



## **Hume, Demonstratives, and Self-Ascriptions of Identity**

Andrew Ward

*Hume Studies* Volume 11, Issue 1 (April, 1985), 69-93.

Your use of the HUME STUDIES archive indicates your acceptance of HUME STUDIES' Terms and Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.humesociety.org/hs/about/terms.html>.

HUME STUDIES' Terms and Conditions of Use provides, in part, that unless you have obtained prior permission, you may not download an entire issue of a journal or multiple copies of articles, and you may use content in the HUME STUDIES archive only for your personal, non-commercial use.

Each copy of any part of a HUME STUDIES transmission must contain the same copyright notice that appears on the screen or printed page of such transmission.

For more information on HUME STUDIES contact [humestudies-info@humesociety.org](mailto:humestudies-info@humesociety.org)

<http://www.humesociety.org/hs/>

## HUME, DEMONSTRATIVES, AND SELF-ASCRPTIONS OF IDENTITY

I. In his A Treatise of Human Nature<sup>1</sup> (hereafter referred to as the Treatise and, for purposes of citation, abbreviated as 'T'), Hume says that "[T]he identity, which we ascribe to the mind of man, is only a fictitious one..." (T 259) Although some commentators read this as tantamount to the claim that we can have no idea of a mind, this seems too strong. To see what Hume is getting at, we need to return to the beginning of the section entitled "Of Personal Identity" where he says:

There are some philosophers, who imagine we are every moment intimately conscious of what we call our SELF; that we feel its existence and its continuance in existence; and are certain, beyond the evidence of a demonstration, both of its perfect identity and simplicity. (T 251, my emphasis)

"Unluckily", he continues, we do not have "any idea of self, after the manner it is here explain'd." (T 251, my emphasis) What this suggests, I think, is that it is only the idea of a simple, changeless mind that ought to be called fictitious. With respect to the question "What kind of an idea of mind do we have?", Hume suggests what has come to be called the "Bundle Theory of Mind". According to the bundle theory, every object of awareness is an individual perception and "what we call a mind, is nothing but a heap or collection of different perceptions, united together by certain relations..." (T 207) In other words, Hume is saying that what we are aware of is a stream of perceptions, none of whose members is a perception of a simple, changeless mind. However, given Hume's account of (strict/perfect) identity, an acceptance of the bundle theory seems to entail the rejection of the

continuous existence of any mind. Put differently, if true the theory seems to require that the very idea of a mind continuous through time is a fiction. This raises the following problem which Hume must address:

Since the ordinary (vulgar) person has a great propensity to ascribe identity through time to minds (T 253), then, from the point of view of a study of human nature, it is important to provide an answer to the question: "why do the vulgar have such a propensity?"

Understanding Hume's answer to this question is, I believe, dependent upon the recognition that it is only the idea of a simple, changeless mind that Hume believes is fictitious. Once this is seen, it follows that the ascription of strict identity through time to a mind must, on Hume's account, be a result of the activity of the imagination (see T 209). As Hume says:

...identity is nothing really belonging to these different perceptions, and uniting them together; but is merely a quality, which we attribute to them, because of the union of their ideas in the imagination, when we reflect upon them (T 260).

Although the qualities that unite ideas typically include causation, resemblance and contiguity, Hume excludes contiguity as a factor in the case of ascriptions of strict identity through time to minds (T 260) and restricts his attention to the relations of resemblance and causation. Of these two relations, a number of commentators<sup>2</sup> have found the relation of resemblance especially problematic. Accordingly, in what follows I will consider whether Hume's explanation of the role of resemblance is sufficient to account for and justify self-ascriptions of strict identity through time. Contrary to the judgement that Hume's explanation of the role of resemblance fails as an account of self-ascriptions of strict identity through time, I will suggest that by recognizing a primitive

theory of demonstrative content in Hume's explanation of the role of resemblance many of the problems that the explanation seems to give rise to can be avoided.

II. I begin with Hume's description of the role of resemblance:

To begin with resemblance; suppose we cou'd see clearly into the breast of another, and observe that succession of perceptions, which constitutes his mind or thinking principle, and suppose that he always preserves the memory of a considerable part of past perceptions; 'tis evident that nothing cou'd more contribute to the bestowing a relation on this succession amidst all its variations. For what is the memory but a faculty, by which we raise up images of past perceptions? And as an image necessarily resembles its object, must not the frequent placing of these resembling perceptions in the chain of thought, convey the imagination more easily from one link to another, and make the whole seem like the continuance of one object? In this particular, then, the memory not only discovers the identity, but also contributes to its production, by producing the relation of resemblance among the perceptions. The case is the same whether we consider ourselves or others (T 260/261).

As suggested by the last sentence, there are two cases to be distinguished: the first is the case in which someone ascribes strict identity through time<sup>3</sup> to the mind of another; the second is the case in which a person makes a self-ascription of identity. Since Hume begins with the former, I will too.

