

A Humean Argument for Personal Identity

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Abstract Considering various arguments in Hume's *Treatise*, I reconstruct a Humean argument against personal identity or unity. According to this argument, each distinct perception is separable from the bundle of perceptions to which it belongs and is thus transferable either to the external, material reality or to another psychical reality, another bundle of perceptions. Nevertheless, such transference (Hume's word!) is entirely illegitimate, otherwise Hume's argument against causal inference would have failed; furthermore, it violates private, psychical accessibility. I suggest a Humean thought experiment clearly demonstrating that, to the extent that anything within a psychical reality is concerned, no distinction leads to separation or transference and that private, psychical accessibility has to be allowed in the Humean argument for personal identity or unity. Private accessibility and psychical untransferability secure personal identity and unity. Referring to the phenomenon of multiple personality along the lines of the Humean argument for personal identity or unity, I illustrate both private accessibility and a possible notion of one and the same person distinct from his/her alters or psychical parts. Finally, I show why Parfit's Humean argument against personal identity must fail.

In this paper, I will convert Hume's argument *against* personal identity in *A Treatise of Human Nature* into an argument *for* personal identity. I entitle this argument "Humean" for it consists of a reconstruction, taking into consideration various arguments in the *Treatise*, all of which share the same premise.

Let me phrase first the Humean argument against personal identity as follows:

1. Suppose that each mind consists of a temporal succession of perceptions.
2. Each perception in such a succession is distinct from the others.
3. Any such distinct perception is separable from the others.

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4. Each separable perception may exist by itself, or it is transferable to and can be associated with other mind(s) or external reality.
5. If any perception of any mind may exist by itself or is transferable (by and as in 4), no identity, let alone personal, of any mind is secured.
6. Separable perceptions cannot be necessarily connected one to the other.
7. Hence (by 3 and 6), no necessary connection combines the perceptions of any mind into a unity of any sort, let alone personal.
8. Indeed, as experience well testifies, no one has a simple impression in one's mind ascribing any unity to that mind; all one has (by 1) is a temporal succession of numerous perceptions.
9. Hence (by 5, 7, and 8), nothing exists to secure personal identity or unity, and the idea of either is merely a fiction, a product of one's imagination.
10. Hence (by 9), each mind is merely a bundle of perceptions lacking any personal identity or unity.
11. Hence (by 10), no mind or perception is a person, self, or subject.

This argument relies upon the same assumption or premise that Hume's arguments against the ideas of necessary connections, causality, and substance rely upon: Any distinct perception is separate or separable from any other perception. A separate or separable perception is not and cannot be necessarily connected or united with other perceptions. The idea of a personal unity has to rest upon a simple impression or else on a necessary, inseparable connection between all the perceptions of one's mind of which it consists. Because each of the perceptions of any mind is distinct, they are separable, however, associatively connected and, however, one's memory and awareness comprise all of them, and no necessary connection or unity exists to secure personal unity. Because no one has an impression of her or his "self" or of its unity and simplicity but only numerous various impressions, sharing no unity at all, one cannot have any veridical idea of personal unity. As a result, each mind is merely a bundle of perceptions with no personal unity whatsoever. Because any of my perceptions can be separated from my other perceptions, it may either exist by itself or be *transferred* to the external reality or to another bundle of perceptions, say, you. Along this paper as a whole, by "transfer," I have in mind the psychological meaning of this term – to transfer from one mind to the other or from a mind to external reality, not a cognitive one, such as "infer" or "conjecture." The transference in question is by no means "spatial" or "local," as much as psychological transference is not spatial or local. As I will argue below, mind and psychological reality as a whole are exempt from any spatiality or locality. Untransferability means that any perception or idea that pertains to one mind cannot belong to any other mind. In any case, as much as each of my perceptions may be related to my other perceptions in a way of association or otherwise, each of them, as separated can be associated from now on with your perceptions. Moreover, each of us, bundles of perceptions, can transfer her or his perceptions to the external, nonpsychical reality. In this way, our associations as to "cause" and "effects," although merely subjective in nature, are transferred to the external, objective reality, however different it is from one's psychological reality.

Thus, no *identity* whatsoever secures the “discreteness,” even the mere distinctness, of my bundle of perceptions as different and distinct from any other mind but no less from the external, objective reality. None of our perceptions makes a person; all the more so, each one of us as a bundle of perceptions, lacking unity or identity, should not be considered a person, self, or subject at all. Any idea we have of personal identity or unity is merely a fiction, a product of our imagination, or, even worse, an illusion.

I will question the legitimacy of that separation–transference especially from Hume’s point of view. Is it not merely an illusion? If it is, it greatly affects the question of personal identity, and it will serve me well in converting the Humean argument into a one for personal identity or unity. However, first, I have another point to make.

