

Hume's Theory of Mental Representation

Abstract

I here argue that Hume's arguments in the *Treatise* require him to employ not only the well-known Copy Principle, which is a thesis about the intrinsic properties of perceptions, but also a thesis concerning what determines the *intentional* content of a perception. I propose that Hume holds the Semantic Copy Principle, which states that a perception is *of* that of which it is a copy. I show that Hume employs this thesis in a number of his most important arguments, and I defend his use of it against an iteration of an important objection to his purported use of the Copy Principle. I argue that the Semantic Copy Thesis is necessary, *a priori*, and discovered as a result of an analysis (via the procedure suggested by Hume's account of general ideas) of our idea of intentional content. I also draw some consequences of Hume's holding this thesis.

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