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Saul Traiger

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HUME ON FINDING AN IMPRESSION OF THE SELF¹

1. Introduction

Descartes held that reflection on "the commonest matters", for example our recognition of a piece of wax, reveals our more fundamental awareness of ourselves.

And further, if the [notion or] perception of the wax has seemed to me clearer and more distinct, not only after the sight or the touch, but also after many other causes have rendered it quite manifest to me, with how much more [evidence] and distinctness must it be said that I now know myself, since all the reasons which contribute to the knowledge of wax, or any other body whatever, are yet better proofs of the nature of my mind!²

Even if I only seem to see a piece of wax, when I have no eyes to see and there is no wax before me, I still know something. I know myself. When I judge that the wax is soft I am aware of myself as so judging. When I judge that the wax is hard, I am aware that I judge it so. I cannot have knowledge of external bodies without having certain knowledge of myself, because even my mere beliefs reveal my self-knowledge. Descartes exploited the insight that he is more intimately conscious of his own mind than anything else to establish that he is "a mind or a soul ... a thing which thinks".³

Philosophers who did not share Descartes' rationalism still held the view that we are intimately conscious of ourselves, and that our awareness of other things enhances our self-awareness, and is epistemically dependent on it. Butler claimed that our awareness of ourselves was beyond doubt, since to doubt that awareness presupposes that we already have it. Whenever we "turn our thoughts upon ourselves" we have

"certain conviction, which necessarily and every moment, rises within us" of our personal identity.⁴

In A Treatise of Human Nature Hume argues against both the intelligibility of the notion of immaterial substance, and the claim that we have simple awareness of our selves independently of our awareness of other objects. When Hume turns his attention squarely to the topic of personal identity in the Treatise, he has already dismissed the rationalist notion of immaterial substance or soul. He attacks the view which tempted rationalists and empiricists alike, that our awareness of ourselves is distinct from our feeling and thinking, but is often enhanced by such experience.

Hume's argument has been and continues to be influential. Recent Wittgenstein interpretation suggests that the Tractatus discussion of the unencounterability of the self in experience is directly borrowed from Hume.⁵ Chisholm's views concerning self-awareness are motivated in part by problems he locates in Hume's negative argument. Chisholm argues that the report that he finds no impression of self commits Hume to the existence of a subject of experience.⁶ Most recently, Nozick suggests that Hume did not consider the possibility that our awareness of ourselves might be isolated by employing special techniques, such as yoga or meditation.⁷

In this paper I will focus on the passage in the Treatise where Hume reports his failure to find an impression of the self and presents this as an argument against the theory of self-awareness which many philosophers found irresistible. Although Hume's argument has been influential and is often discussed in contemporary literature, the Treatise passage in which it occurs appears confused. The confusion is cleared up only when it is seen that Hume really presents two

different arguments against the view that we are intimately conscious of ourselves. Finally I suggest how Hume's actual arguments pave the way for his positive views.

2. The Difficulty

Hume's discussion of personal identity in the Treatise begins with his consideration of the view of "some philosophers, who imagine we are every moment intimately conscious of what we call our SELF."⁸ After characterizing the view, Hume rejects it, having found that we have no idea of self "after the manner it is here explain'd". The unnamed philosophers, as Hume understands them, take the idea of the self to be a simple idea. For Hume, a simple idea can only "pass as clear and intelligible" (T 251) if an impression from which it is derived can be found.⁹ So the "manner" in which we must get the idea of self is by antecedently having a simple impression. Hume does not find a simple impression of self, and so he rejects the view that there is a corresponding idea. But there are two importantly different ways in which Hume might fail to find an impression of self. Either he merely fails to find it when he reflects on his past and present impressions, or philosophical reflection rules out the possibility of anyone having a simple impression of self. Clearly only a failure of the second sort would be sufficient to rule out the possibility of the idea derived from that impression.

