



## Hume on Personal Identity: Memory and Natural Relations

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### Abstract

In 1739, David Hume revolutionized the notion of personal identity in his work “*A Treatise of Human Nature*.” He articulated some aspects of personal identity that we cannot easily comprehend. By personal identity, we only express the perceptions stored in memory, but we cannot accurately describe the source of those perceptions. Hume described this narrow account as an error theory. He made it clear that memory plays an important role in connecting perceptions in the emergence of personal identity, but ultimately, memory cannot maintain this connection and serves as nothing more than an auxiliary principle. Here, Hume distinguished himself from the 17th-century empiricist John Locke by presenting a theory in which he argued that, in addition to memory, three natural relations also operate through our mental processes and make our personal identity intelligible over time. Through this paper, we analyze how Hume positioned memory in this explanation of personal identity and how acceptable this view is in contrast to Locke’s explanation of personal identity as based solely on memory. This paper also examines why Hume grounded personal identity on natural relations in addition to memory.

## **Introduction**

Hume commences his discussion of “Of Personal Identity” in Section VI of Book I of “A Treatise of Human Nature”. On the one hand, he gives priority to memory, and on the other hand, he gives priority to natural relations without memory. However, while describing personal identity, he clearly highlights two identities: perfect identity and imperfect identity. Although we cannot clearly distinguish between these two identities in the case of personal identity, Hume nonetheless uses this distinction for explanatory purposes. By perfect identity, Hume means that which does not vary with time, exempli gratia, a mass of matter; by imperfect identity, he means that which changes with time, such as a person (Hume, 1739, T1.4.6.12/p.257), an oak tree, a church (Hume, 1739, T1.4.6.13/p.257), a ship (Hume, 1739, T1.4.6.11/p.257) and a river (Hume, 1739, T1.4.6.14/p.258). In the case of imperfect identity, however, we mistakenly include these under perfect identity, which results in a misinterpretation. Although Hume recognizes only perfect identity as identity proper, since he does not accept the existence of imperfect identity, imperfect identity nonetheless refers to every object in the world that we claim to exist. Similarly, Hume clarifies imperfect identity in order to explain personal identity, because we rely on stored memories to recognize existence, even though we cannot understand the variations that occur over time.

To clarify this argument, Hume gives the example of a flowing river, where he has clarified imperfect identity and numerical identity. He affirms that when we glance at a river, we notice its flow; nevertheless, we cannot easily understand the gradual change in that flow. In the case of this variability, the statement of Heraclitus (6<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> cent BC) is applicable: “*it is impossible to step into the same river twice*” (Chitwood, 2004, p.67). It is particularly mentioned that when we take a second dip in the river, the water is not identical to that of the first dip because the water from the first dip is different from the second dip. Since water is always flowing, the water in each dip is different. Hume stated, “Thus, as the nature of a river consists in the motion and change of parts; though in less than four and twenty hours these be totally altered; this hinders not the river from continuing the same during several ages.” (Hume, 1739, T1.4.6.14/p.258). He has spoken of imperfect identity in clarifying this very explanation, where such identity does not exist because imperfect identity changes with time and carries a different existence. Imperfection identity has no relation to the persistence of one stage of time with the persistence of another stage; that is, such identity or personal identity is numerically different. However, Hume has clarified here that although imperfect identity or personal identity is numerically different over time, our mind recognizes some natural relations, which Hume also

called custom. Custom is what we naturally observe repeatedly from the environment and social aspects, and naturally includes events in the tradition. Hume says that we know natural relations only when the memory stored in the concept of the identity of a subject cannot be communicated as much as possible, regardless of the situation. That is, even if the picture from 10 years ago and the picture of today are of the same person, some similarities remain. In that case, even if the thing is not in retention of mind, we can recognize that picture or person based on the habitual natural relations. On the one hand, Hume tried to establish personal identity based on natural relations, where he rejected John Locke's mere memory as a contention for establishing personal identity. Although Locke did not mention natural relations, he explained concernment and consciousness as grounds for personal identity.

