



### **The Contents of Hume's Appendix and the Source of His Despair**

Jonathan Ellis

*Hume Studies* Volume 32, Number 2, (2006) 195-232.

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/>

# The Contents of Hume's Appendix and the Source of His Despair

JONATHAN ELLIS

*Abstract:* This paper has two goals: first, to show that the footnote and structure of App. 20, to which too little careful attention has been given, ultimately undermine a great many interpretations of Hume's dissatisfaction with his theory of personal identity; and second, to offer an interpretation that both heeds these textual features and (unlike other interpretations consistent with these features) renders Hume worried about something that would have truly bothered him. Hume's problem, I contend, concerns the relation, in his genetic explanation of ideas such as that of the self, between (i) the objects of the perceptions along which there is a smooth and uninterrupted progress of thought, and (ii) the contents of the ideas that the mind in such cases sometimes subsequently invents.

More than two and a half centuries after Hume published the Appendix to the *Treatise*,<sup>1</sup> in which he expresses a deep discontent with his account of personal identity, there is anything but consensus on the source of his worry. Novel interpretations of Hume's dissatisfaction continue to surface, especially in recent years. What is it that Hume finds so troubling? The basic principles that seemed to him to work so well to explain both our idea of causality and that of continued and distinct existence Hume now finds unsuccessful when applied to the idea of personal identity. Has Hume noticed some underlying circularity in his theory of ideas? Or has he a more specialized problem, relevant only to

---

Jonathan Ellis is at the Department of Philosophy, University of California, Santa Cruz CA 95064, USA.  
E-mail: jellis@ucsc.edu.

his particular treatment of the self? And why is there so little agreement on the subject of his despair?

I believe there has been an overwhelming tendency in the literature on the Appendix to be influenced more by what may indeed constitute a difficulty for Hume's account than by the subtleties of the actual text. The text of the Appendix is notoriously ambiguous and malleable, and so, at first glance, it can be accommodated by many readings. However, there are substantial clues in the text of the Appendix to which sufficient attention has remarkably not yet been paid. And those interpretations that have accorded with these textual features, in my view, render Hume dissatisfied with something that would not have bothered him. I will argue that there is in fact strong evidence indicating what is worrying Hume in the Appendix—and even stronger evidence indicating what is *not*.

In the first part of my paper, I will introduce and discuss some intricate aspects of the text (mostly of App. 20) and explore how they bear upon many of the interpretations in currency. The lessons we will draw from this discussion will help me subsequently support my own interpretation of Hume's Appendix. I will argue that Hume's problem concerns the relation between the objects of the perceptions along which there is a smooth and uninterrupted progress of thought, on the one hand, and the contents of the ideas the mind in such cases sometimes subsequently invents, on the other. Of the going interpretations, I claim that mine is the only one that has Hume worried about something that would truly have worried him and at the same time honors the details of the text.

## 1. Introduction

Hume hoped in T 1.4.6 to do for the idea of the self what he had already done in T 1.3.14 and T 1.4.2 for the ideas of causality and continued and distinct existence. He aspired to give a genetic explanation of how we come to form the idea that we are “possest of an invariable and uninterrupted existence thro' the whole course of our lives” (T 1.4.6.5; SBN 253). Hume begins with an attack on 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 1.4.6.1; SBN 251). Hume can find no impression from which an idea of such an entity could originate; all he can discover on any introspection is a series of perceptions. He writes: “when I enter most intimately into what I call *myself*, I always stumble on some particular perception or other . . . 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; SBN 252). From this Hume draws his celebrated thesis that each of us is nothing but a bundle or collection of different perceptions, and that “[t]hey are the successive perceptions only, that constitute the mind” (T 1.4.6.4; SBN 253).

Hume's genetic explanation of the idea of the self is similar to his explanation of the idea of distinct and continued existence. When we reflect upon a series of perceptions, he suggests, the transition of the mind from one perception to the next is "in feeling" so much like the transition of the mind when it reflects upon one invariable and uninterrupted object that we ascribe identity to that series of perceptions. But this identity is in apparent conflict with the constant variation of our perceptions which we cannot help but notice. To make consistent these two conflicting observations, Hume proposes, we invent the idea of an imperceptible self or soul that connects the perceptions together and "disguise[s] the variation" (T 1.4.6.6; SBN 254). Philosophical concern with personal identity is thus not "merely a dispute of words," but rather involves the treatment of fictitious ideas.

As we learn in T 1.1.4, the only qualities that can give ideas the union in the imagination necessary to produce an easy and deceiving transition of the mind, on Hume's account, are the relations of resemblance, contiguity, and causation. Since in the present case the relation of contiguity has "little or no influence" (T 1.4.6.17; SBN 260), Hume concludes that the smooth passage of the mind's thought when it reflects upon a series of perceptions is the result of the resemblances and causal relations that hold among our perceptions.

Through T 1.4.6, everything seems to be all right. But come the Appendix, Hume claims that his account is "very defective, and that nothing but the seeming evidence of the precedent reasonings cou'd have induc'd me to receive it" (T App. 20; SBN 635). Of the twelve paragraphs in the Appendix that concern personal identity, only the last two address any problem with his account. Almost everything up to the last two paragraphs summarizes arguments Hume lays out earlier in the *Treatise*, mostly arguments advanced in T 1.4.5. In these two paragraphs, however, Hume does attempt to articulate his difficulty. Most famously, he writes:

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.* (T App. 21; SBN 636)

That is not all he says in the way of explanation. In the first of the two crucial paragraphs, he tries, in two places, to specify explicitly where along his previous reasoning he believes his account runs into trouble. He writes:

But having thus loosen'd all our particular perceptions, when<sup>1</sup> I proceed to explain the principle of connexion, which binds them together, and makes us attribute to them a real simplicity and identity; I am sensible, that my account is very defective, and that nothing but the seeming

evidence of the precedent reasonings cou'd have induc'd me to receive it. (T App. 20; SBN 635)<sup>2</sup>

and,

But all my hopes vanish, when I come to explain the principles, that unite our successive perceptions in our thought or consciousness. (T App. 20; SBN 635–36)

Finally, in the second of the two paragraphs, Hume indicates what *would* save his account if only it were available to him. He says, “Did our perceptions either inhere in something simple and individual, or did the mind perceive some real connexion among them, there wou'd be no difficulty in the case” (T App. 21; SBN 636).

But due to a remarkable confluence of factors, the text that results allows for a wide variety of interpretations all of which can appear to make intelligent sense of nearly all of the Appendix. There is unanimous agreement that the two principles Hume claims he cannot render consistent are not in fact inconsistent with one another, so this has left commentators searching for some third principle or claim with which the two principles taken together are inconsistent. Moreover, both sentences in which Hume attempts to locate his problem are ambiguous and lend themselves to more than one reading. Similarly, Hume's two concessions can also be accommodated by many different interpretations.

The fact that so many factors must be in place for all of these interpretations even to be plausible is, in my opinion, itself worthy of note. I do not mean to say there is any deep philosophical significance in this fact, or that Hume in any way intended or foresaw it. But it is at least worth acknowledging that we are in a rare interpretative situation. Of course, it is not that there is no philosophical significance in this fact. It is not only that Hume's words are such that they can be accommodated by many different interpretations. It is only because there are so many aspects of Hume's account about which his critics believe he should have, or might have, worried that there could be so many plausible interpretations.

I am concerned in this paper with what Hume *did* have in mind, and for this we must adhere closely to the text. The successful interpretation will be the one that is in best accord (or sometimes, least *disaccord*) with what Hume actually *says* in the Appendix and with the manner in which he says it, and that attributes to Hume a line of thought in which it would have been reasonable for him to have engaged.

Hume's problem, I will explain, concerns the relation between the contents of perceptions along which the mind proceeds with an easy transition, on the one hand, and the contents of those ideas the mind sometimes subsequently invents,

on the other. In particular, I claim that what troubles Hume in the Appendix is that the kind of explanation that he offers of this relation in the case of objects (in T 1.4.2) is unavailable to him in the case of the self. Consider, for instance, how Hume would understand this relation in the case of a tomato. When the mind reflects upon different perceptions of a tomato, the resemblance among these perceptions facilitates the transition of the mind from one perception to the next and renders its passage just as smooth as if the mind were perceiving one and the same tomato. As a result of the smoothness of this passage, the mind invents an idea of the continued existence of one and the same tomato. There is thus an intimate relation in this case between the content of the invented idea and that which the perceptions reflected upon are *of*. A similar account, however, cannot be given in the case of the self. If there is a tight connection between what the perceptions reflected upon are *of* and the content of the invented idea (i.e., what the invented idea is *of*), then it would seem that in order for the mind to invent an idea of a *self*, the mind must have perceptions of selves. But a central tenet of Hume's theory of personal identity is that the mind never perceives a self. This, I will explain, is at the heart of Hume's worry in the Appendix.

## 2. A Classification

It will be helpful to consider interpretations of the Appendix as each fitting into one of four categories. The first three categories divide according to how their interpretations read the two sentences in App. 20 in which Hume attempts to locate where along his reasoning his account breaks down. Of course, many interpretations of the Appendix also differ as to the nature of Hume's inconsistency and the relevance of his two concessions. But what an interpretation says about these latter matters typically depends upon how it reads the two sentences.

In the penultimate sentence of App. 20, Hume writes:

But all my hopes vanish, when I come to explain the principles, that unite our successive perceptions in our thought or consciousness.

Interpretations diverge as to precisely what it is that Hume is coming to explain or to do when his hopes vanish. They vary with respect to *which perceptions* Hume is concerned with here and with respect to the kind of union (or "connexion") he understands himself as coming to explain.

