

Questions about *Treatise* I.iii.i–I.iii.vi

1. What is the distinction between two different sorts of “philosophical” relations which Hume draws in section I.iii.i, and why does he suppose this distinction to be relevant to the role of these relations in “knowledge”? Is he right about this? And what does he mean here by “knowledge”, anyway?
2. On pp. 75–76, Hume says that the relations of “contiguity” and “priority” are “essential” to that of causation: in other words, he rules out as inconsistent both action at a distance and backwards or simultaneous causation. Is he justified in doing this?
3. Some philosophers have claimed that Hume is wrong when he says (p. 77) that the relation of causation does not depend on the ‘known qualities’ of objects, i.e. that there is no distinctive sort of *sensory impression* which lets us know about the presence of, and gives us the idea of, causation. What is the basis for Hume’s confidence in this claim? (You might want to consider some of the examples in *Enquiry* 4.i.) Is Hume right about this?
4. Section I.iii.iii is devoted to the proposition ‘Whatever has a beginning has also a cause of existence’. What does Hume claim about the status of this proposition? What arguments does he give for this claim? Are the arguments convincing?
5. In section I.iii.v, Hume says that impressions, and ideas of the memory, can serve as the foundation for justified causal inferences on account of their force and vivacity. Does this mean Hume must deny that we ever have good reason to doubt the testimony of our senses or memory? Why / why not?
6. What exactly does Hume mean by ‘constant conjunction’ (p. 88)?
7. On p. 88, Hume begins an argument which is supposed to show that causal inferences are not “determin’d by reason”. What does Hume mean by ‘reason’ here? Note: this is a much-disputed question. Some commentators take Hume to be making a *normative* claim: equivalent, perhaps, to ‘there is no reason for us to make causal inferences’ or ‘it is irrational to make causal inferences’ or ‘causal inferences are unjustified’. Others take him to be making a merely descriptive, psychological claim; there is further disagreement about how this descriptive claim should be understood.
8. Of course, in order to have any hope of resolving this interpretative question, we must consider Hume’s argument for the claim, on pp. 88–92. This is worth reading very carefully. A helpful passage to focus on is on p. 90: ‘probability is founded on the presumption of a resemblance betwixt those objects, of which we have had experience, and those, of which we have had none; and therefore ’tis impossible this presumption can arise from probability.’ What do ‘founded on’ and ‘arise from’ mean here?

9. What is the objection which Hume anticipates in the full paragraph on p. 90, and what is his response to it?
10. What light does section 4 of the *Enquiry concerning Human Understanding* (which corresponds roughly to the part of *Treatise* I.iii which ends at the top of p. 90) shed on all of this? Does anything seem clearer to you after your reading of the *Enquiry* section, and if so what? What are the most significant differences between Hume's discussions in the *Treatise* and in the *Enquiry*?
11. On pp. 92–94, Hume is clearly answering a psychological question about the origin of our tendency to make causal inferences. What exactly is the question, and what is his answer?
12. Section 5, part 1 of the *Enquiry* seems to correspond to pp. 92–94 of the *Treatise*. Again, what new light does this part of the *Enquiry* shed on the question?