We have to distinguish personal identity from personal distinctness. If two persons are distinct (and hence separate) one from the other, this does not secure that any of them has an identity. Suppose that each of us is simply a bundle of perceptions, which is distinct from any other bundle of impressions. What does secure then the personal identity of each of them? As I’ll show below, psychical private accessibility secures the identity of each person, but this is not the complete story. The complete story has to do with metaphysics: Because, metaphysically speaking, each person is a singular psychical being and no two persons in themselves can be even similar, let alone identical, each person must have a private, exclusive accessibility to his or her perceptions or ideas. Such a metaphysical view has to face many difficulties, which are far beyond a paper, let alone this one, as it needs a whole book to handle such difficulties adequately enough (see Gilead 2003). Thus, private accessibility rests upon the singularity of each person as a psychical subject or being. As resting upon it, private accessibility secures personal identity.

Suppose, like Hume, that I have no simple impression of my personal identity or unity but merely a number of endless distinct perceptions namely, impressions and ideas, temporally following each other in a stream or succession of consciousness. Nevertheless, however associatively, subjectively connected, none of them is or can be of another mind. It is only me who consists of these perceptions; no other mind could consist of them, for no mind has any access to other mind’s perceptions. No mind has any idea what is going on in another mind. Contrary to Wittgenstein (1968, p. 223), Davidson (1994, pp. 44–5), and Hacker (1997, p. 273), another mind, consisting of another psychical reality, is *by no means transparent* to me, however close we are. Even if you tell me all about anything in your mind, I have no access to your mind. I have nothing of your perceptions as you have and experience them, and you cannot transfer any of them to me.

Speaking of “transparency” with regard to other minds rests upon a mistake: mistaking what privately occurs in one’s mind for the interpersonal, intersubjective significance of it, which is communicable by language, reaction, attitude, or behavior. In other words, this mistake stems from considering thought and language inseparable, in some sense even indiscernible, and considering language necessarily public and interpersonal, as Davidson did (*ibid.*). By contrast, thought should be considered certainly discernible and separable from language, as language is

intersubjective or interpersonal but not public, while thought is necessarily subjective, personal, and private, which does not render it incommunicable.¹ Without knowing what exists or “goes on” in your mind, your associates are usually capable of knowing the significance of what exists within it, which in itself is entirely inaccessible or not transparent to them. They are capable so because this significance forms or at least affects or reflects on your relationship with them in particular ways or expressions. Note that along this paper, whenever I mention or use “private,” I mean exclusive,” “for oneself alone,” not “intimate.” Using or mentioning it, I do not have the distinction between “knowledge by acquaintance” and “knowledge by description” in mind. Finally, the exclusiveness in question is psychical alone, not physical. Thus, to have access to the impression of red, for instance, has to do with perception, which is a psychical experience, not a physical one.

What exists or occurs within a mind is not its property. Hence, I would not say that your perceptions merely belong to your mind; instead, I would say that your mind consists of them. Anything that belongs to your mind is transferable to other minds. Not so your perceptions. No intersubjective or interpersonal communication consists of transference of perceptions. If Hume relies on his impressions, as his empiricism and skepticism commit him to do, he should rely on the following phenomenal fact too: Nothing in his perceptions has access to another mind, and no perception in his mind was transferred there from other mind(s). Have you such a perception? Could you think that you had other persons’ experiences, thoughts, or feelings in your mind? Sharing the “same” perceptions, as it were, with others, you are actually employing the same words or expressions that they employ for their experiences and the like but nothing of their private, psychical realities; these cannot be shared. Each personal experience is untransferable to another person, unless under an illusion or mistake. I can learn a lot from another person and from her experience, but I cannot have her experience for myself. The only way I can experience anything is by myself.

Each mind has its own private accessibility to its perceptions, to its impressions and ideas, which makes them personal. In the last paragraphs I have mentioned “person(s),” “personal,” “subjective,” “interpersonal,” and “intersubjective,” for the idea of private, psychical accessibility makes sense only if such concepts make any sense. Are we entitled to mention or use the concept of private, psychical accessibility without allowing that of person and the like? We are entitled to do so, although the veridicality of the idea of personal identity or unity has not been established yet. As I have shown elsewhere, private, psychical accessibility is well secured on metaphysical grounds (Gilead 2003, pp. 43–75). Independently of my previous discussion, I would like to suggest now a thought experiment, according to which private, psychical accessibility is well demonstrated. This experiment relates to Hume’s analogy of an illusion, which strongly resembles the illusion or fiction of causality: “a blind man shou’d pretend to find a great many absurdities in the

¹ Although thought is necessarily private and untransferable, it is interpersonally, intersubjectively communicable by linguistic or other means. I have attempted to show this on the grounds of the universal relationality, on which language and translation supervene, of any psychical being (see Gilead 1999, pp. 16–22, 48–49, 83–84, 120, 134–135, 140–141; Gilead 2003, especially pp. 14–16, 47–51, 70–73, 82–84, and 87–89).

supposition, that the colour of scarlet is not the same with the sound of a trumpet, nor light the same with solidity” (*Treatise* I, iii, 14, p. 218).