According to interpretations of the first family (Group 1), Hume's explanandum concerns the ownership of perceptions. Each of these interpretations emphasizes some difficulty Hume faces in explaining the principles that "unite," of all the perceptions in the world, for example, *my* (and only my) perceptions to my (and only my) bundle.<sup>3</sup>

On most other interpretations, the perceptions Hume has in mind are already a particular person's perceptions. His perspective is not all of the perceptions there are. In Group 2 are those interpretations according to which Hume's account of the self as a bundle of perceptions among which we never perceive any real connection prevents Hume from being able to explain one or another central tenet or presupposition of his theory of ideas, which he employs throughout the *Treatise*. Jane McIntyre, for instance, claims that Hume's worry in the Appendix is that his account of personal identity is inconsistent with earlier parts of the *Treatise* that require a notion of a self that, as McIntyre says, is "*affected by experience* and therefore must *persist through experience*."<sup>4</sup> Robert Fogelin argues that Hume has realized that his account of personal identity renders him unable to explain how it could be true that perceptions are sometimes "united" in thought or consciousness, a principle which Fogelin takes to be a fundamental tenet of what he calls Hume's "associationalist program."<sup>5</sup>

The third family of interpretation also assumes that the perceptions Hume is concerned with are already those of a particular person. Group 3 interpreters propose that Hume is bothered by a more local problem for his genetic explanation of the idea of the self. On these interpretations, Hume has not discovered any troubling implication for the theory of ideas he employs throughout the *Treatise*. Rather, the problem is that, even if this theory would remain unthreatened by his account of personal identity, the particular genetic explanation Hume advances in T 1.4.6 (on the basis of this theory) is faulty.<sup>6</sup> This is the group in which my own interpretation resides.

Finally are those interpretations according to which some element of Hume's theory of personal identity other than his genetic explanation of the idea of a self is in tension with something Hume says elsewhere in the *Treatise*. On Norman Kemp Smith's interpretation, for instance, Hume's conclusion that we never have an impression of a self contradicts certain claims he makes in Book 2 when discussing the indirect passions.<sup>7</sup> On Terence Penelhum's view, the idea that we attribute personal identity at all has an untoward implication once this idea is considered in light of Hume's claim that the idea of identity is the idea of an object that persists without changing.<sup>8</sup> And on Corliss Swain's recent account, Hume's conclusion in T 1.4.6 concerning the unavailability of any metaphysical account that explains what actually connects the self's distinct perceptions together is itself in tension with Hume's earlier claim in T 1.4.5 that the "intellectual world, tho' involved in infinite obscurities, is not perplex'd with any such contradictions, as those we have discover'd in the natural" (T 1.4.5.1; SBN 232).<sup>9</sup>

This is only one way to classify interpretations of the Appendix. Indeed, these four groups do not exhaust the possibilities.<sup>10</sup> And they may not even be mutually exclusive. But this classification should be fruitful nonetheless.

### 3. Appendix 20 and Its Footnote

In this section, I want to provide what I believe is conclusive textual evidence against interpretations of Groups 1, 2, and 4. The detailed analysis I give of the text is applied in this section most directly to interpretations of Group 1, but it places us in a good position to understand in the next section why interpretations of Groups 2 and 4 could not be correct either. The correct interpretation, I believe, must belong to Group 3. However, all of the Group 3 interpretations advanced to date face significant difficulties, as I explain in section 5. The most promising Group 3 interpretation, I maintain, is the one I offer and develop in section 6.

Many interpreters place much of their textual emphasis on the paragraph in which Hume identifies the principles he says he “cannot render consistent,” which is App. 21. However, in my view, the most helpful clues are in the preceding paragraph, in which Hume twice attempts to locate explicitly where along his reasoning his problem arises. Again, the second sentence of the paragraph reads:

But having thus loosen'd all our particular perceptions, when<sup>1</sup> I proceed to explain the principle of connexion, which binds them together, and makes us attribute to them a real simplicity and identity; I am sensible, that my account is very defective, and that nothing but the seeming evidence of the precedent reasonings cou'd have induc'd me to receive it.

And in the tenth and penultimate sentence Hume says, “But all my hopes vanish, when I come to explain the principles, that unite our successive perceptions in our thought or consciousness.” Part of the difficulty interpreters of the Appendix face, though, is that each of these sentences can allegedly be read in different ways. About the tenth sentence, Barry Stroud writes:

This statement of the difficulty is ambiguous. It could mean that Hume has no hope of explaining what actually unites our successive perceptions into one mind or consciousness—what actually ties them together to make up one mind. Or it could mean that he has no hope of explaining what features of our perceptions and what principles of the mind combine to produce in us the thought or belief that we are individual minds—what ties the successive perceptions together *in our thought*, or what makes us *think* of them as tied together. Obviously these two interpretations are different.<sup>11</sup>

All of the interpretations in Group 1 read the tenth sentence in (more or less) the first of the two ways Stroud describes: as concerning “what actually unites our successive perceptions into one mind or consciousness” or “what actually

ties them together to make up one mind.” Indeed, the plausibility of Group 1 interpretations rests entirely on being able to read the tenth sentence in this way. I will show that a group of features of the text together reveals that this is clearly *not* how Hume intends the tenth sentence (or the second sentence) to be read. To do this, I must walk rather sedulously through several of Hume’s passages in the *Treatise*; this is worthwhile, though, as it should lay to rest once and for all interpretations of Group 1.

The most overlooked textual detail of the Appendix is without question the footnote Hume provides in the second sentence of App. 20. Immediately after “when” in this sentence, just as Hume is about to indicate where along his reasoning he now believes he encounters difficulty, he places a footnote directing his reader back to T 1.4.6. In the Selby-Bigge edition of the *Treatise*, the footnote reads “<sup>1</sup> Book I. page 260.” In the recent Norton edition, it reads “<sup>89</sup> Book 1, pp. 169–70.”<sup>12</sup> Unfortunately, though, there are even interpretative difficulties discerning where on these pages Hume’s footnote is meant to refer!

Hume himself was of course unfamiliar with these particular editions of the *Treatise*, so the page numbers indicated in the footnote in these editions were not provided by Hume. Our best guide to Hume’s intentions, then, is what he says in the very first edition of the *Treatise*. In that edition, the note is marked by a superscript “a” which appears directly after “when”. The note reads “<sup>a</sup> Vol. I. page 452.” Page 452 of Volume I of this edition of the *Treatise* begins in the middle of the ninth sentence of T 1.4.6.16 with the words “if disjoin’d by the greatest . . .” and concludes at the end of the first sentence of T 1.4.6.18 with the words “. . . succession amidst all its variations.”<sup>13</sup> Knowing precisely what is on this page turns out to be very helpful, because in other editions there is more text on the pages referred to by the footnote, which would otherwise make it more difficult to ascertain Hume’s intentions. It is thus necessary for me to provide the entirety of page 452.

Before I do so, however, I should remind my reader what Hume has been saying in T 1.4.6.16 before its end on page 452. Early in T 1.4.6.16, Hume claims that “every distinct perception, which enters into the composition of the mind, is a distinct existence, and is different, and distinguishable, and separable from every other perception, either co-temporary or successive” (T 1.4.6.16; SBN 259). He then raises the following question:

But, as, notwithstanding this distinction and separability, we suppose the whole train of perceptions to be united by identity, a question naturally arises concerning this relation of identity; whether it be something that really binds our several perceptions together, or only associates their ideas in the imagination. That is, in other words, whether in pronouncing concerning the identity of a person, we observe some real bond among

his perceptions, or only feel one among the ideas we form of them.  
(T 1.4.6.16; SBN 259)

In answering this question, Hume first reminds us that “the understanding never observes any real connexion among objects, and that even the union of cause and effect, when strictly examin’d, resolves itself into a customary association of ideas” and then immediately concludes:

For from thence it evidently follows, that 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 1.4.6.16; SBN 259–60)

In the remainder of the paragraph, Hume explains that personal identity depends on some of the three relations of resemblance, contiguity, and causation. He writes: “Now the only qualities, which can give ideas an union in the imagination, are these three relations above-mention’d.” This brings us to the ninth sentence of T 1.4.6.16, which is not completed until the top of page 452. The bottom of page 451 reads, “These are the uniting principles in the ideal world, and without them every distinct object is separable by the mind, and may be separately consider’d, and appears not to have any more connexion with any other object, than” (T 1.4.6.16; SBN 260). Page 452 then reads as follows (in entirety):

if disjoin’d by the greatest difference and remoteness. ’Tis, therefore, on some of these three relations of resemblance, contiguity and causation, that identity depends; and as the very essence of these relations consists in their producing an easy transition of ideas; it follows, that our notions of personal identity, proceed entirely from the smooth and uninterrupted progress of the thought along a train of connected ideas, according to the principles above-explain’d.

The only question, therefore, which remains, is, by what relations this uninterrupted progress of our thought is produc’d, when we consider the successive existence of a mind or thinking person. And here ’tis evident we must confine ourselves to resemblance and causation, and must drop contiguity, which has little or no influence in the present case.

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. (T 1.4.6.16–18; SBN 260)

Hume's discussion of the relations of resemblance and causation continues on page 453 and occupies Hume through T 1.4.6.20.

Hume's footnote in App. 20 occurs directly after "when" in "when I proceed to explain the principle of connexion, which binds [all our particular perceptions] together, and makes us attribute to them a real simplicity and identity; I am sensible, that my account is very defective. . . ." When we look at page 452, it is clear that what Hume is proceeding to explain when he becomes "sensible" that his account is "very defective" is "by what relations [of "these three relations of resemblance, contiguity and causation"] this uninterrupted progress of our thought is produc'd, when we consider the successive existence of a mind or thinking person." This is the question Hume raises in T 1.4.6.17 and continues to explore through T 1.4.6.20. We arrive at this interpretative conclusion whether we suppose Hume's footnote is meant to direct us to the top of page 452, or to the entire page, or to its only full paragraph, and so on. Thus, at least in the second sentence of App. 20, the explanandum in question is not "what actually unites our successive perceptions into one mind or consciousness" or "what actually ties them together to make up one mind."

Now, most interpreters (if not all) assume that the explanandum of the second sentence is (at least roughly) the same as the explanandum of the tenth sentence, that is, that what Hume says in the second sentence he "proceeds to explain" is what he says in the tenth sentence he "comes to explain." And indeed, it would be incorrect to assume otherwise (as we shall see). But if the second and tenth sentences of App. 20 have the same explanandum, then Group 1 interpretations must be false. Group 1 interpretations hold that the explanandum of the tenth sentence is "what actually unites our successive perceptions into one mind or consciousness" or "what actually ties them together to make up one mind," but we know from Hume's footnote that this is not the explanandum of the second sentence.