Does Hume reject theories which claim a simple idea of the self because they are incoherent, or does he think that there just happens to be no evidence of a simple impression from which the corresponding idea could be derived? There is textual evidence for each answer, but neither seems satisfactory. Hume can be interpreted as levelling the strong objection, that

there could be no impression of self. But then the evidence summoned to back it up is not compelling, since Hume allows that others might find an impression of self, even though he does not. Alternatively, Hume can be taken as pressing the weaker objection, that there just is no impression of self. But this is problematic as well, since Hume says that the position cannot be maintained "without a manifest contradiction and absurdity" (T 251). Thus on the first reading, Hume denies the possibility of an impression of self, while on the second he allows that very possibility. The text appears to support both readings, and we are left with a difficulty. If Hume proves that there could not be an impression of self, why does he subsequently bother to look for it? And how can he allow that others might find it? It is tempting to conclude that Hume was hopelessly confused when he tried to refute the view that we are intimately conscious of ourselves.

The opening pages of the personal identity section contain vacillating claims about how the view of some philosophers fails. Hume first rejects the claimed idea of the self because the suggestion that there is such an idea is incoherent. After characterizing the theory which holds that we perceive our selves directly, Hume says:

Unluckily, all these positive assertions are contrary to that very experience, which is pleaded for them, nor have we any idea of self after the manner it is here explain'd. For from what impression cou'd this idea be deriv'd? (T 251)

Just this question cannot be answered without a manifest contradiction and absurdity. Hume is not merely claiming that we don't find an idea of the self. Rather, the claim that we find the idea from an impression is assessed as contradictory and absurd.

There could not be an idea "after the manner ... here explained", i.e. derived from an impression.

In the passage which immediately follows, however, Hume allows that we could find an impression of self by reflection. But when he reflects he finds that in fact no impression of self appears.

For my part, when I enter most intimately into what I call myself, I always stumble on some particular perception or other, of heat or cold, light or shade, love or hatred, pain or pleasure. I never catch myself at any time without a perception, and never can observe any thing but the perception. (T 252)

Hume never finds anything but particular perceptions, and none of these are perceptions of the self. It is just a fact about Hume's experience that among his simple perceptions there is no perception of self. Nothing here suggests that one couldn't stumble upon such a perception.

But if Hume is allowing the possibility of a perception of self, then concluding that there is no such perception just because he is unable to locate it is at best jumping the gun. Maybe Hume isn't looking hard enough. Or perhaps he is not a representative introspector. Even if no one has found an impression of self, it doesn't follow that the theory which traces the idea of the self to a simple continuous impression is incoherent.

Hume appears confused. The evidence he presents is too weak to discredit the possibility of an idea of the self. His second argument allows the possibility of an idea of the self, but he has already called the view absurd and contradictory. Other passages add to the confusion. Hume appears to acknowledge that if someone were to claim a perception of self, there would be no way to refute him.

All I can allow him is, that he may be in the right as well as I, and that we are essentially different in this particular. He may, perhaps, perceive something simple and continu'd, which he calls himself; tho' I am certain there is no such principle in me. (T 252)

It is not clear from this passage whether Hume is really allowing that someone might find a perception of the self. All he allows is that another might find something simple and continued which he calls himself. Hume may be sceptical about whether what is found is really a perception of the self. Interpreted in this way, Hume could consistently maintain that there couldn't be a perception of the self while still allowing that others may find something which they mistakenly take to be such a perception.

Selective reading reveals still other passages in which Hume's intentions are opaque. Consider the passage in which Hume tells us what an impression of self must be like:

If any impression gives rise to the idea of self, that impression must continue invariably the same, thro' the whole course of our lives; since self is suppos'd to exist after that manner. But there is no impression constant and invariable. (T 251)

The opacity lies not in the requirements of an impression of self, but in Hume's claim that there is no such impression. Again, by saying that there is no impression, he could be expressing either his own failure to find it or the conceptual impossibility of a perception which meets the stated conditions.

What is clear is that Hume is making explicit a condition for a perception to count as a perception of self: A perception of self must continue invariably the same over an entire lifetime. Hume's point is simply that there is no impression which meets this

condition in experience. But is that because we just don't find it, or because it is ruled out on conceptual grounds?

