received well by the 18th century public. In Hume's own words, the book "fell stillborn from the press." Nobody seemed to grasp the subtle and revolutionary arguments that he put forward, and the book was largely ignored.

Disheartened but not despairing, Hume returned to Scotland and began to put his ideas into a form that he believed would receive more attention. The results of his effort were the *Essays Moral and Political*, which he published in 1741 and 1749. These books were significantly more successful than *Treatise on Human Nature* and Hume was encouraged by the success to continue molding his ideas into more easily digestible forms. After being rejected from a teaching post at the University of Edinburgh on the basis of his reputation as an atheist, and then serving a brief stint as a tutor and as a member of two English government missions, Hume reworked the first two books of *Treatise on Human Nature* into a smoother, more palatable book which he published in 1748 under the title of *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*. In 1751 he published the *Enquiry Concerning the Principle of Morals*, which was a reworking of the third book of *Treatise on Human Nature*. Though both more popular than the *Treatise on Human Nature*, neither of these books was a huge success. In 1752 Hume was rejected from yet another University position (this time in Glasgow) on the basis of his anti-religious reputation.

He spent the last year of his life preparing *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* for publication. Actually, he had all but completed the *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* in 1751 but had been afraid to publish them for understandable reasons. Near his death, Hume told his friend Adam Smith that the only purpose he had left was to see Christianity routed from the world. He died in 1776 and *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* were published three years later, in 1779.

Q.2. What is historical background of Hume's Enquiry of Human Understanding?

Ans: Hume's interest in philosophy extended throughout his life, and he published numerous shorter works that tried to clarify or refine the ideas expressed in the *Treatise on Human Nature*. The *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, first published in 1748, is a significant reworking of the first and second books of *Treatise on Human Nature*. In it, he builds upon the empirical philosophy of John Locke and George Berkeley, and attacks the metaphysical rationalism of René Descartes and others.

Philosophy since Descartes had been marked by a rough distinction between empiricist and rationalist philosophy. Rationalists tended to concern themselves with metaphysical questions of the nature of substance, of God, of the soul, of matter, and so on, and usually tried to answer these questions through the exercise of pure reason. Empiricists were more interested in epistemology and determining precisely what and how we can know, arguing that experience is the only sure guide to substantial knowledge about the world.

While providing compelling arguments against the rationalist position, Hume also managed to imperil empiricist philosophy by unflinchingly following it to its logical conclusion. If our only guide to worldly knowledge comes from experience, there is very little we can safely claim to

know. Perhaps the most significant effect of the skepticism expressed in *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* is the impact it had upon Immanuel Kant. Kant famously remarked that reading Hume awoke him from his "dogmatic slumber" and prompted him to write the *Critique of Pure Reason*, which stands as one of the most significant works of philosophy ever written.

Q.3. What is the philosophical perspective of Hume?

Ans: An opponent of philosophical rationalists, Hume held that passions rather than reason govern human behaviour, famously proclaiming that "Reason is, and ought only to be the slave of the passions." Hume was also a sentimentalist who held that ethics are based on emotion or sentiment rather than abstract moral principle.

Q.4. What is Hume's philosophy called?

Ans: Humeanism refers to the philosophy of David Hume and to the tradition of thought inspired by him. Hume was an influential eighteenth century Scottish philosopher well known for his empirical approach, which he applied to various fields in philosophy.

Q.5. What was Hume's philosophy?

Ans: Hume's philosophy is characterized by his influential empiricism and skepticism, emphasizing that knowledge is derived from sensory experience and that human reason has inherent limitations. Key aspects include his view that "reason is, and ought only to be the slave of the passions" (meaning emotions and feelings are the primary motivators, not logic), his skeptical analysis of causality and induction, and his theory of the self as a "bundle of perceptions". His philosophy also includes a system of moral philosophy based on sentiment and sympathy, and a critique of religion rooted in naturalistic explanations of human psychology.

Empiricism: All ideas and knowledge originate from sensory experiences or "impressions". Complex ideas are formed by combining simple ideas derived from impressions.

Skepticism: He questioned whether human reason could fully grasp reality, particularly concerning concepts like causality and the existence of a continuous self.

Key Concepts

Causality and Induction: Hume argued that our belief in cause-and-effect is not based on logical reasoning but on the experience of constant conjunction. The more frequently two events occur together, the more our mind forms a vivid image of the second occurring after the first, leading to a psychological compulsion to believe in a connection.

The Self: Hume proposed that the self is not a single, unified entity but a "bundle or collection of different perceptions". We do not experience a continuous soul, but rather a stream of sensations, thoughts, and emotions that are constantly changing.