It is thus quite surprising to me that so few interpreters of Hume's Appendix even acknowledge the footnote in App. 20. It is not an editor's annotation. It was written by Hume himself, to help us understand where he believes he runs into difficulty.<sup>14</sup>

Still, some interpreters might at this juncture grant my analysis of the second sentence of App. 20 but insist that the second and tenth sentences do not involve the same explanandum. In fact, until one scrutinizes App. 20 in more depth, such a proposal might even seem promising. And so it is worth explaining here why it is incorrect. In order for me to do so, I must first remind my reader what Hume says in the intervening sentences of App. 20: sentences 3 through 9. This brief

exposition should also prove useful in section 4, where I discuss the light Hume's footnote sheds on interpretations of Group 2.

After the second sentence of App. 20, Hume proceeds to walk us through his reasoning in T 1.4.6 in order to explain where his problem arises. Once again, in the second sentence, he writes that he is "sensible, that [his] account is very defective, and that nothing but the seeming evidence of the precedent reasonings cou'd have induc'd [him] to receive it." It soon becomes clear that the "precedent reasonings" he is referring to are from two different places in the *Treatise*. The first is his reasoning in T 1.4.5 that perceptions are distinct existences. (This reasoning also appears in a similar form in the preceding paragraphs of the Appendix.) The second is his reasoning in T 1.3.14 from which he ultimately concludes that the mind never perceives any real connection among distinct existences. In the third and fourth sentences of App. 20, he writes:

If perceptions are distinct existences, they form a whole only by being connected together. But no connexions among distinct existences are ever discoverable by human understanding.

These two results lead Hume to draw the following conclusion in T 1.4.6, which he articulates in sentences 5 and 6 of App. 20:

We only *feel* a connexion or a determination of the thought, to pass from one object to another. It follows, therefore, that the thought alone finds personal identity, when reflecting on the train of past perceptions, that compose a mind, the ideas of them are felt to be connected together, and naturally introduce each other.

Given Hume's prior reasoning in T 1.4.6, this conclusion is the only one available. Hume then explains in sentences 7 through 9 that it strikes him as unproblematic:

However extraordinary this conclusion may seem, it need not surprize us. Most philosophers seem inclin'd to think, that personal identity *arises* from consciousness; and consciousness is nothing but a reflected thought or perception. The present philosophy, therefore, has so far a promising aspect.

This brings Hume to sentence 10:

But all my hopes vanish, when I come to explain the principles, that unite our successive perceptions in our thought or consciousness. I cannot discover any theory, which gives me satisfaction on this head.

Now, the natural way to read this sentence (and the way I do) is to suppose that Hume is returning to the explanandum he introduced in sentence 2. Having walked, in sentences 3 through 9, through the line of thought that leads him to this explanandum, Hume returns to it in sentence 10 locating it in its proper place along his reasoning.

But as I say, some interpreters might propose that we read sentence 10 in a different way. For instance, one might insist that in sentence 2 Hume means to direct us to his general inquiry concerning the associative principles in T 1.4.6, and that in sentence 10 he means to introduce an explanandum to which this general inquiry *leads* him and which he has not yet mentioned. If it were plausible to read App. 20 in this way, one could advance an interpretation that belongs to Group 1 and yet still acknowledge Hume's footnote.

The severe shortcomings of reading sentences 2 and 10 as involving different explananda are not salient until one scrutinizes the text of App. 20 in substantial detail.<sup>15</sup> The case against it consists of a litany of facts about the text. None on its own is conclusive. My emphasis on some of these facts may even be construed as picky. However, *taken together* they make an excellent case that the tenth sentence should be read as being primarily about the associative principles.

The first piece of evidence concerns the textual context of the tenth sentence. Throughout App. 20, Hume has been walking his reader through his reasoning at the end of T 1.4.6, retracing his moves there step by step. This suggests that the tenth sentence, which is the climax of the paragraph and in which Hume's hopes finally "vanish," is still part of his review of that reasoning, and that what Hume is saying he is "coming to explain" is precisely that which he "comes to explain" next in T 1.4.6. Moreover, the fact that this sentence occurs at the end of the paragraph and not at the beginning of a new one is another indication that Hume is still reviewing his reasoning in T 1.4.6 and not introducing a question he never addresses there.

Second, the particular words and phrases Hume uses in the tenth sentence are strikingly similar to those that he uses at the end of T 1.4.6 when discussing the associative relations. In T 1.4.6.16, Hume says of the associative relations that they give ideas "an union in the imagination," and that "[t]hese are the uniting principles in the ideal world" (T 1.4.6.16; SBN 260). In sentence 10 of App. 20, what Hume says he is "coming to explain" are "the principles, that unite our successive perceptions in our thought or consciousness." This similarity in language strongly suggests Hume has in mind the associative principles.

Third, the words and phrases of sentence 10 are also very similar to those of sentence 2. This is also telling. Indeed, their structure is even similar: "But . . . when I proceed to explain . . ." and "But . . . when I come to explain . . ."

The fourth clue comes from the phrase "when I come to" in "But all my hopes vanish, when I come to explain the principles . . ." Given that in App. 20 Hume

has been retracing his steps in T 1.4.6, his choice of “when I come to” suggests he is still discussing the steps he took there. The “when I *come to*” [my emphasis] naturally connotes something like “when I come to such and such step, as I did in T 1.4.6,” or “when I now come to the step which I then came to in T 1.4.6.” Now, of course, it *could* be the case that Hume is simply “coming to explain” some entirely new question, one he has not addressed at all in the *Treatise* until now. In this case, the “when I come to explain” would mean something like, “when I now, some time after writing T 1.4.6, try to explain this *new* question which I was not concerned with in T 1.4.6.” The words of the phrase do allow this reading. However, it would have been more likely for Hume to use “when I come to” if he were still walking us step by step through his reasoning than it would have been if he were arriving at some new question. My point is that each one of these facts about the text makes it less likely (and exponentially so) that the two sentences are meant to be read in different ways.

The fifth clue concerns another choice of words. In the tenth sentence, Hume characterizes his explanandum as “the principles, that unite our successive perceptions in our thought or consciousness.” Hume uses the phrase, “*in* our thought or consciousness” and not “*into* our thought or consciousness.” Were Hume concerned with the ownership of perceptions, it seems it would be more natural for him to use “into” here. The phrase “*in* our thought or consciousness” seems to presuppose that our thought or consciousness already exists. It suggests that Hume’s problem does not concern what ties one’s perceptions together to *form* one’s thought or consciousness but rather what unites them given that they are already part of our thought or consciousness—or given that our thought or consciousness already exists. In fact, the way in which Stroud himself characterizes the two ways of reading the tenth sentence illustrates this very point. Stroud writes:

It could mean that Hume has no hope of explaining what actually unites our successive perceptions *into* one mind or consciousness—what actually ties them together to make up one mind [my emphasis]. Or it could mean that he has no hope of explaining what features of our perceptions and what principles of the mind combine to produce in us the thought or belief that we are individual minds—what ties the successive perceptions together *in our thought*, or what makes us *think* of them as tied together.<sup>16</sup>

Stroud finds it natural to use “in” when he characterizes the explanandum that concerns the associative principles and “into” when he characterizes the explanandum that concerns ownership.

Sixth, to read the second and tenth sentences as concerning different explananda would be to suppose that Hume does not mention the relations of

resemblance and causation *at all* in App. 20–21. But given that these relations are the focus of a good portion of T 1.4.6, Hume would likely have mentioned them in his summary of his reasoning in T 1.4.6 *even if* they were not ultimately what troubled him. After sentence 6 of App. 20, which reads, “It follows, therefore, that the thought alone finds personal identity, when reflecting on the train of past perceptions, that compose a mind, the ideas of them are felt to be connected together, and naturally introduce each other,” Hume might have said something like, “And as I have shown, this is a result of the relations of resemblance and causation which hold among our perceptions.” But he does not.

Seventh, the fact that Hume asks for the “principles” and not the “principle” that “unite our successive perceptions in our thought or consciousness” is another indication that he has the associative principles in mind. Hume already knows that there is more than one associative principle—there are three. But if Hume were asking about what “actually” ties our successive perceptions together to make up one mind, he might not assume that he is looking for more than one principle (or even that he is looking for a “principle” at all).

Eighth, the claim that Hume’s problem in the Appendix concerns the ownership of perceptions commits one to the idea that, in one quick sentence, the general focus and perspective of Hume’s inquiry takes a sudden and dramatic shift, with no prior introduction or subsequent elaboration. Hume’s primary task in T 1.4.6 is to explain how we form the idea of a self on the basis of our impressions and those of our ideas the formation of which Hume has already explained (or at least can explain). Of course, it is not impossible that Hume would change his focus so quickly, but it is yet another thing that it would have been unlikely for him to do.

Moreover, ninth (and finally), to suppose that Hume does make this sudden shift would render him even more unhelpful for his reader than other interpretations do. By the tenth sentence, the only question Hume’s reader would naturally suppose he is coming to explain is the question that next arises in T 1.4.6. Any other issue his reader would have to come up with herself. The further an author’s intentions stray from the way in which his reader would most naturally take them, the more likely it is that the author would clarify what he means. The more different we suppose Hume’s intentions are from what his reader naturally expects, the more careless and insensitive we are supposing he is being.<sup>17</sup>

#### 4. Groups 2 and 4

These textual considerations not only undermine Group 1 interpretations, but they show that Group 4 proposals (or at least, the three with which I am familiar) could not be correct either. None of the Group 4 interpretations I mentioned understands Hume’s worry as concerning Hume’s genetic explanation of the fictitious idea of

the self, and so none can account for the footnote Hume provides in sentence 2 of App. 20. On Kemp Smith's interpretation, Hume realizes that his conclusion that we never have an impression of a self or soul is in conflict with his idea in Book 2 that we have impressions of ourselves. On Penelhum's interpretation, Hume's worry is that the fact that we attribute identity to ourselves at all, given Hume's account of the idea of identity, implies that human beings all accept a belief that they would certainly all notice is false. On Swain's view, Hume's misgiving is that his conclusion in T 1.4.6 about the unavailability of any metaphysical theory that would explain what actually connects distinct perceptions together is in tension with his claim in T 1.4.5 that the intellectual world is free of contradictions. None of these accounts can explain why Hume indicates that his dissatisfaction arises when he comes to explain how the associative principles help provide an easy transition of the mind that is responsible for our inventing the fictitious idea of a self. In all three cases, the problematic feature of Hume's account of personal identity is one which Hume introduces *before* he "comes to explain" this.<sup>18</sup>

The correct interpretation is thus likely to belong to either Group 2 or Group 3. Group 2 interpretations, we remember, hold that Hume's account of personal identity makes him unable to explain one or another central tenet or presupposition of his theory of ideas (e.g., that there are associative principles at all) on which his genetic explanation of the idea of a self depends. Group 3 interpretations hold that the problem for this genetic explanation is more local. Group 3 interpretations, of course, make perfect sense of the footnote. But what about Group 2 interpretations?