First, since Hume's account is third-person, let us distinguish the Observer from the observed (the Subject). This move is both suggested and developed by John Bricke in his Hume's Philosophy of Mind and "Hume on Self-Identity, Memory and Causality".<sup>4</sup> Now as

Bricke notes, in the simplest construal of Hume's account, the subject has<sup>5</sup> two perceptions: one, call it  $P_S^1$  is a past perception whereas the other, call it  $P_S^2$  is the image of  $P_S^1$  which has been raised up by the memory. In addition, since an "image necessarily resembles its object", and because the object of  $P_S^2$  is  $P_S^1$ , it follows that  $P_S^2$  resembles  $P_S^1$ . Thus, given that resemblance is a (perhaps non-symmetrical) dyadic relation, memory can be said to produce the relation of resemblance by supplying one of the terms of the relation, viz.  $P_S^2$ . What now of the ascription of identity? This is where the observer comes in. Staying with the simplest possible construal, the observer has two perceptions: the first, call it  $P_O^1$ , has as its object  $P_S^1$  while the second, call it  $P_O^2$  has as its object  $P_S^2$ . Thus, the observer's having  $P_O^2$  constitutes his awareness of the present perception  $P_S^2$ , whereas the observer's having  $P_O^1$  constitutes his recollection of the perception of which  $P_S^2$  is the image. The idea seems to be that if the observer recollects the subject's past perception,  $P_S^1$ , and is aware of the subject's present perception  $P_S^2$ , then the resemblance of  $P_S^1$  and  $P_S^2$  will lead the observer to identify  $P_S^1$  and  $P_S^2$ . But, since it is "the succession of perceptions, which constitutes ... [the subject's] mind or thinking principle..." (T 260), then the identification of  $P_S^1$  and  $P_S^2$  is tantamount to ascribing identity to (the mind of) the subject. Of course the "typical" subject is likely to have more than two perceptions (see T 634), but an analogous account can be given for bundles of perceptions.

After his account of other-mind ascriptions of identity, Hume summarily contends that the situation is the same when the ascriptions of identity are self-ascriptions (T 261). But in this case it would seem that it ought to be possible to reconstrue the analysis

of Hume's account given above into one which accounts for self-ascriptions of identity. Although Bricke argues that such a reconstrual cannot be given,<sup>6</sup> I cannot agree with him. Accordingly, as a first attempt let us leave unchanged that portion of the account concerned with the subject and simply change all references to the observer into references to the self-observer. However, when we do this there are, prima facie, two problems that immediately arise. First, how are we going to individuate  $P_S^2$  and  $P_O^2$ ? Recall that the subject's having the present perception  $P_S^2$  accounts for his awareness of  $P_S^1$ , whereas the observer's having the present perception  $P_O^2$  accounts for his awareness of  $P_S^2$ . Now while  $P_O^2$  and  $P_S^2$  are different perceptions, the observer's having  $P_O^2$  is to account for his awareness of  $P_S^2$  and so there must be some similarity between the two. This seems to suggest that a complex content must be attributed to  $P_O^2$  such that either  $P_S^2$  or a perception (type-) identical with  $P_S^2$  is contained as a constituent of the complex.<sup>7</sup> After all, if the content of  $P_O^2$  does not include either  $P_S^2$  or a perception (type-) identical with  $P_S^2$  as a constituent, then it is difficult to see how the observer's having  $P_O^2$  could account for his awareness of  $P_S^2$ . Viewing the matter in this way, one might be inclined to say that the difference between  $P_S^2$  and  $P_O^2$  is that whereas  $P_S^2$  is a perception of  $P_S^1$ ,  $P_O^2$  is a perception of  $P_S^2$ . The problem is that this difference is not sufficient to distinguish the two. To see why this is so, suppose that  $P_O^2$  resembles  $P_S^2$  in respects  $R_1, R_2, \dots, R_n$  and differs from  $P_S^2$  in respects  $R_{n+1}, R_{n+2}, \dots, R_m$ . In addition, suppose that there is some perception  $P_S^3$ , different from  $P_S^2$  such that  $P_O^2$  resembles  $P_S^3$  in respects  $R_1, \dots, R_n$ . In this situation we seem led to say that the observer's having  $P_O^2$  is to account either for his awareness of  $P_S^2$ , or for his awareness of

$P_S^3$ , or finally for his awareness of  $P_S^4$  where  $P_S^4$  resembles  $P_O^2$  in respects  $R_{n+1}, \dots, R_m$ .<sup>8</sup> Since  $P_S^3$  resembles  $P_O^2$  in more respects than  $P_S^2$ , and  $P_S^4$  resembles  $P_O^2$  in the same number of respects as  $P_S^2$ , then if it is claimed that the observer's having  $P_O^2$  accounts for his awareness of  $P_S^2$ , it must be for some reason other than resemblance.<sup>9</sup> But if it is for some reason other than resemblance, then it must be fine-grained enough to distinguish the observer's awareness of  $P_S^2$  from his awareness of either  $P_S^3$  or  $P_S^4$ . Because  $P_O^2$  is contemporaneous with the perception whose awareness it is to account for, then neither the relation of contiguity nor that of causality will distinguish between the observer's awareness of  $P_S^2$  and his awareness of either  $P_S^3$  or  $P_S^4$ . Thus, we seem led to say that if the observer's having  $P_O^2$  is to account for his awareness of (only)  $P_S^2$ , then  $P_O^2$  must resemble  $P_S^2$  more than it resembles any other perception. Moreover, in the case where the subject and observer are the same person, it would seem that not only must  $P_O^2$  resemble  $P_S^2$  more than any other perception, but that  $P_O^2$  and  $P_S^2$  must be type-identical. Specifically, since  $P_O^2$  cannot be distinguished from  $P_S^2$  in virtue of being the perception of a different person, then either  $P_O^2$  and  $P_S^2$  must be type-identical or else the content of  $P_O^2$  has some perception different from  $P_S^2$  as a constituent. But in the latter case there is the problem of explaining why the observer's having  $P_O^2$  constitutes his awareness of  $P_S^2$  and not a perception type-identical with  $P_O^2$ . Because the subject and observer are the same person, it is surely possible that there could be a perception that is type-identical but numerically distinct from  $P_O^2$ . Thus it would appear to follow that in the case of self-ascriptions of identity the perceptions  $P_O^2$  and  $P_S^2$  must be type-identical.

