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WILLIAM JAMES'S THEORY OF PERSONAL IDENTITY
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Abstract

In this thesis¹ I examine William James's theory of personal identity. I argue that James's work is best viewed as an attempt to incorporate the fundamental insights of both the atomist and the holist traditions. James's ultimate commitment is to the unassailable nature of the basic facts of consciousness. He rejects the theories offered by both Hume and Kant because of their inability to account for basic indubitable characteristics of thought. However, I also show how James's own theory of personal identity also runs its philosophical commitments over the facts of consciousness. My aim here is to show the dangers inherent in any attempt to provide philosophical mechanisms designed to explain the nature of selfhood.

¹ I would like to take this opportunity to thank my committee for their help and give a special thanks to Dr. Paul Forster for his infinite patience and invaluable help.

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INTRODUCTION – *The Problem of Personal Identity*

The term 'personal identity' is defined as the persistence of self over time. Consciousness of personal sameness can be treated either subjectively as a sentiment or feeling, or objectively as a reality or fact. As it is a common belief that we are the same self today that we were yesterday and that we will continue to be the same self tomorrow, the subjective treatment of personal identity seems for the most part unproblematic. However the subjective feeling of self-persistence involves a paradox. On the one hand, we all feel that we are the same person that we were in the past -- I am the same "Julie-Anderson-academic-and-philosopher" that I was yesterday. On the other hand, it is also clear that our personalities undergo drastic changes -- I am not the same "Julie-Anderson-rebellious-purple-haired-adolescent" that I was in high school, and even less am I the "Julie-Poolie-drooling-baby-sister" that I was as an infant. Our consciousness of selfhood is marked both by the feeling of unity and by the feeling of diversity.

The philosophical interest in personal identity focuses on its objective status. While we all feel that we are both a unified self and a collection of different selves (the self I was as an infant plus the self I was as an adolescent plus the self I am now), the philosophical question is not whether we are a unified or a diverse self, but rather what justifies our belief that we are the same self today that we were yesterday.

Both atomist and holist philosophers believe that they can answer this question by privileging one self-feeling as objective or real and designating the other subjective appearance. Atomist philosophers objectify diversity. Beginning from simple ideas, they take the self to be a mutable collection of thoughts held together by various relations of similarity, contiguity, causation, resemblance, etc. They argue that as the collection of thoughts increases with every new perception, the self changes. Thus, I am not the same "Julie-Poolie-drooling-baby-sister" I was as an

infant because the bundle of ideas I am is now bigger. This means that the atomists are hard-pressed to explain how the self stays the same. Finding no one simple idea in which the self inheres and having dismissed the notion of an underlying self-substance, these philosophers are unable to account for the unity of self and are forced to treat personal identity as a fiction or feigned belief. That is, they claim that the objectively ascertained diversity of self entails that the unity of self is merely attributed to what is in reality a disconnected bundle of ideas.

Holist philosophers objectify unity. They think the self or the soul is something that underlies cognition and makes unified experience possible. The holists's self is not affected by new experiences because it is the agent that makes such experiences possible. Thus, for the holists, the self remains unchanged throughout our lives (and for the soul-theorist throughout eternity). Given their commitment to self-unity, they then relegate the diversity of self to a mere subjective appearance. They argue that while we all believe that the self changes over time, this subjective belief is belied by the objective fact of self-unity. So, where the atomists emphasize the objective diversity of the self at the expense of its unity, the holists by objectifying the unity of the self, sacrifice its diversity. Neither tradition seems to be able to resolve the problem of personal identity satisfactorily.

In this thesis I claim that in *The Principles of Psychology*, William James rejects both the atomist (what he calls "empiricist") and the holist (what he calls "transcendentalist") philosophical traditions because neither theory accounts for the basic facts of consciousness. While it may at first blush appear that the atomists can at least account for the diversity of self and that the holists can account for the unity of self, James shows that neither theory can adequately support its claims. So, not only do both theories deny the reality of one patent facet of our self-perception in order to reify the other, they are equally unable to account for the fact of consciousness they have chosen to objectify. Yet these theories are not empty of all significance for James. His own theory incorporates both the atomists's commitment to diversity and

the holists's commitment to unity and gives an objective justification for both of these subjective beliefs.

James places equal importance on self-unity as on self-diversity because his inquiry into mental life begins by ascertaining the patent subjective facts of consciousness. In order to assert truths, avoid errors, and broach philosophical controversies, James first establishes a neutral and incontrovertible starting point (viz., subjective facts recognized by everyone as patently true), and then uses these facts as the foundations of his philosophical theory of self. James's critique of the atomist and holist traditions is based on their rejection of what he considers to be incontrovertible facts of consciousness.

While this strategy is clearly compatible with James's pragmatic method of investigation, it has been overlooked by James scholars. Most scholars interpret James's work in light of the empiricist or the transcendentalist traditions. Bruce Wilshire focuses on James's holistic descriptions of self-feelings and concludes that James's work is phenomenological. Owen Flanagan looks at James's scientific empiricism and insists that James is a precursor of contemporary functionalism i.e., a proto-naturalist. Hilary Putnam also holds that James is best viewed as a species of natural realist. Finally, T.L.S. Sprigge reads James as a speculative metaphysician, specifically, a holist panpsychic idealist. Each interpreter claims to be expressing the essential core of James's theory and no consensus is to be found. Phenomenologists downplay passages that support naturalistic readings. Naturalists downplay passages that support phenomenologist readings. Idealists downplay passages that support realist interpretations. Realists downplay passages that support idealist readings. Consequently, all miss the importance of James's critique of traditional atomism and holism. James refers to both Hume and Kant throughout his exposition of mental life. He clearly directs his claims against what he calls the "ridiculous theory of Hume and Berkeley" (PP:254) and against the "inborn infirmity, enhanced by the musty academicism of his Königsberg existence" in Kant's philosophy. (PP:366)

This patent rejection of both Humean atomism and Kantian holism shows that James's own theory of personal identity is *outside* this classical dichotomy thus cannot (and should not) be classified as an extension of either tradition.

Rather than trying to fit James into any existing philosophical theory (or interpretation), I suggest that James scholarship would be better served by focussing closely on the texts and taking James's description of the self at face-value. Thus, just as James rejects Hume and Kant's initial commitment to a multitude of chaotic independent perceptions charging that this starting point leads them into paradoxes and contradictions, I shall reject any initial commitment to a particular philosophical tradition so that I need not downplay any of the passages in the *Principles*. I can then treat James's comments on the self as a consistent unified whole.

In order to show the full force of James's theory of personal identity, I shall give a systematic reading of his work incorporating passages taken from several sections of the text. My aim in restructuring the material is to clarify the focus and strength of James's critiques of atomism and holism and to emphasize the coherence of his work. James begins from the basic facts of consciousness, shows how they are either contradicted or ignored by both Hume's and Kant's theories, and then builds his own theory of personal identity on the basis of these unassailable facts of mental life.

I begin my analysis with James's description of the feeling of consciousness; of what he calls the five characteristics of thought. In section one I establish the unassailability of these five traits of consciousness construed subjectively: it is obvious that we all perceive mental life in these ways. In the two subsequent sections I show how James argues that the atomistic-empiricist theory of Hume and the holist-transcendentalist theory of Kant run counter to *all five* characteristics of thought; i.e., each theory either denies or fails to account for the subjective facts of mental life. James does not explicitly present his critique in this manner. However, it is clear from his text that the five characteristics of thought are the foundational building blocks of James's own positive theory and that they govern his arguments against Hume's

atomism and Kant's transcendentalism. Thus, while some of the material presented in this thesis is not found explicitly in the *Principles*, I have striven to keep my additions to James's remarks as close to the text as possible. The fourth section then turns to James's account of the phenomenal self. Here again, I argue that James gives a non-theoretical examination of the way that the self feels to us as a basis for his positive account of the self. James's theory of personal identity is presented in section five where I claim that his theory combines the five characteristics of thought in section one, with the feeling of self given in section four. Specifically, I argue that James's theory of personal identity is an attempt to give an objective account of personal identity based on our subjective feelings of consciousness and of selfhood. Finally, in the last section, I offer a critical examination of James's work. I argue that his theory of personal identity while subjectively unassailable, is objectively indefensible. Specifically I argue that James's theory of personal identity contradicts the very same facts that lead him to reject both Hume's atomism and Kant's transcendentalism. My critique is designed to show not only that James's theory of personal identity is an unacceptable account of mental life, but more importantly to point out that the philosophical mechanisms designed to explain subjective psychological facts fall short of their task. Neither Hume's atomism, nor Kant's transcendentalism, nor James's hybrid of the two philosophical traditions is able to explain mental life without simultaneously running their philosophical commitments over the five facts of consciousness. This conclusion must lead us not only to reject the theories proposed, but should also raise doubts about the nature of the philosophical enterprise in question.

