

Oxford Lectures on David Hume, 2024-25

David Hume, 1711-1776



7. *Hume's View of Body,
Mental Substance,
and Personal Identity*

Peter Millican
Hertford College, Oxford

277

From Last Time ...

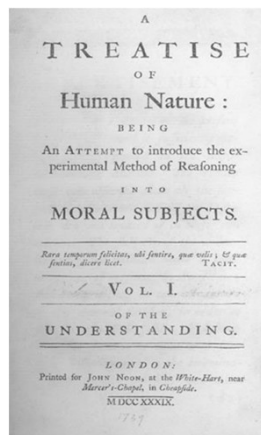
- After looking at Hume's *applications* of his theory of causation, we moved on to *Treatise* Book 1 Part 4.
- We noted Hume's extreme "scepticism with regard to reason" of T 1.4.1 (which will return in T 1.4.7), and moved on to survey his complex "Scepticism with Regard to the Senses" of T 1.4.2, which seems to offer no remedy to scepticism but "carelessness and inattention".
- "Of the Antient Philosophy" (T 1.4.3) and "Of the Modern Philosophy" (T 1.4.4) together raised the question of how far we should submit to principles of the imagination. An initially promising distinction between respectable and disreputable principles seemed to be undermined when considering ideas of primary and secondary qualities.

278

278

7(a)

How Does Hume
View the Belief in
the Continued and
Distinct Existence
of Body?



279

279

(i) The Belief is Dubiously Coherent

- "I cannot conceive how such trivial qualities of the fancy, conducted by such false suppositions, can ever lead to any solid and rational system. ... 'Tis a gross illusion to suppose, that our resembling perceptions are numerically the same; and 'tis this illusion, which leads us into the opinion, that these perceptions ... are still existent, even when they are not present to the senses. ... What ... can we look for from this confusion of groundless and extraordinary opinions but error and falshood?" (T 1.4.2.56)
- "Thus there is a direct and total opposition betwixt our reason and our senses; or more properly speaking, betwixt those conclusions we form from cause and effect, and those that persuade us of the continu'd and independent existence of body." (T 1.4.4.15)

280

280

(ii) Clearly False in its Vulgar Form

- "the vulgar *suppose* their perceptions to be their only objects, and at the same time *believe* the continu'd existence of matter ... Now upon that supposition, 'tis a false opinion that any of our objects, or perceptions, are identically the same after an interruption; and consequently the opinion ... can never arise from reason, but must arise from the imagination" (T 1.4.2.43)
- "a very little reflection and philosophy is sufficient to make us perceive the fallacy of that opinion ... we quickly perceive, that the doctrine of the independent existence of our sensible perceptions is contrary to the plainest experience" (T 1.4.2.44)

281

281

- "we clearly perceive, that all our perceptions are dependent on our organs, and ... our nerves and animal spirits" (T 1.4.2.45)
- "Whoever wou'd explain the origin of the common opinion concerning the continu'd and distinct existence of body ... must proceed upon the supposition, that our perceptions are our only objects, and continue to exist even when they are not perceiv'd. Tho' this opinion be false, 'tis the most natural of any, and has alone any primary recommendation to the fancy." (T 1.4.2.48)
- "a little reflection destroys this conclusion, that our perceptions have a continu'd existence, by shewing that they have a dependent one" (T 1.4.2.50)

282

282

Oxford Lectures on David Hume, 2024-25

(iii) Nevertheless Universal and Irresistible

- "The persons, who entertain this opinion ... are in general all the unthinking and unphilosophical part of mankind, (that is, all of us, at one time or other) ..." (T 1.4.2.36)
- "almost all mankind, and even philosophers themselves, for the greatest part of their lives, take their perceptions to be their only objects, and suppose, that the very being, which is intimately present to the mind, is the real body ..." (T 1.4.2.38)
- "philosophers ... upon leaving their closets, mingle with the rest of mankind in those exploded opinions, that our perceptions are our only objects, and continue identically and uninterruptedly the same in all their interrupted appearances" (T 1.4.2.53)
- "I ... take it for granted, whatever may be the reader's opinion at this present moment, that an hour hence he will be persuaded there is ... an external ... world" (T 1.4.2.57)

283

283

(iv) Is the Philosophical Form Worse?