But Hume thinks that we cannot be clearly aware and concerned about all events. In this context, it is necessary to accept natural relations because they are subject to natural rules, which also express our social environmental customs. Based on these customs and traditions, we can be aware of the similarity and causal relationship of one event to another. For example, when we see a cloud, we assume that it will rain because the previous event is followed by the next event. Similarly, we also identify personal identity as the same person over time based on natural relations. However, Hume believes that personal identity is based on memory and natural relationships that allow our minds to drift into a sea of illusion, and we recognize a person or object as the same person even after a lapse of time, which is a misconception in Hume's view of our identity. This is why Hume denies personal identity and calls it an erroneous idea, where we take personal identity as an accepted truth in practical life, which is nothing more than an error theory.

So, the goal of this work is to analyze how Hume established personal identity in his philosophy and how he positioned memory as the groundwork of personal identity. On the other hand, he criticized John Locke's memory relation in his philosophy for establishing natural relations as the groundwork of personal identity.

### **Hume on Personal Identity**

The Western empiricist David Hume examined personal identity in his 1739 work "A Treatise of Human Nature," where he attempts to describe our mental perceptions as best he can while analyzing personal identity. He shows how our minds act and react, and how we attribute the persistence of our identity to some mental misconceptions. First, he demonstrated that we define personal identity based on memory and imagination, that "The faculty by which we

repeat our impressions in the first manner, is called the MEMORY, and the other the IMAGINATION.” (Hume, 1739, T1.1.3.1/p.8). In this case, Hume explained our mistakes in identifying an object or person, wherein the previous object/person is seen as the present object/person, as a similar object/person to explore the form of identity. Second, he showed that we could identify an object/person by associating it with another object/person based on a single relation; here, it is just “*a bundle or collection of different perceptions*” (Hume, 1739, T1.4.6.4/p.252). Thirdly, he raises the issues of perfect identity and imperfect identity to identify an object at the variation of time. Finally, he shows that “*memory not only discovers our identity*” (added italics) (Hume, 1739, T1.4.6.18/p.261). However, the different succession of perceptions is “closely related” by the resemblance and causality.

Thus, it can be argued that if no relationship is formed in the continuity of perception, the beliefs about our identity cannot be found. In this conception, Hume manifested his discontent with his work on personal identity in the Appendix of “A Treatise of Human Nature,” where he admits that he found the entire concept of identity to be a maze. He also emphasizes that he does not know how to revise his earlier claims or how to reconcile them. Firstly, Hume cites this quote in “A Treatise of Human Nature”:

“The same method of reasoning must be continued, which has so successfully explained the identity of plants, and animals, and ships, and houses, and all of the compounded and changeable products either of art or nature. The identity, which we ascribe to the mind of man, is only a fictitious one; and of a like kind with that which we ascribe to vegetables and animal bodies. It cannot, therefore, have a different origin, but must proceed from a like operation of the imagination upon like objects” (Hume, 1739, T1.4.6.15/p.259).

Since personal identity is nothing more than a bundle of distinct perceptions, Hume contemplates that describing personal identity requires us to connect the different perceptions by natural relations, known as analogy/resemblance, contiguity, and causation, through persistent imagination. However, in explaining identity, we consider only resemblance and causation to be contextually relevant. Hume, however, does not explain fallacy when describing our continuous existence in terms of analogy and causation for the connection of various perceptions. He calls these relationships part of memory, which contributes to defining identity.

### *Hume on Personal Identity: Memory and Natural Relations*

The questions that Hume argues represent his “personal identity” are how we connect the succession of perceptions consequent to the relation of resemblance, and how we recognize that an object is the identical object that we have seen through our memory and imagination. He then represents how to associate the different perceptions, which are connected to each other by the connection of causality. Hume states, “Tis still true, that every distinct perception, which enters into the composition of the mind, is a distinct existence, and is different, and distinguishable, and separable from every other perception, either contemporary or successive.” (Hume, 1739, T1.4.6.3/p.252). Because each distinct perception (pain and pleasure, ...) enters the mind differently, they never complement each other. In this context, Hume states, “As... we suppose the whole train of perceptions to be united by identity, a question naturally arises concerning this relation of identity; whether it be something that really binds our several perceptions together or only associates their ideas in the imagination.” (Hume, 1739, T1.4.6.16/p.259)

In a train example (Hume, 1739, T1.4.6.16/p. 259), Hume explains simply that we imagine the compartments of a train as giving identity, just as our distinct perceptions are assembled by causal relations, or we can imagine that different perceptions are united to give us identity. In this case, Hume thinks that if a person preserves all the past events in his memory in order to maintain his identity, then he will possess his personal identity (see (Biro, 2006); (Biro, 1976)). But we cannot remember all the events. So, if a person forgets his past, then that individual will never be known as the previous person; he will become another person. Hume states in this context that the various perceptions of individuals are “closely related.” (Hume, 1739, T1.4.6.6/p.253) through their causal connection.