SECTION ONE – *The Five Characteristics of Thought*

Before examining James's description of mental life, I shall consider his initial approach to the problem. James's first commitment is to the plain fact that "*thinking of some sort goes on.*" (PP:224) It is important to note that James, seeking the broadest and most neutral starting point, holds that no one mental phenomenon can be construed as being more real than another. His analysis of consciousness includes "mental states at large, irrespective of their kind." (PP:186-7). James's aim is to explain *all* subjective modifications and not just sensory perceptions. Thoughts, feelings, sensations, pains, pleasures, affectations of the soul, modifications of the ego, ideas, perceptions, impressions, all mental activities are included in his investigation. While James distinguishes between feelings (emotions and sensations) and thoughts (conceptions and judgments), he includes both kinds of mental states in his inquiry cautioning us that he "often use[s] both words in a wider sense than usual." (PP:186) James's object of inquiry is thus intended to include every perceived state of consciousness.

According to James, thought is marked by five indubitable characteristics. These are: 1) every thought tends to be part of a personal consciousness; 2) thought is always changing; 3) thought is sensibly continuous; 4) every thought has an object that includes all that the thought thinks in a single pulse of consciousness; and 5) thought is interest-driven. I shall take up each characteristic in turn and show why James takes it to be an unassailable characteristic of mental life that must be accounted for by *any* theory of the mind.

The First Characteristic: Every thought tends to be part of a personal consciousness.

While James acknowledges that any definition of personal consciousness will be highly controversial given the fact that different schools of thought treat the notion

in radically different ways, he claims that it is a fact of consciousness that every thought is thought by some *individual thinker*. I have my thoughts, you have your thoughts, but thoughts independent of any personal consciousness, i.e., thought by no-one, are unintelligible. In order to be thought at all, a thought must be thought by a personal consciousness.

James acknowledges that there are special cases in parapsychology where thoughts seem to be divorced of a personal consciousness and given his method of inquiry, James takes these cases seriously. He confesses that his study of hysterical anaesthesia and automatic writing led him to write that our thoughts "'tend to appear' rather than 'appear'" to be part of a personal consciousness." (PP:227) However, upon closer inspection of these cases, James finds that these cases do not violate the first characteristic of thought. These conditions, he explains, are caused by the severing of the individual's primary awareness. In cases of automatic writing, the writer of a text believes herself to be taken over by a foreign spirit or entity who then proceeds to write texts of which the primary consciousness has no knowledge. Yet, these same individuals can have a conscious oral conversation with an external observer while simultaneously maintaining a coherent but unconscious dialogue with a second observer through written response. James concludes that it must be the case that the thoughts expressed by the unconscious writer are thought by a personal consciousness due to the fact that the automatic writer can maintain *coherent* conversations.

In the case of hysterical anaesthetics, the same person who experiences no sensation in a particular limb or sensory faculty will, under hypnosis, accurately report the stimulation felt by the anaesthetized areas. James cites several cases of such kinds of pathology and concludes that they prove that "*we must never take a person's testimony, however sincere, that he has felt nothing, as proof positive that no feeling has been there.*" (PP:211) These cases also show signs of an underlying personal consciousness as the hypnotized hysterical anaesthetic will accurately

report the stimulations inflicted upon the unconscious limb. James even reports cases where these unconscious thinkers may be so developed as to display personality traits and express individual emotions and desires. In support of this conclusion James cites the work of psychologists Janet, Binet, Bernheim, and Pitres -- researchers who have found evidence that cases of hysterical anaesthesia, automatic writing, and hypnosis are marked with a feeling of conscious awareness even if that awareness is not part of the person's primary consciousness. Thus, James argues that while not perceived by a person's primary awareness,

buried feelings and thoughts ... themselves are parts of *secondary personal selves*. These selves ... form conscious unities, have continuous memories, speak, write, invent distinct names for themselves, or adopt names that are suggested; and, in short, are entirely worthy of that title of secondary personalities which is now commonly given them. (PP:227)

One might think that James is building too much into these cases of paranormal psychology. While it is quite obvious that my thoughts are my thoughts and that your thoughts are your thoughts and that neither of us can experience thoughts without them becoming mine or yours, just how clear is it that *all* unconscious thoughts combine themselves into subconscious secondary personalities? We all experience unconscious perceptions when we dream or when we fail to pay attention to a particular sensation. Yet it seems strange to think of ourselves as having a multitude of buried personalities made up of these unconscious thoughts. However, as James points out, these thoughts (i.e., dreams and perceptions I ignore) are not as wholly divorced from our primary personal consciousness as it would appear.

Let us consider dreams first. When we dream we think of ourselves as the same person from the beginning of the dream to the end. We may go from being in an igloo in one second to being trapped in a burning building the next, but we are the same person in both places. Dreams are perhaps disconnected, but not to the extent that we are one person at the beginning of the dream and another at the end. What is

fragmented are the experiences we undergo during the course of the dream. So we can conclude that there is some kind of self-unity to be found in dreams.

There are other experiences that suggest that our sleeping state is not so disconnected to our waking state as we would suppose and that there is a thread of consciousness running through even our sleep cycle. We know that some people can actually control the outcomes of their dreams. We also know that if we consciously think of a certain person or situation right before falling asleep, these thoughts are often incorporated into our dreams. A more common experience is the ability we sometimes have to wake ourselves up at a certain prescribed time. If you know you have to get up at 5 a.m. to be on a 7 a.m. flight and you consciously remind yourself of this fact before going to sleep, chances are you will wake up on time. Further evidence for the link between the primary consciousnesses and the thoughts we have in dreams is given by the phenomenon often observed in nurses and mothers of infants. While they sleep quite soundly through most external noise, they nevertheless "waken at the slightest stirring of the patient or the babe." (PP:201)

As for thoughts we ignore such as the feel of the floor beneath our feet or the keyboard under our fingers, we must acknowledge that while not attended to, these sensations are nevertheless perceived. When I am typing, the most salient object of my thought is the sentence that I am writing. However, one of the conditions of my being able to commit this thought to paper (or to computer screen) is the feeling of the distinct keys beneath my fingers. While I do not consciously attend to these feelings with the same intensity as I do the sentence in my head, this focus shifts instantly if the keys began to stick. The point is that while these thoughts seem unconscious, they are simply less-salient features of my conscious thought. The feeling of the floor beneath my feet is just as much a part of my thought of walking as the movement of my legs and the intention to displace myself.

Thus we can conclude with James that *"every thought is part of a personal consciousness."* My thoughts are mine, your thoughts are yours, unconscious thoughts

had by people suffering from psychological neuroses tend to form secondary personalities unto themselves, thoughts experienced in dreams are not wholly disassociated from the waking consciousness, and thoughts that are not directly attended to are nevertheless perceived by a personal consciousness.

The Second Characteristic: Within each personal consciousness thought is always changing.

James's concern here is to show that "no [mental] state once gone can recur and be identical with what it was before." (PP:230) Although this claim appears to contradict our common-sense experience -- do we not perceive the same kitchen table at breakfast every morning? does the scent of our favourite laundry detergent not remain unchanged? -- James maintains that given our psychical and physiological make up, no two ideas can have identical contents.

On the psychical level James argues that our sensibility is altering all the time so that we can never ascertain that the same perception is given to us twice. He points out that when we perceive the same table every morning or smell the same scent of laundry detergent, it is not the perception that is the same but rather the object that is being repeatedly perceived. James writes: "*What is got at twice is the same OBJECT. We hear the same note over again; we see the same quality of green, or smell the same objective perfume, or experience the same species of pain.*" (PP:231) But while the things remain the same, our thoughts about the things are constantly changing.

This may seem a radical proposition. If the object remains unchanged, why is it, one might ask, that James finds that the thoughts of the object are so variable? We don't think of the kitchen table one way on Monday morning and in a different way on Tuesday. While James concedes that this is a common belief, he points out that "The entire history of Sensation is a commentary on our inability to tell whether two sensations received apart are exactly alike." (PP:231) He asks: Does sensation not

give us the perception of grass as a uniform sea of green when reason tells us that it is in reality a composite of different shades of yellow, green, and brown? Does darkness not make us perceive all lighter sensations as white regardless of what experience tells us about their true colour? Both our intellects and our previous experiences give us ample proof of the fallibility of perception alone to determine the sameness of two perceptions.

Furthermore, as James points out, there is an undeniable link between our physical or emotional dispositions and the manner in which we perceive the world around us. He writes,

[w]e feel things differently according as we are sleepy or awake, hungry or full, fresh or tired; differently at night and in the morning, differently in summer and winter, and above all things differently in childhood, manhood, and old age ... The difference of sensibility is shown best by the difference of our emotion about the things from one age to another, or when we are in different organic moods. (PP:232)

Throughout these changes in mood and disposition, we perceive the *same world*. It is not the objects of our environment that change, but rather our perceptions of them. Our belief in the constancy of our perceptions is based not on the perceptions themselves, but on the identity of objects in the world that we perceive.

