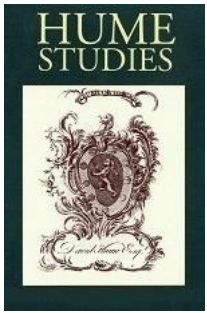

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Abstract: Do the first two books of Hume's *Treatise* form a "compleat chain of reasoning" on the subject of personal identity? Not if a complete chain of reasoning is one that explains the origin of the fictitious beliefs that we remain identical through time, "as it regards our thought or imagination, and as it regards our passions or the concern we take in ourselves." Book 1 explains how we come to believe that we are persisting subjects of conscious experience of an external world. Book 2 explains our belief that we are persisting subjects of passions and powers of practical agency. But neither explains the origin of the mistaken belief that we are also persisting objects of our own practical agency or the equally mistaken belief that we are naturally and powerfully disposed to "concern" for ourselves. If we are not the enduring objects of our practical agency and if, as Hume explicitly states in Book 2, we do not love our "selves," how do we come to make these mistakes? And what actually plays the causal role in moral and social life vulgarly attributed to self-love? Were Hume to leave these phenomena unexplained, his chain of reasoning regarding personal identity would be incomplete. Hume supplies this account in Book 3. Thus the first two Books do not form a complete chain of reasoning as regards personal identity.

Jennifer Welchman, Department of Philosophy, 2-40 Assiniboia Hall, University of Alberta, Edmonton, AB, T6G 2E7. Email: welchman@ualberta.ca.

Introduction

In his Advertisement to the incomplete first edition of the *Treatise*, Hume justifies his decision to publish the first two Books separately on the grounds that "*the subjects of the* understanding *and* passions *make a compleat chain of reasoning by themselves*" (T Adv; SBN xiii).[1] The Advertisement to Book 3 qualifies its predecessor slightly, stating that Book 3 is "in *some* measure independent of the other two and requires not that the reader shou'd enter into *all* the abstract reasonings contain'd in them" (T 3.Adv; SBN 544, emphasis added). Precisely which abstract lines of reasoning were complete by the end of Book 2, Hume does not say. As many commentators read T 1.4.6, personal identity seems a good candidate. When Hume takes up the question of why we believe we remain the same persons over time, he states "in order to answer this question, we must distinguish betwixt personal identity, as it regards our thought or imagination, and as it regards our passions or the concern we take in ourselves. The first is our present subject" (T 1.4.6.5; SBN 253). Book 1 reconstructs the process by which we come to believe the fiction that we remain the same subjects of conscious experience throughout our lives. But this captures only a part of what is involved in our beliefs about our personal identity. We consider ourselves more than mere subjects of conscious experience. We also see ourselves as practical agents, with distinctive enduring passions, aspirations, and powers of action. How this feature of our self-conceptions arises is not broached until Book 2, so here at least we have a topic of abstract reasoning that spans the first two Books.

Does Book 2 complete it? Jane McIntyre argues it does:

> As Hume conceived it, the twofold problem of person identity is, first, to explain why we tend to *believe* in the identity of the self and second, to explain why a present self who is not, in fact identical with a self who existed in the past or will exist in the future is nonetheless *concerned* with a set of "past or future pains or pleasures. . . . [H]is account must explain why I sometimes act out of concern for a future self—a future collection of perceptions—that will bear to me, now, the relation I bear to my past. Hume's theory of the passions does, in fact, accomplish both of these tasks. It is by providing an account of self-concern that Book 2 of the *Treatise* completes Hume's account of personal identity.[2]

Hume's account of the passions in Book 2 provides a detailed reconstruction of the process through which we come to suppose ourselves to be enduring subjects of practical agency with powers to realize the objects of our desires. But there is no necessary connection between (i) taking oneself to be a *subject* of conscious experience capable of practical agency and (ii) taking oneself to be the *object* of one's

own agency. Common sense holds that we do act *for* our selves most, if not all the time. It attributes this phenomena to our possession of a passion of self-love whose *object* is our selves. So Hume is merely reporting common sense belief when he states: "each person loves himself better than any other single person" (T 3.2.2.7; SBN 487). But this leaves the origins of the common sense belief unexplained.

The passions and associative mechanisms Hume describes in Book 2 explain how we come to conceive of ourselves as *subjects* of passions equipped with powers of practical agency. But Hume's account directly challenges the common sense belief that our practical agency is always, or mainly, *self*-directed. In Book 2, Hume explicitly denies that we possess a passion of self-love, "properly so called" (T 2.2.1.2; SBN 329).[3] He is equally explicit about the limitations of sympathy: "in sympathy our own person is not the object of any passion, nor is there any thing, that fixes our attention on ourselves" (T 2.2.2.17; SBN 340). He says nothing, however, about how the common sense belief that we are *objects* of our own practical agency arises.

I will argue that the problem of personal identity, as Hume conceives it, is three-fold, rather than two-fold, and spans all three Books of the *Treatise*. In Book 1, Hume focuses on our belief that we are enduring *subjects* of conscious experience. In Book 2, Hume goes on to reconstruct the process through which we arrive at an expanded conception of ourselves as subjects of practical agency, possessing passions and powers of action. In Book 3, Hume moves on to our ideas about self-directed action in the inter-personal world of practical and moral life, reconstructing the fiction that we ourselves are the persisting *objects* of most, if not all, of our acts. So while there are respects in which the subject matter of Book 3 is relatively "independent" of those of Books 1 and 2, personal identity is not one of them. Hume's reconstruction of self-love in Book 3 is the final stage of one of the central, unifying projects of his *Treatise*.

This is not to say that Hume's reconstruction of our beliefs that our own and others' acts are largely self-directed is an unqualified success. After examining his reconstruction, I shall go on to consider two plausible strategies that a charitable critic might employ to fill in certain gaps in Hume's account. But before considering the merits of either interpretation of Book 3's corroboration of his views about personal identity, we should first review the progress made in the preceding Books, starting with the first.

