

PROBLEMS OF EMPIRICISM II/III

Course Outline

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OUTLINE. This course will look at three specific problems within empiricism. Firstly, Hume's problem of induction and causation. Secondly, the problem of our knowledge of the external world, including Berkeley's argument for Idealism. Thirdly, the problem of morality and the moral sentiments, including Hume's famous 'is-ought gap' argument. All of these problems, deriving from the work of the classical empiricists, are central to the concerns of modern philosophers; my aim will be both to criticise the arguments and to trace the influence of these positions in modern debates.

The course will be divided equally among these problems. That is, there will be four lectures on causation and induction, four on the external world, four on the moral sentiments. (Lecture one, this one—which we'll renumber to zero—will be reserved for background, and as a crib on lecture one.) All lectures will be two hours in length.

A (tentative) plan for the first four lectures is as follows:

LECTURE 1: Hume's dilemma argument for inductive beliefs not being founded in reason.

LECTURE 2: The introduction of the faculty of *custom*, or *habit*, to explain those beliefs. The issue of the normative basis. (Some of this material is contained in my paper 'Hume's Master Argument' downloadable from the home page.)

LECTURE 3: The non-observability of the 'necessary connection' between cause and effect. Its alternative explanation by the faculty of custom.

LECTURE 4: The regularity theory of causation. The subjectivist origin of the so-called necessary connection.

Updates to this outline will be posted at:—

<http://teaching.arts.usyd.edu.au/philosophy/1002/>