3. The Difficulty Resolved

I think that the two readings of Hume's objection can be reconciled. I will show that Hume does not (but could, conceivably) find what he calls a simple and continued impression of the self among his perceptions, but that Hume could not isolate a simple impression of the self which is constant and invariable through his life-time, and which alone gives rise to the idea of the self. Resolving the apparent difficulty thus depends on recognizing that Hume is really attacking two distinct views, one which is merely false, the other confused and absurd.

Hume first attacks the view that an idea of the self can be derived from a constant and invariable perception alone. Hume provides this argument to establish the impossibility of there being a simple impression which is constant and invariable. Hume has a second argument which is weaker. Hume fails to find a simple and continued impression of the self in his experience. The first argument rejects the claimed derivation of the idea of self from an isolated simple impression. The second rejects the claimed availability of an idea of the self within the changing scene of one's experience. Recognizing these as distinct arguments eliminates the apparent confusion in these often cited passages from the Treatise.

In a passage quoted above, Hume argues that since some philosophers take the self to exist constantly and invariably, the impression from which the idea of the self is derived would have to be a constant and invariable impression. Thus they require that there be one simple impression which exists

throughout one's lifetime. It is claimed that from this one impression alone we get the idea of a perfectly identical self, that is, of a self which endures without change. But the framework of Hume's theory of impressions and ideas does not allow the possibility of a simple impression which is constant and invariable. Hume doesn't merely fail to find a constant and invariable impression of self. He shows that there couldn't be such an impression.

To understand Hume's conceptual argument, we must focus on what constancy and invariability mean in this context. In "Of scepticism with regard to the senses" Hume appeals to the notion of constancy to explain the difference between external existence and existence which depends on our perception. When impressions return to consciousness without change after an interruption, the perceptions are constant. Hume's example of constant impressions is well known:

My bed and table, my books and papers, present themselves in the same uniform manner, and change not upon account of any interruption in my seeing or perceiving them. (T 194-5)

The constant impressions of the table, books, and paper are qualitatively the same after an interval in which they are not present to the mind. Constancy in this context involves interruption.

In the context of the opening pages of the personal identity section Hume's use of constancy is different from qualitative sameness after an interruption. Hume says that an impression which gives rise to the idea of self "must continue invariably the same, thro' the whole course of our lives" (T 251). He then states his conclusion, that "there is no impression constant and invariable." So in this context, a constant and invariable impression is one which occupies a lifetime without changing. Here

constancy does not involve interruption. A constant and invariable perception is continuous.

The requirements of constancy and invariability are intimately connected. Invariability requires that what we are aware of when we observe ourselves cannot not change in any way. If it did, we would be stuck with a succession of perceptions, not a constant perception. In that case, no one perception would be responsible for the awareness of self. The theory would have to say how the relations among different perceptions give us our awareness of self. At that point a different view would emerge, one much closer to Hume's own.

The awareness of a perfectly identical self, a self which endures without change, cannot simply be a succession of awarenesses of self, since, according to Hume, successions which "make their appearance to the mind" are interrupted.¹⁰ Were we to have such a succession, there would be distinct impressions of self interrupted by intervening perceptions, and so we would not, at every moment, be aware of the self. To say that there is a constant and invariable perception of the self is to say that we are aware of the self's perfect identity. The awareness of the self is accounted for by the having of some one impression. Succession and change are ruled out, and so we must get the idea of an enduring unchanging self, that is, a perfectly identical self, from that one impression.

Hume is considering the view that we are certain of the perfect identity of the self, and that our certainty results from having a constant and invariable impression. In his discussion of time (T 36-7) Hume argues that we could not get the idea of duration from a single perception and that we cannot conceive of a single perception enduring.¹¹ Identity, for Hume, as "a medium betwixt unity and number" (T

201) requires both duration and lack of change, since lack of change alone gives us just the idea of unity, and duration alone gives us just the idea of number. But if we can only get the idea of duration from a succession of perceptions, then we cannot get the idea of an enduring self from any one perception. So a constant and invariable impression could not give rise to the idea of the self as identical over time.

