

Paper Topics 2

Write a 6–8 page paper on any ONE of the following topics. Due date: Friday, May 10th, in my mailbox in the philosophy department.

1. ‘Thro this whole book, there are great pretensions to new discoveries in philosophy; but if any thing can intitle the author to so glorious a name as that of an *inventor*, ’tis the use he makes of the principle of the association of ideas, which enters into most of his philosophy.’ (*Abstract*, pp. 661–62)

How successful is Hume in his aspiration to use the ‘principle of the association of ideas’ to explain a wide range of psychological phenomena? Discuss, with respect to several examples of such explanations.

2. What is the theory of causation which Hume argues for in section I.iii.14 of the *Treatise*?
3. Explain and critically discuss Hume’s theory of personal identity and his reasons for holding that theory.
4. In section I.iv.7 of the *Treatise*, Hume presents several sceptical arguments, and considers various ways in which we might react to those arguments. What, if anything, can we learn from Hume about the philosophical significance of such sceptical arguments?

Your answer should include a careful explanation of any ONE of the sceptical arguments to which Hume refers in I.iv.7. Note that this will require you to consider earlier sections of the *Treatise* as well.

5. ‘[A] passion can never, in any sense, be call’d unreasonable, but when founded on a false supposition, or when it chuses means insufficient for the design’d end...’ (*Treatise* II.iii.3, p. 416)

What does Hume mean by this counterintuitive-seeming claim, and how good are the arguments he gives to support it?

6. Section III.i.1 of the *Treatise* is devoted to arguing that ‘moral distinctions are not deriv’d from reason’. What does Hume mean by this claim? Explain and critically discuss any ONE of Hume’s arguments for the claim.
7. In Book III, Part II of the *Treatise*, Hume presents explanations of the motivations which constitute the character trait Hume calls “justice”, and of the fact that we consider this character trait a virtue. How do these explanations work? How successful are they?
8. If you want to write about some other aspect of Hume’s views, you may do so. However, if you want to take this option, you must first send me an email with a brief description of your plan, by Thursday May 2nd at the latest.