Moral Philosophy: Morality is rooted in emotion and sentiment, not reason. Moral distinctions arise from feelings of approval and disapproval, driven by a natural human ability to sympathize with others.

Q.6. What is the easy and obvious philosophy?

Ans: The first he calls an "easy and obvious philosophy" which serves as a guide for the man of action. Usually written in an elegant and poetic style, this philosophy tries to cultivate our manners by drawing on examples from common life and making us feel the difference between vice and virtue.

Q.7. What is distinction between Easy and Obvious Philosophy & Accurate and Abstract Philosophy?

Ans: The distinction lies in their approach to human nature and practical vs. theoretical application: "easy and obvious" philosophy focuses on sentiments and common life, appealing to emotions with eloquent language, while "accurate and abstract" philosophy focuses on reason, seeking fundamental principles through logical scrutiny. The former is popular because it directly impacts daily conduct, whereas the latter is less popular because it is difficult and often detached from practical action, according to David Hume.

Feature	Easy and Obvious Philosophy	Accurate and Abstract Philosophy
Focus	Human sentiments, feelings, and practical conduct.	Human reason, abstract concepts, and fundamental principles.
Method	Appeals to emotion and imagination, often using poetry and eloquence.	Employs rational arguments and logical scrutiny to discover hidden truths.
Goal	To mold the heart and affections, and reform conduct in common life.	To form a deeper understanding by moving from facts to the highest, most general principles.
Accessibility	Popular and agreeable to the generality of mankind.	Difficult, often perceived as confusing, and tends to "vanish" in practical situations.
Example	A moral philosophy that uses vivid language to praise virtue and show the difference between vice and virtue.	A metaphysical inquiry that seeks to find the most original principles of reality, which requires deep thought.

Q.8. What is the easy and obvious "Accurate and abstract philosophy" ?

Ans: "Accurate and abstract philosophy" is a type of philosophy that seeks to understand the fundamental, underlying principles of reality and human behavior through rational argument and speculation. It is contrasted with "easy and obvious" philosophy, which appeals to common sense and emotion to guide conduct. While abstract philosophy focuses on reasoning and the discovery of universal laws, it is often seen as impractical for daily life, while the easy philosophy is preferred for its immediate usefulness.

Unit-II

Impressions and Ideas, Association of Ideas, Relations of Ideas and Matters of Fact (Sections – II, III, IV, V)

Q.1. What is Hume's theory of impression and ideas?

Ans: Hume says that all our ideas spring from our impressions. Impression is stronger and livelier than the idea; however, ideas are much weaker than the impressions. This theory is helpful to understand the world we live in. Everything we think or imagine is based on sensory experiences, Hume thought.

Q.2. What is the difference between ideas and impressions?

Ans: An idea is simply a copy of the impression that we have locked into our mind through experiencing it. They are basically memories of the impression, although "less forcible and lively." This means that ideas lack the force and vivacity of impressions.

Q.3. What is the meaning of association of ideas?

Ans: Association of ideas, or mental association, is a process by which representations arise in consciousness, and also for a principle put forward by an important historical school of thinkers to account generally for the succession of mental phenomena.

Q.4. What is the association of ideas according to Hume?

Ans: Hume explains this "tie or union" in terms of the mind's natural ability to associate certain ideas. Association is not "an inseparable connection", but rather "a gentle force, which commonly prevails", by means of which one idea naturally introduces another.

Q.5. What is the relation of ideas and matter of fact Hume?

Ans: According to Hume, the mind is capable of apprehending two kinds of proposition or truth: those expressing "relations of ideas" and those expressing "matters of fact." The former can be intuited—i.e., seen directly—or deduced from other propositions.

Q.6. What does Hume say about relations of ideas?

Ans: Hume argues that every affirmation which is certain, such as geometry, arithmetic and algebra, fall under "relations of ideas". For example, the fact that the square to the hypotenuse is equal to the square of two sides is a relation of ideas.

Q.7. Write a note on Hume's Impression and Ideas.

Ans: David Hume's philosophy majorly emphasizes how we understand the world and how we gain knowledge. He introduced impressions and ideas on how the mind works. These two ideas are a basis of his theory of perception and knowledge.

Impressions are those experiences in the senses. The strength of these is so vivid, such as colors when you see, sounds when you hear, or textures that feel your body. Impressions are experiences which are direct and instantaneous; therefore, it would be the most realistic as well as strong type of knowledge. Everything Hume said comes through this. When you touch something and feel hot, it was a strong feeling. These impressions are preserved in our mind and influence our thoughts. Hume said that we cannot have knowledge without first having these impressions.