We cannot with "propriety or exactness" (T 37) say that unchanging perceptions endure, but we are in the habit of saying just that, and in Part II, Sect. v, of Book I Hume attempts to account for this habit.¹² Hume says that it is an easy matter to account for our tendency to attribute duration to an unchangeable object:

But tho' it be impossible to shew the impression, from which the idea of time without a changeable existence is deriv'd; yet we can easily point out those appearances, which make us fancy we have that idea. (T 65)

We get the idea of "time without a changeable existence" when we perceive something unchanging amidst change. We may, for instance, perceive a chair placed in front of a functioning clock. The impression of the chair is uninterrupted and continuous. However, the impression of the chair doesn't endure -- it is a unitary object, not an enduring one. Unitary objects are not successions of perceptions. When we view the clock we notice change because we have a succession of different perceptions. We get the idea of time from the succession of non-qualitatively identical impressions of the clock, not from the unitary impression of the chair. Hume says that we consider the susceptibility of the chair to change as we experience the succession of background impressions. We notice that the chair could have changed between

first and second appearances as the clock did, and we thus attribute a fictitious duration to it.¹³

A constant and invariable impression of the self must be, like the perception of the chair, a unitary perception against a background of successive perceptions. A unitary perception of the self can only be said to endure by the attribution of a fictitious duration to it. Hume introduced some philosophers as believing that we are aware of the perfect identity of the self (T 251). He asks what one impression could be responsible for that awareness. Any positive answer will be absurd and contradictory. Since it is only by a fiction that we can apply the notion of duration to an unchanging object, the idea of the self cannot be derived from any one simple impression. No one impression could give us the awareness which some philosophers say we have. We need a succession of perceptions to come to think of something as enduring, and we need the notion of duration in order to think of something as identical. With respect to the claim of perfect identity from a constant and invariable impression, then, the view of some philosophers is absurd and contradictory.

The requirement that there be one perception of self which a person is always aware of rules out both change and interruption in the awareness. Other perceptions, "the strongest sensation, the most violent passion" (T 251) fix the impression of self more intensely, but are in no sense responsible for our having the impression in the first place. This contrasts with any reasonable account of our awareness of other objects, such as trees. The awareness of the same tree over time need not involve any one perception. The same tree can change radically over time. By claiming a single perception of self, the possibility of the self enduring change is ruled out.

So the absurdity to which the view falls prey does not infect all claims about identity, only claims which depend on there being a single impression from which the idea is derived.

Hume is not claiming that identity's being fictitious renders all accounts of identity incoherent. The incoherence results from the failure to recognize that the notion of identity can only be the result of a fiction. Hume's opponents insist that we can get the idea of self simply from a constant and invariable perception alone. But, according to Hume, alone no perceptions can be constant and invariable.

When we take a further look at the Treatise, we see that Hume denies the possibility of an impression of self explicitly:

Pain and pleasure, grief and joy, passions and sensations succeed each other, and never all exist at the same time. It cannot, therefore, be from any of these impressions, or from any other, that the idea of self is deriv'd; and consequently there is no such idea. (T 251-2)

No one of those simple impressions could give rise to the idea of the self. They all involve succession and change. But this is compatible with our having an idea of the self which is not derived solely from a constant and invariable impression. Those who claim that we have an idea of the self say that one can only get the idea by coming upon it in experience, not by trying to find a simple impression from which it is derived. Thus it is natural for Hume to turn to the question of whether there is a simple perception of the self in the ebb and flow of one's actual experience.

Hume takes the claimed idea of the self to be a simple idea. But simplicity is only a necessary condition for a perception being a perception of the self. The perception must continue, at least while we

are conscious. The claim that there is a continued impression, a constant and invariable perception, was incoherent on the supposition that it could exist alone and by itself give rise to the idea of the self. But once we are permitted to look at all of our experience for the impression, we will find many perceptions to which we attribute duration. There are many continuous perceptions among the fleeting ones. The attribution of duration to these perceptions is fictitious, but not incoherent. Hume's second argument attacks the claim that there is what he calls a "simple and continued" perception of self, a perception to which we attribute a fictitious duration.