- The philosophical double-existence view "has no primary recommendation either to reason or the imagination" (T 1.4.2.46)
- "'tis only a palliative remedy, and ... contains all the difficulties of the vulgar system, with some others, that are peculiar to itself. There are no principles either of the understanding or fancy, which lead us directly to embrace this opinion of the double existence of perceptions and objects, ..." (T 1.4.2.46)
- "This philosophical system ... is the monstrous offspring of two principles, which are contrary to each other, which are both at once embrac'd by the mind, and which are unable mutually to destroy each other. ... Not being able to reconcile these two enemies, we endeavour to set ourselves at ease as much as possible, ... by feigning a double existence, where each may find something, that has all the conditions it desires." (T 1.4.2.52)

284

284

(v) Rejecting Both Forms of the Belief?

- "'Tis a gross illusion to suppose, that our resembling perceptions are numerically the same ... [as does the] popular system. And as to our philosophical one, 'tis liable to the same difficulties; and is over-and-above loaded with this absurdity, that it at once denies and establishes the vulgar supposition. Philosophers deny our resembling perceptions to be identically the same, and uninterrupted; and yet have so great a propensity to believe them such, that they arbitrarily invent a new set of perceptions, to which they attribute these qualities. I say, a new set of perceptions: For we may well suppose in general, but 'tis impossible for us distinctly to conceive, objects to be in their nature any thing but exactly the same with perceptions. What then can we look for from this confusion of groundless and extraordinary opinions but error and falshood? And how can we justify to ourselves any belief we repose in them?" (T 1.4.2.56)

285

285

(vi) And Yet ...

- If the vulgar view is *so obviously false*, can Hume really become a vulgar believer as soon as he leaves his study?
- Even within his study – where he is clearly aware of the falsehood of the vulgar view – Hume generally evinces a firm belief in external objects such as billiard balls (T 1.3.14.18, E 4.8-10) and dice (T 1.3.11.6-13, E 6.2-3).
- Likewise in the people whose thought and behaviour constitutes the subject-matter of so much of his philosophy.
- Thus many interpreters have considered that Hume must, in the end, be a "representative realist", adopting the "double existence" or "philosophical" view (which, despite his harsh words, at least has the merit of *not being so obviously false!*).

286

286

The Discussion in the *Enquiry*

■ Again the vulgar belief is natural and universal:

- "It seems evident, that men are carried, by a natural instinct ..., to repose faith in their senses; and that, without any reasoning, or even almost before the use of reason, we always suppose an external universe, which depends not on our perception, ... Even the animal creation are governed by a like opinion, ..." (E 12.7)
- It seems also evident, that, when men follow this blind and powerful instinct of nature, they always suppose the very images, presented by the senses, to be the external objects, and never entertain any suspicion, that the one are nothing but representations of the other. This very table, which we see white, and which we feel hard, is believed to exist, independent of our perception, and to be something external to our mind" (E 12.8)

287

287

■ And again the vulgar belief is easily seen to be false:

- "But this universal and primary opinion of all men is soon destroyed by the slightest philosophy, which teaches us, that nothing can ever be present to the mind but an image or perception, and that the senses are only the inlets, through which these images are conveyed ... The table, which we see, seems to diminish, as we remove farther from it: But the real table, which exists independent of us, suffers no alteration: It was, therefore, nothing but its image, which was present to the mind. These are the obvious dictates of reason; and no man, who reflects, ever doubted, that the existences, which we consider, when we say, this house and that tree, are nothing but perceptions in the mind, and fleeting copies or representations of other existences, which remain uniform and independent." (E 12.9)
- This last sentence, however, *appears* to commit Hume to some form of representative realism after all!

288

288

Oxford Lectures on David Hume, 2024-25

- But then Hume goes on to say that the representative realist view cannot be justified either, with an elegant summary of the argument from *T* 1.4.2.47:

- “By what argument can it be proved, that the perceptions of the mind must be caused by external objects, entirely different from them, though resembling them (if that be possible) [rather than] from the energy of the mind itself, or ... some invisible ... spirit, or ... some other cause still more unknown to us?” (*E* 12.11)
- “It is a question of fact, whether the perceptions of the senses be produced by external objects, resembling them: How shall this question be determined? By experience surely; as all other questions of a like nature. But here experience is, and must be entirely silent. The mind has never any thing present to it but the perceptions, and cannot possibly reach any experience of their connexion with objects. The supposition of such a connexion is, therefore, without any foundation in reasoning.” (*E* 12.12)

289

289

- If the truth of the philosophical view “is a question of fact”, then that view must at least be *coherent*, which did not seem to be the view of the *Treatise*.