James also points out that thoughts are thought within a context. A thought's context is composed of the relations it shares with other thoughts including the mood and temperament of the thinker. Now it is clear that this context is always changing. As James notes,

Often we are ourselves struck at the strange differences in our successive views of the same thing. We wonder how we ever could have opined as we did last month about a certain matter. We have outgrown the possibility of that state of mind, we know not how. From one year to the next, we see things in new lights. (PP:233)

A change in attitude and temperament directly affects the manner in which we treat the objects of our perception. Things we once prized and loved can grow dull and

boring, emotions change, circumstances both physical and psychical colour the way in which we perceive the things around us. Depression renders the world flat and uninteresting whereas a new love makes everything exciting and new. As our moods shift and our experience is ever-increasing, James concludes that two thoughts can never have self-identical contents.

At the physiological level, James reminds us that it is an accepted fact that thought is at least correlated with changes in brain-states. So, if every thought is correlated with some change in the brain, then no two thoughts could be perceived by the same brain. As James points out, every shift in neurophysiology includes a shift in neural nutritive substances and neural susceptibility to new pulses of thought.

Every brain-state is partly determined by the nature of this entire past succession. Alter the latter in any part, and the brain-state must be somewhat different. Each present brain-state is a record in which ... [we] might read all the foregone history of the owner. It is out of the question, then, that any total brain-state should identically recur. (PP:234)

So no two thoughts could be identically perceived by the same brain. A latter thought is always perceived by a brain modified by the former. It could therefore not be perceived identically to its predecessor. Thus, James concludes, it is clear that no two mental states can be identical and that thought is constantly changing.

The Third Characteristic: Within each personal consciousness thought is sensibly continuous.

James characterizes mental life as a "stream of consciousness" in which the sensible flow of thought is unbroken. He writes that there are only three possible cases in which an interruption in the flow of thoughts can be conceived to have occurred. These are: the presence of unconscious gaps of awareness such as when a person nods off or suffers an epileptic seizure; the presence of conscious gaps of awareness such as in sleep; and the presence of breaks or interruptions in the quality of thought such as sudden shocks.

The first case James considers is the existence of unconscious gaps in the continuity of the stream of consciousness. There are instances where a person can doze off for a few seconds and not realize that they have fallen asleep. It is also common for a person who is just waking from an epileptic seizure to have no memory of the experience or awareness of the passage of time. One could argue that such episodes must count as real interruptions in the flow of thought.

James responds to this objection by pointing out that the existence of unconscious gaps in *sensible* continuity is paradoxical. In order for there to be a gap in sensible continuity, we would have to feel the interruption. But if the gap in question is one that is unconscious, it is by definition a gap that is *not perceived*. How then can an unperceived gap be an interruption in felt continuity? While an external observer might infer that there is a break in the flow of thought when a person nods off or suffers an epileptic seizure, the individual in question does not perceive this interruption in her stream of thought. Rather, she awakes from these states unaware of the passage of time and ignorant of her behaviour during the period of unconsciousness. The last thought before a seizure merges with the next thought following the seizure in much the same way that our visual fields combine themselves over a perceptual blind spot so that no perceptual break can be found. As James explains, regardless of the viewpoint of an external observer,

Such consciousness as this ... is for itself unbroken. It *feels* unbroken; a waking day of it is sensibly a unit as long as that day lasts, in the sense in which the hours themselves are units, as having all their parts next each other, with no intrusive alien substance between. (PP:238)

And so, not being perceived as interruptions of consciousness, we cannot call this kind of unconscious gap an interruption in our sensible continuity.

The second case James examines involves *perceived* lapses of consciousness as in sleep. For the most part, we wake up each morning aware of the passage of time during which our conscious lives have been momentarily suspended. We thus

have daily experiences of breaks in the temporal succession of our thoughts. How then, one might ask, can James maintain that the continuity of our stream of thought is an undeniable fact of consciousness?

James concedes that our consciousness is not continuous in the "mere time-sense of the word." (PP:238) Nonetheless he argues, thoughts are continuous by virtue of belonging to a common whole. Thus just as my computer's hard drive and its monitor while not contiguous are nevertheless continuous because they are both parts of the same object viz., my computer, so too is the thought I had before falling asleep continuous with the thought I have when I wake up because they both belong to the same self. When we awaken from sleep we are not only aware of a lapse in time, but we also have the added awareness of being the *same person*. In spite of the time gap, the two thoughts, being parts of the same self, are thus continuous with one another.

Finally James explores the breaks in the stream of thought that stem from sudden interruptions and shocks such as loud explosions or flashes of bright light. He calls this type of break an interruption in the *quality* of consciousness. Gaps in the quality of consciousness occur when the flow of thought is interrupted by an unexpected perception. We all have a dim awareness of the direction of our thought. As James points out, "it would be difficult to find in the actual concrete consciousness of a man a feeling so limited to the present as not to have an inkling of anything that went before." (PP:241) This awareness is what James calls a "*psychic overtone, suffusion, or fringe*." (PP:258) The psychic fringe includes emotional states and those modifications in the brain that influence the perception of thought. For James,

Relation, then, to our topic of interest is constantly felt in the fringe, and particularly the relation of harmony and discord, of furtherance or hindrance of the topic. When the sense of furtherance is there, we are 'all right;' with the sense of hindrance we are dissatisfied and perplexed, and cast about us for other thoughts. Now *any* thought the quality of whose fringe lets us feel ourselves 'all right,' is an acceptable member of our thinking, whatever kind of thought it may otherwise be. (PP:259)

The fringe is felt insofar as it promotes or hinders the continuity of our train of thought. Breaks in the quality of thought occur when this flow is disrupted by a completely unexpected perception (e.g. thunder breaking upon expected silence). These contrasts in perception may leave us feeling disoriented and lost and seem to constitute genuine breaches in the direction of thought described above. However, James argues that

[although] things are discrete and discontinuous [and] they do pass before us in a train or chain, making often explosive appearances and rending each other in twain ... their comings and goings and contrasts no more break the flow of thought that thinks them than they break the time and space in which they lie. (PP:240)

For James the belief that these experiences create gaps of consciousness stems from one of two philosophical errors. The first error is the attribution of object properties to the perceptions of objects. While it is clear that objects are discrete and may contrast dramatically with each other, it is not the case that our perceptions of objects are likewise discrete and discontinuous. For example, when lightening streaks across the midnight sky there is a clear break in the continuity of the uniform blackness of night. However, the thought of lightening streaking across the sky contains both elements. The thought of a night sky and the thought of lightening taken individually do not give us the same feeling of awe and wonder. While the objects clash with each other, the perceptions of the two elements must be perceived together in order for any contrast to become apparent.

Ignorance of this last fact is the source of the second philosophical error. By giving an atomistic account of the content of thought, we are mistakenly led to suppose that there has been a breach of consciousness when none has occurred. As we have seen, both internal and external conditions affect the quality of our thought. James contends that the denial of any facet of a thought is tantamount to denying some aspect of its meaning and significance. Thus, James argues, the perception of

thunder breaking upon silence and contrasting with it is really the perception of "thunder-breaking-upon-silence-and-contrasting-with-it"(PP:240) and not simply the perception of thunder following the perception of silence. The contrast is not a break in our perceived consciousness but is itself an experience in the stream of thought.

The Fourth Characteristic: Every thought has an object that includes all that the thought thinks in a single pulse of consciousness.

James differentiates objects in the world from objects of thought. Objects in the world are things we perceive such as tables, chairs, apples and oranges. The object of a thought is the content of a perception, cognition, reasoning or conception. For James, the object of a thought includes "neither more nor less than all that the thought thinks, exactly as the thought thinks it, however complicated the matter, and however symbolic the manner of thinking may be." (PP:276) Specifically, he contends that the true object of thought includes every aspect the thought. Thus, while we can repeatedly have experiences of the identical object in the world -- we can perceive the same table twice -- we can never get the same object of thought twice because conditions both internal and external are always changing and because these conditions are included in the object of thought. For example, if I perceive an apple when I am hungry the object of my thought is not of an "apple" but rather of "an-apple-perceived-when-I-am-hungry"; a radically different object than the thought of "an-apple-perceived-after-I've-eaten-twenty-apple-pies". James insists that when treating of the object of thought we must include everything in our definition as only this holistic treatment will include all of the thought's "delicate idiosyncras[ies]." (PP:275) Philosophical errors occur when the object of thought is abstracted or over-extended. As James explains, when treating of thoughts we must "cling as closely as possible to the actual constitution of the thought we are studying [where] we may err as much by excess as by defect." (PP:276)

James also argues that every thought is thought in *a single pulse of consciousness*. It is not the case that we have the thought of the apple, then the thought of our own hunger, then the thought of our perception of the apple and that somehow these three distinct perceptions are added on to one another to make one thought of an "apple-perceived-when-I-am-hungry." Rather, as James points out, "it is obvious that if things are to be thought in relation, they must be thought together [because] if not thought with each other, things are not thought in relation at all." (PP:277) That is, in order for us to feel a relation, the relation and its objects must be perceived in a single pulse of consciousness (e.g. the thought of "A" and "B" must be perceived as the thought of "A and B"). James thus concludes that the true object of thought includes not only its most salient perceptual feature, but must also include *all conditions of thought both internal and external* thought of in a single pulse of consciousness.

The Fifth Characteristic: Thought is interest-driven.