By an argument analogous to the one given above, it can be shown that  $P_S^1$  and  $P_S^2$  must also be type-identical. However, if  $P_S^1$  and  $P_S^2$  are type-identical, then it cannot be the case that  $P_S^2$ 's being a perception of  $P_S^1$  and  $P_O^2$ 's being a perception of  $P_S^2$  is sufficient to type-individuate  $P_S^2$  from  $P_O^2$ . The problem is that the inability to type-individuate  $P_O^2$  and  $P_S^2$  makes the account of awareness wholly mysterious. For instance, why should having  $P_O^2$  have anything to do with an awareness of  $P_S^2$ ? Why not simply say that it is in virtue of having  $P_S^2$  that the observer is aware of  $P_S^2$ ? The introduction of  $P_O^2$  elucidates nothing since  $P_S^2$  and  $P_O^2$  are type-identical. Moreover, if we attempt to retain the role of  $P_O^2$  by claiming that  $P_S^2$  and  $P_O^2$  are type-identical but numerically distinct, then in principle there is nothing wrong in supposing that there might be yet a third perception (and a fourth, fifth, etc.) which is numerically distinct but type-identical to both  $P_S^2$  and  $P_O^2$ . In this case it is not clear how the observer's having  $P_O^2$  is going to account for his awareness of  $P_S^2$  and not some other perception. The upshot, to be developed in Parts III and IV, is that when considering Hume's third-person account of self-ascriptions of identity we ought not to think of the observer's having  $P_O^2$  as his being aware of his possessing the distinct, though qualitatively identical perception  $P_S^2$ .

The second problem with attempting to translate the account of other-mind ascriptions of identity into an account of self-ascriptions of identity mirrors the first problem, but concerns  $P_S^2$  and  $P_O^1$ . Recall that  $P_S^2$  is, in the case of other-mind ascriptions of identity, the subject's recollection of  $P_S^1$ , whereas  $P_O^1$  is the observer's recollection of the subject's having had  $P_S^1$ . The problem is that when the distinction between the observer and subject is collapsed in the case of self-

ascriptions of identity,  $P_O^1$  can no longer be understood in the same way. Rather, since  $P_O^1$  is now a perception of the subject, then it is the subject's recollection of  $P_S^1$ . But, as noted above, this is the same analysis as given for  $P_S^2$ . Thus, the content of  $P_S^2$  must be type-identical with the content of  $P_O^1$ . However, if the contents of  $P_S^2$  and  $P_O^1$  are type-identical, then it seems that the third-person account breaks down. In particular, if  $P_S^2$  and  $P_O^1$  are type-identical, then self-ascriptions of identity cannot mirror other-mind ascriptions of identity. To suppose otherwise would suggest that the numerical distinctness of  $P_S^2$  and  $P_O^1$  is sufficient to individuate  $P_S^2$  as the perception of the subject qua subject and  $P_O^1$  as the perception of the observer qua subject. But while numerical distinctness is a necessary condition for such individuation, it is not a sufficient condition (see T 257ff). Moreover, to say that the observer qua subject could only have access to his perceptions misses the point since both  $P_S^2$  and  $P_O^1$  are his perceptions. Hence, by simply transforming every occurrence of 'observer' in the original account into 'observer qua subject' not only does the third-person character disappear, but, more importantly, self-ascriptions of identity remain mysterious.

III. Are we to say then that Hume is mistaken in his analysis of self-ascriptions of identity? I think not. Rather, it seems to me that while the third-person account of other-mind ascriptions of identity is suggestive, we must nevertheless alter it when attempting to use it as an account of self-ascriptions of identity. Accordingly, it is to this revision of the analysis of Hume's account as given above that I now turn.