- Perhaps Hume has given up the view that identity of an object over time requires *invariableness* (cf. *T* 1.4.2.31, 1.4.3.2, 1.4.6.6)? The *Enquiry* does not discuss identity.
- *E* 12.16 also seems to imply that the philosophical view of *T* 1.4.2 is at least coherent, since (unlike the instinctive vulgar view) it is not said to be “contrary to reason”, but only “contrary to natural instinct” and without “rational evidence ... to convince an impartial enquirer”.
- But apparently the “second objection” (descended from the discussion of *T* 1.4.4) “goes farther”, representing the belief in body as “contrary to reason” (*E* 12.16).

290

290

- This “second objection”, spelled out in *E* 12.15, focuses on the alleged impossibility of forming an idea of primary qualities – like extension – as mind-independent, given that our visual idea of extension is inevitably *coloured*, our tactile idea of extension is inevitably *felt*, while both *colour* and *feeling* are acknowledged by Lockean “modern philosophers” to be only in the mind.

- The only way out of this, Hume suggests, is by appeal to *abstraction* – e.g. abstracting the idea of the *shape* of a coloured rectangle without thinking about its *colour*. But this, he thinks, has already been refuted by Berkeley:

“An extension, that is neither tangible nor visible, cannot possibly be conceived: And a tangible or visible extension, which is neither hard nor soft, black nor white, is equally beyond the reach of human conception.” (*E* 12.15)

291

291

Hume’s Tantalizing Last Words on Body

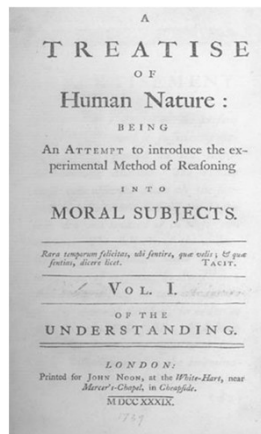
“The second objection goes farther, and represents this opinion as contrary to reason: at least, if it be a principle of reason, that all sensible qualities are in the mind, not in the object. Bereave matter of all its intelligible qualities, both primary and secondary, you in a manner annihilate it, and leave only a certain unknown, inexplicable something, as the cause of our perceptions; a notion so imperfect, that no sceptic will think it worth while to contend against it.” (*E* 12.16)

- Question 1: Does Hume think it is indeed a “principle of reason” that “all sensible qualities are in the mind, not in the object”?
- Question 2: What is the final sentence – *added only in the posthumous 1777 edition of the Enquiry* – saying? That the belief in “a certain unknown, inexplicable *something*, as the cause of our perceptions” is *so hopeless as to be unworthy of critical consideration*, or that it is *so thin as to be harmless*?

292

292

7(b) Of the Immateriality of the Soul



293

293

Turning to the Internal World

- “Of the Immateriality of the Soul” marks a turn to “the intellectual world”. This, “tho’ involv’d in infinite obscurities”, is not perplex’d with any such contradictions, as those we have discovered in the natural” (*T* 1.4.5.1).
- From *T* 1.4.5.2-6, Hume attacks the notion of mental *substance* – and the related notion of *inhesion* – in various ways, including an appeal to the Copy Principle (at *T* 1.4.5.4). Both notions are condemned as meaningless.

294

294

Oxford Lectures on David Hume, 2024-25

Taking Separability Too Far?

- At *T* 1.4.5.5, Hume responds to the attempt to “evade the difficulty, by saying, that the definition of a substance is *something which may exist by itself*”:

“this definition agrees to every thing, that can possibly be conceiv’d; ... Whatever is clearly conceiv’d may exist; ... every thing, which is different, is distinguishable, and every thing which is distinguishable, is separable by the imagination. My conclusion ... is, that since all our perceptions are different from each other, and from every thing else in the universe, they are also distinct and separable, and may be consider’d as separately existent, and may exist separately, and have no need of any thing else to support their existence. They are, therefore, substances, as far as this definition explains a substance.”

