

Hume, *Enquiry Concerning the Human Understanding*, Section IV

Two kinds of reasoning

About “relations of ideas”

About “matters of fact”

What exists in the world.

What causes what.

Reasoning about matter of fact “founded on the relation between cause and effect.” (323)

“*Causes and effects are discoverable, not by reason but by experience.*” (324)

Not by reasoning about relations of ideas, since “the effect is totally different from the cause, and consequently can never be discovered in it.” (325)

But rather by seeing what regularly follows what in our experience of the world.

A new question

“*What is the foundation of all conclusions from experience?*” (328)

What is the *justification* for thinking that the regularities we have experienced will continue to hold? Why think the future will be like the past in this respect? (329)

Hume’s skeptical conclusion

“*Not* founded on reasoning, or any process of the understanding.” (328)

Hume’s argument for this conclusion

If founded on reasoning, this must consist either in reasoning about relations of ideas, or in arguments based on experience.

Not the former, since it is logically possible for anything to follow anything. (See 326.)

Not the latter, since experience-based arguments presuppose that “the future will be conformable to the past.” (330) But that is the very point at issue. But how do we know that the future will be sufficiently like the past to warrant such arguments? To argue for this claim on the basis of experience is “evidently going in a circle.” (330, see also 332)

Moderate skepticism

“As an agent, I am quite satisfied in the point; but as a philosopher, who has some share of curiosity, I will not say skepticism, I want to learn the source of this inference.” (332)