Let me begin with a digression to a point made by Armstrong, Stroud, and others.<sup>10</sup> From the point of view of Armstrong and Stroud, it would seem that even if the problems outlined above were ignored, a deeper problem confronts Hume's account. This is the problem that resemblance, even when conjoined with causality, is not sufficient to account for ascriptions of identity. To see what Armstrong and Stroud have in mind, let us for the moment gloss over the distinction of subject and observer made earlier and consider a series of perceptions  $P_1, P_2, \dots, P_n$  all of which are perceptions of the same object. Indeed, to make the case even stronger, let us suppose that they are all perceptions of the same object from the same perspective (*i.e.*, are all type-identical and differ only in that  $P_1$  occurs at time  $t_1$ ,  $P_2$  at time  $t_2$ , etc.). Now, since any two of these perceptions, say  $P_m$  and  $P_n$ , are type-identical, it seems to follow that on Hume's account an observer of the perceptions would (should) be led to identify them. But if the perceptions are (type-) identical, would not the observer of the perceptions, on Hume's account, suppose that they were both part of a single mind? If so, then it seems that something has gone wrong since, surely, it could turn out that  $P_m$  and  $P_n$  are the perceptions of two different people. What this suggests is that when we identify perceptions, we do not do so independently of the contexts in which those perceptions occur. Put differently, it is not the resemblance of two perceptions simpliciter that leads us to identify them, but rather the resemblance of the two perceptions together with their context.

In this connection, recall Hume's distinction between perfect identity through time and imperfect identity through time (T 256ff). In the section of the Treatise entitled "Of Personal Identity" (T 251ff),

Hume accounts for ascriptions of imperfect identity through time both in terms of causal relations between ideas and in terms of degrees of resemblance. With respect to causal relations, Hume says that in the case of animals and vegetables the tendency to ascribe imperfect identity through time to them is largely due to "the reciprocal relation of cause and effect in all their actions and operations" (T 257). Furthermore, in the case of self-ascriptions of imperfect identity through time, Hume compares the person to a commonwealth in that just as a commonwealth "may not only change its members, but also its laws and constitutions" (T 261) without ceasing to be the "same" commonwealth, so too a person "may vary his character and disposition ... without losing his identity" since "his several parts are still connected by the relation of causation" (T 261). With respect to degrees of resemblance, Hume says that

...supposing some very small or inconsiderable part to be added to the mass, or subtracted from it; tho' this absolutely destroys the [perfect] identity of the whole, strictly speaking, yet as we seldom think so accurately, we scruple not to pronounce a mass of matter the same, where we find so trivial an alternation. (T 255,256).

If we now recall that Hume begins his account of self-ascriptions of identity due to resemblance with "suppose we cou'd see clearly into the breast of another..." (T 260, my emphasis), it seems clear that a context for the perceptions of the subject "seen" by the observer is presupposed. This context is supplied, I suggest, by supposing that the observer has already made an ascription of imperfect identity to the subject. Thus, what the observer is aware of is the subject's present perception and the subject's past perception.

The point, in terms of the account given above, is that while the analysis of  $P_S^1$  and  $P_S^2$  need not be changed, we must modify the analysis of  $P_O^1$  and  $P_O^2$ . To begin with,  $P_O^2$  is not simply the observer's awareness of  $P_S^2$ , but rather, letting 'A' denote the bundle of perceptions which compose (see T 634) the subject's mind at time  $t_1$ ,  $P_O^2$  is the observer's awareness that A has  $P_S^2$  (or, more technically, that  $P_S^2$  is an element of A -- see T 207). Similarly,  $P_O^1$  is not simply the observer's awareness of the perception recalled by  $P_S^2$ , viz.  $P_S^1$ , but rather, letting 'A<sup>o</sup>' denote the bundle of perceptions which compose the subject's mind at time  $t_0$ ,  $P_O^1$  is the observer's awareness that A<sup>o</sup> has  $P_S^1$  (or, again more technically, that  $P_S^1$  is an element of A<sup>o</sup>). Because A and A<sup>o</sup> are bundles (sets) of perceptions, then A is identical with A<sup>o</sup> only if  $P_S^2 = P_S^1$ . But as noted above, the resemblance of  $P_S^2$  to  $P_S^1$  inclines the observer to identify  $P_S^2$  and  $P_S^1$ . Now if A resembled A<sup>o</sup> only in that  $P_S^1$  resembled  $P_S^2$ , then the observer would probably not feel any great inclination to identify A with A<sup>o</sup>. However, if either  $P_S^1$  was the only element of A and  $P_S^2$  was the only element of A<sup>o</sup>, or many elements of A resembled many elements of A<sup>o</sup>, then the observer probably would be inclined to identify A with A<sup>o</sup>. As Hume puts it, the ascription of identity "depends on the relations of ideas; and these relations produce identity, by means of that easy transition they occasion" (T 262; also see 254). Hence, since "what we call a mind, is nothing but a heap or collection of different perceptions" (T 207), the tendency to identify A with A<sup>o</sup> is tantamount to the ascription of identity to another mind.

Now for the point of the digression. What I want to suggest is that by extending the insights of this account to cases of self-ascriptions of identity, the problems raised by Armstrong, Stroud, and others

can be resolved, but in addition, the problems of individuation encountered earlier are also addressed. Accordingly, in what follows I will extend the above account and consider both of these claims.