The experiment proceeds as follows. Think of “identical” twins, Ruth and Helen, that never have been separated. Their life has been completely shared, except for the tragic fact that Helen was born blind. Add to their intimacy a special capability with which they both have been endowed – telepathy, by means of which they can communicate in a different way from the ways that the great majority of us communicate. Each of them is extremely empathic, especially one to the other. Also worth mentioning is the twins’ idiosyncratic sensuous trait – both of them are synesthetic; as the *Concise Oxford Dictionary* defines it, they can produce a mental sense-impression relating to one sense by the stimulation of another. For instance, whenever they hear a sound, each of them simultaneously has a sensation of taste and smell. In such case, Ruth, obviously not Helen, has also a sense of color. In spite of all this, no way exists for Ruth to transfer her perception of any color to Helen. Although Ruth has numerous impressions of color, she is absolutely incapable to transfer even one of them to Helen. Born blind, Helen has no impression of colors and she cannot have one. Furthermore, Helen has no faintest idea what a color is all about.

Suppose that Ruth tells Helen: “The color of your dress is so beautiful. It is red. Alas, you are incapable of seeing it. But I can help you: it senses exactly like ‘la’.” Unfortunately, in spite of their telepathic capability and their synesthesia, no way exists for Ruth to transfer the sensation or impression of red to her twin sister. Moreover, Helen has not even the slightest idea what red is all about, what is a color, any color. No metaphor can help, however synesthetic she really is. Lacking the experience of color, she is absolutely incapable of knowing what red is all about. To know that and to have the idea of red, one needs to have the impression that is privately accessible to her or him. Lacking private access to the sensations of color, as well as to the ideas of them, she is absolutely incapable of having them by means of other persons. She has to see *for herself*. Were Helen not blind, still no other way would exist for her to have a perception of color except for seeing it for herself. No other way exists to experience or to have any other sensation. Even if we ignore all of Ruth’s associations, including her synesthetic ones, no way exists to separate any perception from the rest of her mind to transfer it to Helen. You cannot transfer a piece of your mind to anybody else, except in a metaphorical sense that has merely to do with a sort of intersubjective communication. No one can open one’s mind to another person. Whether they are persons or not, psychical beings are merely impossible unless private accessibility as well as the distinction between inner, psychical and external, intersubjective or objective reality are first secured.

Note that “inner” in this psychical sense bears no spatial meaning. Were it spatial, this would have certainly ended with an absurd conclusion or, at least, a contradiction. For anything spatial is in principle publicly accessible, although it may be technically or actually beyond the public access. In the spatial sense, “inner” objects are publicly observable and possibly subject to shared experience, not so one’s psychical entities or occurrences, which no one can observe, let alone from without, and no other person can share. Psychical entities or objects are not transferable properties. Private, psychical accessibility by no means entails the absurd, misleading analogy of an “inner theater,” privately, exclusively watched, as

it were, by a single person. Nor does it entail any mysterious “ghost in the machine,” which is another wrong-headed spatial metaphor. Such is not the case at all. Referring or relating to our impressions or ideas, to our perceptions, we do not watch or inspect them as if they were external-like objects existing in an “inner” space. They are not spatially located. Instead, we relate to them, and each of them relates to the other, in a way that is categorically different from the way we relate to other external entities, mental or material. This unique way or relationality has to do with the psychical singularity of each one of us, and thus, it is entirely compatible with psychical intrinsicality. “External” here means what is outside of – without – one’s mind. Psychical innerness thus signifies psychical singularity and private accessibility.²

From an empiricist point of view, the distinction between the objects of inner and external sense, between those of sensation and reflection, implies the characteristic of private, psychical accessibility. By means of an external sensation, seeing, we perceive a red object, which you and I and other people may observe. Nevertheless, I have no access to *your own* impression of it. I am absolutely unable to have or experience any of your impressions. Neither can I relate to any of them in the singular way that only you can relate to it, that is, in your reflection about it. Your reflection is also clearly beyond my accessibility, beyond my experience. Your experience takes part in your inner, psychical reality, inaccessible from without but singular to you.

Undoubtedly, all I have argued so far following the above thought experiment is entirely compatible with classical empiricism; moreover, it is a conclusion necessarily implied by it. The classically empiricist conception of the mind as a *tabula rasa*, entirely devoid of innate ideas whatsoever, is fastidiously devoted to the principle that each mind is capable of having any perception only by means of a personal or private experience. Because no one can see through the eyes of another person or, in general, no one can perceive anything through or by means of another person’s senses, each mind can “have” only its own experience; each mind has to undergo the experience by itself. Any classical empiricist, to begin with Locke, adheres to the principle that were it possible for us to see by means of other persons’ eyes, we would have their thoughts too. However, this is absolutely impossible: We cannot have other persons’ thoughts, and each of us must think for himself or herself. Unlike words or language in general, thoughts are private entities or qualities, whereas words and language are not private; they are intersubjective (some would even say that they are public). Using the same language and words that other persons employ, you “have” yet private perceptions, thoughts, feelings, and volitions of your own, each of which is untransferable to other person. If I did not feel love, joy, happiness, shame, guilt, remorse, hatred, and any other feeling and emotion, if I did not “have” a private, entirely personal, absolutely singular access to such emotions and feelings, nothing could substitute them for me. All the concepts I would have about them, based on other persons’ experiences, would mean nothing for me. I could not even meaningfully talk about all these emotions or feelings nor understand somebody talking about them.