But Hume claimed that if A and B are the same individual, that is, if they are numerically the same individual, then whatever changes occur between them, even if they lose their memory, they will remain the same as in the past. Because their several parts will be connected in a causal relationship. He states in that case, “*First*, that reason alone can never give rise to any original idea, and *second*, that reason, as distinguished from experience, can never make us conclude that a cause or productive quality is absolutely requisite to every beginning of existence. Both these considerations have been sufficiently explained; and therefore, shall not at present be any farther insisted on.” (Hume, 1739, T1.3.14.5/p.157).

Hume therefore referred to analogy and causality to establish his doctrine of “personal identity.” Notwithstanding, in the context of personal identity, he excludes memory relations, which are

only impressions of the past. For he deliberates that speaking of memory relations must explain identity on the basis of memory alone, which he rejects. He simply essentialized memory as the principle of acquiring knowledge to establish an individual's identity. Hume sought to establish resemblance and causality as two fundamental relations. He thinks that memory reproduces impressions, and while it multiplies the analogies of memory, it cannot be replaced as a fundamental relation. But memory serves as a side effect of personal identity. Notwithstanding, this analogical work is done by the fundamental resemblance principle. Hume, however, holds that memory itself does not demand fundamental relations. Yet Hume thinks that we fall prey to confusion in interpreting such identities, which he analyses below.

### **Hume's Two Identities**

We do not considerably compare the two identities that are perfect and imperfect identities, which Hume estimated in his philosophy to be considered as personal identity. First, he rejects a common view of the field in the analysis of individual identity in which both "perfect simplicity" and "perfect identity" are analyzed. A being will be known as having "perfect identity" if it is not formed at any particular time, and in the flow of time, the same part of the being remains, never changing. Second, Hume expresses that the identity which exists over time cannot maintain the same part of itself in the flow of time; it can never be considered "perfect" but "imperfect." Hume, thus, distinguishes between the identity of entities existing over time in identifying "perfect identity."

Hume went on to analyze "perfect identity," explaining the "mass of matter" mentioned by Locke. We define the "mass of matter" as absolute; in this regard, we do not mean "the addition or subtraction" of something to the "mass of matter" because if such "addition or subtraction" is admitted, then the "mass of matter" loses its identity (Hume, 1739, T1.4.6.8/p.256). So, the "perfect identity" defines the "identity" of a being that is "invariable" and "uninterrupted" (Hume, 1739, T1.4.6.8/p.255). Hume, on the other hand, refers to the entity as its "imperfect identity" which is always changing with time whereas the entity itself is not the least bit unchanged, in which case he says, "What I have said concerning the first origin and uncertainty of our notion of identity, as applied to the human mind, may be extended with little or no variation to that of simplicity." (Hume, 1739, T1.4.6.22/p.263). But Hume rejects this kind of identity because he takes "identity" or "sameness" to mean immutability over time. However, our/person's identity is never maintained because we are a changing entity with time. All beings, Hume makes clear, are subject to "imperfect identity," examples of which he gives in his

*Treatise* are a plants (Hume, 1739, T1.4.6.5/p.253), an animals (Hume, 1739, T1.4.6.12/p.257), a ships (Hume, 1739, T1.4.6.11/p.257), a republics (Hume, 1739, T1.5.6.19/p.261), a church (Hume, 1739, T1.4.6.13/p.257) etc. But we identify with “invariableness” and “uninterruptedness” as we go on to explain our identity because we envisage ourselves as a single entity known to exist continuously through time, and therefore our identity is “perfect,” and we think it should be “simple.” In this context, Hume states that “perfect identity” and “perfect simplicity” do not permit any change. However, in cases of “imperfect identity,” slight or trivial changes are allowed.