IV. As suggested previously, that portion of the original account concerning itself with the subject need not be changed. Specifically, even in the case of a self-ascription of identity there are, in the simplest case, two perceptions,  $P_S^1$  and  $P_S^2$  such that: (i)  $P_S^1$  is a perception at time  $t_1$  and  $P_S^2$  is a perception at time  $t_2$ ; and (ii)  $P_S^2$  is a perception, produced by memory, which is an image of  $P_S^1$ . This is not where the problems with Hume's account, as outlined above, arose. The problems in other-mind ascriptions of identity arose because of the relation between observer and subject. This problem infects the case of self-ascriptions of identity through the reconstrual of the observer as an aspect of the subject, a reconstrual that is necessary if Hume is to account for self-ascriptions of identity. In light of the discussion above, we can follow Bricke and pinpoint the problem by saying that:

...a distinction must be drawn between those resembling perceptions that provide a basis for one's judgement of self-identity and those perceptions that in some way constitute one's awareness of the former perceptions and of their resemblance to one another [5, 168].

It is precisely the apparent inability to make this distinction that results in the problems of individuation. Does Hume's account allow for such a distinction to be made? Explicitly, I do not think so, but his entire treatment of personal identity is cursory and much must be read into it. In light of this, it seems to me that the account arising out of

the discussion of the problem raised by Armstrong, Stroud, and others is suggestive. For instance, it might seem that we could adopt a version of such an account in the following way:  $P_O^2$ , which is now a perception belonging to the subject, is the subject's (qua observer) awareness that he (himself) has  $P_S^2$ , while  $P_O^1$ , which is also a perception belonging to the subject, is the subject's (qua observer) awareness that he (himself) had  $P_S^1$ . Following the convention established by Castaneda,<sup>11</sup> we could say that the subject's having  $P_O^2$  constitutes the subject's (qua observer) awareness that he\* has  $P_S^2$ , while the subject's having  $P_O^1$  constitutes the subject's (qua observer) awareness that he\* had  $P_S^1$ . In both cases, what the use of the quasi-indicator 'he\*' shows is that demonstrative reference has been attributed to the person having the perception.<sup>12</sup> While prima facie appealing, there is a problem with this approach that centers on the proper analysis of occurrences of 'he\*'. If, as Castaneda and Baker suggest, quasi-indicators form a unique logical class of expressions through whose use we implicitly attribute a first-person indexical reference,<sup>13</sup> then reading Hume's account as involving quasi-indicators seems to require that Hume be willing to countenance an idea of the self. Put differently, indexical reference seems to presuppose the idea of a self to which the reference is being made. But, as Hume says:

For my part, when I enter most intimately into what I call 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 anything but the perception (T 252).

Thus, any analysis of Hume's account involving quasi-indicators simply seems to run contrary to what Hume actually said.

What has gone wrong, I think, is that the account suggested above has conflated two questions that Hume wants to keep separate. In particular:

- (a) How is it that adults in fact think when recalling past perceptions?
- (b) Why is it that adults think the way they do when recalling past perceptions?

I take it that the answer to (a), in part at least, is that they think 'I had this or that perception', something we attribute to them by saying 'He recalls that he\* had this or that perception'. Thus, through the use of quasi-indicators we can provide a Humean answer to (a). However, the major point of Hume's inquiry in the section of the Treatise entitled "Of Personal Identity" (T 251ff) is not to answer (a) but to answer (b). As Hume frames it:

What ... gives us so great a propensity to ascribe an [perfect] identity to these successive perceptions [that make up the self], and to suppose ourselves possest of an invariable and uninterrupted existence thro' the whole course of our lives? (T 253)

Accordingly, although the subject -- qua adult -- might well be thinking "I have  $P_S^2$ " when he has  $P_O^1$ , this is not the issue. The issue is why he thinks this way. Therefore, the analysis of the subject's (qua observer) own awareness of  $P_S^1$  as 'he\* had  $P_S^1$ ' simply misses the issue. Still, the failure is suggestive. The problem it points out is that the third-person account of ascriptions of identity, when it is applied to the case in which the observer is the subject, seems to presuppose an idea of the self. However, I think there is a way of keeping the third-person account and not

presupposing the underlying idea of a self possessing perfect identity and simplicity.

To begin with, rather than accepting ascriptions of the form 'Jason is aware that he\* had  $P_S^1$ ' as accurately representing Jason's having  $P_O^1$ , we should adopt something of the form 'Jason is aware that he had  $P_S^1$ ', where 'he' demonstratively refers to the bundle of perceptions that make up Jason at time  $t_1$  (see T 252).<sup>14</sup> In contrast, Jason's having  $P_O^2$  would be represented by 'Jason is aware that he has  $P_S^2$ ', where 'he' demonstratively refers to the bundle of perceptions that make up Jason at time  $t_2$ . If Jason then concludes that the bundle of perceptions of which  $P_S^1$  is an element is identical with the bundle of perceptions of which  $P_S^2$  is an element, at least the ascription of identity would be a contingent one. This accords well with Hume's statement that the relations of identity, causality and time and place, "depend entirely on the ideas, which we compare together, and such as may be chang'd without any change in the ideas." (T 69).