Hume thinks that it is merely false that there is an enduring perception of self. There could be a simple and continued perception of self among the succession of perceptions of our lifetime. The perception of self would not occur alone, because, as we have seen, continuity requires a background of change to give us the idea of duration. Some philosophers say that we have this perception. The problem is just that Hume does not find it. His simple impressions, e.g. of heat, cold, pain, and pleasure are not impressions of the self. They are impressions of heat, cold, pain and pleasure. And a complex impression won't do.

When Hume surveys his own mental landscape he concludes that he is unable to find a simple impression of himself. One thing he has noticed is that he is not always conscious, that his perceptions are sometimes "removed ... by sound sleep" (T 252). But the fact that we are sometimes without any perceptions is not introduced as evidence against the claimed continuity of the perception of self. The philosophers who hold that we are at every moment conscious of ourselves do not hold the false view that we are always awake. Rather, they hold that every moment during which we are

conscious is a moment during which we are intimately conscious of ourselves. Hume's point is simply that when we "remove" our particular perceptions, either in sound sleep or death, there is, of course, nothing left which would count as our idea of the self.

The actual discontinuity of human experience is not relevant to the first argument, as an objection to the claim of a constant and invariable impression, an impression which is supposed to continue for a lifetime. That view cannot get off the ground, since an unchangeable impression alone could never give us the idea of an enduring self at all, even for the shortest temporal interval we can imagine. So empirical evidence about sleep is irrelevant to a view for which there could be no empirical evidence.

Hume raises the strong objection before he raises the weak one. He says that there cannot be a constant and invariable perception of the self, and in the next paragraph he says he just fails to find a simple and continued impression of the self. Were Hume attacking a single view, the order of the objections would be quite puzzling. Why would he reject a view as absurd and contradictory only to go on and allow the possibility of that same view being true in the very next paragraph? If the order of the arguments had been reversed, we could read the different objections as appearing dialectically, with Hume offering first a weak objection, and then a strong objection.

Precisely because Hume is considering two different claims about our awareness of ourselves, the problem of the order of Hume's arguments does not arise. Yet the views Hume is rejecting are related in a way which explains why Hume proceeds as he does. First Hume finds the claimed existence of a constant and invariable perception of the self to involve a manifest contradiction and absurdity. He shows that

there could not be a constant and invariable perception which alone gives us the idea of self, and then he argues against the weaker claim that in our experience at large, where we have both continuous and discontinuous perceptions, there are no perceptions of the self. A continuous perception which alone gives us the idea of the self is impossible. A continuous perception against the background of experience is possible, but not found.

The opening pages of the Treatise discussion of personal identity appear to find Hume levelling both strong and weak charges against those who claim that we have intimate consciousness of the self. This is precisely what is going on. But this discovery is only a difficulty if one fails to appreciate the underlying texture of Hume's argument. The objections are not to one thesis, but to two distinct theses. Hume's own failure to find a simple and continued impression of self is only employed to refute the weaker thesis, the claimed existence of a simple and continued impression of self. The stronger thesis, which claims a constant and invariable impression which is solely responsible for our having the idea of self, requires a stronger argument, which Hume does provide.

These arguments prepare the way for Hume's own theory of personal identity. Once it is seen that there is "no single power of the soul, which remains unalterably the same" (T 253) we are forced to recognize that we have just "different perceptions, which succeed each other with an inconceivable rapidity, and are in a perpetual flux and movement" (T 252). The false views do violence to this fact about the nature of our experience of our selves, that there is "properly no simplicity in it at one time, nor identity in different" (T 253). There is no identity:

no one impression can, by itself, be said to endure. There is no simplicity: in our changing experience we find no simple perception to which the idea of self applies.

In light of this we can understand Hume's earlier remark, that "self or person is not any one impression, but that to which our several impressions and ideas are suppos'd to have a reference" (T 251). This claim precedes the two arguments which I have elaborated. Appearances to the contrary, it is not an argument by itself, but the conclusion of his two arguments, stated in advance. Hume's arguments attempt to show that the idea of the self cannot be accounted for from any one impression, either by itself, or in concert with the rest of our experience.