² See Gilead 2003 for a systematic elaboration of this issue.

If any perception or sensation must be private, all the more so any reflection or “secondary” impression or idea. Your personality consists of your experience and reflective impressions or ideas as well, each of which is private and untransferable to another person. Even when several persons identically, as it were, react to the same event or object, even if the behavior of several persons under the same circumstances appears identical, the privacy of the perceptions of each of them is secured. Empiricism, at least classical empiricism, especially the radical version of it – the Humean – and private, psychical accessibility are thus entirely compatible. By contrast, classical rationalism, whose radical version is Leibnizean, may exclude such accessibility. Although no monad has “windows,” through which anything can enter, each higher monad has access to, has a consciousness of, what unconsciously exists and occurs in any lower monad. Leibniz entitles it “ideal influence” (I would call it “ideal access or transference”) according to which the reasons for what exists and occurs within monads of lower grades of clarity and distinctness exist in any monad of a higher grade. Hence, God, the highest, omniscient monad, is conscious of all that exists and occurs within any monad. Such Leibnizean “ideal access or transference” is very much compatible with innateness, whereas it must be absolutely impossible from the classical empiricist point of view, especially Hume’s. According to classical empiricism, as they are given to us, our simple impressions or ideas are not only individual and not general, they are private, subjective, or inner as well. What is not private belongs to external reality, whether public or intersubjective.

Interestingly enough, although quite expectably, Hume was entirely devoted to the distinction between inner, psychical or subjective and external, objective reality. For pulling the ground under the idea of causality and employing the concept of cognitive transference, he states that it is a “great propensity” of our mind “to spread itself on external objects, and to conjoin with them any internal impressions, which they occasion” (*Treatise* I, iii, 14, p. 217). According to Hume (1969), such a transference is certainly illusory, illegitimate, fictional, or absurd, making a “false philosophy,” as he writes:

What! the efficacy of causes lie in the determination of the mind! As if causes did not operate entirely independent of the mind, and wou’d not continue their operation, even tho’ there was no mind existent to contemplate them, or reason concerning them. Thought may well depend on causes for its operation, but not causes on thought. This is the reverse of the order of nature, and make that secondary, which is really primary. ... If we remove the power from one cause, we must ascribe it to another: But to remove it from all causes, and bestow it on being, that in no way related to the cause or effect, but by perceiving them, is a gross absurdity, and contrary to the most certain principles of human reason. ... when ... we make the terms of power and efficacy signify something, of which we have a clear idea, and which is incompatible with those objects, to which we apply it, obscurity and error begin then to take place, and we are led astray by a false philosophy. This is the case, when we *transfer* the determination of the thought to external objects, and suppose any real intelligible connexion betwixt them; that being a quality, which can only belong to the mind that considers them. (*Treatise* I, iii, 14, pp. 218–219; my italics)³

³ Cf. *Treatise*, I, iii, 12, pp. 184, 188, 190; 13, pp. 197–198.

All the illegitimacy of causal inferences lies in not distinguishing between inner, psychical, or subjective associations (although being felt as necessary for us) and external occurrences. Habit and experience are personal, subjective matters, and, the Humean philosopher argues, we are not entitled to transfer them to the objective reality in itself, existing independently outside of our impressions and inner reality. The reason for this is that our inner, psychical, or subjective reality is *both distinct and separate* from the objective, external reality. This is sufficient for converting the Humean argument against personal identity into a one *for* it. Thus, the identity of each psychical reality, although merely as a bundle of perceptions lacking, as it were, any intrinsic unity, must be well secured along the lines of this Humean consideration. The converted Humean concept of personal identity or, as we will soon realize, personal unity makes a difference not only with respect to external reality but also to other minds, other bundles of perceptions. Each person is distinct and separate from any other persons as well as external reality in general. Nothing can be transferred from one bundle of perceptions to another such bundle or to external objective reality. Otherwise, the indispensable difference between subjective associations and objective, necessary connections, if existed, would have been canceled. Otherwise, all of Hume's argument against the idea of causality and other so-called necessary, objective relations must fail.

We must face now an unexpected result: Hume's rule that distinctness leads to separation does not practically hold for anything within any inner, psychical reality. Although each of our perceptions is distinct, we are entirely unable to separate any of them from the rest of the bundle of perceptions and transfer it to another bundle. All the perceptions of a bundle of perceptions, however distinct and separable, are of *one and the same* inner reality, inaccessible from without. Hence, quite unexpectedly, they are inseparable from their bundle of perceptions. Even with no intrinsic unity or necessary connections, even without one and the same consciousness that comprises them all, they all share a common ground of one and the same inner reality, entirely distinct and separate from any other reality.