As James explains, we only attend to some of the multitude of sensations we perceive. While I am sitting here at my desk, pen in hand, I attend to my train of reasoning and not to the feeling of the chair I am sitting on, the colour of the ink that flows from my pen, or many of the other innumerable sensations being registered by my body. While these less salient features are perceived (as noted in the analysis of the first characteristic), they are nevertheless not attended to with the same degree of interest. The great majority of us give more attention to the word than to the individual letter and to the melody rather than to the individual note. The mind is continually emphasizing certain features of our experience. We pay particular attention to those objects of thought that hold for us a practical, aesthetic, or logical appeal.

These five characteristics are for James patent and unassailable facts of consciousness. Whether they are veridical or not, we all *feel* the activity of thought in

these ways. A thought independent of a personal consciousness is unthinkable and not to be had, ideas with identical contents are prohibited by both psychical and physiological facts, the perceived continuity of thought is unassailable, the object of thought must include conditions both internal and external in order to retain all of its significance, and the feeling of interest is undeniable. My task in the next two sections is to show how according to James, both Hume's atomistic theory and Kant's transcendentalist theory fail to account for these five undeniable characteristics of thought.

SECTION TWO -- *The Atomist Tradition*

In this section I explore James's analysis of Hume's associationist theory of mind. As my aim is to give an exegesis of James's view, this section should not be considered a scholarly study of Hume's theory. Rather, I am interested only in James's interpretation of Hume's theory in light of how it contradicts or fails to account for the five facts of consciousness. My central claim is that James uses the five characteristics of thought as basis for his positive theory and as criticism of Hume's atomistic model of the self. While it can be argued that James does not explicitly state that he is employing the five characteristics to these ends, I argue that the five characteristics of thought are clearly at odds with James's interpretation of Hume's theory. Furthermore I provide textual support to show where Hume departs from James's view. Given the import James gives to the five characteristics of thought, I take his claim that "the Humian doctrine ... entirely misrepresents the natural appearances," (PP:237) to mean that Hume's atomistic model of the self has abandoned the empirical method of investigation. On this basis, I maintain that Hume, while not always named, is nevertheless one of the key figures whom James believes "is abandoning the empirical method of investigation"(PP:224) by denying the five unassailable characteristics of consciousness. This is an original claim. To my knowledge, no other scholar has linked each of James's five characteristics of thought to his critique of Humean atomism. However, given the fact that I am able to supply passages that clearly show that Hume's theory, as interpreted by James, runs counter to each of the five facts of consciousness, I propose that my interpretation is not only justified, but that it tells us something important about James's commitment to using the "simplest mental facts" (PP:224) as a neutral starting point for all inquiry into mental life.

According to James, Hume's initial commitment is to simple ideas. A Humean simple idea is an idea whose content admits of no sensible distinction or division. These ideas are ontologically distinct from one another because they possess distinguishable features and are conceptually separable (i.e. can be thought of independently of any other idea). In plain English, if you can think of something as existing independently of anything else, then that thought (the one you are thinking) is a simple idea. So, for example, the complex idea of a pen is for Hume a composite of the simple ideas of black, extended, solid, etc. As each of these features of the pen is distinguishable and separable (i.e., the idea of black is thinkable independently of the idea of solid), each feature is perceived in a distinct simple idea. For Hume, simple ideas are the basic building blocks of mental life.

Hume's simple ideas are units unto themselves independent of any other idea. So, in order to account for our perceptions of complex ideas, Hume must provide an explanation of the manner in which simple ideas may come to be conjoined. He argues that the association of simple ideas stems from the habitual re-presentation of ideas with identical contents. For example, the complex idea of strawberry is often paired with the idea of sweetness. This habitual conjunction leads the mind to provide a relation of causality between the two ideas through the faculties of imagination, reason, and memory. We remember that the two sensations are habitually paired, we imagine that they will continue to be paired in the future, and then reason that one perception (strawberry) causes the other (sweetness). Thus, Hume concludes, the faculty of reason relates simple ideas based on the habitual conjunction of ideas with identical contents. Repeated patterns of identical ideas are thus necessary to the formation of complex ideas. If identical ideas were not frequently re-presented in similar patterns, we could never explain from within Hume's theory how the mind could supply relations between distinct ideas to form complex perceptions.

In light of his commitment to simple ideas, Hume also argues that the self must

either be a distinct simple idea that continues to be the same throughout our lives or that it is a complex idea consisting of several related simple ideas. In the *Treatise of Human Nature*, Hume writes

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 and pleasure. I never can catch *myself* at any time without a perception, and never can observe anything but the perception. (THN:300)

Since he can find no one idea of the self, Hume reasons that it must therefore be the case that the self is a bundle of related simple ideas. As relations between distinct ideas are provided by the faculty of reason, Hume then concludes that the unity of self is feigned by the mind.

I claim that James finds this theory of ideas contrary to each of the five characteristics of thought. I shall thus take up each characteristic in turn and show how Hume is forced to reject the patent facts of consciousness that, for James, are unassailably true. I shall also demonstrate how Hume's rejection of the five facts of consciousness forces him to reject the unity of the self and leaves him unable to account for the atomistic self to which he is committed.

The first characteristic states that every thought is thought by a personal consciousness. My ideas are mine, your ideas are yours, my thoughts stick with my thoughts, and your thoughts stick with yours. James writes that thoughts "mutually cohere" with one another where they are

as little each-for-itself and reciprocally independent as they are all-belonging together. They are neither: no one of them is separate, but each belongs with certain others and with none besides. (PP:225-6)

By this James means that no thought is separate unto itself. In order to be thought by a personal consciousness, a thought must belong with certain other thoughts and no others. Yet Hume describes simple ideas as distinct and independent entities whose

contents admit of no sensible distinction; a position that clearly contradicts James's first characteristic. Furthermore, Hume's simple ideas must be characterizable independently of any personal consciousness. As a simple idea can admit of no sensible distinction, two simple ideas can only be the same (and can only be related by the mind) if they have *identical* contents. We have also seen that Hume's self is a collection of simple ideas -- a self that must change with each addition of a new self idea. Simple ideas could not be part of a personal consciousness as they cannot both belong to an ever-changing self and be identically repeatable. In order to form complex ideas, Hume's simple ideas must therefore be independent of a personal consciousness.

The second characteristic says that thought is always changing. This characteristic is also contradicted by Hume's notion of simple ideas with identical contents. We know, given James's second characteristic of thought, that we never have the same thought as conditions both internal and external change with every successive perception. That first magical taste of a summer-sun-ripened strawberry is never exactly reproduced with all of its initial anticipation and joy. We experience a similar flavour, our taste buds are stimulated in comparable ways, but the identical perception coloured by the same internal and external conditions is never had twice. Our expectations have changed, our gastrointestinal systems have been altered, even our brain states have been modified since the initial sensation. We can therefore never taste the same strawberry in exactly the same way. If the same simple idea can never be repeated and if the conjunction of complex ideas is explained in Hume's theory by the repetition of identical simple ideas, then Hume cannot explain the existence of complex ideas; an undeniable part of our perceived mental lives.

The third characteristic states that our thoughts are sensibly continuous. Ideas follow each other like a movie where the unity of the film is given by the continuous succession of its frames. James argues that Hume is unable to account for the perceived continuity of the stream of thought for two reasons. The first is Hume's

claim that "where there is no name no entity can exist." (PP:246) James argues that this is false because it denies the existence of transitive thoughts. For James the thought process is "Like a bird's life" in that "it seems to be made up of an alternation of flights and perchings." (PP:243) The perchings are what James calls "substantive thoughts"; thoughts that have a specific and identifiable content. The flights are transitive thoughts; thoughts that lead our consciousnesses from one substantive thought to the next. But while the content of a substantive thought can be readily identified and named, a transitive thought cannot be captured in terms of static and timeless concepts. As James points out, to try to hold onto a feeling of transition is tantamount to holding a snow-flake; the second it alights on the hand, it disappears. Felt relations can only be known by being felt. Because they are leadings, pushes, expectancies and indications, they cannot be labelled with timeless definitions. To illustrate this point James gives the example of trying to recall a forgotten name. Here we have no definite idea before the mind or else the name would already be known. But our consciousness is nevertheless infused with the feeling of striving to remember. As James explains, this is no mere empty gap of consciousness. We may not know which name we are trying to recall, but we are quite clear about which names do not fit the expected answer and we recognize the right answer when it is presented. What is described as "drawing a blank" is not the absence of thought. Rather it is the active struggle to remember something that is not directly available to our present awareness.

James points out that Hume cannot account for these facts of consciousness. As transitive thoughts are not static concepts they cannot be classified as either simple ideas or as relations. They cannot be classified as ideas because they have no discernable content; they are perceived as pushes and expectancies and do not include such concrete objects as apples or tables. But neither are they relations because Hume's relations are supplied by the mind and are not felt (the mind supplies the relations of causality and resemblance, it does not perceive them). This

is why James argues that Hume, being unable to classify feelings of transition as either ideas or as relations, omits "a good third of our psychic life." (PP:253) He writes that in Hume's theory "All *dumb* or anonymous psychic states have ... been coolly suppressed; or, if recognized at all, have been named after the substantive perceptions they led to, as thoughts 'about' this object of 'about' that." (PP:246) But these dumb psychic states are integral to the perceived continuity of thought precisely because they provide the transition between one substantive section of the stream and the next -- they link the frames of the movie together. Having omitted transitive feelings, it is therefore no surprise that Hume cannot account for the perceived continuity of thought.