Ideas are weaker and less vivid than impressions. They are copies of the impressions we have experienced. For example, thinking about the colour red or remembering a sound is an idea,

not an impression. Ideas are formed in our mind when we recall or imagine something from the past. Hume argued that all ideas come from impressions and are less real. They are not as clear or strong as impressions but still shape how we think. Without impressions, our ideas would not exist.

Hume's concept of impressions and ideas explains how we know things. Impressions are our direct experiences, while ideas are the copies of those experiences in our minds. He believed that all knowledge comes from impressions, and ideas are built from them. This theory challenged earlier ideas that knowledge could come from pure reason. Hume's work made people think more about how perception shapes what we know. His ideas influenced later philosophers and scientists. Today, his theory of impressions and ideas is studied. It forms a great part of understanding how we come to understand and experience the world.

Q.8. Explain David Hume's Laws of Association.

Ans: Ideas do not occur entirely at random but in an orderly connection with each other.

There are three laws of association. These are the bonds or connections between ideas, by which one idea revives the other, in our minds. The three laws of association are: (i) Law of Similarity, (ii) Law of Contiguity, and the (iii) Law of Causality. **“The three connecting principles of all ideas are the relations of resemblance, contiguity and causation”**—says Hume in his ‘Enquiry’.

The Law of Similarity says, similar things tend to revive one another. The photograph of a person reminds us of the person. The law of Contiguity or nearness says contiguous things tend to revive one another. Lightning revives in us the idea of thunder. This is contiguity or nearness in time.

The name **“Gitanjali”** reminds us of Rabindranath Tagore. This is contiguity in space. The Law of Causality claims that if two events are connected as cause and effect, then one revives the image of the other. Cloud and rain, mosquito bite and malaria are connected by way of the law of causality.

To emphasise the importance of these laws in our everyday experience, Hume compares them to the principle of universal attraction in physics,—says Morris. According to Hume, one idea is associated with another entirely by repeated occurrence. We find in our experience that two ideas go together several times— and these two are associated.

Thus Hume thinks that though our mind is confined to its impressions and ideas, which are discrete and disorganised, the laws of association bind these perceptions together and we are able to pass from one idea to another.

But the question here arises as to ‘Who is employing the laws of association?’ Hume does not believe in a permanent self. So he is unable to answer how the laws are employed or who employs these laws.

Again, all these laws refer to actual objects. As Mohanti observes, the relation of cause and effect obtains amongst objects and their ideas. The actual cloud and rain are causally connected. The idea of cloud is not causally connected with the idea of rain.

Thus Hume only accepts these laws of association and analyses them psychologically.

Q.9. What is Matter of Fact according to Hume?

Ans: For David Hume, matters of fact are truths about the world that are known through sensory experience and are not logically necessary. Unlike relations of ideas (like $2+2=4$), matters of fact could logically be false; for example, the sun might not rise in the east tomorrow. They are "a posteriori" knowledge—learned after experience—and their truth is contingent, meaning it depends on the way the world happens to be.

Q.10. Explain David Hume's Relations of Ideas and Matters of Fact.

Ans: Hume thinks that all our objects of knowledge, all objects of enquiry, are of two kinds:

(1) Relations of Ideas, and

(2) Matters of Fact.

This division reminds us of Leibniz's classification of proposition as Truths of Reason and Truths of Fact.

The science of Geometry, Algebra, and Arithmetic are said to be concerned with relations of ideas. One important characteristic of such knowledge is that, it is 'a priori' or independent of experience. Our knowledge—"Two plus two is equal to four" or "three times five equals to half of thirty" exemplifies relations of ideas.

"Propositions of this kind are discoverable by the mere operations of thought, without depending on what is anywhere existent in the universe." says Hume.

The other important characteristic of these 'a priori' propositions is that, the denial of such propositions leads to self-contradiction. We cannot even conceive of the negation of these propositions. " $2 + 2 = 4$ " is an a priori proposition. Its truth does not depend on fact. It is self-evidently true. It is not possible to think that $2 + 2$ is not equal to 4. 'A priori' propositions only analyse the whole or part of the subject in the predicate.

When we say, 'All men are rational animals'—this proposition is such that we cannot deny it without being involved in self-contradiction. Here the predicate 'rational animal' is nothing but the analysis of the subject term "men", (animality and rationality are the defining characters of man).

The predicate in such propositions do not add any new information to the subject term but only analyses it. A priori propositions are analytic.