Book 1

The first three parts of *Treatise* Book 1 introduce Hume's radical new empiricist account of human knowledge. Part 4 is devoted to thinking through its skeptical and philosophical implications. Hume clears the ground for his own skeptical conclusions about our knowledge of external bodies and ourselves with a critical

review of previous philosophical attempts, beginning with ancient philosophies. Here he argues that philosophical opinion always advances through three stages. He writes:

> We may observe a gradation of three opinions, that rise above each other, according as the persons, who form them, acquire new degrees of reason and knowledge. These opinions are that of the vulgar, that of a false philosophy, and that of the true; where we shall find upon enquiry, that the true philosophy approaches nearer to the sentiments of the vulgar, than those of a mistaken knowledge. (T 1.4.3.9; SBN 222–23)

The vulgar take the contents of their experiences to correspond to real, stable, and enduring entities, including external bodies and their own minds. They are, moreover, "are apt to fancy" that these entities cannot be decomposed into separate, discontinuous elements. By contrast, philosophers have had "sufficient force of genius to free them from the vulgar error, that there is a natural and perceivable connexion betwixt the several sensible qualities and actions of matter" (T 1.4.3.9; SBN 223). Thus they have moved on to Hume's second stage in the development of true philosophical opinion. Unfortunately, according to Hume, most philosophers, ancient and modern, have never advanced beyond it. Their theories have typically compounded, rather than corrected, the misconceptions of the vulgar. False philosophical opinions arise when philosophers attempt to validate vulgar commonsense beliefs about external objects or our own minds by invoking such things as underlying substances (material or spiritual) or a special form of conscious awareness able to supply the missing connections. According to Hume, we have no impressions of substance or any special self-awareness. In the absence of evidence of their real existence, we must conclude that these are fictions. Since these earlier philosophical theories are built upon merely fictional entities, they are all "false." We attain the third stage of philosophical opinion, "moderate skepticism," when we accept that we have no evidence for supposing our beliefs about external objects or our selves are certain (T 1.4.310; SBN 224). We abandon the hopeless project of proving our pre-critical beliefs true and turn, instead, to more sensible projects, such as understanding how our pre-critical conceptions of external objects and ourselves have come about and what reliance we may place upon them for the purposes of practical life.

Which philosophies and philosophers is Hume targeting? In the discussions preceding the section on personal identity, Hume focuses mainly on metaphysical and epistemological theories, including those of Aristotle, Descartes, Malebranche, Spinoza, and Locke. Hume now indicates that he has a wider range of philosophical targets in mind. He begins by drawing the reader's attention to philosophers who hold that we are all "every moment intimately conscious of what we call our Self."

But he immediately goes on to highlight a different sort of philosophical opinion, that "the strongest sensation, the most violent passion . . . instead of distracting us from this view, only fix it the more intensely, and make us consider their influence on *self* either by their pain or pleasure" (T 1.4.6.1; SBN 251). This suggests that Hume's targets also include egoistic philosophies of human motivation and action, such as the infamous and still controversial theories of Thomas Hobbes and Bernard Mandeville. Though such views receive no further consideration in Book 1, Hume returns to this topic in Book 3, where he declares that such philosophies are "as wide of nature as any accounts of monsters, which we meet with in fables and romances" (T 3.2.2.5; SBN 487).

Book 1's positive contribution to the problem of personal identity is the reconstruction of our belief that our minds possess "an invariable and uninterrupted existence thro' the whole course of our lives" (T 1.4.6.5; SBN 253), despite the fact that our self-awareness is limited to "a bundle or collection of different impressions, which succeed each other with an inconceivable rapidity and are in a perpetual flux and movement" (T 1.4.6.4; SBN 252). Hume's explanation starts with an analysis of the process through which we come to believe that plants and animals retain their identity as organisms. Though all creatures change markedly over time, these changes are gradual. Each succeeding wave of the impressions that constitute our ideas of plants or animals is only slightly different than its predecessor. Consequently, "the mind, in following the successive changes of the body, feels an easy passage from surveying its conditions in one moment to the viewing of it in another. . . . From which continu'd perception, it ascribes a continu'd existence and identity to the object" (T 1.4.6.10; SBN 256). Eventually, the changes become so "considerable" as to attract our notice, as when an acorn becomes an oak tree. But so long as we seem to detect continuity of functions performed through each successive wave (for example, growth and maturation) or continuity in the pursuit of a single end (for example, reproduction), we are inclined to interpret the successive waves of impressions as successive stages in one and the same plant's or animal's life. Whenever this is the case, our belief in the plant's or animal's continuing identity will be unshaken.

Were we able to look into one another's minds (that is, to directly observe the bundles of impressions and ideas constituting those minds) we would observe a similar process of gradual changes. We would note (i) a resemblance between current and immediately preceding constituent impressions and ideas composing one another's mind and (2) the appearance of causal connections between them.[4] We would observe directly what we can see only indirectly when we look inward, that human selves are not simple, persisting substances, but rather fluctuating "bundles" of impressions possessing only such continuity over time as we attribute to political republics. Both the individual constituents of republics and the principles of political association binding them together are in slow but constant

flux. Yet republics retain a sufficient (if piece-meal) continuity over time to explain why we nevertheless think and speak of them as enduring individual things. "In like manner," Hume says, "as far as our imaginations are concerned, "the same person may vary his character and dispositions, as well as his impressions and ideas, without losing his identity" (T 1.4.6.19; SBN 261).[5]

Hume states that this entails that "our identity with regard to the passions serves to corroborate that with regard to the imagination, by the making our distant perceptions influence each other, and by giving us a present concern for our past or future pains or pleasures" (T 1.4.6.19; SBN 261). But this remains to be proven. Up to this point, Hume has focused narrowly on explaining how we are so easily persuaded of our enduring identity as subjects of experience. Two considerations weigh in his account's favor thus far. His explanation (i) agrees with our ordinary common sense experience and (ii) does not rely on the postulation of fictional entities to achieve that agreement. Throughout his discussion, Hume has treated passions just as he does all our other kinds of ideas and impressions; as a kind of mental object composing the bundles that are our selves. He has not yet discussed how specifically our passions influence one another, or help to constitute our notions of ourselves as practical agents concerned for themselves. So the corroboration of which he speaks is yet to come.