The second reason that James gives for Hume's inability to account for the perceived continuity of thought is Hume's incapacity to provide a plausible account of how the mind could ever come to relate *any* two ideas. As we have seen Hume argues that relations between ideas are supplied by the mind. However, we have also seen that Hume cannot conceive of the self as being other than a bundle of simple ideas. If all simple ideas including the simple ideas of the self are independent of one another, then Hume must conclude that the self (and personal identity) is a collection of ideas related by the mind. But if the self is only a collection of related simple ideas, how is it, James asks, that these ideas ever come to be related?

There are only two ways in which Hume could possibly explain the relation of ideas. Either Hume must assume that the self and the mind are the same and that the collection of self-ideas can somehow become self-aware: that

Out of a such recurrences and resemblances in a series of discrete ideas and feelings a knowledge was somehow supposed to be engendered in each feeling that it was recurrent and resembling, and that it helped to form a series to whose unity the name *I* came to be joined; (PP:353)

or he must posit the existence of a mind independent of the self. But, James argues, neither option is defensible.

First, Hume cannot argue that the collection of self-ideas becomes self-aware because simple ideas, if they were to conjoin themselves, would have to know one another. Each simple idea would then have knowledge not only of itself, but it would also have an awareness of the bundle of ideas to which it was adding itself. If this were the case, no two ideas could ever have the identical content as each succeeding simple idea would have knowledge of its predecessor while the preceding idea would have no knowledge of its successor. Thus, every succeeding idea would know more than its predecessor and the two could not share the identical content. As James explains, "If memory of previous existence and all sorts of other cognitive functions are attributed to [an idea] when it returns, it is no longer the same, but a wholly different feeling, and ought to be so described." (PP:354) Thus, if thoughts are cognitive they must be constantly changing. However, if thoughts are constantly changing, then they will lack the identity of content whose repetition makes the attribution of relations between ideas possible. James concludes therefore that Hume cannot hold that ideas unify themselves and that the feeling of self somehow arises from this collection of thoughts.

Nor can Hume claim that it is the mind (independent of the self) that conjoins simple ideas. Just as Hume must conclude that the self is a collection of simple ideas because we can have no idea of the self without stumbling on "some particular perception or other of heat or cold, light or shade, love or hatred, pain and pleasure," (THN:300), so too must he conclude that we can have no idea of the mind without stumbling on some particular judgment or reasoning, memory or imagining, perception or thought. Hume must apply the same reasoning that leads him to find that the self is a collection of distinct independent unrelated ideas to his analysis of the mind. But if the mind is a bundle of ideas, then we can legitimately ask: "Who is bundling the contents of the mind?"

James argues that having analysed the self into parts Hume cannot put the pieces back together again and thus he cannot explain how the *belief* in personal

identity is even thinkable (regardless of its truth or falsity). If the mind is a collection of ideas then it cannot be the agent that supplies relations between simple ideas. If Hume cannot explain the relations between distinct ideas, then he can explain neither the self nor the perceived continuity of the stream of thought. We then have thoughts thought by no one, unified by no one, and constitutive of no one. Thus, for James, Hume's theory of the self reduces to absurdity.

The fourth characteristic of thought states that every thought has an object that includes all that the thought thinks in a single pulse of consciousness. Hume's theory begins with the assumption that complex ideas are composites of simple ideas. But as distinct sensory contents composed of a single distinguishable element (e.g. black, extended, solid), Hume's simple ideas do not count the internal and external conditions of thought as parts of the thought's content. Recall that in his exposition of the fourth characteristic James warns us that we must "cling to the actual constitution of the thought" (PP:276) and refrain from dissecting its appearance (i.e. pre-analytic description). Hume's analysis of complex ideas into atomistic bits is a clear case of taking a substantive kernel out of the thought and calling it the thought's object. (PP:275) Even though the kernel can be distinguished from the larger thought-content, it does not according to James, constitute an ontologically prior separate idea. As he might point out, the thought of "snow" taken independently of the thought of "storm" is not the same thought of "snow" that we find within the thought of "snow-storm." On its own, the idea of "snow" does not convey the force and power of the storm, and the separate idea of "storm" does not give us the same feeling of cold and blinding whiteness. There would be nothing in the simple idea of storm to indicate that it was a snow-storm. One would be just as likely to imagine a hurricane or tornado as to picture a blizzard. The meaning that we attribute to each separate idea is determined by the context of the larger complex idea so that the idea "snow" thought within the complex idea "snow-globe" with its connotations of winsomeness and frivolity is different from the idea "snow" thought within the complex idea of "snow-

storm" with its intemperance and harshness. James concludes that by abstracting simple ideas from the complex thought, Hume fails to account for the true object of thought and robs our mental life of a good part of its meaning.

The fifth characteristic is that thought is interest-driven. Clearly we give particular attention to certain objects in our perception. We notice the objects in our environment in proportion to their relevance to our present train of thought. Hume does accord the passions an important role in induction. However, having dismissed the existence of feelings of tendency and transition and having dissolved the self into a disconnected bundle of ideas, it is at the very least unclear how any relation of interest could be explained from within Hume's ontology. We feel that something is important precisely because it is *related* to our present train of thought. Being a relation, Hume must argue that interest is supplied by the mind but since he is also forced to conclude that the self and the mind are nothing more than collections of ideas then he cannot explain how the collection of self ideas can be the agent through which a topic of interest is *felt*. Thus Hume can explain neither how, nor why thought is interest-driven.

We can thus see how Hume's theory of mental life runs counter to each of the five characteristics of thought; characteristics that are for James unassailable. According to James, Hume objectifies distinct simple ideas and is then forced to conclude that thoughts can exist independently of a personal consciousness so that they may recur with identical contents. James finds that Hume cannot account for the perceived continuity of the stream of thought, that he fails to acknowledge the fact that the object of thought is context-dependent, and that he thereby robs our thoughts of their relations to an overriding topic of interest. Having mistakenly attributed ontological distinctness to simple ideas, Hume can offer no explanation of how these thoughts stick together. Relations become mental postulates, the self falls out, and the resulting theory of personal identity is both counter-intuitive and self-refuting. It is

interesting to note that even the diversity of self to which Hume is so committed cannot be accounted for by his theory. As there is no agent that can bundle the ideas of the self, there can be no self. And, as there is no self, there is no diversity of self. James concludes finally that all the paradoxes and contradictions in Hume's theory arise as a result of his initial commitment to ontologically prior simple distinct independent recurring ideas; entities that are for James "as mythological ... as the Jack of Spades."
(PP:236)

SECTION THREE -- *The Transcendentalist Tradition*

James also criticizes Kant's transcendental theory of the unity of apperception. I argue that James's claims that Kant's theory fails to "describe the facts naturally" (PP:363) and that "Kant's way of describing the facts is mythological," (PP:363), are best read in light of James's commitment to the five characteristics of thought. Here, James accuses Kant of rejecting the unassailable neutral starting points that must be accountable by every theory of mental life. As in the previous section, the connection between the five characteristics of thought (the natural facts) and James's rejection of Kantian transcendentalism originates with this thesis. Although James does not make the explicit connection between Kant's theory and the five characteristics of thought, I claim that it is clear, given certain passages in the *Principles of Psychology*, that James's rejection of Kantian transcendentalism stems from Kant's inability to account for the five characteristics of thought.

It must be noted at the outset that this section deals only with James's interpretation and critique of Kant's position. James, being, less concerned with the details of the theory than he is with its central claim, namely, that the unity of thought is provided by a non-phenomenal thinker behind experience, gives only a cursory treatment of Kant's theory. (PP:362-3) He presents the theory as follows. Kant distinguishes conceptual understanding (thought) from experience (raw sensation or intuition). While Kant's object of thought, a "system of things, qualities or facts in relation," (PP:360) loosely reflects James's own definition of the object of thought, Kant holds that intuitions or experiences are ontologically prior to thoughts synthesized by the understanding. Finding that sense impressions come through five disconnected senses, Kant reasons that it must be the case that impressions are originally perceived as a chaotic manifold of experience.

We saw in examining Hume's theory of ideas that such disconnected experiences must be conjoined in order to form complex ideas. How else could we explain the fact that our thoughts are unified experiences and not disconnected atomistic parts? It is also clear that these distinct ideas cannot unify themselves. Hume's theory reduces itself to absurdity precisely because he cannot give an account of how simple ideas came to be related to one another. From this inability to account for complex ideas, Kant argues that we can only explain the unity of experience required for knowledge by presupposing the existence of a thinker that unifies experience.

