

Hume “An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding” sections 5-6.

Section V, Skeptical Solutions to these doubts, Part 1, pages 25-31

1) The passion for the study of philosophy presents the problem of...

It may only serve to strengthen our prejudices and assumptions.

It is very time consuming and hard to read.

Creating a passionate philosophy.

Neglecting our other passions.

2) Academic or skeptical philosophy is harmless yet generates opposition as...

One cannot run the world from a university.

It is based on divine revelation.

It supports no preconceptions and opposes error.

None of the other three.

3) There is no danger that skeptical philosophy will undermine the reasonings of ordinary life or thought in general as...

Very few people will read it.

Nature has provided us with custom or habit of thought.

No one drops out space and is thus forced to confront these issues alone.

All of the other three.

4) For Hume custom or habit is defined as...

Repeating an act over and over again.

The general cultural behavior of a people.

The tendency to think the future will resemble the past without any attendant proof of this belief.

All of the other three.

5) For Hume the only foundation we have for matters of fact is...

Our reason.

Our senses and memory.

The beliefs of others that confirm our own.

All of the other three.

6) For Hume thinking the future will resemble the past is a matter of...

Instinct.

Reason.

Experience.

All of the other three.

Commentary on Questions one to six. Hume is here beginning to advocate skepticism about our judgments concerning the external world. He thinks many philosophies can flatter passions or preconceived notions we hold and for this reason are popular. A philosophy which does not flatter any passions is that of Academic or Skeptical philosophy, the view that we should not be so certain of our thoughts about matters. We will continue with this issue next week but it can help to see how the readings are inter-related, here we have Hume presenting the problem of how we can know things about the world and a solution to this problem (custom or habit), next week will examine a different solution to this same problem. One of the defining features of modern philosophy is the focus on what can and cannot be claimed to be known (or what qualifies as a justified belief.) Hume thinks very little counts in this regard and that we form our beliefs about matters of fact from instinct or a habitual form of behavior that while unjustified is also impossible to avoid.

Section V, Skeptical Solutions to these doubts, Part 2, pages 31-37

7) For Hume the difference between fiction and belief is...

What is false and what is true.

The difference between what we tell people and what we really think.

Reason and experience.

A Feeling or sentiment attached to belief that is not attendant to fiction.

8) For Hume resemblance, contiguity and causation are...

Three principles of scientific investigation.

Three principles of social science investigation.

Three principles of religious investigation.

The bonds that unite our thoughts together.

9) For Hume resemblance is...

The power of a picture, place or thing to bring our thoughts to life.
Unrelated to philosophical issues as these matters are abstract and
resemblance is not.
The hidden power behind church services.
None of the other three.

10) For Hume pre-established harmony is...

The natural music of the universe.
The coordination of two things even though they never inter-relate.
The natural music of the universe and humanity's successful attempts to
produce really good music.
Unrelated to his ideas in philosophy as it is religious in nature.

11) For Hume there is a pre-established harmony between...

The course of nature and how it is represented in music.
Our reason and our experience.
The course of our thoughts and the course of nature.
God and creation.

Commentary on Questions seven through eleven. At this point Hume has started to develop his explanation of how we come to form beliefs and what separates them from fiction. For Hume the difference between belief and fiction is feeling that one is real and other is false, this surprising conclusion stems from the fact that our evidence for belief is solely custom or habit and this is an unsupported conclusion. Thus because we believe in accordance with habit or custom and since custom or habit is not proof of anything the only real difference between our thoughts on fiction and belief is a feeling we attach to one and not to the other. This is not as big a problem as it might seem at first as Hume thinks we have been provided with natural instincts that mirror nature to at least some extent and that allow us to live and survive, most of the time.

Section VI, Of Probability, pages 37-39.

12) For Hume the amount of credence given to a belief depends upon...

The frequency of its regular occurrence.
Reasoning about experience.
The number of experts that stand up for an idea.
All of the other three.

Hume Questions, Week Six

Questions from Section V, 'Skeptical Solution of these Doubts' Part I

Answer one of the following questions.

- 1) Explain in detail what Hume intends by the term custom and how he uses this concept in his thought about beliefs.
- 2) Explain in detail what Hume means by a pre-established harmony between the course of nature and the succession of our ideas.

1 A

2 C

3 B

4 C

5 B

6 A

7 D

8 D

9 A

10 B

11 C

12 A