Because we already have ground enough to introduce the converted Humean argument *for* personal identity or unity, let me formally phrase it as follows before elaborating on it:

1. Suppose that each mind consists of a temporal succession of perceptions.
2. Each perception in such a succession is distinct from the others.
3. Each perception in it is privately accessible to that mind alone; namely, each such perception refers or relates to all the others within the mind in a singular way, categorically different from its relationality to other mind(s) or to external reality.
4. Private, psychical accessibility is the exclusive characteristic of minds as subjects or persons.
5. Hence (by 3 and 4), from this step on, whenever "mind" is mentioned, it can be substituted by "person" or "subject."
6. Hence (by 3), each mind (person) consists of an inner reality, inaccessible from without, which, unless under illusion or the like, is necessarily distinct and separate from external, spatial reality and from any other mind (person) as well ("inner" here bears no spatial sense).

7. Hence (by 6), nothing is transferable from one mind (person) to the other or to external reality, unless under illusion or the like.
8. Hence (by 7), the distinction of any perception from any other within a particular mind by no means leads to separation from that mind; nothing within it is separable from it.
9. Each mind's private accessibility (by 4) and untransferability (by 7) are sufficient for securing the distinction and separation of each person from any other person and the external reality as well.
10. Hence (by 9), the distinction and separation of each mind (person) secure personal *identity*.
11. Each mind's singular relationality of each perception to the others (by 3), all sharing one and the same inner reality (by 6) from which nothing is separable (by 8), secures personal *unity*.
12. Hence (by 10 and 11), each subject or person, however dissociative s/he may be, enjoys personal identity and unity; namely, all the perceptions, distinctions, or details of each mind take part in one and the same inner, psychical reality and cannot take part in another inner, psychical reality or else in the external reality.
13. Hence (by 12), we are capable of distinguishing, although not separating (by 8), the self or the person in question from his or her perceptions, parts, or even "personalities" or alters (to be explained below, as the phenomenon of multiple personality definitely demonstrates). We have thus a distinct notion of the self or the person in question.

Elaborating on this argument, let us begin with some comments. First, at step 3 above, we were allowed already to introduce the concept of "person" or "subject" instead of "mind," for psychical, private accessibility has to do with person(s) or subject(s) alone. It is a unique characteristic of persons or subjects. We are thus allowed to mention or use such concepts, although the veridicality of the idea of personal identity or unity has not been established yet, which has to be done by further, later steps. Secondly, although Hume is skeptical about the existence of the external world or material reality, he is not skeptical about the distinction–separation of any inner, psychical reality from all there is outside of it. He does not interfere in the debate between idealism and materialism. A Humean skeptic has no answer to the question whether our simple, most basic impressions are also the building blocks of the external world or only psychical "representations" of material facts, existing without us, of which we know nothing as they are in themselves. Only the impressions are accessible to us, nothing beyond them. Knowing nothing beyond them means that our mind has its own limits, borders, or boundaries, beyond which nothing is transferable. What is inner or psychical for any of us is so for any Humean philosopher, and the crucial distinction–separation between inner and external reality is necessarily maintained, without which impressions would be merely impossible, losing all their special, indispensable standing. Thus, a Humean philosopher has to distinguish between inner and external reality (even if s/he has no evidence as to the independent existence of the latter), which are distinct and separated by a boundary that no transference can pass or eliminate, unless in a form of illusion. According to

Hume, my impressions draw the boundaries of my mind, and my impressions cannot belong or be transferred to another mind as much as they cannot belong or be transferred to any reality without my mind. Only owing to illusion or “false philosophy” do we mistake our perceptions for external beings.

Private, psychical accessibility is sufficient for securing personal identity. Even if each of us were merely a bundle of distinct perceptions, each of which were separable from the others, each of these bundles must consist of its own singular perceptions, absolutely untransferable to any other bundle of perceptions. However dissociative a person may be, say, may have a multiple personality, her or his inner, psychical reality is absolutely inaccessible from without and none of its parts or details is transferable, unless under an illusion. Personal, private accessibility secures personal identity, although any of our perceptions is distinct from the others and although one has no simple impression of one’s personal identity. The untransferability of what is inner, psychical – of one’s perceptions – is sufficient for securing personal identity.

The most intriguing phenomenon of multiple personality – the existence of several personalities or subjects (“selves,” alters, and so on) within one person – has bothered psychologists and philosophers alike.⁴ Multiple personality is not only a psychopathological subject matter or psychical disorder, it also raises philosophical questions, which have much to do with the problem of personal identity.⁵ Whether multiple personality is an iatrogenic (physician-produced) fiction or a real psychical disintegration or dissociation, pathological or not, it is worthy of serious philosophical discussion. Psychopathology aside, the multifariousness and flexibility of human personality make a special philosophical question. Is each of us *a* person under one and the same personal identity or a psychical subject bundling up, however loosely, several personalities or subjects? As if each of us is, to borrow Hume’s words, merely “a republic or commonwealth, in which the several members are united by the reciprocal ties of government and subordination, and give rise to other persons, who propagate the same republic in the incessant changes of its parts” (*Treatise* I, iv, 6, p. 309)? Does multifarious personality contribute to creativity? What is the difference between multifarious creative personality and multiple personality as dissociative identity disorder? I attempted to answer these questions elsewhere on the basis of the ideas of psychical singularity and private accessibility.⁶

I would like now to utilize the phenomenon of multiple personality for the purposes of my Humean argument *for* personal identity or unity. Suppose that a multiple, Sybil, is used to appear under different alters or personalities. Some of her alters are capable of misleading some who meet her, yet handling all the difficulties in recognizing her, she is still usually recognized. Each of her alters changes her behavior, posture, talking, and the like quite dramatically. Each does not know about

⁴ See Berman 1981; Lilienfeld 1995, pp. 170–194; Wilkes 1988; Braude 1991; Dennett 1991; Hacking 1995.