Hume, in his theory of personal identity, states that we understand the persistence of things as “immutability” and “continuity,” where we believe that things persist in the same way throughout the evolution of time. In making this belief relevant, we imagine some “new and incomprehensible principle.” (Hume, 1739, T1.4.6.6/p.254) on the fundamentals of which we connect previously known perceptions with currently known perceptions. We imagine a similarity and causality between these perceptions, and based on this imagination, we recognize the persistence of an object or person as the same despite the variation of time. The natural relationship of new perceptions to previous perceptions is so “smooth” that we cannot, in practical life, clarify that perceptions of any object or person vary with time, and we do not hesitate to characterize such a continuous process of personal identity as “a perfect identity” (Hume, 1739, T1.4.6.6/p.254). To put it bluntly, we imagine a fictitious natural relation between the different perceptions of objects to maintain the persistence of objects over time. This is an error theory according to Hume because we do not access any “real connexion” between the perceptions of objects (Hume, 1739, T1.4.6.16/p.259) that would claim an object or person to be numerically the same and one at over time. Moreover, there is no specific principle for the relationship between the different perceptions that we want to establish in order to retain the continuity of identity. Therefore, Hume thinks that our identity is nothing more than a pile of different perceptions of the variation of time.

It is important to clarify here that our mental processes in establishing personal identity are based on natural relations, since they assume that different perceptions are related by causal relations in which “they mutually produce, destroy, influence, and modify each other” (Hume, 1739, T1.4.6.19/p.261). Hume gives the example of “a republic or commonwealth” to clarify this analysis:

“[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. And as the same individual republic may not only change its members, but also its laws and constitutions; in like manner the same person may vary his character and disposition, as well as his impressions and ideas, without losing his identity. Whatever changes he endures, his several parts are still connected by the relation of causation.” (Hume, 1739, T1.4.6.19/p.261)

In this example, Hume makes it clear that “republic or commonwealth” is a bundle of external and internal perceptions. Where the government changes according to the needs of the members, the constitution changes, but despite such changes, we do not explain the republic in another form or by any different name. Similarly, in the illustration of a river (Hume, 1739, T1.4.6.14/p.258) we see that although the river changes every moment according to its flow, we identify that river by the same name, where the water of that river comes and goes anew every moment, and the new flowing water has no relation to the water flowing some moments ago. Such identity is called “uninterrupted” and “invariable” because our mind imagines similarity and causal relationships, but such identity is an imperfect identity because it is based on change. Similarly, in the context of personal identity of a person, change always continues in a traditional way, so even if a person’s memory is lost, his natural relations identify him as the same person. However, if we explain Hume’s argument, we understand that Locke’s theory of memory becomes absurd, where Locke explains memory by saying “of the prince and the cobbler” (Locke, 1690, E2.27.15/p.324). If memory is exchanged between the prince and the cobbler, then the cobbler identifies himself as the prince and the prince identifies himself as the cobbler. Therefore, it should be stated that personal identity is based solely on memory. Whereas Hume claims that, in addition to memory, we can make decisions through conscious thought, plan for the future, and provide personal identity based on causal and analogous relationships.

Although recent scholars such as Traiger (Traiger, 2006) and Ainslie (Ainslie, 2001) argue against Hume’s notion of perfect identity, Hume, however, holds that personal identity is a system in which all perceptions are united and are connected to each other by the natural relations through change. Although Hume refers to the continuous persistence of the person formed by this process as “fiction” (Hume, 1739, T1.4.6.15/p. 259), it can never be a “perfect identity” but rather an imperfect identity.

However, according to Hume, personal identity is not acceptable in our ordinary continued life, if only memory discovers our personal identity, but not the natural relations. Based on this concept, Hume criticizes John Locke's memory theory of personal identity: "therefore, memory does not so much *produce* as *discover* personal identity, by shewing us the relation of cause and effect among our different perceptions. It will be incumbent on those who affirm that memory produces our personal identity entirely, to give a reason why we can thus extend our identity beyond our memory." (Hume, 1739, T1.4.6.20/p.262).

From this, it is clear that Hume placed importance on memory only as a supporting factor in personal identity but denied the conception of personal identity based solely on memory. He referred to memory as a supporting factor, meaning it acts as a support in establishing connections between natural relationships. However, it is important to mention that memory is not the only significant relationship in Hume's philosophy; he attributed greater importance to natural relations in personal identity. Because only with the aid of natural relations can perceptions adhere to each other in such a way that we cannot perceive the constancy of objects or persons even after a time gap. Hume stated in this context, "We have also a distinct idea of several different objects existing in succession and connected together by a close relation" (Hume, 1739, T1.4.6.6/p.253).