On the other hand, our knowledge concerning matters of fact is not obtainable by mere operations of reasoning. Such knowledge needs sense-experience. Knowledge like 'water quenches our thirst', or 'my friend has a pet dog' are not necessarily true, but are contingent, i.e. their truth or falsity depend on our experience of the fact.

Here the predicate adds some new information to the subject goes beyond the defining character of the subject term and becomes probable.

Such knowledge is not a priori, but "a posteriori", i.e. derived from experience. The denial of these propositions is not self-contradictory, but is only false. "That the sun will not rise tomorrow is no less intelligible a proposition and implies no more contradiction than the affirmation that it will rise".

The absolute certainty that is characteristic of our knowledge concerning relations of ideas (mathematical knowledge) is absent here. There is no logical contradiction in thinking that the sun will not rise tomorrow. Such propositions are only probable or contingent, not necessary.

This bilateral division of knowledge by Hume is very important from the point of view of history of philosophy and has a far-reaching influence on philosophers of modern age. The first

group of propositions (Relations of Ideas) is “analytic a priori propositions of the Logical Positivists of modern philosophy. On the other hand, the propositions concerning matters of fact are the “Synthetic a posteriori” of the modern Logical Positivists.

According to the Logical Positivists metaphysical propositions are neither synthetic ‘a posteriori, nor analytic ‘a priori’. So metaphysical propositions which deal with super-sensible entities like God or Soul, or substance etc. are meaningless. Hume too expressed his anti-metaphysical attitude when he said any discussion on such entities are beyond our knowledge and so are to be abandoned.

It is in Kant’s theory of knowledge that we get a reconciliation between these two types of knowledge. Kant speaks of ‘synthetic a priori’ propositions which are alone “knowledge” in the truest sense of the term, where both sense-experience and reason have their important contributions.

Unit III

Probability, Necessary Connection, Causation (Sections- VI and VII)

Q.1. What does Hume say about causation?

Ans: Hume's theory of causation asserts that our belief in a cause-and-effect relationship stems not from an inherent, observable connection, but from our repeated experience of two events consistently occurring together (constant conjunction) in a specific order (contiguity and succession). This repeated observation creates a habit or psychological expectation within our minds, leading us to infer a necessary connection, even though we can never directly perceive a "power" or "force" linking the cause to its effect. Ultimately, Hume concludes that our idea of causation is a psychological one, a product of custom, and not a proven, inherent feature of the world itself.

Q.2. What is Hume's necessary connection?

Ans: Hume argues that we cannot conceive of any other connection between cause and effect, because there simply is no other impression to which our idea may be traced. This certitude is all that remains. For Hume, the necessary connection invoked by causation is nothing more than this certainty.

Q.3. Explain David Hume's View on Causality.

Ans: Hume examines our knowledge of causal relation and tries to find out what degree of certainty belongs to the conviction that all things are connected with other things as cause and effect. Hume, consistently with his empiricism, searches here for the 'impression' of our idea of causal relation. As is usual with Hume, he says that if we are unable to find out any such impression, the corresponding 'idea' is unwarranted.

Our knowledge of cause and effect is derived entirely from experience and cannot be derived from 'a priori' reasoning, because, Hume claims, that all judgments of pure reason like ' $2 + 2 = 4$ '; or 'three times five is equal to half of thirty'—are analytic, whereas causal judgments are synthetic. Being analytic an a priori proposition is necessary, but a causal proposition like 'bread affords nourishment' is probable only, not certain. Here the predicate adds some new character to the subject, which may not be always true. Such a proposition is obtained by experience only.

Again, Hume argues that cause and effect are two different things. No amount of analysis of cause gives us any knowledge of the effect.

Cause and effect are entirely independent of each other.

If an absolutely new object is given to a man, he will not be able to discover its cause, nor its effect. "Adam," says Hume, "at the very first, could not have inferred from the fluidity and transparency of water that it would suffocate him, or from the light and warmth of fire, that it would consume him... Our reason, unassisted by experience, can never draw any inference concerning matters of fact. Thus causes and effects are discoverable not by reason but by experience."

Every effect, Hume says, is a distinct event from its cause. It could not, therefore, be discovered in the cause. There is nothing in any object, considered in itself which can afford us a reason for drawing a conclusion beyond it. "We argue that fire will warm us and bread affords nourishment because we have often perceived these causal pairs closely connected in space and time."

But what is the warrant for transforming perceived succession in time into causal succession? Any and every pair of successive events are not looked upon as related by way of causality. It is only when we find in our experience that a certain event follows a certain prior or antecedent event several times that we come to believe that these two events are necessarily connected with each other.