⁵ Consider, for instance, Elster 1986; Parfit 1987; Zemach 1992, pp. 167–200.

⁶ My answers (Gilead 2003, pp. 77–95) are integrated within a novel modal metaphysics of mine, entitled “panenmentalism”; the principles of which are introduced in Gilead 1999.

the existence of the other, yet each of them knows about her. After each attack of the disorder, Sybil remembers nothing of it or of the alter. All that remains is a severe feeling of absence, of losing a part of her waking life, as if she were immersed in a deep sleep. No one can have any contact or communication with any of the alters except by means of her presence. Sybil is an indispensable medium for the appearance as well as the existence of any of her personalities—alters. Without her, whether she is conscious of it or not, not one of her alters could be, appear, and be communicable with us. Any contact with any of her alters can be only by means of a contact with her. Although there is no any conscious connection between her alters, no doubt should exist that each one of them is a part of her as a person or self, without whom not one of these alters could exist. Ontologically, each of them, each of her “personalities,” must be a part of one and the same person, however dissociative or disintegrative. All her alters share one and the same inner, psychical reality, which is inaccessible from without. None of them consists of a separate inner reality, a psychical reality of *its* own. Each of them has no independent existence of *itself*. They are all of one and the same *self*, Sybil, however distinct from her. Hence, at least in such cases of multiple personality, we do have a notion of the mind as “distinct from the particular perceptions,” very much contrary to Hume (*Treatise*, “Appendix,” p. 677). Sybil, who is the self in this case, about whom we have a clear and distinct notion, is distinguishable, although absolutely inseparable, from her particular alters as well from her particular perceptions.

Along the lines of the converted Humean argument, each of the alters is definitely distinct from all the others as well as from Sybil as their self. Yet, none of them is ontologically separable from her self. In the case of psychical inner distinctions, no distinction entails separation, for all inner distinctions constitute together one and the same inner reality, each distinction of which is inseparable from it. By contrast, the distinctness or distinguishability of each person’s bundle of alters from any other person’s bundle of alters necessarily leads to separation, as much as the distinctness of any inner reality entails its separation from any other inner reality and from external, objective reality as well.

Hume has thus to break, to some extent, or to qualify his famous or notorious rule that distinctness necessarily implies separability. Not in every case does distinctness imply separability. Any case of distinctness in which transferability is impossible implies separability, whereas any distinction within the same mind does not imply any separation from it. It is impossible to transfer any of Sybil’s alters to another person. Although any of them is distinct from her, none of them is separable from her.

To avoid any misunderstanding, I should add immediately that although no alter has access to the other, none of them makes an independent personality. Think of the unconscious parts of one’s mind. Although one’s consciousness has no access to any of these parts, they pertain to one’s personality, not to any other personality. Thus, there must be a great difference between the inaccessibility of one’s consciousness to one’s unconscious parts and one’s inaccessibility to other minds. The conscious and unconscious parts of a person pertain to that person alone because of his or her singularity, whereas the consciousness and the unconscious of another person rest upon another psychical singularity. It is not the body of Sybil that secures her personal identity; it is rather the singularity of her mind.

More important, our Humean converted argument *for* personal identity or unity meets Hume's reconsideration of the personal unity problem in the *Treatise's* "Appendix" according to which "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" (ibid., p. 677). The private accessibility of each of us to her or his own mind well meets such feeling. All the more, it meets the following impression of personal identity: "'Tis evident, that the idea, or rather impression of ourselves is always intimately present with us, and that our consciousness gives us so lively a conception of our own person, that 'tis not possible to imagine, that any thing can in this particular go beyond it'" (*Treatise* II, i, 11, p. 368).⁷ This intimate accessibility is the basis for our subjective yet entirely reliable feeling about the unity and identity of our mind: All that is there is accessible only to the singular being who is the person in question. However sympathetic we may feel to other persons, "related to ourselves" (ibid.), it is obviously different from the way we relate to ourselves, each of whom enjoys personal unity and identity. One cannot have such a feeling or impression about anything outside of oneself as a person, outside of one's mind. Thus, as I see it, the difference between the idea of substance and that of the unity of the mind is maintained even more clearly in the "Appendix." Private accessibility, each person's accessibility to his or her own mind, is the principle that Hume searched for so desperately: "All my hopes vanish, when I come to explain the principles, that unite our successive perceptions in our thought or consciousness" (*Treatise's* "Appendix," pp. 677–8). Note that my solution to this problem explains the unity in question *without* ignoring the Humean inconsistency of the following principles: (1) All our distinct perceptions are distinct existences; (2) the mind never perceives any real connection among distinct existences (ibid., p. 678). Existing within one and the same inner, psychical reality, they maintain its unity side by side to the distinctness of any psychical detail or entity. We do not perceive the unity of our mind as that of substance, and the feeling we have about personal unity or identity is, in the end, our private, psychical accessibility. One has no such accessibility to anything outside of one's mind.