295

295

Reification of Perceptions

- Many have considered that Hume’s “reification” of perceptions – his assertion that impressions and ideas are “substances” that could exist without a perceiver, is utterly absurd, for example John Cook (1968, p. 8, quoted by Noonan 1999, p. 195):

“[It follows from Hume’s position] that there could be a scratch or a dent without there being anything scratched or dented. Indeed if we take Hume at his word, we must take him to be saying that he would see no absurdity in Alice’s remark: ‘Well, I’ve often seen a cat without a grin, but a grin without a cat! It’s the most curious thing I ever saw in all my life!’”

296

296

The Location of Perceptions

- From *T* 1.4.5.7-16, Hume discusses the issue of the location and extension of perceptions:

- Note in particular his insistence that only perceptions of sight and feeling have spatial location (*T* 1.4.5.10). Other, non-spatial, perceptions prove that “*an object may exist, and yet be no where*”. So causation cannot require spatial contiguity (cf. *T* 1.3.2.6 n. 16).
- Note also the illusion whereby we are seduced by the imagination into ascribing sensations of taste (which have no physical location) to the object – e.g. a fig – that produces them (*T* 1.4.5.13-14); this discussion was referenced by the footnote at 1.3.14.25 n. 32.

297

297

A Spinozistic Parody

- From *T* 1.4.5.17-28, Hume parodies standard arguments against the “hideous hypothesis” (*T* 1.4.5.19) of Spinoza, deploying them against the orthodox theological idea of a simple soul.
- Spinoza sees “the universe of objects” as being modifications of a “simple, uncompounded, and indivisible” substance (*T* 1.4.5.21). This is supposed to be outrageous. And yet theologians see “the universe of thought” – my impressions and ideas – as being all modifications of a simple, uncompounded and indivisible soul.

298

298

Defending Materialism

- The most important part of *Treatise* 1.4.5 for Hume’s own philosophy – noted briefly in Lecture 5 on causation (slides 217 and 232) – is his attack on the popular argument standardly used against Hobbist materialism, where he crucially appeals to his own theory of causation as constant conjunction:

“Matter and motion, ’tis commonly said in the schools, however vary’d, are still matter and motion, and produce only a difference in the position and situation of objects. Divide a body as often as you please, ’tis still body. ...” (*T* 1.4.5.29)

299

299

“... Place it in any figure, nothing ever results but figure, or the relation of parts. Move it in any manner, you still find motion or a change of relation. ’Tis absurd to imagine, that motion in a circle, for instance, shou’d be nothing but merely motion in a circle; while motion in another direction, as in an ellipse, shou’d also be a passion or moral reflection: That the shocking of two globular particles shou’d become a sensation of pain, and that the meeting of two triangular ones shou’d afford a pleasure. Now as these different shocks, and variations, and mixtures are the only changes, of which matter is susceptible, and as these never afford us any idea of thought or perception, ’tis concluded to be impossible, that thought can ever be caus’d by matter.” (*T* 1.4.5.29)

300

300

Oxford Lectures on David Hume, 2024-25

“’tis only by our experience of ... constant conjunction, we can arrive at any knowledge of causation”

“Few have been able to withstand the seeming evidence of this argument; and yet nothing in the world is more easy than to refute it. We need only to reflect on what has been prov’d at large, that we are never sensible of any connexion betwixt causes and effects, and that ’tis only by our experience of their constant conjunction, we can arrive at any knowledge of this relation. Now as all objects, which are not contrary, are susceptible of a constant conjunction, ...” (T 1.4.5.30)

301

301

“To consider the matter *a priori*, any thing may produce any thing”

“... and as no real objects are contrary; [note 48] I have inferr’d from these principles, that to consider the matter *a priori*, any thing may produce any thing, and that we shall never discover a reason, why any object may or may not be the cause of any other, however great, or however little the resemblance may be between them” (T 1.4.5.30)

■ Here note 48 refers to T 1.3.15, “Rules by which to judge of causes and effects”, paragraph 1.