It might be objected that there is no textual evidence for the claim that Hume is vacillating between rejecting the claimed awareness of the self as merely false and rejecting it as absurd and contradictory. An alternative interpretation is that Hume is offering only conceptual objections to the view of some philosophers. Hume appears to allow that others may find a simple and continued self. But he also says that he can no longer reason with someone who claims to have such a notion of himself. This suggests that those who claim an idea of self hold a conceptually confused view. There is no sense in trying to reason with someone who is so confused. This would explain why Hume sarcastically remarks:

But setting aside some metaphysicians of this kind, I may venture to affirm of the rest of mankind, that they are nothing but a bundle or collection of different perceptions... (T 252)

On this interpretation Hume isn't really allowing the possibility of a simple and continued perception of the

self, he is just registering his failure to convince some metaphysicians.¹⁴

Hume does not vacillate between strong and weak objections, but that is not because he is providing only the strong objection, as was just suggested. Rather, Hume offers distinct arguments against distinct claims, rather than strong and weak arguments against one claim, or just strong arguments against one claim. Hume's inability to reason with metaphysicians who claim a simple perception of self is the result of his disagreement with them about the data of consciousness. One of Hume's arguments is the report of his own attempt to find a simple impression of the self. Upon not finding it, Hume concludes that he is certain that there is "no such principle", that is, no simple and continued impression, in himself. Hume cannot reason with someone who claims intimate consciousness of the self because no reasoning could convince Hume that he has this kind of intimate consciousness of himself, once he has made a sincere effort at introspection. Those who claim intimate consciousness of the self hold that no proof can be provided for their views, "since no proof can be deriv'd from any fact, of which we are so intimately conscious" (T 251). Once Hume has failed to find the simple continued impression, he has exhausted the possibility of taking the view of some philosophers seriously. They have no proof which could be scrutinized. So what I have called Hume's weak objection, the objection that there is just no impression of self, cannot be read as a conceptual argument against the possibility of an impression of self.

The mirror image of the objection that Hume has only a conceptual argument against those who claim an impression of self is that Hume has only empirical evidence against his opponents. The only textual

evidence, it might be suggested, for thinking that Hume has a conceptual objection is the following passage, quoted above:

Unluckily all these positive assertions are contrary to that very experience, which is pleaded for them, nor have we any idea of self, after the manner it is here explain'd. For from what impression cou'd this idea be deriv'd? This question 'tis impossible to answer without a manifest contradiction and absurdity (T 251).

Instead of reading this passage as asserting that the claimed idea of self is both "contrary to experience" and logically "absurd and contradictory", the structure of Hume's argument is greatly simplified if we take "absurd and contradictory" to be merely an emphasis on Hume's part of the empirical falsehood of the existence of an impression of self. The claim that there is an idea of self is contradicted by experience. Such a reading frees us from the need to explicate a conceptual argument and explain its relation to Hume's empirical arguments.

The suggested simplification of Hume's negative arguments does not find support in the text. The simplification requires that in calling a view "absurd and contradictory" Hume means only that it is "contrary to experience". However, Hume's use of "absurdity" and "contradiction" elsewhere in the Treatise defies this interpretation.

Hume characterizes views as absurd, as contradictory, and as impossible in a number of places in the Treatise. In "Of Abstract Ideas" Hume says "nothing of which we can form a clear and distinct idea is absurd and impossible" (T 19-20). Hume cannot mean that things of which we can form clear and distinct ideas are not contradicted by experience; there are many things of which we can form clear and distinct

ideas which don't exist. Hume is denying that the existence of something of which we can have a clear and distinct idea is logically impossible.

When Hume begins his assault on the idea of substance, he says that it "is very difficult, if not impossible" to conceive an impression of substance (T 232-3) and he challenges philosophers to conceive it, to define it. In the same section Hume argues that it is "impossible any thing divisible can be conjoin'd to a thought or perception". Hume establishes this in part by considering the claim that thought is extended, which he finds "utterly absurd and contradictory" by a conceivability argument (T 234, emphasis mine). In the conclusion to Book I Hume continues his characteristic usage of "contradictory". It is not "possible for us to reason justly and regularly from causes and effects, and at the same time believe the continu'd existence of matter". It is "a manifest contradiction" when we "successively assent to both" (T 266).