“Every effect,” Hume says, “is a distinct event from its cause. It could not... therefore be discovered in the cause . . . There is nothing in any object considered in itself, which can afford us a reason for drawing a conclusion beyond it.” We argue that fire will warm us, and bread affords nourishment because we have often perceived these causal pairs closely connected in space and time. In the case of a phenomenon previously unknown, we cannot tell from what cause it has proceeded, nor what its effect will be. But even experience does not vouchsafe all that we desire. It shows nothing more than co-existence and succession of phenomenon or events, while the judgment itself, for example, “the motion of one body stands in causal connection with that of another” (or ‘bread affords nourishment’), asserts more than mere contiguity in space and time. It affirms not merely that the one precedes the other but that it produces it—not merely that the second event follows the first, but that it results from it. We believe that the cause has a power to produce the effect. Milk has a ‘power’ to produce curd. The bond that connects the two events, the force that puts forth the second from the first, the necessary connection between the two is not perceived, but is added to perception, by thought, is construed into it.

Critical Appreciation of Hume’s View of Causality:

The whole difficulty of Hume in giving a true account of causality arises from his defective view of experience. His theory of cause as a regular antecedent of the effect has been criticised vehemently by philosophers from various points of view:

- (1) If Hume’s view is accepted we should say that day is the cause of night, because there is a regularity of sequence between these two events. In fact day and night both are caused by the rotation of earth. This is confusing a condition for a cause.
- (2) Historical events which have occurred only once cannot be explained by Hume’s regularity theory of causation. We think the attack of Poland by Hitler is the cause of the Second World War. But the event occurred only once in history. Regularity theory fails to explain such events.
- (3) On the contrary, there are many events that occur regularly one after another yet are not believed to be causally connected e.g. Malaria occurs almost always with fever and trembling of the body. Yet the fever has not been recognised as the cause of Malaria. The cause here is something else, i.e. the biting of a particular kind of mosquito.
- (4) As Ewing observes, when I raise my hand as per the command of my will I believe that my will is the cause of raising of my hand. I cannot agree with Hume that it is not controlled by my will but is only a regular sequence of my will.
- (5) The exclusion of the idea of power from the notion of cause is also open to question. As Wright remarks “we know the cause as productive of the effect or we do not know the cause at all.”

Lastly, Hume conceived experience to be made up of isolated impressions or ideas and, due to this defective conception of experience itself, he failed to find out any connection between two facts in our experience, which is all that is implied in the conception of ‘cause’.

Q.4. What is Necessary Connection?

Ans: Necessary connection or power is a product of our imagination. These ideas are not copies of any corresponding impression of power. Repeated experiences of two events occurring one after another, in close succession, are imagined to be connected. We start inferring one from the other. Two events, lightning and thunder occur repeatedly in close succession in our experience.

Q.5. What does Hume mean by probability?

Ans: Probability, for Hume, is a kind of reasoning, inference, or argument that is based upon experience and produces varying degrees of conviction regarding possible matters of fact beyond the immediate evidence of sense and memory. The metaphysical notion of chance, by contrast, is simply that of the absence of causes.

Q.6. Explain Hume's theory of probability.

Ans: Section VI is a short section entitled "Of Probability." Hume asserts that there is no such thing as chance in the workings of the universe, but that our ignorance of the real causes of events leads us to a belief in chance. Hume conjectures that belief differs from fiction simply in this: what we believe is more forcefully imprinted upon our imagination because it is more likely to arise. Belief, Hume asserts, is just what is confirmed by experiment.

In Section VII, "Of the Idea of Necessary Connection," Hume suggests that no idea in metaphysics is more obscure and uncertain than what is variously termed "force," "power," "energy," or "necessary connection." As he has argued in section II, all ideas and complex impressions are initially formed by simple impressions, which are vivid, sensible, and unambiguous. For a complex idea like causation to have any meaning, we must be able to trace it from the simple impression from whence it is derived.

Hume argues that there is no simple impression that could inform us of necessary connection. He examines in turn our impressions of interactions between two bodies, between mind and body, and within the mind, and argues that in each case we do not perceive, by experiment or reason, any secret power of necessary connection.

Hume has already discussed the body-body interaction of billiard balls. All we *observe* is that the motion of the first billiard ball is followed by the motion of the second billiard ball: we cannot *observe* the act of causation. Nor does the mind perceive the workings of cause and effect: otherwise we could determine what effects would follow from causes without ever having to rely on observation.