McIntyre supposes that Hume's worry is that "the concept of a self that is *affected by experience* and therefore must *persist through experience* is precisely the concept of the self that *cannot* be accounted for in the context of the theory of ideas presented in the *Treatise*."<sup>19</sup> According to Fogelin, Hume's trouble arises as a result of his account's inability to explain the fundamental principle of Hume's associationalist program: that perceptions are sometimes "united" in our thought or consciousness. How can perceptions ever be united in "one's consciousness" if each perception is itself a distinct and single consciousness?

Neither of these problems concerns Hume's genetic explanation of the fictitious idea of the self in particular. It may be that both problems provide a difficulty for Hume's genetic explanation of the fictitious idea of the self, in that this explanation may depend upon each of the tenets they concern. But these tenets are employed widely in the *Treatise* before T 1.4.6, and so these problems would affect a great deal more than Hume's genetic explanation of the idea of the self. Moreover, nothing about Hume's genetic explanation of the idea of the self is responsible for either of these problems. What allegedly undermines these tenets is Hume's prior conclusion that all perceptions are distinct existences and we never perceive a connection among them. That is what has the untoward

implication, on these views. So on these interpretations his problem would arise the moment he draws this prior conclusion. Why then would Hume not have identified his problem as arising once he concludes that the idea of a self is a fiction—in sentence 5 or 6 of App. 20 perhaps?

In addition, my analysis of App. 20 undermines the primary motivation for Group 2 theories. What motivates Group 2 interpretations in the first place is precisely that the wording of sentence 10—“the principles, that unite our successive perceptions in our thought or consciousness”—(and perhaps that of sentence 2) makes the way Group 2 interpreters read sentence 10 (and perhaps sentence 2) very natural. However, this way of reading sentence 10 is *not* the way that we concluded in section 3 this sentence must be read. In T 1.4.6, Hume never “comes to explain” that which these interpreters claim is the explanandum in sentence 10.

McIntyre and Fogelin might concede that the explanandum of sentence 10 is not what they had first thought it was, yet propose nonetheless that Hume has in mind the problem they identify. They might suggest that while Hume really should have seen the problem they identify earlier, he does not in fact appreciate it until he comes to explain the role the associative principles play in the formation of the idea of a self. What provokes this realization, they might suggest, is turning to the associative principles. He realizes then that his prior conclusion renders him unable to appeal to these principles *anywhere*, including in explaining the idea of the self. But this proposal is not compelling. First, it disarms McIntyre and Fogelin of the primary motivation for their reading—the wording of sentence 10. And second, it makes for an awkward interpretation. Even if, as a matter of fact, it was when turning to the associative principles in order to explain their role in the formation of the idea of the self that Hume first realized his problem, why would Hume place so much emphasis in his explanation of the problem on this contingent fact about when it first dawned upon him?<sup>20</sup>

### 5. Group 3: The Remaining Interpretations

The textual evidence, then, points persuasively to Group 3. Indeed, Hume scholars may be beginning to heed some of this evidence. I say this not because they have supplied the many textual considerations I have offered in this paper, but because, of the novel interpretations of the Appendix advanced in the last decade, a great majority, interestingly, belong to Group 3. However, all of the Group 3 interpretations of which I am aware (new and old) are problematic. Each of these interpretations faces the same general objection: it does not attribute to Hume a worry that Hume would (or should) have had. There are at least six sufficiently different Group 3 interpretations in currency, and so I will be unable here to provide the rigorous analysis which each of them deserves. Still, in this section, I want to give at least a rough sense, for each of these interpretations, of why I believe that the problem it

attributes to Hume is one that would not have bothered him. In the final section, I will argue that there is another way of reading Hume along the lines of Group 3 that does attribute to him a problem about which he would have worried.

Let me begin with the most influential Group 3 interpretation, that of S. C. Patten. According to Patten, what Hume realizes in the Appendix is that it is simply not true that even most of our successive perceptions are related by either resemblance or causation, and so Hume's appeal to these relations cannot explain the easy transition of the mind responsible for our invention of the idea of a self. Patten writes:

[I]t is just a matter of fact that my perception of this pen is often followed by many different percepts—of this book, that writing pad, those scribbled notes. Shall we then say that one of the two perceptions in question resembles the other? But this is even more absurd. For Hume, to say one perception resembles the other is to say that it is an image of the same or a similar thing as the other, but if my perception of a coffee cup is to be an image of anything at all it must be 'of' just that, a coffee cup, and not a pen.<sup>21</sup>

Some commentators object to this interpretation by claiming that Hume's worry has a more "global" ring to it, and that this difficulty is merely a "technical" one.<sup>22</sup> Another objection is that, if this truly were what Hume was worried about, he would have said as much, for this problem would be easy to explain. But I don't find either of these objections especially convincing. It would seem that the latter response could be raised against *any* interpretation of the Appendix. There is no denying that Hume is too quick and ambiguous in explaining his problem. All interpretations have to admit this. Against any interpretation, it seems one could always say, "but it would have been easy for him to elaborate upon this further."

Still, I do not believe that Patten's interpretation is correct. And that is because the purported fact that not even most of our successive perceptions are related by either resemblance or causation does not appear to be a difficulty for Hume at all. In order for Hume's genetic explanation of the idea of a self to be successful, Hume does not need all successive perceptions to be related by resemblance or causation. He needs only *some* series of successive perceptions to be so related. And clearly they are. As long as some series of successive perceptions are related in this way, Hume can explain how we first form the fictitious idea of the self. Once we have this idea, we do not need to form it again, even to believe about yet other perceptions that they are parts of the self. Hume's genetic explanation of the idea of a self does not rely on, nor ever involves asserting, the claim that, for any series of perceptions at all, when one reflects upon it, there is an easy transition of the mind.<sup>23</sup>

A similar difficulty, I believe, besets Donald Ainslie's interpretation. Ainslie argues that Hume's dissatisfaction concerns what Hume calls "secondary ideas" (T 1.1.1.11; SBN 6), which Ainslie understands to be ideas that have other perceptions as their objects (perceptions which Ainslie thus calls "primary" perceptions).<sup>24</sup> According to Ainslie, in order to explain "why we believe in the identity and simplicity of our minds,"<sup>25</sup> Hume identifies a process whereby we reflect *by means of secondary ideas* upon past primary perceptions. On Ainslie's interpretation, the difficulty Hume expresses in the Appendix does not concern his explanation of our belief that our past perceptions constituted a simple, identical entity. The problem is that Hume cannot explain why we believe, at a particular time  $t_i$ , that the secondary ideas we have *at*  $t_i$ , are parts of our minds. Hume cannot explain this, Ainslie claims, because on Hume's account, "there are not ideas *of them* (tertiary ideas?) associated together with the ideas of our other perceptions. And, Hume thinks, there is no other way to explain how we believe a perception to be part of a simple, continuing mind other than by the association of secondary ideas of it with other such secondary ideas."<sup>26</sup> Ainslie writes:

When the perceptions we reflect on are in the past, [Hume's] account succeeds in explaining our *current* belief in the continuity of the mind *during that prior stretch of time* because our current secondary ideas of the past perceptions are run together so as to produce the belief that those perceptions constituted a simple, identical entity. The fact that current secondary ideas are involved in the production of this belief poses no problem because the belief does not concern current constituents of the mind. But when it comes to the belief in the simplicity of the mind *during the moment we are reflecting*, then the secondary ideas by means of which this reflection takes place are themselves taken to be part of our minds even though they are not themselves "observed" in such a way that associations of ideas *of them* can explain our beliefs about them; for, since there are not ideas of these ideas in our minds, no association of ideas of them can take place.<sup>27</sup>

This is an interesting interpretation, and important in its emphasis on the distinction between primary and secondary ideas. In fact, in the final section, I shall return to the idea that in T 1.4.6 Hume has in mind a process whereby we reflect upon past primary perceptions by means of secondary ideas. There are a variety of reasons to be wary of Ainslie's interpretation of the Appendix, though. I will briefly mention two. First, it is far from clear that Hume believes that people (even philosophers) ever really *have* such beliefs, that is, beliefs about *occurrent* secondary perceptions to the effect that these (still occurrent) secondary perceptions are "themselves" part of a simple mind—or that Hume believes such beliefs

are even possible—let alone that he would be so committed to such beliefs that all his hopes would vanish if he thought he could not explain them. At the very least, it is not what Hume appears to be trying to explain on the page in T 1.4.6 to which he refers us in App. 20.

But second, and more important, there is good reason to suppose that Hume could explain such beliefs. Ainslie's view that he could not depends on his claim that Hume thinks that "there is no other way to explain how we believe a perception to be part of a simple, continuing mind other than by the association of secondary ideas of it with other such secondary ideas." But Ainslie gives surprisingly little support for his attribution of this thought to Hume, and I think the attribution is highly dubitable. It is true that Hume appeals to the association of secondary ideas in explaining how we first form the idea of a self. However, it is quite plausible to suppose that, on Hume's account, once we have formed an idea of a self, we do not need to undergo a process similar to the one through which we first formed that idea in order subsequently to employ it, nor in order subsequently to believe that a particular perception is part of the self. Consider what Hume says about perceptions that we no longer remember:

But having once acquir'd this notion of causation from the memory, we can extend the same chain of causes, and consequently the identity of our persons beyond our memory, and can comprehend times, and circumstances, and actions, which we have entirely forgot, but suppose in general to have existed. (T 1.4.6.20; SBN 262)

It seems that Hume could propose something similar for occurrent secondary ideas: having once acquired the notion of identity of our persons, we can "extend" that notion to our occurrent secondary ideas. At the very least, until we have good reason to attribute to Hume the thought that there is "no other way to explain how we believe a perception to be part of a simple, continuing mind other than by the association of secondary ideas of it with other such secondary ideas," Ainslie's interpretation remains unpersuasive.