The above account notwithstanding, it might be argued that the question of self-ascriptions of identity has still been begged. After all, even if the third-person personal pronoun 'he' does not somehow involve an implicit indexical reference, you still have the same pronoun in the analysis of both  $P_O^1$  and  $P_O^2$ , and this presumes that it is the same person in each case. Fortunately, this objection rests upon a misunderstanding of how pronouns work. In particular, it supposes that pronouns work like proper names. Such a supposition is, however, false. For instance, consider the following:

Tom, looking at Mike, says to Jon "he committed the crime". Just then Greg, Mike's brother, walks into the room. Tom, seeing Greg, realizes his mistake

and says to Jon "Oops. I mean he committed the crime."

Are we to say that each occurrence of 'he' refers to the same person? Obviously not. The point is that third-person pronouns are essentially demonstrative in character whereas proper names are not (though naming may well be). Because of the demonstrative character of pronouns, it is possible for a person at one time to say 'he is very tall' and at a later time 'he is very tall' and either be talking about different people or, if the speaker is talking about the same person, to be unaware of it. In the context of the analysis of  $P_O^1$  and  $P_S^2$ , this means that the use of 'he' in both analyses does not preclude either analysis. Rather, Hume would, on the account given above, have a clear way to individuate  $P_O^1$  from  $P_S^2$ . Whereas the presence of  $P_S^2$  accounts for the subject's memory of  $P_S^1$  simpliciter, the presence of  $P_O^1$  accounts for the subject's awareness that he<sub>1</sub> (where the 'he<sub>1</sub>'<sup>15</sup> is used demonstratively to indicate that  $P_S^1$  is an element of some determinate set of perceptions<sup>16</sup>) had  $P_S^1$ . Put differently, whereas the presence of  $P_S^2$  accounts for the subject's remembering only  $P_S^1$ , the presence of  $P_O^1$  accounts for the (self-) observer's awareness that a certain (demonstratively identified) bundle of perceptions had  $P_S^1$  as a member. Thus,  $P_S^2$ , lacking any demonstrative content, is content-distinct from  $P_O^1$  which does have demonstrative content. Similarly in the case of  $P_O^2$  and  $P_S^2$ , whereas the presence of  $P_O^2$  accounts for the subject's remembering only  $P_S^1$  (as noted above), the presence of  $P_O^2$  accounts for the (self-) observer's awareness that a certain (demonstratively identified) bundle of perceptions has  $P_S^2$  as a member. Thus, mirroring the case of  $P_O^1$  and  $P_S^2$ ,  $P_S^2$  lacks any demonstrative content and, as a result, is content-distinct from  $P_O^2$  which does have demonstrative content. Thus, by recognizing

the implicit demonstrative content of both  $P_0^1$  and  $P_0^2$ , the problems of individuation brought up in Part II are avoided.

Finally, what of the problem raised by Stroud, Armstrong and others? Basically, the answer is that this problem comes up only if one restricts one's attention to individual perceptions and does not see that these individual perceptions must be grounded in some larger group of perceptions. It is therefore of special importance to note that the function of demonstratives in the analysis above is not only to individuate the perceptions of the subject and the observer but to ground the "subject's" perceptions within the context of some bundle of perceptions. Accordingly, ascriptions of identity must be seen as contingent ascriptions to sets of perceptions -- something we would have expected given Hume's account (see T 253). Now it may be that Stroud, et al., would shift ground and suggest that the identity conditions of a Humean bundle of perceptions are underdetermined and that, as a result, self-ascriptions of identity can never be made on the proposed account. Put differently, it might be argued that the problem now becomes one of accounting for the unity of "Humean bundles" and that this cannot be done. However, it seems to me that Hume addresses this issue when he considers the role causality plays in people's propensity to make ascriptions of imperfect identity (see T 256ff). As Nathan Brett says:

...The unity of the self consists in the stability of the principles of causal connection among ideas [4:124].

Hence, I will presume that this is not an unanswerable objection.

V. Let me now turn to a consideration of two unresolved issues. To begin with, there seems to be a lacuna in the account of self-ascriptions of identity that I have drawn out of Hume. In terms of the language used above, there seems to be no explanation for why the subject's identification of two demonstratively referred to bundles of perceptions should lead to the subject's thinking something like: "I had this or that perception". Put in its simplest terms, the problem is why one passes from an identification of two bundles of perceptions to a first-person attribution. Although it might be supposed that the problem could be resolved by analysing the subject's possession of  $P_0^1$  as "he<sub>1</sub> had  $P_S^1$  and I am that person", this will not work. Two of the major problems with such an analysis are:

- (1) The analysis presupposes that the subject has already passed from a third-person analysis to a first-person attribution. Specifically, the analysis presupposes that the subject already has come to have an idea of himself that justifies his thinking 'I am that person'. But, since it is the goal of Hume's account to show why the subject has a propensity to make first-person attributions of identity, it follows that the introduction of 'I' into the analysis begs the question.
- (2) Even if (1) could be answered, the analysis seems to introduce two distinct I's depending upon whether it is the subject's possession of  $P_0^1$  or the subject's possession of  $P_0^2$  that is being analysed. Whether the two I's "refer to the same person" appears to be left undetermined by the analysis. In this case, though, the reason for the identification of the "two I's" remains mysterious.