Next, Hume looks at the mind-body interactions according to which an act of volition can cause the movement of limbs. Hume points out that while we are aware of our ability to move our body, we are by no means aware of the connection between the act of volition and the bodily movement. The connection between mind and body is poorly understood at best, nor do we understand why we are so capable of moving, say, our fingers but not of controlling, say, our heart. Furthermore, Hume points out that there is a long chain of muscle and nerve reactions between the act of volition and the movement of the body. Our mind wills that the arm should move, but it actually produces a whole series of effects which it in no way wills.

Finally, Hume looks at mind-mind interactions, whereby we focus the mind or produce ideas, and fails to locate any necessary connection. First, he points out that we are unaware of how

the mind can conjure an idea out of nothing. Further, he points out that experience teaches us that the mind has varying degrees of control, so that it has more power over reason than the passions, or that it has greater self-command when it is healthy. That we learn these things from experience suggests that we are observing only a constant conjunction and not some necessary connection.

Hume goes on to examine and attack the occasionalist picture, which suggests that what we perceive as "causes" are in fact "occasions" and that God is the ultimate cause of all change. Considering the limitations of the human intellect, Hume ponders what stroke of logic could possibly produce such unsupported and outlandish conclusions. Further, he questions how we might know the forces that are operated by the mind of God if we cannot even decipher the forces that are operated by our own minds and bodies.

Unit – IV

Liberty and Necessity, Reasons of Animals (Sections- VIII and IX)

Q.1. What do you mean by Liberty and Necessity according to Hume?

Ans: David Hume's view on liberty and necessity is that human actions are both free (liberty) and causally determined (necessity), a position known as compatibilism. He defines liberty not as a lack of causation, but as the power to act according to the determinations of the will, which are themselves shaped by motives and character. For Hume, this kind of liberty is necessary for morality, as it allows us to hold people accountable for their actions based on their motivations.

Q.2. Explain the compatibility issues of liberty and Necessity according to Hume.

Ans: The debate regarding the compatibility of free will (liberty) and determinism (necessity) has a long and distinguished history in ethics, and is perpetuated even today. The question under debate is how we can reconcile, on the one hand, the view that all events are causally necessitated (determinism) and the on the other hand, the view that in any given situation, a person could have behaved otherwise (free will). If all events are causally necessitated, argues that incompatibilist, then human actions must also be causally necessitated, and if human actions are causally necessitated, then people could not possibly behave other than they do. Thus, the incompatibilist argues, free will and determinism are incompatible (hence a proponent of this argument is called an "incompatibilist").

The incompatibilist picture raises some serious issues for either metaphysics or ethics. Hard determinists reject the idea that humans have free will, which raises the ethical question of how we can be held responsible for our actions.

Hume places himself firmly in the compatibilist camp on the free will/determinism debate, arguing that the two notions can be reconciled. Such a position relies on defining free will and determinism in such a way as to avoid the logic of the incompatibilist position.

Hume's trick lies in altering our conception of a deterministic universe. According to Hume, the incompatibilist picture of determinism claims the existence of causation or necessary connection in physical interactions that we deny exist in human behavior. In previous sections, Hume has argued quite forcefully against this picture, suggesting instead that we can observe only constant conjunction, and not necessary connection, in nature. Our idea of necessity derives only from a determination in our thoughts to perceive two events as connected. Thus, for Hume, determinism ceases to rely on events being causally necessitated, and relies only on our perception of them as being causally necessitated.

Hume also redefines free will in order to render it compatible with this new conception of determinism. Rather than contrast it with determinism as the freedom to have acted otherwise, Hume contrasts it with constraint as the ability to act in accordance with one's will. An action is free, not if it could have been otherwise (which raises the metaphysical question of what is meant by this "could") but if we can claim that the action was performed in accordance with our will, if we can say "I chose to do x."

Hume reconciles free will and determinism by drawing on his deflation of causal necessity that has dominated *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*. This section could be read as a display of the force to which he can put the arguments he has previously set out. If there is no necessary connection, but only constant conjunction,

between physical events, then physical events are on a level with human behavior. In both cases we observe certain regularities, make predictions regarding future outcomes, and act according to those predictions. The more our predictions prove correct, the more confident we become in making predictions in that domain. Thus, the difference between our certainty that fire will burn and that liars will deceive is only a matter of degree as to how regular our past observations of fire and liars have been. Fundamentally, our predictions concerning the one are the same kind as our predictions concerning the other. Hume's conception of human nature, while not necessarily mistaken, is unmistakably rooted in the environment of eighteenth-century Enlightenment thought. Enlightenment thinkers believed firmly in the uniformity and universality of human reason, that all people fundamentally are the same and think the same. Thus, correct reasoning should be universally applicable and heeded. Postmodern thinking tends to hold a far more skeptical and relativistic position toward human reason, suggesting that what might be true for me might not be true for someone else. Hume's assertion that all human behavior follows from the same motives and causes might be held to closer scrutiny today than it was in his day. The relative merits and defects of the Enlightenment view versus the Postmodern view is beyond the scope of this commentary, but can make for some very lively debate between friends.