On Donald Baxter's interpretation, Hume's difficulty stems from the purported fact that on Hume's account, in order for distinct perceptions to be represented as one and the same, the "distinct ideas that reflect them" must also be one and the same. This is problematic, Baxter claims, because "the distinct cannot be identical."<sup>28</sup> But why should we suppose that on Hume's account, in order for distinct perceptions to be represented as one and the same, what must represent them as such are "distinct ideas that reflect them"? The attribution of identity, or the belief that one has been reflecting upon the same thing, may be a perception that *succeeds* the reflection upon one's successive perceptions. As Stroud says,

[F]or me to think, to feel, to reflect, to attribute identity to something—in short, for me to perform any of those ‘mental acts’—is just for a certain perception to occur in my mind. The mind’s ‘activity’ consists in nothing more than the occurrence of perceptions in it. . . . So, for example, when I confuse the set of perceptions AAAAABBBBAAAA with another set of perceptions AAAAAAAAAA, there simply occurs in the mind the lively idea or belief (which is in fact false) that the second set is just like the first.<sup>29</sup>

Perhaps more important, though, on Baxter’s interpretation, Hume’s worry is a general one. It would apply no less to his genetic explanation in T 1.4.2 of the idea of continued and distinct existence. Yet Hume says nothing about this explanation in the Appendix. He speaks only of a problem for his account of personal identity. Baxter acknowledges this difficulty for his interpretation at the end of his paper; however, his treatment of it is not, in my view, compelling. Baxter agrees that Hume’s problem is a general one, but Baxter gives reasons for supposing that it is understandable that Hume would have first realized the problem when reflecting on his account of personal identity. But even if that is so, once Hume did realize this problem, certainly he would have seen that it is a general one. Baxter’s interpretation depends on the doubtful assumption that although Hume is in deep despair about this problem, he does not realize that it is in fact a problem for other cases in which he employs the same model of explanation, such as his treatment of animals and plants.<sup>30</sup>

Paul Grice and John Haugeland advance another Group 3 interpretation.<sup>31</sup> According to them, Hume has realized a fatal circularity in his account of personal identity: his genetic explanation of the idea of a self makes essential use of the notion of causality, yet his genetic explanation of the idea of causality makes essential use of the notion of a self. Stroud raises an objection to this interpretation which I find decisive. Stroud’s objection does not involve denying that the two explanations Grice and Haugeland focus upon make essential use of what Grice and Haugeland maintain they do. Rather, Stroud claims that the fact that they do does not imply that Hume’s account is circular (or circular in any problematic way).<sup>32</sup> Hume’s aim in these parts of the *Treatise* is to explain how we attain these ideas of causality and of a self, how these ideas originate. To rely on the notion of causality in explaining how we get the idea of a self does not commit one to the view that the origin of the idea of a self *itself* relies or depends upon the idea of causality. Nor does appealing to the idea of a self to explain how we acquire the idea of causality commit one to the view that we must have the idea of a self in order to form the idea of causality. If it did, that would involve Hume in a circularity, but it does not.

This brings me to Abraham Roth’s reading of the Appendix. On Roth’s account, Hume is bothered by the purported fact that, on Hume’s account, I cannot believe that my personal identity “extends to my current experiences of objects which I

take to be independent of each other and of myself.”<sup>33</sup> That is, I cannot believe *both* that my “current experiences” are experiences of one and the same object (a tomato, say), *and* that my personal identity “extends to” these experiences. The problem is not that I cannot hold *any* two beliefs at the same time; it is that I cannot hold these two beliefs at the same time. And the reason I cannot, Roth explains, is that the mechanisms required to hold these two beliefs—namely, the psychological mechanism Hume believes is responsible for our ascription of personal identity and the psychological mechanism Hume believes is responsible for our ascription of identity to objects—cannot themselves be performed at the same time. Roth writes:

[I]n running through the perceptions, and not noticing the differences, the perceptions are not available (at least not right at that time) to be run through in a different manner. That is, if I run together all of my perceptions (necessary for the belief in personal identity), then I cannot at the same time run together some of my perceptions but not others (necessary for the belief in the persistence of distinct, independent objects).<sup>34</sup>

And so, if I run together my current experiences of the tomato and thereby form a belief in the continued and distinct existence of the tomato, I could not, at the same time, run together *all* of my perceptions (which of course include my current experiences of the tomato) and thereby form the belief that my personal identity extends to those current experiences of the tomato.<sup>35</sup>

The problem for this account is similar to the central problem for Patten's account. I am willing to grant that if Hume's account had the consequence that I cannot believe that my personal identity extends to perceptions of objects that I believe have a continued and distinct existence, then this might have bothered Hume. However, on Hume's account, my believing that my personal identity extends to a particular set of perceptions does not require that I perform upon that set of perceptions the very mechanism that I performed when I first invented the idea of a self. But Roth's interpretation assumes that it does. And Roth does not provide any discussion of this assumption. Likewise, to believe of a particular subset of my perceptions that they are perceptions of a distinct and enduring object, I need not employ the mechanism that I employed when I first invented the idea of continued and distinct existence.

Finally, I turn to Kenneth Winkler's interpretation. Like Grice and Haugeland, Winkler argues that Hume's problem concerns the relation of causation. Winkler does not claim that Hume has found a circularity in his account but rather that he has realized that the relation of causation simply cannot do the work he supposed it could in T 1.4.6. Causation, Winkler explains, is present in many instances where we experience little or no inclination to unify, or to think of a unified complex as simple and strictly identical. Winkler cites Shaftesbury's emphasis on the complex

causal interplay that obtains between such things as a tree and its vine, or a tree and the air, or a tree's fruit and animals. Causation is present in all of these cases, Winkler claims, but in none of them are we inclined to ascribe simplicity or strict identity. Thus, causation is "simply unable to generate the kind of 'easy transitions' that, in the case of resembling perceptions, enable the mind to ignore (or ignore the real import of) perceived differences."<sup>36</sup> Since the relation of resemblance, according to Winkler, "plays a relatively minor role in accounting for our belief in personal identity and simplicity,"<sup>37</sup> this limitation of causation provides a substantial problem for Hume's genetic explanation of the idea of the self.

It is doubtful, though, that this could be all that Hume is worried about in the Appendix. Winkler's interpretation leaves Hume's appeal to resemblance in T 1.4.6 entirely intact. In T 1.4.6, after noting that the relation of contiguity has "little or no influence in the present case" (T 1.4.6.17; SBN 260), Hume begins with the relation of resemblance, explaining how it is one of the relations that produces the easy transitions of the mind. He explains that through the faculty of memory, we often "raise up the images of past perceptions," and that since images "necessarily" resemble their objects, "the frequent placing of these resembling perceptions in the chain of thought, convey[s] the imagination more easily from one link to another, and make[s] the whole seem like the continuance of one object" (T 1.4.6.18; SBN 261). Only then does Hume proceed to explain that the relation of causation is another relation that produces the easy transitions of the mind. As long as the relation of resemblance is still capable of producing easy transitions in the way Hume envisions in T 1.4.6, Hume's genetic explanation of the idea of a self can still succeed. It is true that, if Winkler is correct, not as many series of perceptions as Hume thinks in T 1.4.6 would produce easy transitions. But, as I argued in my discussion of Patten's interpretation, only *some* series must be capable of producing them.

What about Winkler's claim that the relation of resemblance "plays a relatively minor role in accounting for our belief in personal identity and simplicity"? Winkler adduces five indications he claims Hume gives in T 1.4.6 and the Appendix that resemblance plays a relatively minor role:

- (1) that what Hume calls "the true idea of the human mind" involves causation rather than resemblance;
- (2) that Hume says that memory is "chiefly" the source of personal identity not insofar as it generates resemblance, but insofar as it supplies us with the notion of cause and effect, and with the knowledge of a particular system of causally related perceptions;
- (3) that only cause and effect can explain how we extend identity beyond memory, in order to "comprehend times, and circumstances, and actions, which we have entirely forgot";

- (4) that identity with regard to the passions corroborates the importance of causation, and *only* the importance of causation;
- (5) that the two principles Hume identifies in the climactic passage of the Appendix bear more particularly on causation, which is, according to Hume, commonly understood as a real connection.<sup>38</sup>

But while causation, and not resemblance, may play these five roles in Hume's treatment of our belief in personal identity, it is not clear that any of these roles is the role Hume has resemblance and causation play in generating the easy transitions of the mind. Yet generating these transitions is what Winkler claims that Hume has realized causation is unable to do. For instance, as concerns the first indication, (1), it may be that once we form the idea of a mind, causation is important to the idea, but *this* relation between causation and the idea of the mind is very different from the relation between causation and the idea of the mind concerning the easy transitions. Likewise, as concerns (2), memory may help to provide the *notion* of cause and effect, but that is at best only indirectly related to the role causation plays in generating the easy transitions that occur when we reflect upon our perceptions. I think similar things can be said about the other three indications. So while it may be true to say that causation plays a bigger role than resemblance in accounting "for our belief in personal identity and simplicity," it's not clear it plays any bigger a role in accounting for the easy transition of the mind. But the latter is the more direct concern of Winkler's considerations about other cases of causation (such as that between trees and vines).<sup>39</sup>

The problem about causation Winkler underscores, however, may still be very important for understanding Hume's intentions in the Appendix. In fact, I believe Winkler may be correct that it is *part* of what is bothering Hume in the Appendix. As I explain in the next section, while the interpretation I offer there does not depend on Hume's having this problem in mind, the idea that he does complements my interpretation nicely.

## 6. The Problem of Content

I want to propose that Hume's problem in the Appendix concerns the relation between the contents of invented ideas and the contents of those perceptions on which the mind reflects with an easy transition. Consider Hume's explanation of how we come to form the idea of a temporally-extended object, a tomato (say). One week we perceive a small tomato in the garden. We return the next week to see a slightly bigger one. Finally, the week later we find a fully grown tomato. How do we come to ascribe an identity to these three tomatoes? Why do we call it the same tomato? Hume's explanation is as follows: When we reflect upon the three different perceptions of the tomato, the resemblance among these perceptions

facilitates the transition of the mind from one perception to the next and renders its passage just as smooth as if it were perceiving one and the same tomato. The mind's passage along the related perceptions is so similar to what its passage would be if it were contemplating the same perception that the mind substitutes the notion of identity for that of related objects.

Now what is it that stands in the relation of resemblance in this case? It is the perceptions of tomatoes. Hume claims that as a result of this resemblance among the perceptions of tomatoes, we form an idea of one and the same tomato. We invent an idea of an identity of that which these perceptions are *of*. The crucial point is that there is an intimate connection between what the perceptions in the series are of and what the idea that we invent is of—that is, what its content is.