302

302

■ Hume then goes further, to insist that material motion *is indeed* found to be the cause of thought:

- “we find ... by experience, that they are constantly united; which being *all the circumstances, that enter into the idea of cause and effect* ... we may *certainly* conclude, that motion may be, and *actually is*, the cause of thought and perception.” (T 1.4.5.30, my emphasis)
- “as *the constant conjunction of objects constitutes the very essence of cause and effect*, matter and motion may often be regarded as the causes of thought, as far as we have any notion of that relation.” (T 1.4.5.33, my emphasis)

303

303

■ T 1.4.5.31 poses a dilemma, whether causation is to be understood as involving some intelligible connexion, or instead just constant conjunction.

■ Hume clearly opts for the second of these, thus implying that thought could have a material cause:

“all objects, which are found to be constantly conjoin’d, are upon that account only to be regarded as causes and effects. Now as all objects, which are not contrary, are susceptible of a constant conjunction, and as no real objects are contrary; it follows, that for ought we can determine by the mere ideas, any thing may be the cause or effect of any thing; which evidently gives the advantage to the materialists above their antagonists.” (T 1.4.5.31)

304

304

Applying the Definition of Cause

- Thus at the end of *Treatise* 1.4.5 – just as in the discussion of “Liberty and Necessity” which is to come in 2.3.1 and 2.3.2 (and *Enquiry* 8) – Hume is applying his (first) definition of cause in terms of constant conjunction.
- As emphasised in earlier lectures, these are *positive* (rather than sceptical) implications of his definition: they *vindicate* the application of causation to mental phenomena.
- Hume’s analysis of causation, culminating at *Treatise* 1.3.14-15, has thus served the purpose of supporting materialism and determinism.

305

305

A Puzzling Conclusion

- The final paragraph, T 1.4.5.35, starts by repeating Hume’s key principle (cf. T 1.3.15.1 and 1.4.5.30) that causes and effects can be known only by experience, since “*whatever we can imagine, is possible*” (i.e. the Conceivability Principle).
- However the last two sentences refer to “the immortality of the soul”, which hasn’t so far been mentioned! This seems to be a trace of one of the “noble parts” on religion which Hume excised from the *Treatise* manuscript when he “castrated” it in 1737 (cf. letter to Henry Home, *NHL* 2)

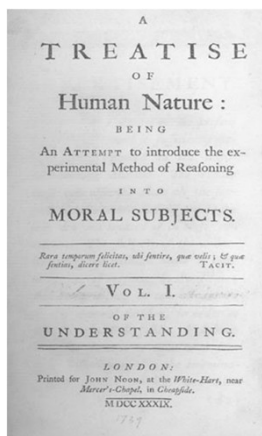
306

306

Oxford Lectures on David Hume, 2024-25

7(c)

Of Personal Identity



307

307

Of Personal Identity

- *Treatise* 1.4.6 addresses the topic of personal identity, wielding the Copy Principle (T 1.4.6.2) to deny that we have any idea of the self which is anything like the conventionally presumed notion with its “perfect identity and simplicity” (T 1.4.6.1).
- There is no such impression, and hence no such idea, of *self* (T 1.4.6.2). When I look inside myself, “I always stumble on some particular perception or other, of heat or cold, light or shade, love or hatred, pain or pleasure. I never can catch *myself* at any time without a perception, and never can observe any thing but the perception.” (T 1.4.6.3)

308

308

The Bundle Theory

- Hence the only genuine idea of self is that of:

“nothing but a bundle or collection of different perceptions [impressions and ideas], which succeed each other with an inconceivable rapidity, and are in a perpetual flux and movement. ... The mind is a kind of theatre, where several perceptions successively make their appearance ... There is properly no *simplicity* in it at one time, nor *identity* in different. ... The comparison of the theatre must not mislead us. They are the successive perceptions only, that constitute the mind; nor have we the most distant notion of the place, where these scenes are represented ...” (T 1.4.6.4)

309

309

- Later Hume suggests another comparison:

