

Questions about *Treatise* I.i

1. What does Hume mean when he says (p. 1) that the difference between ideas and impressions ‘consists in the degrees of force and liveliness, with which they strike upon the mind’? Is he right about this?
2. On p. 2, Hume introduces the distinction between simple and complex impressions and ideas. What might some examples of simple and complex ideas be like? (We’ll come back to this question later.)
3. On p. 4, Hume states what we will call the ‘Copy Principle’: ‘That all our simple ideas in their first appearance are deriv’d from simple impressions, which are correspondent to them, and which they exactly represent.’ Is this principle true? If it is true, is it an *a priori* truth, or can we conceive of it being false? If the latter, how does Hume argue for it? Is his argument convincing? How should Hume’s “rationalist” contemporaries, who denied the Copy Principle, respond to the argument?
4. On pp. 5–6, Hume describes the famous “missing shade of blue”. Is Hume right that we could acquire an idea of the missing shade of blue without having an impression of it? Is this a counterexample to the Copy Principle? If so, why is Hume so sanguine about it, saying that ‘’tis scarce worth our observing, and does not merit that for it alone we should alter our general maxim’?
5. The ‘Separability Principle’, which Hume appeals to at many points in the *Treatise*, is first stated in its canonical form on p. 18: ‘We have observ’d, that whatever objects are different are distinguishable, and that whatever objects are distinguishable are separable by the thought and imagination.’ Hume appears to be referring us back to p. 10, where he discusses ‘the liberty of the imagination to transpose and change its ideas’. Is this ‘principle’ true? Is it *a priori* true, or can we conceive of its being false? If the latter, how does Hume argue for it? What does he mean when he says that ‘there are not any two impressions which are perfectly inseparable’? What does he mean when he says that the principle ‘is an evident consequence of the division of ideas into simple and complex’?
6. In I.i.iv, Hume describes the three ‘natural relations’ which govern the association of ideas. What examples could we give of the operation of these principles of association in, say, day-dreaming?
7. (Note: sections 5 and 6 make more sense if you come back to them having read section 7.)
8. In section 7 (p. 18), Hume says that ‘the mind cannot form any notion of quantity or quality without forming a precise notion of the degrees of each.’ Is this true? You might want to consider the following cases: (i) Imagine your favourite tune. Is there a determinate pitch at

which you imagined it? (ii) Imagine a bus. What colour was the bus you imagined? (iii) Imagine a speckled hen. How many speckles did you imagine it as having?

9. Hume's discussion of abstract ideas suggests that the way to specify the meaning of some general word like 'triangle' is to list all the different ideas which "custom" might call up in response to the word (to use Garrett's term, the "revival set" of the word). What might this list look like for 'triangle'? For 'man'? For 'professor'? Fill in some of your own examples.
10. The ideas Hume discusses in sections 5 and 6 seem to be abstract: does Hume's theory of abstract ideas apply to them? If so, what might be the revival sets associated with words like 'similar', 'larger than', 'adjacent to'... (section 5); 'golden', 'dance'... (section 6)?