Book 2

Before Hume embarks upon the "accurate account of human nature" to be offered in Book 2 (T 1.4.6.13; SBN 263), he confesses to some trepidation about his venture. He writes, "methinks I am like a man, who having struck on many shoals, and having narrowly escap'd shipwreck in passing a small frith, has yet the temerity to put out sea in the same leaky weather-beaten vessel" (T 1.4.7.1; SBN 263). Hume's sailing metaphor seems apposite. To succeed in his ambitions with regard to beliefs about the self, he will have to sail through the Scylla and Charybdis of the two sorts of false philosophies highlighted in Book 1; false metaphysical and epistemological philosophies, on the one hand, and false moral psychological philosophies, on the other. To avoid shipwreck, he must ensure that his reconstruction of our beliefs about our practical agency does not clash either with his account of our belief in our identity as subjects of experience, or his rejection of egoistic theories of human nature. Though the latter is not the subject of Book 2, Hume advises readers against assuming that an egoistic philosophy of the passions will be offered. "When we speak of *self-love*," he declares, "'tis not in a proper sense." The object of love and its counterpart, hatred, is "some other person" (T 2.2.1.2; SBN 329).[6] Hume will return to the subject of self-love in Book 3, after concluding his reconstruction of the fiction that we are enduring subjects of practical agency.

For Hume, our passions are "secondary, or reflective impressions," that is, impressions following the occurrence of "original" impressions arising "from the constitution of the body, from the animal spirits, or from the application of objects to the external organs" (T 2.1.1.1; SBN 275). The manner in which this occurs may be direct or indirect. Hume sub-divides the passions accordingly: direct passions, such as desire, aversion, joy, hope, and despair are those arising immediately from impressions or ideas of pleasure or pain. The indirect passions arise indirectly via the "conjunction of other qualities" (T 2.1.1.4; SBN 276). For indirect passions of pride, humility, love, and hatred, the other qualities involved include ideas of persons, one's self or others. These are the passions central to Hume's reconstruction of our ideas of our selves as enduring practical agents.

Though the processes responsible for our indirect passions can be quite complex according to Hume, subjectively they are simple and unanalyzable. To identify and explain them we must appeal to the ways they regularly occur in conjunction with other experiences of ourselves and the world. Direct passions are simple responses to stimuli that fix our attention on their apparent causes. By contrast, Hume argues, our indirect passions arise through a more complex "double-relation" of ideas and impressions. Compare the direct passion of joy with the indirect passion of pride. One can experience the delightful passion we call "joy" directly upon observing a newly opened tulip blossom. One cannot experience the equally pleasant passion of pride, however, unless another idea intervenes, an idea of the self.

Any idea or impression occurring to us will stimulate other ideas and impressions, so that from one we pass "to what is resembling, continquous to, or produc'd by it" (T 2.1.4.2; SBN 283). So for example, if the tulip is in my garden, the tulip may trigger an idea of myself as the owner of the tulip. My delight at the *tulip* will then be transferred to the idea of myself as the tulip's owner, triggering an associated delight in the complex idea of *myself* as the delightful tulip's owner. This is the feeling of pride whose intentional object is always one's self. Its converse, humility, the dejection triggered by the idea of one's self as possessor of a degrading object or quality, arises from the same kind of double-relation of ideas and impressions, and so too has the self as its intentional object.[7] The effects in each case are magnified, whenever others around us react to the same trigger with a similar delight or displeasure. Sympathy, the innate mechanism by which ideas of others' feelings are converted into impressions we ourselves feel, will be a source of additional joy or disgust, and thus triggering an enhanced pride or humility.[8]

Each of these two indirect passions has a special characteristic; it "always turns our view to ourselves, and makes us think of our own qualities and circumstances" (T 2.1.5.6; SBN 287). The self to which these two passions turn our gaze remains merely that "succession of related ideas and impressions, of which we have an intimate memory and consciousness" (T. 2.1.2.2; SBN 277). But the pleasure and

pain of pride and humility causes us to focus on the elements of the stream that constitutes our selves and their associations with the circumstances in which they arise. Pride and humility, being in Hume's words, "pure emotions in the soul," are both "unattended with any desire, and not immediately exciting us to action" (T 2.2.6.3; SBN 367). Nevertheless, because they are pleasant or painful, these experiences play a central role in building up our conceptions of our selves as practical agents in two ways. First, pleasure and pain turn our attention to these inner states of what we call our "selves," including the ideas and impressions currently composing it; sense impressions of our bodies and of external objects, as well as impressions of desire, passion, and emotion. Repeated experience teaches us which kinds of associations among them are more or less enduring and lend more or less continuity to our experience over time, for example, our more enduring interests, tastes, physical and mental dispositions, and desires. As we become accustomed to regularities in the appearance of pleasure and pain in relation to occurrences of desires and interests, together with the exercise of physical and mental dispositions, we suppose there to be causal connections between them. When the connections seem to originate with our own inner states, we credit ourselves as the cause.

Our adult conceptions of our selves as practical agents with passions and causal powers of gratifying them (or the reverse) are presumably the accretion of years of experience. How might this work? Consider the following example. Five-year-old Maia is delighted about an aunt's gift of toy drums. First, she experiences the direct passion of joy on beholding the delightful objects. Then she learns that the drums are meant for "Maia." This redirection of her attention to her own self gives rise to a new, complex idea: Maia-possessor-of-drums. The joy she initially felt on seeing the drums is transferred and transformed, so that she now takes pleasure in *being* Maia-possessor-of-drums—the pleasure of pride. Over time, custom teaches Maia that her drums are means to alter the world in ways important to her five-year-old self. She can amuse herself and annoy her younger sister whenever she pleases. Maia comes to see herself as possessed of *powers* of action, powers her younger sister lacks.

The adults in her life will be less impressed, of course. Toy drums are neither unique nor remarkable from an adult point of view. It is, however, only with time and experience that we learn to incorporate others' points of view into our evaluations. As Hume remarks, "if a person full grown, and of the same nature with ourselves, were on a sudden transported into our world, he wou'd be very much embarrass'd with every object, and wou'd not readily find what degree of love or hatred, pride or humility, or any other passion he ought to attribute to it" (T 2.1.6.9; SBN 293–94). As Maia becomes more knowledgeable, she will cease to take pride in such possessions. Yet experiences such as these are the starting point for the formation of our belief in our selves as enduring subjects of practical agency, with passions and powers of action to achieve desired ends.[9]

As Donald Ainslie has argued, our conceptions of other persons as practical agents are built up through the operation of a related pair of indirect passions: love and hatred.[10] Other people's selves, like our own, are mere bundles and collections of impressions in constant flux. To these we have no direct access. Nevertheless, we imagine that other persons have enduring selves like our own. And we believe these remain stable over time. Once again our indirect passions help to explain how this happens.