It goes without saying that due to the deep relationship between perceptions, it is not possible to perceive the changeability of each perception with time. For example, the relationship between rain and clouds is so close that it is not possible to accept the two events separately; the appearance of rain immediately follows the clouds, so we cannot imagine rain without clouds. However, according to Hume, not every event in the world is complementary to another; each event passes through its own natural laws, changing regardless of time and place. Therefore, it is not possible to perceive the change of each event directly. To perceive the continuity of events over time, we perceive a "close relation" between the perceptions. According to Hume, even if the successive perceptions of an object are numerically different, we refer that object or person numerically one and the same in the continuity of time. He claimed that since the relationship between perceptions is "smooth" and "close," we do not find any numerical difference between two events or perceptions that occur together, so we call worldly perceptions or events environmental conventions and customs. He stated, "The custom of imagining a dependence has the same effect as the custom of observing it wou'd have. This conceit, however, is no more reasonable than any of the foregoing. Every quality being a distinct thing from another, may be conceived to exist apart, and may exist apart, not only from

every other quality, but from that unintelligible chimera of a substance.” (Hume, 1739, T1.4.3.7./p.222)

So, natural relations are intrinsically connected with custom. The custom that is customary to us is where we cannot perceive the gap between the two events. For example, if there is a cloud, we conventionally assume that it will rain, in which case there is no need to retain it in memory. Again, if we saw a person ten years ago and see him now, that is “something unknown and mysterious” (Hume, 1739, T1.4.6.6/p.254) principle arises in us, but we accept the conventional continuous custom due to the similarity and causality of the inheritance of perception. Therefore, even if we do not remember that person in memory, the natural relations and the conventional continuous custom help us to identify that person. However, now we will see how Hume criticized John Locke’s memory theory in establishing personal identity.

### **Hume’s critique of John Locke’s position on the memory is the criterion for Personal Identity**

Hume mentions “memory” significantly in his explanation of “personal identity” because, without “memory,” no theory of “identity” can be formulated. Although Hume never specifically mentions “personal identity” in his theory, he is deeply indebted to John Locke for this concept.

Hume believed that, apart from our memories, we have more mental states in our minds that explain our identity through various causal connections. There are many occurrences that do not require memory and can only be described through causal relations, such as conscious thoughts, present decisions, and some future ones. However, according to Hume, memory is simply a principle of association that repeats the sequence of our impressions. It is said that memory contributes to a person’s identity by establishing similarities between perceptions. He claimed that “The memory of a considerable part of past perceptions; ‘tis evident that nothing cou’d more contribute to the bestowing a relation on this succession amidst all its variations”. (Hume, 1739, T1.4.6.18/p.260).

Locke, on the other hand, tried to explain identity based on memory alone. Although Hume accepted some of Locke’s theories in establishing his theory of identity, he did not intend to base his concept of personal identity only on the “*Consciousness alone unites remote existences into one person.*” (added italics) (Locke, 1690, E2.27.23/p.328). Therefore, on closer analysis, Hume’s concept of identity seems to be more significant than Locke’s comparison.

However, Locke holds that memory is the only way to retain personal identity, which connects the continuation of the succession of perceptions, because we know our identity and our own existence only to the extent that we experience conscious awareness of our memories. It can be stated from Locke's view, "if A remembers doing X, then A is the same person who did X. In the second view, personal identity depends on the continuity of consciousness. If B has an unbroken consciousness with A, then continuity is defined in different ways, the same as A." (Afroza, 2023, p.3). But if there is no conscious awareness of the event in memory, then we express doubt about that event. Furthermore, Locke believes that memory is the continuum of our causality that contributes to the formation of our personality or soul. So, Locke tried to clarify that memory is the cause of identity. But Hume thinks that having derived the concept of necessary relations from memory, we can extend the concept of a distinct identity without memory relation by the same causal chain. In this case, what our memory has completely forgotten, we can know our identity through our extended causal process. It is here that Hume criticizes Locke's theory. However, Hume calls our causal relation of identity merely a fiction because we analyze such a concept with the idea of identity, which he misconceives.