But in the case in which we are said to invent an idea of a self, what is it that stands in the relation of resemblance or causation? A series of perceptions, of course; but perceptions of *what*? We never perceive a self. In his famous passage, Hume writes:

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 any thing but the perception.  
(T 1.4.6.3; SBN 252)

So the question is: What series of perceptions could one have such that feeling a connection among these perceptions would result in one's inventing an idea of a *self*? If there is an intimate connection between what the perceptions reflected upon are *of* and the content of the invented idea, then it would seem that in order for us to invent an idea of a persisting self, we must at some point have a perception of, or perceive, a self. But, according to Hume, we never do. This, I claim, is at the heart of Hume's worry in the Appendix.

Unlike other interpretations, my way of understanding Hume's worry in the Appendix both adheres closely to the text and renders Hume's problem one about which he would and should have been concerned. First, the interpretation is consistent with the footnote that I have argued indicates that the correct interpretation must reside in Group 3. Hume is bothered by a local problem for his genetic explanation of the idea of the self. Second, my interpretation also makes sense of Hume's claim that he cannot render consistent his famous two principles. If it were not the case that the mind never perceives any real connection among distinct existences, then we could form an idea of a self by perceiving such a connection. Likewise, were it not the case that all our distinct perceptions are distinct existences, then there would be something that these perceptions "inhere in," which we might perceive and form an idea of. If these principles are true, however,

then the idea of a self is a fictitious idea. What Hume realizes in the Appendix is that he cannot satisfactorily explain how we manage to invent this particular fiction. Third, on my interpretation, it is understandable why Hume is concerned in the Appendix only with his account of personal identity, and not with, for example, his treatment of animals and plants.

As I say, my interpretation also attributes to Hume a worry about something that would and should have concerned him. Indeed, this problem about content has recently been acknowledged to be a real problem for him. Vijay Mascarenhas says that a central problem for Hume's account of personal identity

... comes in his insistence on conceiving the identity of the self as being analogous to that of plants, animals, churches, rocks, and rivers, that is, on conceiving the self in essentially objective terms. The nature of the blunder becomes clear if we imagine what would obtain if resemblance and causation could produce so smooth a transition in the imagination that perceptions are run together and taken to constitute a single, self-identical entity. Would not this entity be an object like any other object and, hence, something other than the self? If I see two resembling impressions, interrupted by a non-resembling one (e.g., I blink), then the resemblance of the two impressions may make me believe that they are one constant and invariable impression, but I would certainly never take that one impression to be *me*. Resemblance, in other words, cannot be expected to produce both the belief in the distinct and continued existence of an object and the belief in personal identity.<sup>40</sup>

Likewise, Michael Green has recently emphasized the need for some perception of a self in Hume's genetic explanation of the idea of a self. Green argues that Hume's explanation of the origin of the idea of the self "can work only for those who have some idea of the self to begin with."<sup>41</sup> Green continues:

If I had no idea of the self whatsoever, why would I think that a self had persisted through time simply because perceptions are related to one another in particular ways? The belief that something persists through time has to get its content from somewhere. In the case of things in the external world, I draw on the content of my perceptions: I have the idea of a cabbage's identity over time because I have had perceptions of cabbages at particular moments in time.

Neither Green nor Mascarenhas believes that this is the problem Hume is worried about in the Appendix, though. I do.<sup>42</sup>

Let me address two potential objections that might be raised against my account, one concerning whether my interpretation depends upon a false understanding of the relation between perceptions and objects in Hume's philosophy, and another concerning whether my interpretation is in the end truly consistent with the footnote in App. 20. As for the first objection, one might argue as follows:

It is true that when we reflect upon our perceptions of a tomato, we sometimes form an idea of a persisting tomato. In this case, we invent an idea of an identity of that which these perceptions are *of*; that is, we form an idea of an identity of the *objects* of the perceptions. The objects of these perceptions are tomatoes. But the objects of perceptions must be distinguished from the perceptions themselves. There is more to a perception than its object. This is important, because perceptions can be objects of other perceptions. For instance, according to Hume, whenever we reflect upon past perceptions, the reflection is by means of "secondary" perceptions, which have the past perceptions as their objects. The crucial point is that the object of a secondary perception, that is, the "primary" perception, is more complex than merely the *object* of the primary perception. Consider a secondary perception of a primary perception of a tomato. The object of the primary perception is a tomato. But the object of the secondary perception consists not only of the tomato but of the primary *perception* of the tomato (or perhaps the *perceiving* of the tomato) and perhaps even of a *perceiver* of the tomato. It is because the contents of our perceptions sometimes involve *these* things, that is, perceptions (or perceivings, or even perceivers) as opposed to their objects, that Hume believes we have the resources with which to invent an idea that has the content of a persisting *self*.

This line of thinking depends upon at least four substantial assumptions:

- (a) that Hume distinguishes between perceptions and their objects in the robust way required by this line of thinking;
- (b) that Hume believes that when we perceive perceptions by way of secondary perceptions, we perceive more than the objects of the primary perceptions;
- (c) that Hume believes that when we perceive primary perceptions by way of secondary perceptions, whatever more we do perceive than the objects of the primary perceptions is or contains that which is required to invent an idea that has the content of a persisting self;

- (d) that Hume believes that in order for us to perceive the extra component that is required to invent an idea that has the content of a persisting self, we do not need already to have an idea of a persisting self.

I myself am inclined to think that none of these assumptions is correct. But if just one of them is false, the objection against my interpretation fails.

As for (a), Hume explicitly says:

[H]owever philosophers may distinguish betwixt the objects and perceptions of the senses; which they suppose co-existent and resembling; yet this is a distinction, which is not comprehended by the generality of mankind, who as they perceive only one being, can never assent to the opinion of a double existence and representation. Those very sensations, which enter by the eye or ear, are with them the true objects, nor can they readily conceive that this pen or paper, which is immediately perceiv'd, represents another, which is different from, but resembling it. In order, therefore, to accommodate myself to their notions, I shall at first suppose; that there is only a single existence, which I shall call indifferently *object* or *perception*, according as it shall seem best to suit my purpose, understanding by both of them what any common man means by hat, or shoe, or stone, or any other impression, convey'd to him by his senses. I shall be sure to give warning, when I return to a more philosophical way of speaking and thinking. (T 1.4.2.31; SBN 202)

Moreover, when Hume does return to a more philosophical way of speaking that distinguishes between perception and object, one of his primary aims is to criticize the distinction (T 1.4.2.46; SBN 211).

Still, Hume's relation to this distinction is controversial, and some readers do understand him as employing a robust distinction between perceptions and objects in T 1.4.6. Because of this, it is important for me to underscore that my interpretation does not rest upon the supposition that he does not have this distinction clearly in mind in T 1.4.6. Even if Hume did always hold this distinction clearly in mind, this would not resolve the problem about content I am raising. What my interpretation *does* turn upon is the claim that Hume believes that we never perceive a perceiver, or something that perceives, or something in which perceptions inhere. It is perceiving one of these sorts of entity that, it would seem, would be required for us to invent an idea of a persisting self. Or, at least, so it would be understandable for Hume to suppose.

Also doubtful is (b), according to which Hume believes that when we perceive perceptions by way of secondary perceptions, we perceive more than just the objects of the primary perceptions. It is one thing to distinguish clearly between

perceptions and their objects; it is another to suppose that whatever more there is to a perception than its object (whether an act of perceiving, or a perceiver, etc.) is ever itself perceived, that is, is ever itself an object of (or part of an object of) a perception. In T 1.4.6 at least, the objects Hume seems to be concerned with, of the secondary perceptions by means of which the mind reflects upon past perceptions, are simply the objects of those past perceptions. Recall how Hume appeals to memory in explaining that resemblance is one of the two relations that unites our successive perceptions in our mind when we reflect upon our past perceptions. Hume says that we often “raise up the images of past perceptions,” and that since images “necessarily” resemble their objects, “the frequent placing of these resembling perceptions in the chain of thought, convey[s] the imagination more easily from one link to another, and make[s] the whole seem like the continuance of one object” (T 1.4.6.18; SBN 261). Memories, however, resemble the perceptions they are memories of in virtue of the objects of those perceptions. My memory of seeing a tomato yesterday, for instance, resembles the perception I had yesterday of the tomato in virtue of the object of yesterday’s perception, the tomato. Or, if memories do ever resemble the perceptions they are memories of in virtue of elements other than the perceptions’ objects, Hume does not seem to have those elements in mind here. Of course, that Hume does not focus upon these elements in T 1.4.6 does not prove that (b) is false. Nor does it show that Hume could not reformulate the explanation he gives there in a way that does focus upon these elements. But the question would remain, if (b) is true, why did Hume not focus upon these elements in the first place?

According to (c), Hume believes that when we perceive primary perceptions by way of secondary perceptions, whatever more we do perceive than the objects of the primary perceptions is or contains that which is required to invent an idea that has the content of a persisting self. Even if we did perceive that which perceptions have in addition to their objects, in order for the objection to my interpretation to succeed, what we perceive would have to contain that which is required to invent an idea that has the content of a persisting self. Consider, for instance, Ainslie’s claim that “Hume thinks that a perception has a characteristic feeling, vivacity, as well as an object.”<sup>43</sup> If this claim is true, perhaps Hume thinks that the content of our secondary perceptions includes not simply the object of the primary perception but its vivacity as well. Even if this is so (and thus (a) and (b) are correct), it is unlikely that having ideas with the content of *vivacity* would provide that which is required to invent an idea that has the content of a persisting self. It would seem that what would be required is a perception of something like a momentary self or perceiver—or at least something in the vicinity of that. But the idea that we ever perceive *these* sorts of things is at odds with some of what Hume explicitly says in T 1.4.6. For instance, Hume identifies the target of his argument as those “who imagine we are every moment intimately conscious of what we call

our SELF" (T 1.4.6.1; SBN 251). And again, there is Hume's celebrated claim that he can never catch himself at any time without a perception and "never can observe any thing but the perception" (T 1.4.6.3; SBN 252).