Like pride and humility, love and hatred are indirect passions arising from a double relation of impressions and ideas. But in contrast to pride and humility, Hume holds, "our love and hatred are always directed to some sensible being external to us" (T 2.2.1.2; SBN 329). How does this work? Consider Maia again. The joy Maia feels at receiving the drum set from her aunt will also inform her thoughts of her aunt, the gift-giver, who provides them. And this, in turn, triggers a new pleasure, *love*, whose intentional object is her aunt (T 1.4.6.19; SBN 261). Hatred arises by a parallel process. Say Maia discovers her drums have been stolen by a neighbor's child. Her distress at her loss will be associated with her new idea of the neighbor's child as a drum-thief, with the result that the child becomes the object of Maia's juvenile hatred.

The motivations from which others act when they please or pain us are not always products of qualities "constant and inherent in his person and character" (T 2.3.2.6; SBN 411). Repeated experience teaches us which kinds of associations among others' attitudes are the more common and enduring, lending continuity to our experience of their characters over time. We also learn to pick out stable correlations between the appearances of desires, interests, and other dispositions on their parts and the subsequent occurrence of pleasant or painful states of affairs. Taking these correlations for evidence of causation, we credit others' inner states with practical efficacy and respond accordingly. If Maia's aunt proves a fond and frequent source of gifts, Maia's love for her aunt will grow and deepen overtime, as will Maia's idea of her aunt as a practical agent with enduring passions and powers of her own. Likewise, if the neighbor's child continues to steal Maia's toys, custom will ensure that Maia's dislike will deepen and that she will see the neighbor's child as an enduring threat to her own happiness.

Once we have come to believe ourselves and others to be practical agents with enduring personal characteristics, instances of our own and others "agency" will stimulate further passions such as benevolence, compassion, malice, and envy, that will add richness and greater complexity to our beliefs about our own and others' stable and enduring personal characteristics. Nevertheless, strictly speaking, these beliefs are as fictitious as our beliefs about the enduring identity of plants, animals, or other objects of our experience. Just as we misinterpret mere continuity with identity in our assessments of our own and others' minds, we misinterpret mere conjunctions of events as causation in our assessments of our own and others'

powers to act. Thus, Hume's examination of the operations of passions in Book 2 serves to corroborate his account in Book 1 of our belief in our own and others' personal identity as subjects of conscious experience. Hume demonstrates that he can account for the development of our ideas of our selves as practical agents by appeal to relationships between and among the ideas and impressions that constitute our subjective experience alone, and without resort to the devices of the false philosophies he rejects. His explanation of how we come to imagine we are enduring practical agents does not invoke the philosophical fictions of immaterial substances or special intuitive powers of self-awareness. And it lends no support to egoistic theories of human psychologies according to which all our passions have the self for their object. On Hume's account, the passions of pride, humility, love, and hatred exist prior to our ideas of our selves and other persons as subjects of practical agency; indeed, they are sources of these ideas. Thus it cannot be the case that these passions always have the self as their object in the relevant sense.

In fact, none of our passions has the self as its object. All Hume's direct passions, such as desire, aversion, joy, hope, and despair, arise immediately from impressions or ideas of pleasure or pain with present or absent objects or events, so that "in order to produce an affection of any kind, 'tis only requisite to present some good or evil" (T 2.3.9.1; SBN 438). Thus pleasure and pain, not the self, are the objects of our direct passions. Of the four indirect passions, only two, pride and humility, have the self as their "objects" in any sense at all. But for these passions, the self is an intentional, not a practical, object. Being "pure emotions," neither pride nor humility motivates us to any action at all, let alone self-directed action.[11] Consequently, none of our passions, direct or indirect, motivate us to act *for* our selves.

At the conclusion of Book 2, Hume's chain of reasoning regarding our beliefs about our personal identity remains open-ended. It is complete regarding the beliefs about our identity as subjects of conscious experience and of practical agency which arise from thought, imagination, and the passions. But it undermines without explaining another equally ingrained belief about our personal identity: our belief that we are the enduring objects of our passions and practical agency. On the face of it, Hume's position would seem to be flatly contradicted by common sense. The world of inter-personal action seems overflowing with evidence of the power and prevalence of self-love. Moralists throughout the ages have invoked self-love to explain why human beings find it difficult to obey laws, moral, social, and religious, and to maintain social peace. If Hume is correct, and there is no such passion, we cannot be the enduring objects of our practical agency. Why, then, are we prone to this fiction? What is actually responsible for the phenomena mistakenly attributed to self-love? Since these questions are not answered in Books 1 or 2, Hume's chain of reasoning regarding personal identity is still incomplete. Meeting this challenge was presumably one of Hume's goals in Book 3, one of

the respects in which he expected this Book to lend his philosophical system as a whole "new force as it advances" (T 3.1.1.1.1; SBN 455).

Book 3

Hume opens Book 3, part 1, with a remark upon "an inconvenience which attends all abstruse reasoning. . . . When we leave our closet, and engage in the common affairs of life, its conclusions seem to vanish, like phantoms of the night on the appearance of morning: and 'tis difficult for us to retain even that conviction, which we had attain'd with difficulty" (T 3.1.1.1; SBN 455). One conclusion we are not to lose hold of is the true nature of the self, for Hume quickly reminds us that "nothing is ever present to the self but its own perceptions" (T 3.1.1.2; SBN 456). He then expands upon the implications of his previous analysis of the passions for understanding moral judgment.

That analysis had revealed that reason is neither a passion nor any other sort of "influencing motive of the will." The motivations we immediately recognize as passions are simply the more violently apprehended members of the species. There are others "which, tho' they be real passions, produce little emotion in the mind, and are known more by their effects than by the immediate feeling or sensation" (T 2.3.3.8; SBN 417). These, Hume suggests, typically fall into two categories: "certain instincts originally implanted in our natures, such as benevolence and resentment, the love of life, and kindness to children; or the general appetite to good, and aversion to evil, consider'd merely as such" (T 2.3.3.8; SBN 417). Others are the products of custom and habituation. While calm passions are not necessarily weak and can take precedence over violent ones in certain situations, Hume notes, "when we would govern a man, and push him to any action, 'twill commonly be better policy to work upon the violent than the calm passions, and rather take him by his inclination, than what is vulgarly call'd his *reason*" (T 2.3.4.1; SBN 417). The violence of a passion, he explains, is a function of the "situation" of an object of interest: "the same good, when near, will cause a violent passion, which, when remote, produces only a calm one" (T. 2.3.4.1; SBN 417). Since self-love is neither a passion nor an independently motivating reason for action, this only leaves the "situation" of the objects of our desires as a possible ground of explicating the apparent phenomena of self-love.