Finally, when Hume discusses personal identity in the Appendix, the phrase "absurd and contradictory" is again used as it has been claimed Hume uses it elsewhere in the Treatise, that is, to express logical incoherence. Hume concludes that our perceptions are distinguishable and separable from the fact that our perceptions are distinct. It also follows that they "may exist separately, without any contradiction and absurdity" (T 634, emphasis mine). Hume's point is that our perceptions may exist separately, even if in fact they never do. The point is made by saying that the separate existence of our perceptions is not logically impossible, i.e. it doesn't involve "any contradiction and absurdity".

This survey of passages in which Hume classifies ideas as absurd, contradictory and impossible reveals the consistency of Hume's

terminology. Hume never calls a claim which he thinks is empirically false "absurd and contradictory". While reading "absurd and contradictory" in the non-standard way would simplify Hume's argument, such a reading achieves simplicity at too great an expense. Once it is recognized that an alternative reading to the literal one is not a viable option, we must recognize that Hume raises both strong and weak objections to the claim that there is an idea of the self. So understood, Hume's position is a complex one, but this feature is a strength of Hume's position, not a weakness. Hume isolates two distinct views about our awareness of self, and offers appropriate arguments against each.

Saul Traiger
Indiana University of Pennsylvania

1. A version of this paper was presented at the Twelfth Hume Conference, August 20, 1983. I wish to thank participants at the conference, especially the commentator, Wade L. Robison, for comments and discussion. I would also like to thank Annette Baier for many helpful suggestions.
2. Rene Descartes, Meditations on First Philosophy, in E.S. Haldane and G.R.T. Ross, eds., The Philosophical Works of Descartes, (Cambridge, 1931) pp. 156-7.
3. Ibid. p. 152.
4. Joseph Butler, The Analogy of Religion in John Perry, ed., Personal Identity, (Berkeley, 1975) p. 103.

5. L. Wittgenstein, Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, (London, 1933) 5.631, p. 117. Wittgenstein says that a book entitled "The World as I found it" could not mention the subject of the book because in an important sense there is no subject. Also see P.S.M. Hacker, Insight and Illusion, (Oxford, 1972) pp. 58ff., and Saul Kripke, Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language, (Cambridge, 1982) pp. 121-122.
6. Cf. R. Chisholm; "On the Observability of the Self", Philosophy and Phenomenological Research 30 (1969) 7-21.
7. Cf. R. Nozick; Philosophical Explanations (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981) p. 111.
8. David Hume, A Treatise of Human Nature (ed. L.A. Selby-Bigge), Oxford University Press 1958, hereafter, "T", pp. 251ff.
9. Hume does not claim that some philosophers explicitly say that there is an impression of self. But the claimed consciousness of the self is described by Hume as feeling, and for Hume the distinction between impressions and ideas is just the difference between feeling and thinking. To feel the continued existence of the self is to have an impression of the self. Cf. T 1-2.
10. At T37 Hume allows that there can be a "real succession in the objects" without a perceived succession. In such cases, however, "time cannot make its appearance to the mind", and so we could not have awareness of identity. Thus the fact that we have sound sleep without any perceptions is not a problem for the view under consideration. Sound sleep is not interruption which makes an appearance to the mind.
11. He infers the latter, stronger claim, from the former. His argument is that if we can't get the idea of duration from a single unchanging perception, then we cannot truly say that a single perception endures. In this form, the inference is clearly invalid. But for the purposes of the argument being considered here, Hume only needs the weaker claim, that we could not get the idea of duration from a single perception alone. Cf. T 37.

12. Cf. also T 200-210.
13. Hume's talk about the "susceptibility to change" of objects, such as chairs, does not carry over easily to perceptions. To imagine the susceptibility to change of a perception is really to imagine a succession of different perceptions. Thus "susceptibility to change" is not helpful in the context of accounting for our attribution of duration to unitary perceptions. Perhaps Hume need only say that we get the idea of time from the background successions, and we (falsely) apply it to the unitary perception. Cf. T 65.
14. This objection has been raised (in discussion) by Wade Robison.