There is one passage that might appear to support the objection I have been discussing. In T 1.3.8, Hume writes:

In thinking of our past thoughts we not only delineate out the objects, of which we were thinking, but also conceive the action of the mind in the meditation, that certain *je-ne-sçai-quoi*, of which 'tis impossible to give any definition or description, but which every one sufficiently understands. (T 1.3.8.16; SBN 106)

I think there are reasons to doubt whether this passage provides strong support for any of (a), (b), or (c).<sup>44</sup> But even if it does, an objection that appealed to this passage in support of these three assumptions would run afoul of (d). According to (d), Hume believes that in order for us to perceive the extra component that is required to invent an idea that has the content of a persisting self, we do not need already to have an idea of a persisting self. If, in forming the idea of a persisting self, we must perceive this extra component, then our perceiving this component could not require our already having an idea of a persisting self. Hume's choice of the word "conceive," though, in "conceive the action of the mind" suggests that he is not supposing that in thinking of our past thoughts we have an *impression* of "the action of the mind." And indeed, this is consistent with Hume's claim in T 1.4.6 that we do not have an impression of the self.<sup>45</sup> Thus in T 1.3.8.16 Hume must be thinking that in "conceiving" the action of the mind, one is having an *idea* of the action of the mind. But here the question would arise: how would Hume explain our formation of *this* idea? Our acquisition of an idea of something like "the mind" is precisely what the genetic explanation of T 1.4.6 is intended to explain. The appeal to T 1.3.8.16 would appear to presuppose the success of a genetic explanation of the very sort that the appeal would be meant to support.

My brief discussion of these four assumptions hardly settles the issue; for each of them, there is more to say in its defence. And there may be some philosophers who would maintain that all four of them are correct (as they must be for the objection to my interpretation to succeed).<sup>46</sup> However, for the purposes of this paper, I do not need to show decisively that this conjunction is false. It should suffice to remind ourselves of the interpretative situation we are in. We are trying to determine Hume's thinking in the Appendix and, in particular, whether there is any interpretation that both honors all of the details of the text and attributes to Hume a worry by which he would have been troubled. If I am right, nearly all of the going interpretations run afoul of one of these two conditions for success. The interpretations in Groups 1, 2, and 4 do not honor the details of the text; the

other interpretations in Group 3 do not attribute to Hume a worry that would have truly bothered him. Or so I have argued. Thus, if there *is* an interpretation that may satisfy both conditions, as I claim mine does, there is a presumption in its favor. If the conjunction of four questionable assumptions entails that such an interpretation is incorrect, perhaps that provides further reason to suppose that this conjunction is false. At the very least, the possibility that the conjunction is true should be no barrier to regarding the interpretation as a serious contender.

The second objection I shall raise questions whether my interpretation is truly consistent with my own analysis of App. 20. If my analysis of App. 20 is correct, Hume's difficulty arises when he comes to explain the principles that unite our successive perceptions in our thought such that the mind has an easy transition when it reflects upon these united perceptions. But, one might argue, the problem about content is not a problem concerning the principles that unite our successive perceptions in this way. The problem concerns why, assuming that some principles *do* unite our perceptions in this way, it is the idea of a *self* that the mind subsequently invents? The juncture in Hume's genetic explanation of the idea of a self to which Hume points us in App. 20 is earlier in the explanation than the juncture to which one might think Hume would point us if his worry concerned the problem of content.

I think it must be admitted that this objection does count against my proposal. I do not think it is devastating, but it is a drawback. It is not devastating, because it is quite possible to understand Hume's thinking in the Appendix in a way that both attributes to him the worry about content and makes sense of the juncture to which he does in fact point us. Actually, there are two ways to understand Hume's thinking in this manner. One way is to suppose that what happens to Hume when he comes to explain the principles that unite our successive perceptions in our thought is that he realizes that the sorts of series of perceptions that are related by either the principle of resemblance or the principle of causation are series of perceptions such that, if our reflection upon them were to lead us to invent an idea of anything, that idea would not be an idea of a self. Reflection upon series of perceptions related by resemblance would lead us to invent ideas of that in virtue of which the perceptions resemble one another. Reflection upon series of perceptions related by causation would lead us to invent ideas of something that is constituted by those things that stand in causal relations. Hume may even reason that, if there are any series of perceptions at all such that a mind's experiencing an easy transition when reflecting upon them *would* lead the mind to invent an idea of something like a self, what primarily unites these series could not be resemblance or causation. I think this is a plausible reconstruction of Hume's thoughts in the Appendix, and one that would explain why Hume indicates that his problem begins when he comes to explain the principles that unite our successive perceptions in our thought. At

the very least, I do not think the drawback this objection raises is as problematic as any of the primary difficulties I have raised for each of the other Group 3 interpretations.

Still, there is an alternate way to forestall this objection while maintaining that Hume is troubled in the Appendix by the problem of content. And that is to appeal to the problem that Winkler thinks Hume has in mind in the Appendix. Winkler claims that Hume has realized that the relation of causation is unable to generate the requisite easy transitions of the mind, because causation is present in many instances where we experience little or no inclination to unify. In section 5, I explained that I do not think that this could be all that is troubling Hume in the Appendix. But perhaps it is a substantial *part* of it.

The alternate way to forestall the objection above is to adopt a *hybrid* of the interpretation I have advanced and that which Winkler advances. That is, perhaps what Hume has in mind in App. 20 is that, when he comes to explain the principles that unite our successive perceptions in our thought, he realizes, as Winkler urges, that the relation of causation is unable to do the work that in T 1.4.6 he thought it could do. Cognizant of this difficulty with his appeal to the principle of causation, he thus turns to the principle of resemblance to determine whether it might not be able to explain on its own what both principles were originally meant to explain. But it is precisely when focusing on the relation of resemblance that Hume comes to see the problem of content. Indeed, the problem of content is especially patent with respect to series of perceptions united by the relation of resemblance. Why would one, when reflecting upon a series of perceptions related by resemblance (say, a series of perceptions of a tomato) ever invent an idea of a persisting *self*? The invented idea would be an idea of that which the perceptions are *of* (in this case, a *tomato*), an idea of that in virtue of which the perceptions resemble one another. Or at least, that is the story Hume appears to tell when discussing the idea of the continued and distinct existence of an object. Recall how Mascarenhas focuses primarily on the relation of resemblance when explaining the problem:

If I see two resembling impressions, interrupted by a non-resembling one (e.g., I blink), then the resemblance of the two impressions may make me believe that they are one constant and invariable impression, but I would certainly never take that one impression to be *me*. Resemblance, in other words, cannot be expected to produce both the belief in the distinct and continued existence of an object and the belief in personal identity.<sup>47</sup>

Thus, on the hybrid interpretation, Winkler's interpretation is correct *as far as it goes*. But the problem of content is required to explain why Hume believes he cannot simply appeal solely to the relation of resemblance in explaining the easy transition of the mind responsible for the invention of the idea of a self.

The objection I raised to my original interpretation does not arise for the hybrid interpretation, because the latter interpretation makes immediate sense of why Hume indicates that his problem arises when he comes to explain the principles that unite our successive perceptions in our thought such that the mind has an easy transition when it reflects upon these united principles. The problem begins with the issue Winkler identifies concerning the principle of causation.<sup>48</sup>

As I say though, I am not convinced that this objection weighs heavily against my original interpretation in the first place. My claim that Hume's worry in the Appendix concerns the problem of content thus does not depend on Hume's also being worried about the problem Winkler identifies concerning causation.

Of course, on either of these interpretations (my original interpretation or the hybrid interpretation), it would still remain puzzling that Hume is not more helpful in explaining his problem. If Hume's problem involves the problem of content, why did he not say so? I think Fogelin is exactly right when he responds to this sort of worry as it applies to his own proposal:

There is, however, a challenge that remains embarrassing: if Hume's worries took any of these forms, *why didn't he say so?* I don't know the answer to this and I can only say that this challenge embarrasses everyone who puts forward suggestions on this matter.<sup>49</sup>

This is a puzzle with which every interpretation must contend.

In an influential passage in the *Treatise*, Hume likens the mind to a theater: "The mind is a kind of theatre, where several perceptions successively make their appearance; pass, re-pass, glide away, and mingle in an infinite variety of postures and situations" (T 1.4.6.4; SBN 253). If either of the interpretations I have offered is correct, a primary source of Hume's troubles in the Appendix is in fact the very idea that makes his account so provocative in the first place: audiences never appear on stage.

## NOTES

I would like to thank Janet Broughton, the editors of *Hume Studies* (both current and previous), and several anonymous reviewers for *Hume Studies* for valuable comments on this paper.

1 References to Hume's *Treatise* will be cited with a "T" followed (where applicable) by the Book, part, section, and paragraph number of the paragraph in which the quotation appears in David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. David Fate Norton and Mary J. Norton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), then followed by "SBN" and the number of the page on which the quotation appears in Hume, *A Treatise of*

*Human Nature*, ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge, 2nd edition revised by P. H. Nidditch (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978).

2 After the word "when" Hume places a footnote which refers his reader to T 1.4.6. I shall return to this footnote.

3 See, for instance, A. H. Basson, *David Hume* (Baltimore: Penguin, 1958); David Pears, "Hume's Account of Personal Identity," in his *Questions in the Philosophy of Mind* (London: Duckworth, 1975); Barry Stroud, *Hume* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977); Tom Beauchamp, "Self Inconsistency or Mere Self Perplexity?" *Hume Studies* 5.1 (1979): 37–44; and Don Garrett, "Hume's Self Doubts About Personal Identity," *The Philosophical Review* XC.3 (1981): 337–58. As can be seen from the variety among the interpretations offered in these essays, a number of questions arise for Hume's account once all the perceptions in the world are considered. Indeed, the interpretations in this group vary considerably in important respects. The arguments I will provide to show that the correct interpretation could not be in this group, however, do not require my categorizing the interpretations in this group any further.

4 Jane McIntyre, "Is Hume's Self Consistent?" *McGill Hume Studies*, ed. David Fate Norton, Nicolas Capaldi, and Wade L. Robison (San Diego: Austin Hill Press, 1979), 79–88, 82. For variants of this interpretation of the Appendix, see Wade Robison, "Hume on Personal Identity," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 12.2 (1974): 181–93, and Stephen Nathanson, "Hume's Second Thoughts on the Self," *Hume Studies* 2.1 (1976): 36–45.