As James notes, Kant explains the synthesis of the manifold of experience through the faculties of apprehension, imagination, intuition, and apperception. These faculties convey our perceptions to the understanding which then "bring[s] ... this material 'under the unity of Apperception,'" (PP:361), that is, "the 'Ego' ... employ[s] the productive Imagination to make the Understanding use the categories to combine the data which Recognition, Association, and Apprehension receive from the sensible Intuition." (PP:364) As James explains, it is in this way that experience is synthesized and unified so as to be thought by me. It is only when thought by a unified subject that experience becomes part of my experience and can be related to other thoughts in my body of knowledge. Thus thoughts must be thought by me in order to be known. Since experience itself is made possible through this connection of the chaotic manifold of experience to a unified thinker, Kant's transcendental unity of apperception is a precondition of the very possibility of knowledge. As James writes, for Kant,

All things, then, so far as they are intelligible at all, are so through combination with pure consciousness of *Self*, and apart from this, at least potential, combination nothing is knowable to us at all. (PP:361-2)

Kant's transcendental ego must also be immutable. The self being proposed here is not the empirical self that we all experience in our daily activities. Kant

explains that the *perceived* self is merely a phenomenal (subjective) appearance; it is the "empirical *me*, not the pure *I*." (PP:362) The *I* of the transcendental ego is the pure form of thought. It organizes experience but it never itself an object of experience. That is, the pure ego is the "simple and utterly empty idea: *I*" (PP:362) whose conjunction with experience makes knowledge possible. The pure ego cannot be conceived independently of experience. As James writes, it is "only that 'Subject' which is the necessary correlate of the Object in all knowledge." (PP:362) Thus, James says that Kant's ego is a metaphysical postulate from which nothing can be deduced; because the pure *I* can never be known independently of an experience, "we cannot form the least conception of it" (PP:326) when it is taken on its own. As a bare metaphysical condition or form of all intelligible experience, the pure *I* is not itself modified by changing experience.

James views Kant's transcendentalist theory as a response to Hume's atomism. Nonetheless, James also finds that Kant is equally unable to account for the five characteristics of thought. I emphasize this tension between the atomistic and transcendentalistic (or holistic) views of the self by presenting each of the five characteristics of thought, giving a brief outline of James's objection to Hume's bundle theory, showing how according to James, Kant may be viewed as responding to the weaknesses of Hume's account, and then explaining why James takes these responses to be at odds with the facts.

The first characteristic is that every thought is thought by a personal consciousness. As we saw in the previous section, Hume's commitment to recurring simple ideas entails that ideas must be context-independent and distinct. Kant on the other hand, maintains that "[t]he awareness that *I think* is ... implied in all experience" (PP:361) so that every thought, in order to known, must be connected to the self. This claim seems to parallel James's comment in his exposition of the first characteristic that the "universal conscious fact is not 'feelings and thoughts exist,' but 'I think' and 'I

feel.'" (PP:226) But the 'I' for Kant and the 'I' for James are as different from one another as night and day.

For James the self is a *personal* consciousness -- "concrete particular I's and you's." (PP:226) Kant's transcendental ego, on the other hand, is not my "I" or your "I"; it is the universal "I" -- the pure form of consciousness. As a condition of objective knowledge, it is both universal and necessary rather than particular (i.e. personal) and contingent. Unlike James's personal consciousness, we can have no experience of Kant's transcendental ego because we can have no experience of the pure ego. As it is the pure ego that makes experience possible, reason alone leads us to conclude that it must exist as a condition for the possibility of knowledge. However, we can never *know* anything about it because it is not an object of possible experience. This pure ego, being an impersonal form of consciousness, is therefore at odds with James's first characteristic of thought.

The second characteristic of thought is that it is always changing. Hume is unable to account for this characteristic of thought because he is committed to the existence of simple *recurring* identical ideas. Kant does not have to postulate the recurrence of simple ideas since relations in his theory are provided not by the mind's perceptions of the habitual conjunction of identical ideas, but rather are given by the synthesis of the manifold of experience by the transcendental ego. While it is not explicitly spelled out in James's treatment of the Kantian theory, anyone familiar with the Kantian system knows that Kant explains this synthesis of the manifold of experience through the application of the categories of thought (immutable laws of cognition) to the chaotic manifold of experience. That is, the understanding binds or synthesizes the manifold together by means of *a priori* concepts; concepts that are independent of experience. (PP:361) But given James's mental ontology, this would mean that Kant also requires that the same thoughts are repeated with identical content. A closer look at the synthesis of experience will show that Kant needs the repetition of identical ideas.

The faculty of the understanding is by nature empty. Sensory experiences are given to the understanding by the faculty of intuition (what we would call sensation) and the understanding then organizes this experience by means of immutable categories of thought. The understanding, being independent of experience and employing the immutable categories of thought, must then apply the same rules of synthesis to every new experience. That is, while the content of experience is always changing, *the way in which the experience is synthesized* must remain the same given the nature of the faculty of the understanding. Furthermore, as noted above, the understanding must judge every experience as being thought by me (it must join the experience to the transcendental ego). As the form of understanding does not change, and as the transcendental ego does not change, this judgment must be identically repeated for every new experience. However, James insists that judgments are as much mental activities or events as are perceptions, conceptions, and imaginings. Kant's explanation of the synthesis of the manifold of experience through the transcendental unity of apperception thus requires the repetition of identical thoughts (in this case judgments) and runs counter to James's second characteristic of thought.

The third characteristic is that thought is sensibly continuous. Hume, having dissolved both relations and the mind through his commitment to simple ideas, is unable to explain even the perception of continuity of the self. Kant agrees with James that

if things are to thought in relation, they must be thought together, and in one *something*, be that something ego, psychosis, state of consciousness, or whatever you please. If not thought with each other, things are not thought in relation at all; (PP:277)

and from this fact Kant concludes that the self must be assumed as a condition for the possibility of experience, i.e., as a metaphysical postulate needed in order to explain the possibility of knowledge. In Kant's theory the continuity of the stream of thought is

given by the transcendental unity of apperception; it being the "one something" in which diverse thoughts are thought together. But James argues that while Kant's theory may unite Hume's distinct ideas, it nevertheless contains the same fatal flaw viz., the assumption that our experiences are composites of discrete ideas.

Both Hume and Kant have problems with the perceptual continuity of thought because they both must provide an account for the synthesis of simple perceptions. Hume must explain complex ideas in terms of feigned mental relations and Kant must explain knowledge by positing a transcendental self. Both these positions begin with the assumption that our perceptions are inherently independent and chaotic. James, by contrast, points out that we perceive our thoughts as unified and continuous experiences. That is, regardless of the apparatus of perception, all sensations are originally given as unified wholes. James argues then that there is no reason to posit an agent that conjoins simple ideas into complex thoughts. He writes that in their commitment to the initial perception of disconnected sensations

both the Intellectualists [Kant] and the Sensationalists [Hume] are wrong. If there be such things as feelings at all, *then so surely as relations between objects exist in rerum natura, so surely, and more surely do feelings exist to which these relations are known.* (PP:245)

Even though Kant explains relations between ideas through the synthesis of the manifold, these relations being supplied by the mind are logical and not *felt* relations. Kant, like Hume, dismisses the existence of feelings in which relations are known. This move denies the felt continuity of the stream of consciousness because relations are known not by thoughts that are "continuous and consubstantial with the subjective tissue out of which sensations and other substantive states are known," (PP:245) but rather are known only by conceptual thought, "something unutterably superior to any fact of sensibility whatever." (PP:245) The unity supplied by the pure ego cannot be felt as continuity because the pure ego is divorced from sensation. Having made the unity of experience purely logical, Kant cannot explain the *feeling* of continuity.

The fourth characteristic is that the object of thought includes "neither more nor less than all that the thought thinks, exactly as the thought thinks it, however complicated the matter, and however symbolic the manner of thinking may be"(PP:276) presented in a single pulse of consciousness. Hume, by abstracting simple components from the unified object of thought, contradicts James's definition of the object of thought by including too little in his treatment of simple ideas. Kant on the other hand, contradicts James's definition of the object of thought by including too much.

Kant says that our thoughts come to us in a chaotic manifold and that the function of the transcendental unity of apperception is to synthesize discrete perceptions into unified judgments. He argues that knowledge of a thought includes not only knowledge of its object, but also knowledge of the thinker. James argues that this stance confuses the act of thinking a thought with the act of thinking of thinking a thought. While the second may necessitate ego-awareness, the first does not. That is, thinking a thought does not imply ego-awareness -- I do not think of my self when I am reading a novel or watching a movie. So even though every thought must be thought by some thinker, James maintains that "thought may, but need not, in knowing, discriminate between its object and itself." (PP:275) Thus on the one hand Kant atomizes the object of experience into discreet independent sensations, and on the other over-extends the object of thought in order to explain how experience could ever be synthesized at all.

The last characteristic of thought is that thought is interest-driven. Hume, having denied the reality of felt relations and the unity of the self, is unable to explain how the relation of interest can be perceived. Kant's transcendental unity of apperception seems to be an agent through which the interest to a topic of thought may be felt and acted upon. However, according to James, the Kantian transcendental ego is an empty posit that explains nothing and cannot therefore be an agent of interest. James's argument for this point is twofold. First, James argues

that Kant fails to adequately explain how the transcendental unity of apperception performs the synthesis of thought. Secondly, James points out that the fact that our thoughts are perceived as continuous effectively annihilates the need for this postulated entity.