If I could give a Humean some advice, I would suggest the following: Perceive all the distinctions you can muster, mind only those that make any difference, and consider how each of them relates to the others. On the final account, each difference relates to all the others, for being different from something means to necessarily relate to that entity. Note especially that you have to relate to any of your perceptions, whether sensuous or reflective, in a unique way, categorically different from the way you relate to those of other person(s) or to external entities. Your access to your perceptions is private, as no one else has access to them. This is

⁷ See Penelhum's (2000, pp. 121–23) analysis of this passage. Penelhum mentions "my own sense of my own inner life, of myself as the bearer of comparable experiences. It is here set against the idea of the other as the bearer of his or her distinct but presumably similar life-experiences" (ibid., p. 122). Yet, he seriously doubts whether the "special access" that one has to one's own perceptions may really lessen Hume's attack on the metaphysical self in *Treatise* I, iv, 6 (ibid.). I think that the converted Humean argument defeats that attack.

sufficient for securing personal unity or identity. In this sense, each of your perceptions is unique to you, as a singular being.

In sum, however severely dissociative a bundle of perceptions may be, say, an extremely multiple person, it is impossible to separate anything from such an inner reality and transfer it to another bundle of perceptions or to any external reality. Any bundle of perceptions, however dissociative, enjoys to this or that extent a unity of one and the same inner, psychical reality and, thus, a personal identity. It enjoys an identity of a person, existing distinctly and separately from any other person and the external reality as well.

As an illusion or a mistake, transference, psychical or cognitive, is certainly possible. Hume's epistemology and psychology explain quite well such illusions or mistakes. Were his argument against the veridicality of the idea of personal identity or unity valid, this would have pulled the ground from under his crucial distinction between transferred images and objective reality, the blurring of which leads to illusions or mistakes. Transferring our images to objective or intersubjective reality, we mistake them for what really exists without them. No Humean philosopher can accept such results, disastrous especially for his/her refutation of our idea of causality. The subjective–personal must be distinct and separable from the intersubjective or interpersonal and the objective. Otherwise, not much room remains for any sober or sane thought, Humean or otherwise. Otherwise, illusions or mistaking the subjective for the intersubjective or the objective appear to be inescapable.

Let us turn now to the following argument by Parfit:

Because we ascribe thoughts to thinkers, we can truly claim that thinkers exist. But we cannot deduce, from the content of our experiences, that a thinker is a separately existing entity. And ... because we are not separately existing entities, we could fully describe our thoughts without claiming that they have thinkers. We could fully describe our experiences, and the connections between them, without claiming that they are had by a subject of experiences. We could give what I call an *impersonal* description. (Parfit 1987, p. 225)

If I am not mistaken, this is a Humean argument,⁸ which by means of the method that I have taken can also be converted into an argument for personal identity or unity and personal description as well. From our experiences, including their contents, we are not in any need to deduce, but we immediately, directly know that the way we relate to them, by means of private accessibility, is categorically different from the way we relate to the experience of other persons or to anything in the external reality. The privately accessible relationality of all my psychical details or parts makes me one and the same person, distinct and separable from any other

⁸ Although Parfit finds Hume's view inadequate, he defends "a view that, in the relevant aspects, follows Hume" (Parfit 1987, p. 139). The inadequacy Parfit mentions has to do mainly with the ethical, moral, and psychological implications of Hume's metaphysical view on personal identity, which is basically quite close to Parfit's. Sydney Shoemaker refers to the analogy with Hume's argument, "except that Parfit never suggests that there is anything 'fictional' about personal identity" (Shoemaker 1997, p. 138). Of special interest is Shoemaker's response to Hume's problem of personal unity and identity (Shoemaker 1996).

persons as well as from external, material reality. Normally and veridically, we experience or sense our inner reality as a distinct and separately existing whole, comprising all its psychical parts, which could not exist without it. Normally and veridically, one experiences oneself as a person existing distinctly and separately from other persons and external objects as well. The veridicality of such experience appears to me beyond any reasonable doubt, metaphysical or otherwise. Only under illusion and the like can we experience ourselves as Humean or Parfitian bundles of perceptions or thoughts, lacking any personal identity or unity. No person, however dissociative or multiple, is merely a commonwealth or republic of “personalities” as its members.