5 Robert Fogelin, "Hume's Worries about Personal Identity," in his *Philosophical Interpretations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 81–94. Brendan Lalor and Vijay Mascarenhas has each recently advanced an interpretation along the lines of Fogelin's (Brendan Lalor, "The Antilogistic Puzzle of Hume's Appendix to the *Treatise*," *Philosophical Inquiry* 20 (1998): 22–30; Vijay Mascarenhas, "Hume's Recantation Revisited," *Hume Studies* 27.2 (2001): 279–300, especially 292–97). Wayne Waxman's interpretation is also closely related, although it concentrates more upon the possibility of consciousness of successive perceptions (Wayne Waxman, "Hume's Quandary Concerning Personal Identity," *Hume Studies* 18.2 (1992): 233–53). It is worth noting that Fogelin's interpretation does not appear in Fogelin's earlier book on Hume, in which he claims that the text of the Appendix is so underdetermined on the matter that we are simply unable to identify satisfactorily the nature of Hume's worries (Fogelin, *Hume's Skepticism in the Treatise of Human Nature* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985), chap. VIII).

6 See S. C. Patten, "Hume's Bundles, Self-Consciousness, and Kant," *Hume Studies* 2.2 (1976): 59–75; Donald Baxter, "Hume's Labyrinth Concerning the Idea of Personal Identity," *Hume Studies* 24.2 (1998): 203–33; John Haugeland, "Hume on Personal Identity," in his *Having Thought: Essays in the Metaphysics of Mind* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998); Abraham Roth, "What Was Hume's Problem with Personal Identity?" *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 61.1 (2000): 91–114; Kenneth Winkler, "All Is Revolution in Us': Personal Identity in Shaftesbury and Hume," *Hume Studies* 26.1 (2000): 3–40; Donald Ainslie, "Hume's Reflections on the Identity and Simplicity of Mind," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 62.3 (2001): 557–78; and A. E. Pitson, *Hume's Philosophy of the Self* (London: Routledge, 2002), chap. 4.

7 Norman Kemp Smith, *The Philosophy of David Hume* (London: Macmillan, 1941), 555–8.

8 Terence Penelhum, “Hume on Personal Identity,” *The Philosophical Review* 64.4 (1955): 571–89.

9 Corliss Swain, “Personal Identity and the Skeptical System of Philosophy,” in *The Blackwell Guide to Hume’s Treatise*, ed. Saul Traiger (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 2006), 133–50.

10 For instance, in her earlier account of the Appendix, Swain argues that Hume is not expressing a problem that he believes besets his own theory of the self (or of anything else); rather, he is expressing a difficulty for *other* approaches to personal identity, approaches he argues against in T 1.4.6. Such an interpretation does not belong to any of the four groups. Swain, “Being Sure of One’s Self: Hume on Personal Identity,” *Hume Studies* 17.2 (1991): 107–24.

11 Stroud, *Hume*, 133.

12 In the Norton edition, the note in the text (a superscript “89”) is placed directly after “connexion,”.

13 I thank David Norton for his guidance on this matter.

14 One of the few interpreters who discuss the footnote is Kenneth Winkler (see Winkler, “‘All Is Revolution in Us,’” 18–9). Indeed, Winkler’s interpretation belongs to Group 3, the group that the footnote reveals must contain the correct interpretation. Winkler discusses the footnote briefly, though, and does not examine the interpretative difficulties I turn to next.

15 Indeed, the initial plausibility of this reading might explain why some interpreters do not mention Hume’s footnote at all. A reader who believes that the second and tenth sentences can legitimately be read as concerning different explananda might not prioritize ascertaining where Hume’s footnote is meant to direct us, since ascertaining this would not, in the reader’s view, settle what Hume intends in the tenth sentence. (Here I am interpreting the intentions of interpreters of Hume’s intentions.)

16 Stroud, *Hume*, 133.

17 All of the support I have advanced against Group 1 interpretations has been of a textual nature. It is worth noting that there are also serious philosophical reasons to doubt them. For one compelling objection, see Fogelin, “Hume’s Worries about Personal Identity,” 84–5.

18 One might suppose that Swain could perhaps account for the footnote by proposing that Hume believes that a condition on satisfactorily appealing to the associative relations amongst distinct perceptions is that he explain what actually connects those distinct perceptions together, and that it is precisely his inability to fulfill this condition that constitutes the “contradictions” of which the intellectual world is not free. But the contradictions Swain believes Hume has in mind in the Appendix are contradictions she thinks Hume fully acknowledged in T 1.4.6. They concern the philosopher’s inability to explain what actually ties distinct perceptions together, and they are what *lead Hume subsequently* to offer his genetic explanation of the idea of a self.

19 McIntyre, "Is Hume's Self Consistent?" 82.

20 Group 2 interpretations also face significant non-textual difficulties. For a standard and (in my view) convincing objection to McIntyre-style interpretations, see Don Garrett's treatment of Wade Robison's closely related view (Garrett, "Hume's Self Doubts About Personal Identity," 344). (See also Nelson Pike, "Hume's Bundle Theory of the Self: A Limited Defense," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 4 (1967): 159–65, and Penelhum in "Hume on Personal Identity.") Garrett's objection may ultimately apply to Fogelin's interpretation as well. See Stroud, *Hume*, 130–1) for a discussion of the underlying issue.

21 Patten, "Hume's Bundles, Self-Consciousness, and Kant," 62–3.

22 Stroud, Garrett, and Fogelin all make this point.

23 I am grateful to Janet Broughton for bringing to my attention this difficulty for Patten's interpretation.

24 Ainslie, "Hume's Reflections," 560.

25 *Ibid.*, 566.

26 *Ibid.*

27 *Ibid.*, 568–9.

28 Baxter, "Hume's Labyrinth," 204.

29 Stroud, *Hume*, 130–1.

30 Baxter might propose that Hume did realize that his problem is a general one, but that he chose to identify it in the context of his account of personal identity, because it was in this context that the problem first occurred to Hume, or, perhaps, because what is responsible for the problem is Hume's conclusion that all perceptions are distinct existences and we never perceive a connection among them. However, both of these proposals ultimately face the same sorts of difficulties that McIntyre and Fogelin's Group 2 interpretations (and the response I anticipated they might make) face.

31 This interpretation was influential long before it was first published, by Haugeland in memory of Grice ("Hume on Personal Identity"). See, for instance, Stroud, *Hume*, 134–6, and David Pears, *Hume's System* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990).

32 See Stroud, *Hume*, 134–6.

33 Roth, "What Was Hume's Problem with Personal Identity?" 105.

34 *Ibid.*

35 It is worth making explicit that the problem Roth has in mind is not the problem about content that I shall claim in the next section is what is preoccupying Hume. The problem Roth articulates does not concern how the two similar psychological mechanisms could result in ideas with such different contents (ideas of objects like tomatoes, on the one hand, and the idea of a self, on the other); rather, it concerns our inability to employ these two mechanisms at the same time. Indeed, Roth explicitly assumes that each mechanism can successfully produce its respective kind of idea at different times.

36 Winkler, “All Is Revolution in Us,” 20.

37 *Ibid.*, 23.

38 *Ibid.*, 23–4.

39 For another interpretation that identifies the source of Hume’s worry to be a problem with Hume’s appeal in T 1.4.6 to the relation of causation (and that takes the relation of resemblance to play a relatively minor role there), see Pitson, *Hume’s Philosophy of the Self*, chap. 4. I believe that similar problems to those I have raised for Winkler’s account ultimately afflict Pitson’s account.

40 Mascarenhas, “Hume’s Recantation Revisited,” 288.

41 Michael Green, “The Idea of a Momentary Self and Hume’s Theory of Personal Identity,” *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 7.1 (1999): 103–22, 107.

42 As I mentioned, Mascarenhas’s interpretation of the Appendix is similar to Fogelin’s (see Mascarenhas, “Hume’s Recantation Revisited,” 292–7). For Green’s interpretation of the Appendix, and for why he does not believe Hume is troubled by the issue about content, see note 46.

43 Ainslie, “Hume’s Reflections,” 560n8.

44 For instance, concerning (c), if what secondary perceptions have as objects in addition to the objects of their primary perceptions is a *je-ne-sçai-quoi*, then presumably the idea we would form by reflecting upon a series of past perceptions would be that of a continued and distinct *je-ne-sçai-quoi!*—i.e., and not that of a continued and distinct *self*.

45 Or at least, it is consistent with it if, as this proposal must assume, the idea of “the mind” is sufficiently close to the idea of a self, such that by reflecting upon a series of perceptions the content of which includes an action of the *mind* one could form an idea of a *self*.

46 Green appears to be one. Green claims that the reason the putative problem concerning content does not bother Hume is that Hume believes in a “momentary self” which we perceive and of which we are able to form an idea (Green, “The Idea of a Momentary Self,” 119). Green claims that the reason Hume focuses in T 1.4.6 upon the objects of the past perceptions instead of the momentary self is that Hume was “confused.” According to Green, what bothers Hume in the Appendix (and what is also the source of the confusion responsible for his not discussing the momentary self in T 1.4.6) is Hume’s inability to explain “how the idea of a temporally extended self is generated by repeated ideas of a momentary self.” (The location of Green’s interpretation in our taxonomy depends on precisely what problem Green thinks Hume faces in explaining this; the emphasis of Green’s discussion can be understood in different ways.)

47 Mascarenhas, “Hume’s Recantation Revisited,” 288.

48 And so, when I say that none of the other Group 3 interpretations identifies an issue that would have truly bothered Hume, I mean that none of them identifies an issue that would *on its own*, or independently of other problems, have truly bothered him.

Another hybrid account would conjoin the original account I offer and Pitson's account (i.e., and not Winkler's). As I mentioned above, Pitson too argues that Hume's worry concerns his appeal in T 1.4.6 to the relation of causation (and that resemblance plays a minor role in Hume's genetic explanation of the idea of a self). The problem Pitson identifies is that there are too many "discontinuities" and "irregularities" amongst our perceptions for the relation of causation to "account for our propensity to ascribe a continued identical existence to these perceptions" (Pitson, *Hume's Philosophy of the Self*, 73). I am inclined to think that it is more likely that Hume would have been bothered by the problem Winkler identifies than the one Pitson does. The objection I discussed to Patten's interpretation—that we need not form the idea of a self anew each time we have it or employ it—would seem applicable to Pitson's proposal as well. Indeed, Pitson's interpretation is ultimately quite similar to Patten's, except that Pitson places less emphasis than Patten on the relation of resemblance.

49 Fogelin, *Hume's Skepticism*, 108.

