

Section II: Of the Origin of Ideas

n.b. the paragraph numbers below refer to our class text and may not correspond to other editions of the *Enquiries*.

Paragraph 1.

- a. What is a 'perception of the mind'? n.b. the answer is not given in the text.

Paragraph 3.

- a. Hume says, ' we can divide the mind's perceptions into two classes'. He names these as:
- b. What is the distinguishing feature of these two classes of perception?

Paragraph 1.

- a. What mental activities are associated with each class of perception?

Paragraph 2.

- a. How are these two classes of perception related to each other?

Paragraph 1.

- a. What example does Hume use in paragraph one to illustrate the two classes?

Paragraph 2.

- a. What two examples does Hume use in paragraph two to illustrate the two classes?
- b. How do the examples in this paragraph differ from the example in paragraph one?

Paragraph 1.

- a. What two exceptions does Hume allow which suggests he is intending his analysis to be good only in normal circumstances?

Think for yourself

- a. Hume has to invent a name for one of the classes. Give one reason why this might be a good name and one reason why it might be a misleading name.
- b. Is Hume correct in only allowing two exceptions? What others might be added?
- c. Does allowing exceptions cause a problem for Hume. Give one reason why it might and one reason why it might not.

- d. Is the distinguishing feature of the two classes of perception introduced in paragraph three adequate? If not, what other distinguishing features might you add?
- e. Do you agree with the final sentence of paragraph one?

Paragraph 4.

- a. In paragraph one Hume made a general claim and then qualified it with an exception. In what way does Hume do something similar in paragraph four?
- b. Summarize paragraph three in no more than 25 words.

Paragraph 5.

- a. Hume says that contrary to what might at first sight appear to be the case (paragraph four) our thought can only operate on materials that come from what source?
- b. In what four ways can the mind manipulate these materials?
- c. What two examples does Hume use to illustrate his claim?
- d. In what way are the two examples here similar to the examples given earlier in paragraphs one and two?

Think for yourself

- a. It is usual to say that Hume is making a distinction between simple ideas and complex ideas. Give your own example of a simple idea and your own examples to illustrate the four ways in which thought is said to operate on simple ideas.

Paragraph 6.

- a. Hume begins this paragraph by saying that he is going to give two arguments to prove something. What is he attempting to prove?
- b. Why might Hume's first argument be described as an inductive argument?
- c. How does Hume use the example of God to illustrate his point?
- d. Does the example of God illustrate his point with regard to simple or complex ideas?

- e. What does Hume say would show that he is wrong?

Paragraph 7.

- a. Do the examples in this paragraph illustrate his point with regard to simple or complex ideas?
- b. The argument in this paragraph is made in a number of ways. If it was divided according to the following schema what would each point represent?
1a, 1b, 2a, 2b, 3
- c. State one way in which 1a and 1b are similar and one way in which they are different.

Think for yourself

- a. What problems may arise with Hume's claim in point 3 above?
- b. Do you regard each of the points made in paragraph six equally convincing? If not, why not?

Paragraph 8

- a. Why is the example given in this paragraph often referred to as a 'problem'?
- b. When Hume says that there is 'one counter example' what reasons can be given for thinking this is referring to a type of situation rather than one specific situation?
- c. What is the purpose of his argument concerning red and green?
- d. Why is this kind of argument, i.e. the one about red and green, called a *reductio ad absurdum*?
- e. It would be wrong to say that Hume has given an example of a simple idea that isn't based on an impression. Hume doesn't claim to have done this. Being precise, what has Hume claimed?

Think for yourself

- a. If the series of blue shades had 'each member of the series shading imperceptibly into its neighbour' as in the red/green argument, does it follow that removing one of the shades means that someone would notice a gap in the sequence?

- b. If the series was set up so that each member of the series did *not* shade imperceptibly into its neighbour so that a person with normal experience of colours could see that they were clearly distinct shades, is it obvious that someone with abnormal experience of colours would 'notice a blank in the place where the missing shade should go'?
- c. It seems obvious that the problem might be removed by saying that somebody might augment or diminish the shades on either side of the missing shade and so generate the required idea. Why does this 'solution' not get rid of the 'problem'.
- d. It has been suggested that the four operations of the mind listed in paragraph four might be need to be added to with another operation, e.g. mental mixing. Why does this 'solution' not get rid of the 'problem'.
- d. Whether he is right to or not, Hume does regard this as a counter-example to his earlier claim. However, this clearly does not trouble him. How might an analysis of what he said in paragraph one and in paragraph four help to explain this?

Paragraph 9.

- a. How does Hume plan to use his theory of ideas to settle certain philosophical problems?