“the true idea of the human mind, is to consider it as a system of different perceptions or different existences, which are link'd together by the relation of cause and effect, ... Our impressions give rise to their correspondent ideas; and these ideas in their turn produce other impressions. ... In this respect, I cannot compare the soul more properly to any thing than to a republic or commonwealth, in which the several members are united by the reciprocal ties of government and subordination, and give rise to other persons, who propagate the same republic in the incessant changes of its parts. And as the same individual republic may not only change its members, but also its laws and constitutions; in like manner the same person may vary his character and disposition, as well as his impressions and ideas, without losing his identity. Whatever changes he endures, his several parts are still connected by the relation of causation. And in this view our identity with regard to the passions serves to corroborate that with regard to the imagination, by the making our distant perceptions influence each other, and by giving us a present concern for our past or future pains or pleasures....” (T 1.4.6.19)

310

310

But Identity Requires Constancy?

- In the passage just quoted, Hume *seems* to allow for qualitative change without loss of *identity*. But this is contrary to his more usual *Treatise* position:

“one of the essential qualities of identity [is] *invariableness*” (T 1.4.2.31)

“The acknowledge'd composition is evidently contrary to this suppose'd *simplicity*, and the variation to the *identity*. ... such evident contradictions” (T 1.4.3.2)

“We have a distinct idea of an object, that remains invariable and uninterrupted thro' a suppos'd variation of time; and this idea we call that of *identity* or *sameness*.” (T 1.4.6.6)

311

311

Explaining the Attribution of Identity

- Hume accordingly sets out to explain what he takes to be (strictly speaking) our *confused* “propension to ascribe an identity to these successive perceptions, and to suppose ourselves possess of an invariable and uninterrupted existence” (T 1.4.6.5).
- He takes this to involve the same sort of imaginative principles at play when we attribute identity “to plants and animals”. The similarity and very gradual change in the sequence of perceptions over time “facilitates the transition of the mind from one object to another, and renders its passage as smooth as if it contemplated one continu'd object” (T 1.4.6.6). Thus we come to think of them as “as invariable and uninterrupted”.

312

312

Oxford Lectures on David Hume, 2024-25

Confusion, Absurdity, and Fictions

- So just as with external objects (cf. *T* 1.4.2 and 1.4.3), when we consider a gradually changing sequence of perceptions, we are apt to confuse this with one that is self-identical, “uninterrupted and invariable” (1.4.6.6).
- Reflection on the changing sequence reveals our error here, so to resolve “this absurdity, we ... feign some new and unintelligible principle, that connects the objects together ... and run into the notion of a *soul*, and *self*, and *substance*, to disguise the variation.”
- So one type of *fiction* arises from our propensity to merge perceptions together and consider them as unchanging; another is when we “imagine something unknown and mysterious, connecting the parts”.

313

313

Association and Identity

- “To prove this hypothesis”, Hume aims “to show ... that the objects, which are variable or interrupted, and yet are suppos’d to continue the same, are such only as consist of a succession of parts, connected together by resemblance, contiguity, or causation”, that is, by the association of ideas (*T* 1.4.6.7).
- We tend to attribute identity when changes are *proportionately* small and *gradual* (*T* 1.4.6.9-10), or when the changing parts are relevant to “some *common end* or purpose”, and all the more so when they bear “the reciprocal relation of cause and effect” to each other (*T* 1.4.6.11-12).

314

314

Explaining Personal Identity

- The attribution of personal identity is just another instance of this phenomenon: “The identity, which we ascribe to the mind of man, is only a fictitious one, and of a like kind with that which we ascribe to vegetables and animal bodies.” (*T* 1.4.6.15)
- Hume appeals here to his Separability Principle and his theory of causation, which tell us “that the understanding never observes any real connexion among objects, and that even the union of cause and effect ... resolves itself into a customary association of ideas”. So identity cannot *really* apply between our perceptions, but is something we attribute because of mental association (*T* 1.4.6.16).

315

315

Resemblance, Causation, Memory

- So “our notions of personal identity, proceed entirely from the smooth and uninterrupted progress of the thought along a train of connected ideas” (*T* 1.4.6.16).
- Contiguity plays little role here (maybe because most perceptions have no spatial relations – *T* 1.4.5.10), so it must be the mutual *resemblance* and *causation* between our perceptions that are crucial (*T* 1.4.6.17).
- Memory produces resemblance between our perceptions, and our concern about our future adds to their causal linkages. Memory also reveals to us the sequence of linked perceptions, and so is the chief “source of personal identity” (*T* 1.4.6.18-20).