What then are we to say? It seems to me that the resolution to the problem depends upon understanding the character of the regress raised by

the second problem. Suppose we ask the question "What would lead a person (an observer of the observer if you will) to believe that  $P_O^1$  and  $P_O^2$  are perceptions belonging to the same subject?" Since this mirrors the question "What would lead a person to believe that  $P_S^1$  and  $P_S^2$  are perceptions belonging to the same subject?" we would, I think, expect a similar answer. Accordingly, consider the following:

- (i)  $P_{O,O}^{1,1}$  is the image of  $P_O^1$  which has been raised up by the memory.
- (ii)  $P_{O,O}^{2,2}$  is the image of  $P_O^2$  which has been raised up by the memory.
- (iii)  $P_{O,O}^1$  constitutes the subject qua observer's awareness that  $he_3$  had  $P_O^1$  and  $P_O^2$ .
- (iv)  $P_{O,O}^2$  constitutes the subject qua observer's awareness that  $he_4$  has  $P_{O,O}^{1,1}$  and  $P_{O,O}^{2,2}$ .

By reasoning analogous to that used to account for the identification of the bundle of perceptions demonstratively referred to by ' $he_1$ ' with the bundle of perceptions demonstratively referred to by ' $he_2$ ', it follows that we are led to identify the bundle of perceptions (directly) referred to by ' $he_3$ ' with the bundle of perceptions (directly) referred to by ' $he_4$ '. Moreover, the same sort of analysis can be indefinitely extended by jumping up, as it were, to a new "meta-level" each time. Thus, we ascribe identity to strata within the person: the subject, the observer of the subject, the observer of the observer of the subject, etc.

To see precisely what this amounts to, let me begin by noting that in Part IV the bundle of perceptions demonstratively referred to by ' $he_1$ ' was identified with the bundle of perceptions demonstratively referred to by ' $he_2$ '. Thus, if  $P_S^1$  was one of the perceptions composing bundle  $B_1^1$  and  $P_S^2$  was

one of the perceptions composing bundle  $B_1^2$ , then what have been identified are  $B_1^1$  and  $B_1^2$ . Let us refer to the new bundle which contains both  $P_S^1$  and  $P_S^2$  as  $B_1$ . Now as suggested above, the same sort of analysis could be carried out at the level of the observer qua subject. This would lead us to suppose that a person would be inclined to identify the bundle of perceptions demonstratively referred to by 'he<sub>3</sub>' with the bundle of perceptions demonstratively referred to by 'he<sub>4</sub>'. Mirroring the case above, this means that if  $P_O^1$  and  $P_O^2$  were two of the perceptions composing bundle  $B_2^1$  and  $P_O^{1,1}$  and  $P_O^{2,2}$  were two perceptions composing bundle  $B_2^2$ , then what the person (i.e., the observer of the observer) has identified is  $B_2^1$  and  $B_2^2$ . Let us refer to the new bundle which contains  $P_O^1$  and  $P_O^2$ ,  $P_O^{1,1}$ , and  $P_O^{2,2}$ , as  $B_2$ .

Now up to this point there is still no explanation of the switch from the third-person analysis to a first-person attribution of identity. It is important to be clear about this. While the account is, in one sense, an account of self-ascriptions of identity (since the observer and the subject are the same person), the account has not yet answered the question of why the person should have a thought of the form 'I have this or that perception'. All that has been shown is that attributing a primitive theory of demonstratives to Hume leads to an identification of certain strata of perceptions within the individual by the individual. However, this is not at all the same as a first-person attribution of identity. Does this mean that the account has run aground? I do not think so. Rather, we now need to push on and ask whether there is any relation between bundles  $B_1$ ,  $B_2$ , etc. Reflection suggests, I think, that these bundles are not simple, unrelated separate collections of perceptions. To begin with,  $P_S^2$  is a perception in

bundle B1 whereas  $P_O^2$  is a perception in bundle B2. However, as we noted earlier, although  $P_S^2$  and  $P_O^2$  can be individuated from one another,  $P_S^2$  and  $P_O^2$  nevertheless closely resemble one another. Similar remarks can be made concerning  $P_S^2$  and  $P_O^1$ . But, if the elements of bundles B1 and B2 resemble one another, then the bundles themselves must resemble one another. Now as Hume notes, it is the resemblance of perceptions (or bundles of perceptions) that "is the cause of the confusion and mistake, and makes us substitute the notion of identity, instead of that of related objects" (T 254; also see T 209). Or, putting the point differently:

Identity depends on the relations of ideas; and these relations produce identity, by means of that easy transition they occasion (T 262).

Thus, the resemblance of bundles B1, B2, etc. provides the occasion for "the easy transition of the mind" and, as a result, the (false) ascription of identity to them. But as Hume says:

...the thought alone finds personal identity, when reflecting on the train of past perceptions, that compose a mind... (T 635; my emphasis)

This suggests, I think, that Hume believed that it is the ability of thought to make an indefinite transition from bundle B1 to B2 ... that is responsible for people's first-person attributions. Put differently, for Hume the cause of a person's first-person attribution of identity is not the presence of an underlying soul (in this connection, see T Bk. I, Chapter IV, Sections V and VI), but is rather the result of the exercise of the ability to indefinitely identify bundles containing past and present perceptions with one another. Now while it might be objected that such a view denies that 'I' is what John Perry calls an essential indexical,<sup>17</sup> this should not

be surprising given Hume's account of the self as a bundle of perceptions. To suppose that a first person attribution requires the essential indexical character of 'I' is not to refute Hume; it is to start out with a different account of what makes up the human mind.