Q.3. What is free will and necessity?

Ans: The term "free will" (*liberum arbitrium*) was introduced by Christian philosophy (4th century CE). It has traditionally meant (until the Enlightenment proposed its own meanings) lack of necessity in human will, so that "the will is free" meant "the will does not have to be such as it is".

Q.4. What is the concept of free will?

Ans: Free will is the concept that individuals have the ability to make their own choices and control their actions, independent of prior events or external coercion. This capacity is seen as the basis for moral responsibility, where people are held accountable for their decisions. Debates surrounding free will explore whether this freedom is compatible with philosophical concepts like determinism, which posits that all events are causally inevitable, and have implications for legal, ethical, and theological frameworks.

Q.5. What does Hume say about animal reason?

In other words, Hume maintains that the particular instincts of animals are no different from the ability, shared by humans and animals, to reason on the basis of experience.

Q.6. What does Hume say about reason?

Hume surmises that reason alone can never influence the will to action, because the most reason can do is discover such causal connections. He goes on to famously say, "Reason is, and ought only to be the slave of the passions, and can never pretend to any other office than to serve and obey them".

Q.7. Explain Hume's theory of reason.

Ans: In these pages, we gain a clear insight into Hume's naturalist and anti-rationalist thinking. Rather than follow in the tradition of rationalist philosophy and try to uncover the mysteries of the universe according to a priori reasoning, Hume abandons all pretensions to knowing truths that transcend experience. He does not try to detect the origins of many of our common sense or philosophical notions in the secret workings of the universe, but asks instead how they arise in us.

For instance, Hume's explanation of moral judgments at the end of Section VIII is based purely on observations of our natural behavior. We judge something to be good because it promotes happiness, security, peace, or what have you, and we judge something to be bad because it promotes the opposite of what we consider to be beneficial. Hume does not deny that there may be some God with some ultimate purpose and some ultimate sense of right and wrong so much as he denies that this is the origin of our own ideas of right and wrong. Rationalist philosophers such as Descartes and Leibniz worked very hard to reconcile metaphysics and ethics, developing metaphysical systems that explained God's presence and role in the universe, and inferred principles of right and wrong from this metaphysics. Hume concedes that all may be for the best in the universe when considered in the wider context of God's creation, but points out that our understanding of morality is not based on this wider context. In this way and others, Hume steers away from the metaphysical and toward the empirical in examining ethics. Modern ethics, for the most part, has taken this line of thinking, seeing the principles of morality as founded ultimately in human reason and human action rather than in the workings of the universe.

Hume also follows a naturalist line in examining reason in animals. Rather than perceive reason as a special faculty of the human mind that allows us to see into the truth, Hume interprets reason as a faculty that has arisen naturally, one that helps us get by in the practical world. Animals, too, have this ability to reason, and we find it most distinctly in our inferences from causes to effects. As Hume has argued already, these inferences are not rationally justified, but are, rather, useful determinations of thought. In this section, he goes so far as to liken them with instincts. Human reason then differs from animal reason only in the sharpness and precision of our ability to infer necessary connections in nature and to think about them.

We might identify this argument with the skeptical line in Hume's thought. Contrary to rationalist philosophy, Hume argues that our reason is not a truth-tracking device that can a priori understand the many mysteries of the universe. Rather, it is simply a tool that guides us through life. All our higher reasoning is based on perceiving necessary connections in nature, and yet we never perceive any necessary connections that go beyond constant conjunction. Thus, our higher reasoning has no more rational justification than that of animals.

Unit – V

Religion and Skepticism (Sections X, XI and XII)

Q.1. What was Hume's religion?

Ans: Hume was derailed in his attempts to start a university career by protests over his alleged "atheism", also lamenting that his literary debut, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, "fell dead-born from the press".

Q.2. What are Hume's arguments against religion?

Ans: As such, Hume rejects the truth of any revealed religion, and further shows that, when corrupted with inappropriate passions, religion has harmful consequences to both morality and society. Further, he argues, rational arguments cannot lead us to a deity.

Q.3. What is the natural history of religion Hume?

Ans: David Hume's *Treatise of Human Nature*, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, and *Natural History of Religion* fit together in an explanation of religious belief. The first offers a theory of human nature for which certain propensities to form beliefs constitute that nature.