However, Locke presented his conception of personal identity as such a theory in philosophical circles that his arguments are still discussed and criticized as research articles by modern scholars. Because Locke believes that personal identity is the psychic process that maintains the continuity of the individual's existence. The mental process is determined by the consciousness of the individual, through which he/she manifests himself/herself in the same way over time. In this case, Locke clarified that consciousness can be manifested in the same way even though matter changes. Although he denied the existence of material or soul entities, he did not deny consciousness because it is based on this that man expresses his definite identity. In this respect, Udo Thiel writes in his *"The Early Modern Subject"*: "For Locke, ... memory, and consciousness (here 'knowledge') of the past are constitutive of identity." (Thiel, 2011, p.98) . Contemporary scholar Ainslie states on this, "In the Essay, Locke claims that the identities of persons are based, not on the material or immaterial substances underlying them, nor on the animal bodies in which they are located, but are instead the result of the continuation in them of the consciousnesses by which the persons in question are aware of their ideas." (Ainslie, 2001, p.558). By now, it is very clear that this is why Hume denies Locke's "Theory of Identity". Because he never accepted memory alone as a creator of personal identity, Hume referred to various relationships for personal identity.

Not only Hume, but there are also numerous commentators who have criticized Locke's memory theory, stating that it is an uninformative and irrational argument. In that case, Udo Thiel (Thiel, 2011) states that "Locke's developed theory ten years later. In terms of his later theory, the expression 'consciousness of being the same person' would be open to the charge of circularity to which his mature theory is immune," (Thiel, 2011, P.99)

Late 17<sup>th</sup> to the middle of the 18th century philosopher Bishop Joseph Butler claims in his "An Analogy of Religion" that Locke made a "wonderful mistake" in interpreting personal identity because he did not properly analyze how to create personal identity. In this context, Butler states,

"This wonderful mistake may possibly have arisen from hence; that to be endued with consciousness is inseparable from the idea of a person, or intelligent being. For, this might be expressed inaccurately thus, that consciousness makes personality: and from hence it might be concluded to make personal identity. But though present consciousness of what we at present do and feel is necessary to our being the persons we now are; yet present consciousness of past actions or feelings is not necessary to our being the same persons who performed those actions or had those feelings" (Butler, 1875, p.358)

And the recent scholar Nimbalkar states that,

"he (Locke) failed to recognise that the relation of consciousness presupposes identity, and thus cannot constitute it (Butler, 1736). In other words, I can remember only my own experiences, but it is not my memory of an experience that makes it mine; rather, I remember it only because it's already mine. So, while memory can reveal my identity with some past experienter, it does not make that experienter me. What I am remembering, then, insists Butler, are the experiences of a substance, namely, the same substance that constitutes me now." (Nimbalkar, 2011, P.270)

Also, 18th-century Scottish philosopher Thomas Reid claimed in "Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man" (Reid, 1785) that Locke's memory concept is simply absurd. For Reid, a person's identity is not something that can be determined by the individual's actions; rather, we must rely on an infallible concept to recognize personal identity. Moreover, "identity" is "sameness," so it is always unchanging. But since the individual is changing from moment to moment, it cannot be considered the identity of the individual. He claimed that, "Fourthly, there are many expressions used by Mr. Locke, in speaking of personal identity, which to me \

are altogether unintelligible, unless we suppose that he confounded that sameness or identity which we ascribe to an individual with the identity which, in common ii discourse, is often ascribed to many individuals of the same species.” (Reid, 1785, p.252)

Locke’s critics argued that Locke’s view of concernment of consciousness as personal identity means that an individual’s adulthood and childhood will be one person if he remembers his past experiences. Thus, Locke attempted to define the criteria and degree of an individual’s identity. However, we cannot remember all of our experiences. So, in this context, if an individual forgets a bad incident from his youth, then will he not be the same person? Will he not be punished for his bad deeds? Or should he be punished for the forgotten bad deeds that do not exist for him? The answer to these queries should be no, but Locke could not have answered these questions. So, for Reid, consciousness is not enough to form personal identity because if consciousness is the only boundary for the formation of personal identity, then we would enter a vicious circle, and we would have to accept some imaginary ideas that form our personal identity. Reid stated,

“Consciousness, and every kind of thought, are transient and momentary, and have no continued existence; and, therefore, if personal identity consisted in consciousness, it would certainly follow, that no man is the same person any two moments of his life; and as the right and justice of reward and punishment are founded on personal identity, no man could be responsible for his actions.” (Reid, 1785, p.251-52)

Although Locke supported his doctrine by stating that the madman is not punished for the work of peace, nor is the madman disturbed for what he has done (Locke, 1690, E2.27.22/p.328), it is often denied by many scholars.