To do any justice to such an intricate and subtle theory as suggested by Parfit, one needs much more world and time, which we have not, let alone in a paper. Yet, let me say this: Leaving anything psychical to an impersonal, external reality in which everything is spatiotemporally, publicly located, Parfit actually suggests abolishing any inner reality, inaccessible from without. Abolishing any such reality means to eradicate any psychical reality. Externalizing the psychical means not only to dispense with selves, persons, and subjects but no less with the psychical itself.⁹ Psychical entities, say, perceptions, can be privately accessible from within a psychical reality but by no means from without. Perceptions that are externally or publicly accessible or those that are not only privately accessible are not entitled to be considered psychical at all. No such perception can exist, insofar as any perception is psychical. If thoughts or anything psychical exist, the inner realities “housing” them must be distinct and separable from the rest of the world. In other words, thoughts, unlike material facts, do not occupy any space,¹⁰ let alone public, objective space, at any public, objective time. They are real as much as spatiotemporally located entities are real, but their reality is quite different; namely, they are parts of inner, private realities. However distinct and distinguishable one from the other, our thoughts are parts of such realities. Instead of choosing the inner, psychical reality, of which a person is made, to serve as a locus of relationality and accessibility for the existence of distinct thoughts, Parfit leaves them to external reality. Nevertheless, he thus puts them in the wrong institution. If distinct thoughts require a reality to house them, external reality cannot serve as such a “home.” Thoughts or anything psychical dwell only in a person, self, or subject. Or, thoughts or anything psychical do not constitute any external, public or intersubjective reality; instead, they constitute an inner reality, which makes a person, self, or subject. Thus, if distinct thoughts exist, a separate, substantial thinker must exist, without whom

⁹ Shoemaker criticizes Parfit over this matter on quite different grounds: “it will be impossible to have a reduction of personhood and personal identity without having a reduction of mentality as well—the impersonal description will have to be in physical or functional terms” (ibid., p. 139). This is indeed one of the troubles with Parfit’s impersonal description, and it may reflect on Hume too (see ibid.).

¹⁰ Distinguishing and separating internal (psychical) entities or objects from external (physical or material) ones, Hume makes clear that each perception or other psychical entity “*may exist, and yet be no where*” (*Treatise* I, iv, 5, p. 284), and that “all our perceptions are not susceptible of a local union, either with what is extended or unextended” (ibid., p. 298). This is certainly compatible with the converted Humean argument but by no means with Parfit’s view.

such thoughts would not have existed at all. Parfit's argument may defeat Cartesian thought, but it cannot save the above Humean argument from conversion. I also believe that, like Hume's argument, it cannot survive the Kantian counterargument, but this should be left to a separate discussion.¹¹

As I have shown above, only personal, personal-related, or subjective experiences, perceptions, impressions, ideas, thoughts, feelings, emotions, volitions, or any psychical entities exist. Any psychical entity, therefore, cannot be transferred from one psychical, inner reality to another, unless under an illusion. Parfit's impersonal description is bound to fail. No complete description of the world, of reality, is possible unless it also includes inner, psychical, subjective realities, inaccessible from without, each of which makes a person. Reality as a whole is made of subjective–personal, intersubjective–interpersonal, and objective realities, none of which is reducible to the other. Furthermore, objective and intersubjective accessibilities are impossible unless private, subjective, or personal accessibility is possible, as much as no phenomenon or experience is possible unless subjects, to whom phenomena appear and who experience things, are possible. In addition, phenomena can appear only to subjects not as “impersonal experiences” but as persons, each of whom is a private reality, accessible only from within. Moreover, each aforementioned accessibility is *for* subjects who are persons. Can we dispense with any of these accessibilities? Certainly not. To have objective reality, a reality existing outside of persons, persons must exist, otherwise the epithet “objective” would lose all its meaning. Private, interpersonal, and objective accessibilities are necessarily correlative. With no existing persons, the world would have turned into a huge stream of facts, objects, events, experiences, perceptions, impressions, ideas, thoughts, emotions, volitions, and the like, each of which is transferable or transportable to other places at other times in the same total stream of reality. Such is not the case at all insofar as psychical matters are concerned.

The metaphysical conclusions of this article bear crucial ethical and moral implications. Contrary to Parfit and others, I am devoted to a metaphysics of personal identity as well as of the singularity of each person, which, on the basis of the universal relationality of each singular being, does imply universal moral values (Gilead 2003, 2005). This metaphysics, panenmentalism, ascribes absolute value to each person. I cannot even begin to elaborate on that subject in this paper.

If no mistakes have befallen my arguments so far and if no relevant phenomenal fact has escaped my attention, Humean argument against the idea of personal identity or unity must fail. Moreover, the method that I have taken converts it into a valid argument *for* personal identity or unity. Finally, I have shown that Humean argument against it should not be considered coherent, for insofar as anything within inner, psychical reality is concerned, unlike anything in external reality, distinction does not lead to separation or transference. Thus, the Humean argument against personal identity or unity fails, whereas the Humean argument for it is valid and sound.

¹¹ Simon Blackburn's analysis is especially interesting as to the analogy with Hume's argument as well as to the question whether Kant's counterargument also refutes Parfit's argument (Blackburn 1997, pp. 183–191).

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