Hume re-introduces the topic of self-love in Book 3 as he begins his analysis of the artificial virtue of justice. He denies that self-love as commonly understood could be the source of our motivation to be just, because "self-love, when it acts at its liberty, instead of engaging us to honest actions, is the source of all injustice and violence; nor can a man ever correct those vices, without correcting and restraining the *natural* movements of that appetite. (T 3.2.1.10; SBN 480). A few pages later we are told that "we may justly esteem our *selfishness* to be the most considerable"

among the "particulars in our *natural temper*" that oppose the virtue of justice (T 3.2.2.5; SBN 486). Hume immediately follows these remarks with a criticism of egoistic philosophies that treat self-love as the predominant human passion for being "as wide of nature as any accounts of monsters, which we meet in fables and romances" (T 3.2.2.5; SBN 486–87). Hume offers a counter-argument which reinterprets and reconstructs the phenomena incorrectly attributed to self-love.

The first step in his counter argument is to point to a disparity between these egoistic theories of human nature and the evidence of "common experience": "[t]ho' it be rare to meet with one, who loves any single person better than himself; yet 'tis as rare to meet with one, in whom all the kind affections, taken together, do not over-ballance all the selfish" (T 3.2.2.5; SBN 487). Hume's next step is to highlight other particulars "in our natural temper" capable of producing the phenomena routinely attributed to self-love. The "kind affections," such as love, benevolence, and generosity, that move people to act for others' interests, Hume notes "instead of fitting men for large societies, is almost as contrary to them, as the most narrow selfishness" (T 3.2.2.6; SBN 487). This is because our kind affections motivate us to give particular attention to the welfare of the individuals whom we love, respect, or pity. Consequently, when any matter touches our own interests or those for whom we care, we cannot be impartial. As justice requires us to abide by impartial conventions, our kind affections motivate us to injustice rather than justice.

The implication of this argument is that social divisiveness arises from a partiality common to *all* our passions and affections, whether violent or calm, rather than a passion of self-love. Should his reader doubt that all kind affections and other passions are inherently partial, Hume recalls attention to a peculiarity of the operation of the principles of association that influence all our impressions and ideas. "Now it appears," he writes "that in the original frame of our mind, our strongest attention is confin'd to ourselves; our next is extended to relations and acquaintance; and 'tis only the weakest which reaches to strangers and indifferent persons. This partiality, then, and unequal affection, must not only have an influence on our behavior and conduct in society, but even on our ideas of vice and virtue (T 3.2.2.8; SBN 488). From what Hume says here, it appears that it is the principle of contiguity that is primarily responsible for the partiality of all our passions and affections. His remarks reprise a Book 2 characterization of its effect on our imaginations: "Ourself is intimately present to us, and whatever is related to self must partake of that quality. But where an object is so far remov'd as to have lost the advantage of this relation . . . its idea becomes fainter and more obscure" (T 2.3.7.1; SBN 427). We are most vividly aware of things and persons nearest to us in space and time. The greater the distance in space or time from our own immediate impressions and ideas, the weaker will be the vivacity of the ideas or impressions we have of other things or person. And the weaker their vivacity, the

weaker will be their capacity to command our attention. Because of the influence of contiguity, we are simply *incapable* of giving the same attention to our family, friends, or strangers that we give to ourselves. Our own pleasures and pains, being the most vivid to us, crowd out the less vivid impressions of pleasure and pain communicated to us from family or friends via sympathy. These, in turn, crowd out the still less vivid impressions of pleasure and pain communicated to us from strangers. Thus we can never feel or act impartially when either our own interests or the interests of loved ones are at stake.

The psychological effects of contiguity explain why we are innately partial in our affections and actions. They also help to explain the common sense belief that we possess and act from a passion of self-love. As Hume describes us, we act as we do because the principle of contiguity makes us prone to what I will call "narcissistic engrossment" with our immediate pleasures and pains, an engrossment that produces behavior outwardly indistinguishable from self-directed action though otherwise motivated. Ovid's retelling of the myth of Narcissus illustrates this phenomenon.

According to the myth, the stunningly beautiful Narcissus was punished for an offense by being exposed to his own reflection in a forest pool. As Ovid tells it, Narcissus is overwhelmed by the beauty of the young man he thinks he sees: "He gazes at his eyes, twin stars, and his locks worthy of Bacchus, worthy of Apollo; on his smooth cheeks, his ivory neck, the glorious beauty of his face. . . . Unwittingly he desires himself."[12] By the time Narcissus realizes what engrosses him, it is too late. Unable to turn his gaze even to eat or sleep, Narcissus dies of self-neglect.

It is Narcissus's engrossment with the pleasure of gazing at his own beauty that kills him, not self-love. Self-love would have motivated him to act otherwise. Our own situation is analogous to Narcissus's. We are prone to the same sort of engrossment with ideas and impressions of pleasures and pains most closely associated with ourselves. Narcissistic engrossment can motivate acts outwardly indistinguishable from acts genuinely motivated by a passion of self-love. But as Narcissus's example shows, it can also cause us to neglect the welfare of our own relatively "remote" future selves, as well as the welfare of other people. Hume writes:

> Accordingly, we find in common life, that men are principally concern'd about those objects, which are not much remov'd in either space or time, enjoying the present, and leaving what is afar off to the care of chance and fortune. Talk to a man of his condition thirty years hence, and he will not regard you. Speak of what is to happen to-morrow, and he will lend you attention. The breaking of a mirror gives us more concern when at home, than the burning of a house, when abroad, and some hundred leagues distant. (T 2.3.7.3; SBN 428–29)

In other words, we are no more able to give impartial attention to our own interests than we are the interests of others. In a later passage, Hume declares that "there is no quality in human nature, which causes more fatal errors in our conduct, than that which leads us to prefer whatever is present to the distant and remote, and makes us desire objects more according to their situation than their intrinsic value" (T 3.2.7.8; SBN 538).[13]

