

Empiricism

Impressions and ideas

By the term *impression*, then, I mean all our more lively perceptions, when we hear, or see, or feel, or love, or hate, or desire, or will. And impressions are distinguished from *ideas*, which are the less lively perceptions, of which we are conscious, when we reflect on any of those sensations or movements above mentioned.

When we think of a golden mountain, we only join two consistent ideas, *gold*, and *mountain*, with which we were formerly acquainted. In short, all our ideas or more feeble perceptions are copies of our impressions or more lively ones.

When we analyze our thoughts or ideas, however compounded or sublime, we always find that they resolve themselves into such simple ideas as were copied from a precedent feeling or sentiment. Even those ideas, which, at first view, seem the most wide of this origin, are found, upon a nearer scrutiny, to be derived from it. The idea of God, as meaning an infinitely intelligent, wise, and good Being, arises from reflecting on the operations of our own mind, and augmenting, without limit, those qualities of goodness and wisdom. We may prosecute this enquiry to what length we please; where we shall always find, that every idea which we examine is copied from a similar impression... introduced to us in the only manner by which an idea can have access to the mind, to wit, by the actual feeling and sensation.

from David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* II