Q.4. What is Hume's dialogues concerning natural religion summary?

Ans: In *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* Hume explores whether religious belief can be rational. Because Hume is an empiricist (i.e. someone who thinks that all knowledge comes through experience), he thinks that a belief is rational only if it is sufficiently supported by experiential evidence.

Q.5. What was Hume's views on religion?

Ans: David Hume was not a traditional religious believer but was considered an irreligious skeptic, often labeled an atheist by his contemporaries, although he publicly disavowed that label. He argued that religious belief is not a product of reason and questioned the rational basis for believing in God, particularly the existence of a benevolent creator given the world's suffering. While he criticized religious arguments and miracles, he supported religious toleration, suggesting religious differences should be seen as emotional rather than errors of logic.

Skepticism toward religious arguments: Hume argued that one cannot rationally prove or disprove God's existence through reason, as the concept of God is not based on sensory experience. He argued against arguments from design, pointing out that the world's imperfections (like suffering) contradict the idea of an all-powerful, all-good creator.

Critique of miracles: He famously argued that it is never rational to believe in a miracle, as the testimony for a violation of natural law is always weaker than the evidence for the law of nature itself.

Public stance vs. private views: While his writings were seen as hostile to religion, Hume publicly stated he did not believe in atheists and avoided the label of atheist himself, likely due to the social and professional dangers of such a stance in the 18th century. He was not a Christian and rejected Christian doctrines like miracles.

Support for religious toleration: Despite his skepticism, Hume promoted tolerance for different religious beliefs, viewing religious disagreements as stemming from passionate emotions rather than logical errors.

Q.6. What is skepticism according to Hume?

Ans: No matter what the subject matter is, the total skeptic sees no beliefs as better than others and thus avoids judgment altogether. This is the form of skepticism that Hume takes most seriously and that he emphatically rejects.

Q.7. What is Hume's skepticism of causation?

Ans: Hume argues that we cannot conceive of any other connection between cause and effect, because there simply is no other impression to which our idea may be traced. This certitude is all that remains. For Hume, the necessary connection invoked by causation is nothing more than this certainty.

Q.8. What is Hume's idea of moral skepticism?

Ans: Though Hume is a moderate epistemic skeptic, his moral writings tend towards subjectivism rather than outright skepticism. More specifically, Hume's position has been termed "sentimentalism" because he believes that morality arises from human sentiments.

Q.9. What is Hume's skeptical solution to the problem of induction?

Ans: At this point, Hume adopts a "skeptical solution" to the problem: the strategy here is to translate statements about matters the skeptic claims we can't have any knowledge about into statements about things our knowledge of which is not thrown into question.

Q.10. What is Hume's skepticism?

Ans: He was a philosophical proponent of skepticism, as it had been conceived of in Ancient Greece. He argued that skepticism explained the human practice of developing beliefs or expectations based on past experiences, but not actually being able to guarantee those beliefs/expectations.

Q.11. What is Hume's mitigated scepticism?

Ans: He was skeptical only about some areas of knowledge. He rejected some knowledge claims without rejecting all of them. Hume's skepticism is mitigated skepticism.

Q.12. Write a note on Hume's scepticism.

Ans: Humean skepticism is a form of skepticism championed by philosopher David Hume, which argues that human knowledge is limited to what can be known through experience, and certainty is rarely achievable. His skepticism is most famously applied to the problem of induction, questioning the rational basis for believing that future events will resemble past ones. He argued that while we rely on cause and effect and induction to navigate the world, our belief in them comes from habit rather than rational certainty.

Features of scepticism:

Empiricism: All knowledge originates from sensory experience and goes beyond it only in abstract terms, which he called "relations of ideas".

Problem of Induction: Hume argued that we have no rational grounds for believing that our past experiences are a reliable guide to the future. For example, just because every swan observed is white does not guarantee that every swan is white; we cannot be certain until we have observed all swans.

Causation: We observe constant conjunctions of events (like a ball hitting another), but we never observe a necessary connection between the two. Our belief in a cause-and-effect relationship is a result of habit, not a direct perception of a causal link.

Mitigated Skepticism: Hume advocated for a "mitigated skepticism" that limits doubt to the realm of complex philosophical questions like the existence of God, the nature of the self, or metaphysical concepts. For everyday life, he believed we must rely on our beliefs, formed through habit and custom, even though we cannot rationally justify them with certainty.

Limits of Knowledge: He believed that knowledge of the unobserved is never certain. This skeptical approach suggests that most metaphysical inquiries are pointless because the questions are beyond our rational capabilities.