The effect of contiguity on our direct passions for external goods accounts neatly for the behavior that the vulgar and false philosophies ascribe to the passion of self-love. It prompts us to pursue objects that serve our own and/or our associates' immediate interests with little or no regard for others', especially strangers or distant persons. In Hume's words, "This avidity alone, of acquiring goods and possessions for ourselves and our nearest friends, is insatiable, perpetual, universal, and directly destructive of society" (T 3.2.2.12; SBN 491–92). Because our avidity is rooted in a principle of association, every passion is subject to it. "There is," Hume declares, "no passion, therefore, capable of controlling the interested affection, but the very affection itself, by an alteration of its direction (T 3.2.2.13; SBN 492). In the case of our avidity for external goods, we change our situations by adopting social conventions regarding personal property that brings our short term and long term interests into convergence (T 3.2.7; SBN 534–39). Hume notes that some convention about property exists in even the smallest family groups: "Every parent, in order to preserve peace among his children, must establish it" (T 3.2.2.13; SBN 493). Larger groups achieve the same result by agreeing to position certain members—"civil magistrates, kings, and their ministers, our governors, and rulers"—in a comparable position. As their jobs and income depend on their maintenance of social peace, their own short and long term interests converge on enforcing conventions of justice. And because they enforce the conventions, they "render the observance of the laws of justice our nearest interest, and their violation our most remote" (T 3.2.7.6: SBN 537).

Obedience to conventions of justice is difficult for us because we must act against our natural partiality. Hume argues that the benefits provide sufficient motivation to obey, even for creatures as prone as we are to narcissistic engrossment and the perpetual avidity for possessions. "'[T]is evident, that the passion is much better satisfy'd by its restraint, than by its liberty, and that by preserving society, we make much greater advances in the acquiring possessions" (T 3.2.2.13; SBN 492). Sympathy with others around us fortifies our present interest in acting justly for whenever they suffer injustice: "We partake of their uneasiness by *sympathy*; and as every thing, which gives uneasiness in human actions, upon the general survey, is call'd *vice*, and whatever produces satisfaction, in the same manner, is denominated *virtue*; this is the reason why the sense of moral good and evil follows upon justice and injustice" (T 3.2.2.24; SBN 499). Although sympathy alone is not sufficient to control the narcissistic engrossment that contiguity causes,

sympathy has "sufficient force to influence our taste, and give us the sentiments of approbation or blame" (T 3.2.2.24; SBN 500).

Hume's analysis and reconstruction of our beliefs about the object of our practical agency, specifically that it is our own selves, identical through time, ties up the loose ends left after the corroborative arguments offered in Book 2. His reduction of self-love to narcissistic engrossment with the pleasures and pains rendered most vivid by contiguity is meant to explain the phenomena of self-directed action in a way that conforms to common sense experience without invoking philosophical fictions, such as self-love. We are now in a position to begin to evaluate the results, to ask whether Hume's reconstruction does the work he requires of it.

One Objection, Two Replies

If the effect of contiguity is as Hume characterizes it, it is unclear how, left to ourselves, we could ever succeed in acting consistently for long-term objectives. On Hume's account of personal identity, the selves sacrificing immediate pleasures for the sake of greater future pleasures are *not* the selves who will enjoy those future pleasures. The possible future pleasures of our possible future selves are remote possibilities. They would rarely be as vivid to us as pleasures immediately available to our current selves. Whenever conflicts arise, it would seem the latter would typically win the battle for our attention and action. A parallel problem arises with regard to the future welfare of the persons with whose present interests we now sympathize. The persons with whom we sympathize in the present will *not* be the persons who would benefit from sacrifices we might now make in favor of "their" long term interests.[14]

"In reflecting on any action, which I am to perform a twelve-month hence, I always resolve to prefer the greater good," Hume remarks. But whenever success requires the sacrifice of more immediate goods along the way, "[a] new inclination to the present good springs up, and makes it difficult for me to adhere inflexibly to my first purpose and resolve" (T 3.2.6.5; SBN 536). In these situations, Hume notes, we often try to bolster our commitment to the greater, but more remote, good through reflection, consultation with friends, meditation, and repeated self-exhortation. Unfortunately, experience proves "how ineffectual all these are" as means of constraining our natural tendencies to prefer the contiguous to the remote (T 3.2.6.5; SBN 536). So it would seem that when left to our own devices, we should act like perpetual adolescents, incapable of overriding our tendency to narcissistic engrossment. Prudence regarding our future welfare should be impossible for us, absent some social convention or artifice to bring our short-term and long-term interests into convergence. No human society has evolved social conventions to enforce prudence with regard to their future selves' welfare comparable to their social conventions of justice. Yet somehow, human beings do manage to act

prudently with regard to their future selves welfare much, if not all, of the time. How can we reconcile this fact with the implications of Hume's deflationary accounting for self-love in Book 3? Read charitably, Hume's text provides material for two ways of replying.

The first reply would start with our accepting that prudence on behalf of our future selves is impossible absent assistance from some external social artifice, or convention, able to counteract narcissistic engrossment. Say Maia, twenty years older, wants to buy her own home within three years and has started a savings plan. Shortly afterwards, the only direct bus to her job is cancelled and she finds herself craving a car, though she knows the cheapest car she could afford would seriously retard her savings plan. Assume also that Maia has succumbed to the natural human tendency to think of herself as remaining the same person over time. When she imagines the future Maia's disappointment at being unable to buy a home three years hence, she imagines that it is her current self which will suffer that disappointment in the future. However she only *imagines* she will feel this disappointment, she does not feel it now. And its target, the house she wants, is considerably more remote than the car she could buy right now. Should she overcome the craving for a car nonetheless, we would need to identify some social artifice(s) to explain how her passion for the more remote good succeeded despite its relative remoteness.

Hume's "common point of view," which we employ to counteract partiality in our judgments of others' moral character, could be a viable candidate. Hume holds that all our moral evaluations are grounded in passions and sentiments. But, as our passions and sentiments are always partial, any evaluative judgments directly based upon them will also be partial. To make impartial judgements, our evaluative judgments must be made indirectly, through adopting the third-party perspective Hume calls the common point of view. He explains:

> When we form our judgments of persons merely from the tendency of their characters to our own benefit, or to that of our friends, we find so many contradictions to our sentiments in society and conversation, and such an uncertainty from the incessant changes of our situations, that we seek some other standard of merit and demerit, which may not admit of so great variation. Being thus loosen'd from our first station, we cannot afterwards fix ourselves so commodiously by any means as by a sympathy with those, who have any commerce with the person we consider. (T 3.3.1.18; SBN 583)