Turning now to the second issue, if we assume that the account given above makes some sense of Hume's remarks about the third-person character of self-ascriptions of identity, then what reason is there to suppose that Hume would have accepted such an analysis? So far as I can tell, there is at best only circumstantial evidence. On the other hand, what I would like to suggest is that, at the very least, the above is consistent with what Hume had to say about ascriptions of identity and is, perhaps more importantly, indicative of the many deep insights he had on the problem of self-ascriptions of identity.<sup>18</sup>

Andrew Ward  
University of Kansas

1. All references to Hume's A Treatise of Human Nature are to the 2nd edition, edited by L.A. Selby-Bigge, revised by P.H. Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978).
2. See, for instance, bibliographical items [1], [5], [6], and [13].
3. In what follows I will shorten 'strict identity through time' to 'identity' unless the context demands clarification or the point being made depends on the fuller locution.

4. See [5:168-173], [6:86-88].
5. Obviously the sense of 'the subject has...' needs explication. Such explication is taken up later in the paper. At this point, it needs only be said that 'subject' is not to be understood as a substance in which perceptions inhere as qualities.
6. See [6:86ff].
7. Clearly this glosses over a number of important issues -- e.g., can perceptions have a complex content? While both interesting and important, the full accounting of these issues is beyond the scope of this paper.
8. Where  $(n-1) = (m-(n+1))$ .
9. In the case of  $P_S^4$  and  $P_S^2$  it might be claimed that while both resemble  $P_O^1$  in the same number of respects,  $P_S^2$  resembles  $P_O^1$  in the more important respects. Even if this were so, it would not solve the problem of  $P_S^3$  and  $P_S^2$ .
10. See, for instance, [1:16-18], [7:85], [9:124].
11. See [7] and [8].
12. See [3:246; 251ff].
13. In the case of Castenada, see especially [7]. In the case of Baker, see [3:253].
14. Although the bundle of perceptions that make up Jason at time  $t$  may be the demonstrative referent of 'he<sub>1</sub>', it does not follow that Jason knows that they are the bundles that compose him. This matter will be discussed in more detail in Part V.
15. I use subscripts, e.g., he<sub>1</sub>, he<sub>2</sub>, etc. in order to make it clear that the demonstrative referents of the two are not identical (though the subject may identify them).
16. As one of the anonymous reviewers suggested, it may be that perceptions could be of sufficient complexity to allow their description to contain demonstrative content. This suggestion is interesting and deserving of consideration.

17. See [10].
18. I would like to thank John Bricke for his help on earlier drafts of this paper and for correcting many of my mistaken views about Hume. I would also like to thank the reviewers whose comments have made this a better paper. Of course, any remaining mistakes and ambiguities are my responsibility.

### Bibliography

- [1] David M. Armstrong, A Materialist Theory of the Mind (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1968).
- [2] Lawrence Ashley and Michael Stack, "Hume's Theory of the Self and Its Identity," Dialogue (Canadian Philosophical Review), v. 13, n. 2 (1974), pp. 239-254.
- [3] Lynne Rudder Baker, "On Making and Attributing Demonstrative Reference," Synthese, v. 49, n. 2 (November, 1981), pp. 245-273.
- [4] Nathan Brett, "Substance and Mental Identity in Hume's Treatise," The Philosophical Quarterly, v. 22, n. 87 (April, 1972), pp. 11-125.
- [5] John Bricke, "Hume on Self-Identity, Memory and Causality," in David Hume: Bicentenary Papers, ed. by G.P. Morice (Edinburgh: Edinburgh Press, 1977), pp. 167-174.
- [6] John Bricke, Hume's Philosophy of Mind (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980).
- [7] Hector-Neri Castaneda, "Indicators and Quasi-Indicators," American Philosophical Quarterly, v. 4, n. 2 (April, 1967), pp. 85-100.
- [8] Hector-Neri Castaneda, "On the Philosophical Foundations of the Theory of Communication: Reference," in Contemporary Perspectives in the Philosophy of Language, edited by Peter French, Theodore Uehling, Jr., and Howard Wettstein (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1979), pp. 125-146.
- [9] David Hume, A Treatise of Human Nature, 2nd ed., ed. by L.A. Selby-Bigge, revised by P.H. Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978).

- [10] Jane L. McIntyre, "Is Hume's Self Consistent?" in McGill Hume Studies, ed. by D. Norton, N. Capaldi, and W. Robison (San Diego: Austin Hill Press, Inc., 1979), pp. 79-88.
- [11] John Perry, "The Problem of the Essential Indexical," Nous, v. 13, n. 1 (March, 1979), pp. 3-21.
- [12] Nelson Pike, "Hume's Bundle Theory of the Self: A Limited Defense," American Philosophical Quarterly, v. 4, n. 2 (April, 1967), pp. 159-165.
- [13] Barry Stroud, Hume (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1977).
- [14] Sybil Wolfram, "Hume on Personal Identity," Mind, v. 83, n. 332 (October, 1974), pp. 586-593.