With regard to the first point, James points out that it is clear that we all think, understand, judge dream, etc., and that we are aware of our own mental powers at work. Kant explains these phenomena by saying that they inhere in, or are produced by a pure ego and he bases this assumption on the fact that thinking, understanding, judging and dreaming go on. The phenomena are explained by positing a transcendental thinker but we are only aware of this transcendental thinker insofar as we are aware of the phenomena. So, James argues, Kant finds that we must presuppose an underlying unity given mental activity, and then explains this mental activity in terms of the underlying unity. This postulation of a transcendental ego thus adds nothing to our knowledge of the nature of thought and selfhood. James compares the role of the transcendental unity of apperception to the activity of the substantialists's soul where the synthesis of ideas is "taken ready-made and clapped on to her as expressions of her nature taken after the fact." (PP:365) But where the substantialists at least gave the soul the powers of activity and selection, the Kantian ego "is simply nothing: as ineffectual and windy an abortion as Philosophy can show." (PP:365) Nothing can be deduced from the Kantian ego as it is empty of all content. James's point is that Kant's theory of the transcendental ego is a "complete superfluity, so far as accounting for the actually verified facts of consciousness goes." (PP:348)

Secondly, James argues that Kant not only fails to explain how the pure ego performs this synthesis of ideas, he also claims that Kant cannot even show why this synthesis must be performed. As thoughts are already perceived as continuous, the necessity of Kant's postulated transcendental ego must be renounced. Kant's argument presupposes that the perception of elementary sensations is prior to the felt

continuity of the stream of thought, but this ignores the patent fact that the object of experience is perceived as a whole. (PP:360) So there is no originally chaotic manifold to be reduced to order (given that thoughts are perceived as unities and not as a disconnected bits), and no need to explain the synthesis of perceptions in terms of a transcendental ego.

Even if Kant could defend the need for this metaphysical postulate, his theory would still run counter to the fifth characteristic of thought. The Kantian ego explains nothing so it cannot be an agent of interest. Its sole duty is the conjunction of ideas. But as it is a bare metaphysical postulate, the pure form of thought, it cannot be a particular self and thus can have no individual interest, nor particular values or choices. Interest is a relation to those objects that have a certain appeal. Pure forms of thought such as Kant's transcendental unity of apperception have neither desires nor wishes, they feel neither pleasure nor pain, in short, they lack the emotions that would inspire any feeling of interest.

Kant thus fails to explain mental unity beyond simply positing its existence. Furthermore, in arguing for the necessity of the synthesis of the manifold of experience through the postulated transcendental thinker, Kant denies each of the five basic and undeniable characteristics of thought. Kant's unity of apperception is not a personal consciousness, it is an immutable timeless "form of thought." Having argued that sensations are perceived as a chaotic manifold rather than as a continuous procession of unified thoughts, he cannot explain the perceived continuity of the stream of thought and must over-extend thought's object to include the self. Finally, Kant cannot account for the role of interest in the synthesis of ideas because his self is impersonal, above experience and thus unaffected by its content. And yet we have seen that James's five characteristics of thought are unassailable by any reasonable inquirer -- no theory can deny these obvious facts. So, Kant, like Hume before him, must accept that his theory of the transcendental unity of apperception is an unacceptable account of mental life.

SECTION FOUR -- *James's Description of the Phenomenal Self*

The preceding sections establish the import of James's five characteristics of thought and their critical force against the theories of Hume and Kant. However, the problem of personal identity is not a problem of the characteristics of thought, but rather is a problem concerning the nature of selfhood. Thus, in order to flesh out James's positive theory of personal identity, we must first address his remarks on the self.

In describing the self, James once again begins his inquiry from selfhood in "its widest acceptance." (PP:291) His analysis includes a description of the constituents of self, the feelings inspired by the self, and the actions prompted by the self. For James, a person's phenomenal self is "the sum total of all that he CAN call his, not only his body and his psychic powers, but his clothes and his house, his wife and children, his ancestors and friends, his reputation and works, his lands and horses, and yacht and bank account." (PP:291) This description of the way the self *feels* is not challenged by either of the philosophical traditions we have examined. James writes that Hume finds that consciousness of the diversity of self is both patently obvious and indicative of the self's atomistic nature, (PP:351) and that Kant concedes that this phenomenal self, while not the pure ego, is "the only self we can know anything positive about." (PP:362) Yet James also writes that both Hume and Kant deem this perceived self as mere appearance. Hume finds that there may be "no 'real tie'" (PP:359) between the distinct ideas of self and Kant treats the phenomenal self as just "an object among other objects;" (PP:362) an appearance that must be synthesized by the transcendental unity of apperception in order to be known. But, as we have seen in the preceding two sections, James holds that neither philosopher can explain even the appearance of the phenomenal self. Hume dissolves the mind and thus cannot explain the feigned relations that lead us to believe we are a unified self, and Kant's

ego, being an empty philosophical posit, cannot explain the presence of the phenomenal self that we all perceive. So, while everyone agrees that it is a patent fact that we experience the self phenomenally in the way James describes, having denied the five characteristics of thought, neither Hume nor Kant can account for this perception. James on the other hand, does not reject the five characteristics of thought. Rather, he builds his theory of self from these very facts of consciousness. Thus, James's description of the self is compatible with his description of the phenomenal self.

Before evaluating James's analysis of the phenomenal self however, we must first establish what James considers to be its main features. James treats the self in three parts: 1) the constituents of self; 2) self-feelings; and 3) self-seeking and self-preservation. The empirical (or phenomenal self) includes the material self, the social self, and the spiritual self as its constituents. As self-feeling, self-seeking and self-preservation vary with the three constituents, I shall describe them in terms of each constituent respectively.

The Material Self

James explains that the material self is composed of all the corporeal objects that inspire instinctive preferences and help us further our practical interests. In its most narrow application, this self consists of our physical bodies. However, the material self also includes our clothes, our families, our homes, our wealth, and any other physical object in which we feel a particular interest. We have a special feeling of attachment to these things in the sense that their loss would effect a "shrinkage of our personality, a partial conversion of ourselves into nothingness." (PP:293) To illustrate this point, James cites the case of a youth whose senses were limited to sight in one eye and hearing in one ear who would say "I no longer am" when his one good eye was closed. (PP:376 f.n.) Having lost the feeling of his body, he had lost the feeling of self. James also points out that the death of a family member is experienced as a

devastating loss of part of the self: "When they die, a part of our very selves is gone." (PP:292) Likewise, the loss of a home or of wealth can change one's feelings of self-worth and self-importance.

We are affected by the loss of these objects because we identify them with our selves. The joys and pains of our family members become our joys and pains; their achievements becomes our achievements and their shame our shame. We also identify our selves with the objects of our labours and with the goods we have appropriated. There is an unmistakable pride in an individual who has built her own home, or who finds herself in the possession of a priceless family heirloom. We seek to acquire these objects in order to maintain or improve our physical well-being and count them among the things we call our selves.

The Social Self

James defines a person's social self as "the recognition which he gets from his mates." (PP:293) He argues that we are not only gregarious animals, but that we also possess an "innate propensity to get ourselves noticed, and noticed favourably, by our kind." (PP:293) This notice makes up our social selves. James argues that "Properly speaking, a man has as many social selves as there are individuals who recognize him and carry an image of him in their mind." (PP:294) We are thus a collection of many different social selves. But, as James notes, given that "the individuals who carry the images [of us] fall naturally into classes, we may practically say that [we have] as many different social selves as there are distinct groups of persons" (PP:294) who touch our lives.

James also points out that the opinion of these "groups of persons" affect us in proportion to the importance we place on their affections. He argues that there is a particularly strong identification of self with persons that we love noting that the opinions of a spouse or lover can affect us more strongly than those of other individuals. Similarly, the recognition and respect of our social peers is almost

always more important to us than the opinion of a stranger. So while the social self includes all of our social interactions and relationships with the members of our communities, certain relationships may affect us with a greater force and importance than others and thus be more central to our sense of selfhood.

The Spiritual Self

The spiritual self is a person's inner psychic being. As James points out, whatever else we may know of mental life, it nevertheless remains a fact that we are able to "*think of ourselves as thinkers*" and as such, that we have some experience of our own cognitions (i.e., of our spiritual selves) (PP:296) For James, our spiritual self is the "most intimate part" (PP:296) of our empirical self and it gives rise to a "purer self-satisfaction" (PP:296) than all of our possessions combined.

James treats the spiritual self both as the collection of perceived mental faculties, and as a feeling of an "inner core" self. In terms of a collection of faculties, the spiritual self for James is composed of various mental capacities. These include among other things, our ability to argue, our religious sensibilities, our moral convictions, and our strength of will. But we also feel that there is a core self or what James calls "a sort of innermost centre within the circle of the sanctuary within the citadel, constituted by the subjective life as a whole." (PP:297) That is, we clearly feel that there is a central part of the self (a real me so to speak), a spirit that remains the same while other self-feelings may come and go.