When we take up this third-party perspective, we ignore the effects of others' acts upon our own interests, focusing, instead, on their effects upon persons other than ourselves. Through this artifice we can arrive at impartial moral judgements,

because "the only interest or pleasure which appears the same to every spectator, is that of the person himself whose character is examin'd; or that of persons, who have a connexion with him. . . . [T]hey alone produce that particular feeling or sentiment on which moral distinctions depend" (T 3.3.1.31; SBN 591). Sympathy converts our ideas of other persons' passions and sentiments into impressions we ourselves feel. As these are pleasing or displeasing, we approve or disapprove of others' characters. As it happens, prudence is a trait of character that benefits its possessors and enhances their ability to assist those interacting with them. Not surprisingly, Hume considers prudence is impartially admirable from the common point of view.[15]

Once adept at taking the common point of view upon others, we can—and sometimes do—turn it upon ourselves, "surveying ourselves as we appear to others" (T 3.3.1.26; SBN 589). When we do, our self-evaluations can cause us to question our characters, "to be displeas'd with a quality commodious to us, merely because it displeases others and renders us disagreeable in their eyes; tho' perhaps we never can have any interest in rendering ourselves agreeable to them" (T 3.3.1.26; SBN 589). Assume Maia has become adept in this respect, and examines her options from the common point of view. She predicts that her imprudence will distress those close to her. Sympathy with the imagined distress and disapproval of her friends and family troubles her. Though the distress and self-disapproval she feels is imagined, she feels it now, in the present. So it would seem possible that thoughts of her future disappointment, bolstered by the immediate distress of self-disapproval arising from thoughts of the consequences of her imprudence, might jointly outweigh her present craving for a car.

Should we endorse this proposal on Hume's behalf? There are at least three reasons to think we should not. First, we know that Hume considers the methods Maia would be using to counter her partiality to a present good—reflection, consideration of our friends' reactions, and self-exhortation—to be generally "ineffectual." Second, he has argued that the only thing that can restrain our avariciousness for external goods is the tendency itself, redirected by some change in our situations. But according to this account, Maia's avariciousness for the car is not restrained by being redirected towards itself, it is being outweighed by the addition of sympathy for others' distress and disapproval to her calm desire for a future home. Third, this proposal relies upon Maia maintaining the false, vulgar belief that she remains the same person over time. Or, to put it another way, it relies upon the *Treatise* remaining a sealed book to her. This implies the contrary of Hume's claim that the *Treatise* contains nothing but "what is laudable and good" for its readers (T 3.3.6.3; SBN 619). Were Maia to read it, the illusion of identity between her present and future self would evaporate. "Eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die," would become Maia's motto. Indeed, it should be our own.

A second approach avoids these problems. Assume that being an intelligent young woman, Maia recognizes she has reasons to doubt that she has always been and will always remain the same person throughout her life. She is old enough to realize that she has changed in significant ways in the past. She believes that she will continue to change (for the better she hopes) in the future. Indeed, she feels a certain alienation from her distant past and future selves. They seem to stand to her as predecessors and descendants of her present self, more closely related to the person she now is than any other person could be, but nonetheless distinguishable from her present self.[16]

We would then appeal to this feeling of alienation from her remote, non-present, selves to explain how the welfare of non-present future Maias can become objects of concern to her present self. Precisely because Maia does *not* feel herself to be strictly identical with her non-present selves, it would be possible for her to feel the passions of love and hate towards them. She could also experience the passions (benevolence, revenge, and so on) to which love or hatred typically give rise.[17] Suppose for example, that Maia's earlier selves had cultivated qualities of which Maia is now proud. Her appreciation of these qualities would trigger affectionate feelings towards those earlier Maias, just as it triggered affection towards her gift-giving aunt. Similarly, as she looks ahead to her distant future selves, Maia would feel affection for them, if she presumes they will retain abilities or qualities of character in which she now takes pride. She may also imagine them to possess a kind affection towards herself, one which motivates them to carry forward her own unfinished projects and plans. (Presumably, no other persons would be better placed to help the current Maia in this regard.) Whenever such thoughts trigger feelings of love and affection towards Maia's future selves, she feels a pleasure in the present. And that pleasure provides an immediate, present motivation to be prudent as regards the welfare of future Maias. The more she does to ensure the welfare of those future Maias, the more likely they will be to look back affectionately upon her current self and so be motivated to carry forward projects they inherit from her. The greater the importance she assigns to the completion of her unfinished projects, the greater will be her present motivation to look out for those future Maias' needs.

This does not guarantee that Maia will stick to her savings plan. She may not now be attached to any projects that provide her a reason to care deeply whether or when her future self can buy her own home. She may be so uncertain about her future development as to be unable to feel much active affection for her future selves. In either case, her present concern for her future self's welfare would not now be sufficient to outweigh her present avidity for the car. But, as most of us are capable of some affection for our future selves and have some current projects for whose future success we now care deeply, most of us are capable of making some prudent sacrifices for the sake of our future selves.

This second proposal has advantages over the first. For one thing, this proposal does not rely on our mistakenly believing that we remain identical persons over time. Consequently, reading the *Treatise* need not prove injurious to our characters or conduct, present, or future. In addition, this proposal better conforms to Hume's proviso that the only feature of our natures able to restrain our avidity for contiguous goods is that same avidity itself. What we feel now regarding our future selves is a kind of avidity for things "near and dear" to us, our unfinished projects, our desire for our future selves' respect, and our affectionate concern for their welfare.

Could Hume endorse this proposal? He could if he was prepared to accept the following two implications. First, he would have to agree that he had been exaggerating wildly when he suggested that people care nothing about what might happen to them in ten years' time. Second, Hume would have to agree that he had been guilty of equivocation when he denied that there is such thing as "self-love." If self-love is love for our present selves, then strictly speaking, no one loves themselves. But as self-love can also mean love of past or future selves, sufficiently remote in time to be perceived as non-identical, then people can, and often do, have a loving regard for themselves.

There is a further implication that might concern Hume. Taking this approach would seem to undercut Hume's case against the egoistic theories of Hobbes and Mandeville, which he rejects. Thanks to the influence of contiguity, any love we bear to our own future selves will inevitably be stronger than the love we bear the future selves of others. Whenever conflicts arise between the interests of our own and other future persons, our self-love is apt to motivate us to privilege the interests of our own future selves over other peoples' interests. Thus, accepting this proposal entails granting that self-love plays a greater role in the world of inter-personal action than Hume may have wanted to allow.