316

316

Just *Who* is Confused Here?

- It is natural to ask: if “our notions of personal identity, proceed entirely from the smooth and uninterrupted progress of the thought along a train of connected ideas” leading to the confused view of them as identical, then *who is the thinker whose thought is proceeding and getting confused in this way?*
- For accessible discussion of this issue, see for example Harold Noonan, *Hume on Knowledge*, pp. 193-4, who goes on to link it (pp. 194-8) with the related issue of Hume’s reification of perceptions. This is also related to the issue of “bundling”, discussed below and by Noonan at pp. 205-9.

317

317

Notorious Second Thoughts

- In the *Appendix* to the *Treatise*, published with Book 3 in late 1740 (just 21 months after Books 1 and 2), Hume famously expresses despair about his account:
“upon a more strict review of the section concerning *personal identity*, I find myself involv’d in such a labyrinth, that, I must confess, I neither know how to correct my former opinions, nor how to render them consistent.” (*T App* 10).
- Unfortunately, Hume leaves it very obscure what exactly he takes the problem to be:

318

318

Oxford Lectures on David Hume, 2024-25

Two Inconsistent Principles?

"In short there are two principles, which I cannot render consistent; nor is it in my power to renounce either of them, viz. *that all our distinct perceptions are distinct existences*, and *that the mind never perceives any real connexion among distinct existences*. Did our perceptions either inhere in something simple and individual, or did the mind perceive some real connexion among them, there would be no difficulty in the case." (*T App 21*)

- But the two cited principles aren't apparently inconsistent! So this has left an attractively intriguing puzzle for Hume's interpreters.

319

319

Multiple Interpretations

- Don Garrett starts his paper "Rethinking Hume's Second Thoughts about Personal Identity" (2011) by remarking:

"Why did Hume become so dissatisfied with [his] 'former opinions' ...? ... The question ... has received what is surely a far greater number of distinct answers – well over two dozen, even by a conservative count – than has any other interpretive question about Hume's philosophical writings. ... I believe it is fair to say that no commentator has ever simply endorsed the answer of any other commentator." (p. 16)

320

320

A "Bundling Problem"?

- Many have seen the heart of Hume's difficulty as some sort of *bundling problem*, e.g.:

- What is it that makes our perceptions part of "our bundle" in the way that enables us to be seduced into thinking of them as a continuing self?
- After all, I have no temptation to think of *your* perceptions as part of *my* self, because they don't even come to my awareness!
- This all seems to presuppose that the perceptions must *genuinely* be bundled in some way *before* Hume's account of the error can even get going.

321

321

Garrett's Proposal

- Garrett's carefully argued proposal in his 2011 paper seems as good as any other. He sees Hume's problem as arising from three of his "central doctrines":

- Placeless Perceptions

No *nonvisual* and *nontactile* perception is in any "place," either spiritual (such as a soul or mental substance) or spatial, by which it is located relative to any other perception. Even visual and tactile perceptions are not in any place by which they are located relative to any other perceptions except to those (if any) with which they form a spatially complex perception.

322

322

- Conjunctive Causation

Taken together, the following are individually necessary and jointly sufficient for the existence of a causal relation between two objects: (i) priority in time; (ii) contiguity in time and, *where applicable*, in place; and (iii) constant similar conjunction of like objects.

- Causal Bundling

Perceptions are in the same mind if and only if they are elements in a system of relevant causal relations holding among them.

- Garrett argues that these three doctrines together made it impossible for Hume to achieve a coherent conception of how perceptions have a "place" within any particular mind.

323

323

Changes of Mind?

- The issue of identity doesn't arise in the *Enquiry*, and the only mention of personal identity in Hume's later works is in his posthumously published *Dialogues concerning Natural Religion*, at *D* 4.2-3). There "the soul of man" is described by Demea as constantly changing, and Cleanthes responds that a mind by its nature cannot be immutable. So neither of them considers mental identity incompatible with change.
- The Separability Principle also disappears in the later works (at least in anything more than a very lightweight form), so Hume *might* have changed his mind on the principles that made identity, especially of persons, so intractable in the *Treatise*.

324

324