However, we have already analyzed that Hume supported Locke’s theory in some respects but ultimately rejected his concept of identity. He emphasized a strict criterion of personal identity, where the individual’s identity is based only on his degree of experience, which, according to Hume, is not satisfactory. In analyzing Hume’s conception of personal identity, many scholars have attempted to clarify the flaws in his theory. As commentator Penelhum claims that the linguistic ambiguity of Hume’s theory in “Hume on Personal Identity,” stated that “Hume’s language throughout makes it clear that he thinks the error he claims to detect is committed by everyone, that is, by every user of the language, not just by philosophers.” (Penelhum, 1955, p.588). Another commentator, James Giles, stated that “Hume concludes his account with the

important remark that all nice and subtle questions concerning personal identity are best considered as grammatical rather than philosophical difficulties.” (Giles, 1993, p.178). After all such discussions and analyses, what we concluded in the next step is now the subject of our discussion.

## **Conclusion**

So, on the one hand, David Hume considers memory as a supporting relationship in establishing personal identity, and on the other hand, he establishes natural relations as a significant relationship in establishing personal identity. He tries to make it clear that in addition to memory, we can maintain our identity through continuous natural relations and traditional customs. Notwithstanding this context, the question arises: how can Hume establish personal identity only based on natural relations without prioritizing memory? Although it can be said in the context of Hume’s answer that “What will suffice to prove this hypothesis to the satisfaction of every fair enquirer, is to shew from daily experience and observation, that the objects, which are variable or interrupted, and yet are suppos’d to continue the same, are such only as consist of a succession of parts, connected together by resemblance, contiguity, or causation.” (Hume, 1739, T1.4.6.7/p.255).

Hume, however, first discussed the integration of all memories of the person in examining the definition of a person’s identity according to the bundle of perceptions. But he did not apply the process of “*division of memory between two persons*” (added italics) in the concept of a person’s identity. In the context of the division of memory, if A gives half of his memory to B and if B gives half of his memory to A, then how will their identity be maintained in such a divided memory? Moreover, if A commits a crime, how much will B be guilty or not guilty of B? However, we did not find the definition of such divided memory or a response to the above question in his bundle theory.

About memory, we can think that since ultimately Hume’s personal identity doctrine does not provide any collection of past events by memory. In that case, Hume only accepts our error in psychological processes. However, when we explain our identity, we always rely on our memory. Also, when we get to know a person after many years, we try to remember past events. In this case, John Locke’s theory seems to be supported because he established personal identity based on memory. But Hume seems to deny the source of personal identity, rather than admitting memory as true.

In the Appendix to “A Treatise of Human Nature,” Hume also expresses dissatisfaction with natural relations because he ultimately thinks that natural relations are not adequate grounds for the formation of personal identity. He argues that since everything we perceive is subject to ideas and these ideas arise from impressions, it is difficult to analyze how these impressions help to form natural relations. He also points out that it is difficult to explain how the various properties are combined into a bundle to give personal identity, where even Hume could not expressly explain what method natural relations follow in forming personal identity. Thus, Hume reveals his inadequacies in the Appendix and then points out his errors: “I am sensible, that my account [of the connections of perceptions] is very defective, and that nothing but the seeming evidence of the precedent reasoning could have induced me to receive it”. (Hume, 1739, T App. 20/p.635)

Therefore, it can be said that just as Hume rejected memory relations as insufficient in establishing personal identity, on the one hand, Hume finally admitted his mistake in the Appendix by referring to natural relations as insufficient. However, it should be clearly stated that Hume was the first to clarify the natural relations and free personal identity from an ambiguous web, whereas John Locke, although discussing natural relations, claimed that they were based entirely on memory, while Hume completely separated natural relations from memory. Therefore, in this context, Hume’s concept of personal identity is interpreted as more reasonable than Locke’s.

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