Conclusion

Neither of these two ways of interpreting Hume's analysis of self-love is entirely unproblematic. I consider the second somewhat more consistent with the text as a whole. I will not argue for this here. My present concern here has been with the role that Hume's Book 3 analysis of self-love plays in the argument structure of the *Treatise* as a whole. If the foregoing is correct, Hume's discussion of self-love plays a more significant role in the overall argument of the *Treatise* than has generally been supposed.

The goals Hume set for himself in the *Treatise* were extraordinarily ambitious. To "put the science of man on a new footing," he set out to debunk all foregoing theories of the self, metaphysical, psychological, and moral (T Intro. 7; SBN xvii). And as the footing on which his science of man was to be placed was so thoroughly revisionary, he believed he needed to be able to demonstrate its fruitfulness in

generating new insights into each of these three domains for it to be seriously entertained. He structured his text accordingly.

Each of the three Books of the *Treatise* makes a distinct contribution to Hume's overall argument for his new science by providing corroboration to the revisionist conception of the self at its heart. Book 1 explains and reconstructs our belief in the fiction that we remain identical subjects of experience throughout our lives. Books 2 and 3 do the same, respectively, for our beliefs that we are persisting subjects of practical agency with powers of action and that we are also the persisting objects of most (if not quite all) our practical agency.

Each of these three beliefs had the warrant of long acceptance, but none more so than the third, that we are the persisting objects of our own agency. Other philosophers had raised questions about the composition or "substance" of the self. Many conflicting theories of the passions had been offered. But few if any seriously doubted the existence of self-love. In this context, nothing could have been more revisionary than a theory entailing that self-directed action is an illusion. And no one could seriously expect contemporary audiences to accept such a theory absent plausible reconstruction of the "concern we take in ourselves." Hume understood that his defense of his revisionist account of the self and personal identity required such a reconstruction to corroborate it. Thus the examination of self-directed action offered in Book 3 plays a crucial role in one of the central, unifying projects of Hume's *Treatise*.

NOTES

1 References to the *Treatise* are to Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. Norton and Norton, hereafter cited in the text as "T" followed by Book, part, section, and paragraph number, or followed by abbreviations for subsections such as the Advertisement or the Appendix. References will also include Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. Selby-Bigge, rev. by Nidditch, cited in the text as "SBN" followed by the page number.

2 McIntyre, "Hume and the Problem of Personal Identity," 191–92. See also her "Personal Identity and the Passions."

3 Hume's denial that we love our (current) selves is not a casual remark made in passing. The experiments discussed at T 2.2.2 (SBN 332–470) show that Hume is perfectly serious about this.

4 Since one's own mind is simply the specific collection of impressions and ideas occurring at any given moment, one cannot, strictly speaking, observe successions of impressions and ideas by looking within one's own mind. This is why one has to imagine looking into another's mind for the purposes of Hume's argument.

5 By the time Book 3 of the *Treatise* was published, Hume had developed doubts about the arguments he had offered to explain how we become persuaded of our minds'

simplicity and identity over time, fearing a contradiction existed in the principles to which he had appealed. The account he gives of his concerns has been the source of a lengthy and ongoing debate. Useful reviews of recent literature regarding Hume's worries include Ainslie, "Hume on Personal Identity," Butler, "The Problem of Believing in Yourself," and McIntyre, "Hume and the Problem of Personal Identity."

6 This is not a specious remark made in passing. Hume reiterates it at length in T 2.2.2 (SBN 332–47): "Experiments to confirm this system."

7 See T 2.1.5 (SBN 285–90). In the text, Hume speaks of the self as pride's *object*, but he does not mean that the self is an object of action but rather pride's *intentional* object. For a very helpful discussion of the intentionality of Humean passions, see Schmitter, "Making an Object of Yourself."

8 For more detailed discussions of the process by which Hume takes this to occur, see Baier, *A Progress of the Sentiments*; Rorty, "Pride Produces the Idea of Self"; Chazan, "Pride, Virtue and Selfhood"; Purviance, "The Moral Self and the Indirect Passions"; King, "Pride and Hume's Sensible Knave"; Ainslie, "Scepticism about Persons in Book II of Hume's *Treatise*"; Postema, "Cemented with Diseased Qualities;" Alanen, "Personal Identity, Passions, and "The True Idea."

9 On some interpretations of Hume, such as Chazan's, children like Daria would rarely, if ever, fulfill Hume's "limitations" on pride; they ought not be credited with experiencing pride at all. To allay this, recall that Hume believed that animals experienced pride and humility (T 2.1.12; SBN 324–28). Since an animal's capacity to fulfill the conditions of adult pride are even poorer than a five-year-old child's, there is no reason to suppose Hume would deny that young children like Daria feel pride or humility.

10 See, especially, Ainslie, "Scepticism about Persons."

11 Hume allows that they may give "additional force" to direct passions with which they may be associated. But doing so would not change the direct passion's target, or redirect it towards ourselves (T 2.3.9.3–4; SBN 439).

12 Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 155.

13 See similar remarks in his discussion of the origin of government, at T 3.2.7.1–5 (SBN 534–37).

14 As discussed above, none of the passions, including the calm passions, has the self as its object. And all passions, calm or violent, are affected by principles such as contiguity. Extensive sympathy, as Hume describes it, is also powerfully affected by contiguity, so that when it comes to action, "my sympathy with another may give me the sentiment of pain and disapprobation, when any object is presented, that has a tendency to give him uneasiness, tho' I may not be willing to sacrifice anything of my own interest, or cross any of my passions for his satisfaction" (T 3.3.1.19–23; SBN 584–87). One must remember that sympathy "extended" more widely does not become stronger for being extended in this way, nor any more liable to contradict the partiality which explains our limited generosity.

15 See Hume's discussion in T 3.3.4 (SBN 606–14).

16 Some worry that such an attitude towards one's self might have implications incompatible with being a good person, or with normal attributions of moral respon-

sibility. It does not seem likely that Hume would share such concerns. Those who do may wish to consult Strawson, "Episodic Ethics."

17 Hume rarely refers to self-hatred in the *Treatise*, and in the few places he does, he appears to use "self-hatred" as synonymous with humility, and he understands humility to be triggered by an uneasiness occasioned by reflection that some property or quality the individual associates with himself is undesirable or unworthy (hence, reflection on himself becomes a source of uneasiness from which the individual will seek distraction by more pleasant impressions). Presumably, self-hatred would normally be directed only to past selves responsible for past acts or character traits we now deplore.

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