James not only claims that we all feel that there is such a central self of all the other selves, he goes on to describe what this self feels like (or at least what it feels like to him). James explains that his experience of this innermost core can be said "*to consist mainly of the collection of ... peculiar motions in the head or between the head and throat.*" (PP:301) Note that James is not equating the spiritual self with these cephalic adjustments; rather, he is showing that introspectively these physical readjustments are the "portions of my innermost activity of which I am most distinctly

aware." (PP:301) However, while these physical alterations mark our psychic activity, we nevertheless also feel that "over and above these [physical movements] there is an obscurer feeling of something more." (PP:305) This "something more" is a dim awareness of the Ego; the Thinker that holds our thoughts and our various selves together. It is, James explains, what we all experience as a true core self that persists over time.

Subjectively personal identity is but a judgment of sameness. For James, all thought entails a "*bringing of things together into the object of a single judgment,*" (PP:331) which is to say no more than that things are thought in relation to one another only if they are thought together. This judgment of sameness between a past self and the present self is no more mysterious than judging that the pen of yesterday is the same as the pen of today. Whether we prove the objective truth of our belief in personal identity or not, it remains a fact that we all believe that we are the same self that we were yesterday. However, the question of the truth of this judgment is one that must be decided objectively and not on the basis of feelings alone. As we shall see in the next section, James goes beyond the description of the phenomenal self to offer a theory of personal identity that not only describes the felt persistence of self over time, but also *explains why* we feel selfhood in this manner. But, having seen that both Hume's and Kant's explanatory theories of mental life ran their theoretical commitments over the five facts of consciousness, let us first establish whether or not James's description of the material, social and spiritual constituents of the phenomenal self is compatible with his five indubitable characteristics of thought in order to ensure that James himself has not contradicted the facts of consciousness to which he is committed.

The first characteristic is that every thought is part of a personal consciousness. What marks the constituents of the self described above is the fact that "ALL THE[SE] THINGS ... *have the power to produce in the stream of*

consciousness excitement of a certain peculiar sort." (PP:319) James calls this "excitement" the feeling of "vested interest" or the feeling of "warmth and intimacy." This feeling of vested interest accompanies all of the things that I think of as "me" or as "mine." Objects perceived in this fashion have a special significance i.e., the sense of attachment described above. As James explains, "these things give [us] the same emotions. If they wax and prosper, [we] feel triumphant; if they dwindle and die away, [we] feel cast down -- not necessarily in the same degree for each thing, but in much the same way for all." (PP:291-2) So the object of a vested interest is one that appeals directly to the self or personal consciousness. We know from the first characteristic that every thought belongs to a personal consciousness, but James criticises the Kantian theory of the transcendental unity of self by pointing out that "*thought may, but need not, in knowing, discriminate between its object and itself.*" (PP:275) Yet if thought need not in knowing discriminate its object from itself and if interest is a relation of the object of thought to the self, how can James defend the notion of "vested interest"?

While knowledge does not entail that we must discriminate the object of thought from the self perceiving the thought, it is nevertheless patently obvious that we all can think (in some sense) about our selves. It must therefore be the case that the object of some of our thoughts includes this awareness of self. A vested interest then, is found in those thoughts whose objects include this feeling of personal consciousness i.e., warmth and intimacy. Thus, in those cases, the self can be part of "all that the thought thinks," making James's description of the phenomenal self compatible with the first characteristic.

The second characteristic is that thought is always changing. James's treatment of the phenomenal self is compatible with the second characteristic of thought because as James argues, when we are dealing with the self,

we are dealing with a fluctuating material. The same object being sometimes treated as a part of me, at other times as simply mine, and then again as if I had nothing to do with it at all. (PP:291)

For example, in some cases I consider my body as "me": when my body is wounded I say that I am hurt or that I feel pain. In other cases however, I treat my body as the mere physical shell of a higher self. As James points out, we can all experience instances when we might feel a willingness to sacrifice our bodies for the attainment of some higher ideal: a mother in labour might forgo an epidural for fear of endangering her newborn child; an Olympic athlete will ignore his aches and pains in order to win a gold medal; a scientist on the verge of a major breakthrough will neither sleep nor eat until she has properly confirmed her hypothesis. In these cases, the body is a mere vessel or instrument for the achievement of some higher purpose or ideal. It is clear then that the distinction of the "me" from the "mine" is not one that can be made once and for all and that the phenomenal self is thus always changing.

The third characteristic is that thought is sensibly continuous. James explains that the constituents of the self are those objects that inspire us with a vested interest. A vested interest means that we are drawn to these objects because we believe that these things will further our lives and enrich them in some way i.e., that they will help carry our projects forward. The things that tend to inspire the feeling of vested interest then, are objects that have some duration in our lives and that we believe will influence our futures. Thus the continuity of the self and of the objects that compose the self is integral to our perception of self.

The fourth characteristic is that the object of a thought includes all that the thought thinks in a single pulse of consciousness. This characteristic is also essential to James's description of the self. In order for these objects to be constitutive of the self, the feeling of vested interest, the "me" or the "mine" that accompanies thoughts of these objects, must be thought with the objects in question in the same pulse of consciousness. It is not the feeling of vested interest alone that marks the phenomenal self. If this were the case, the phenomenal self would not include the material objects, social relationships, and psychic activities that James describes.

The feeling alone would be an acceptable account of the self. But as Hume points out, we never do have an impression of the self that is not accompanied by some other feeling or perception. As James is not going to find that the feeling of self is somehow added on to our perceptions by the mind or by the transcendental unity of apperception, and as he is not going to deny the fact that the self is *felt*, he is free to acknowledge that the feeling of self is felt together with the perceptions of the objects that constitute the self within the same pulse of consciousness as required by the fourth characteristic.

Finally the fifth characteristic -- that thought is interest-driven-- is covered by the feeling of self, the vested interest of objects that are thought of as "me" or "mine" which for James, is but another form of interest that marks consciousness as a whole. James's description of the phenomenal self is thus clearly compatible with the fifth characteristic of thought.

So, unlike Kant and Hume, James does offer a descriptive account of the phenomenal self that is compatible with the five characteristics of thought. Having provided this descriptive examination of the self, James then goes on to give an objective evaluation of the belief in personal identity. I shall give James's objective theory of self-persistence in the following section. I argue that James explains the identity of self by conjoining the five indubitable facts of consciousness with the feeling of vested interest that marks the constituents of the empirical self described above.

SECTION FIVE -- *James's Theory of Personal Identity*

Before I begin my study of James's theory of personal identity, let us review what has been established up to this point. James begins his investigation from the initial assumption that thought exists and from this starting point finds that thought has five important characteristics. These are: 1) that every thought belongs to a personal consciousness; 2) that thought is always changing; 3) that thought is sensibly continuous; 4) that every thought has an object that includes all that the thought thinks in a single pulse of consciousness; and 5) that thought is interest-driven. James then looks at the phenomenal self and notes that some objects are marked with a feeling of vested interest i.e., are felt as "me" or as "mine". These objects include material objects, social relationships, and psychic or spiritual activities. Each of these things is felt with a warmth and intimacy that identifies them as belonging to the self. But James also notes that we all feel that there is a self independent of any particular self-feeling; a unified "me" that persists over time. He writes that as a feeling, personal identity is a judgment of sameness just like any other. That is, subjectively the judgment that my present self is the same as my past self is no more mysterious than my judging that the present pen is the same as the past pen. (PP:331) Clearly we all share this belief in the persistence of self. However, as a philosophical question, the "most puzzling puzzle" (PP:330) of personal identity is not whether we all believe we are the same self today as we were yesterday, but what justifies us in affirming that we are the same selves that we were yesterday.

In this section I examine James's analysis of personal identity and argue that he uses the critiques levied against the Humean bundle theory and the Kantian transcendentalist theory to show why it must be the case that personal identity is the feeling of selfhood that is passed down from one pulse of consciousness to the next. I show that on the basis of the five characteristics of thought, the feeling of vested interest, and both Hume's and Kant's inability to account for these five facts of

consciousness through the postulation of some form of self-entity, James concludes that "The phenomena are enough, [and that] the passing Thought itself is the only *verifiable* thinker." (PP:346) Once again I shall take up each characteristic in turn, summarize James's criticisms of the Kantian and Humean theories of mind, and then show how James's objective analysis of subjective mental life follows from his conjunction of the five facts of consciousness and the vested interest of the phenomenal self.

The first characteristic is that every thought belongs to a personal consciousness. We know from the analysis of the constituents of the self given in section four, that we distinguish those thoughts that are "me" or "mine" from those that are "not-me" or "not-mine." So if we know that we can pick out thoughts that are mine (i.e., those that belong to my personal consciousness) from those that are not, we can then infer that thoughts from the same personal consciousness in some sense stick together because they belong to the same self. Hume denies the reality of relations both inside and outside the mind and is thus forced to dissolve the self. Kant on the other hand, by positing a universal self, cannot account for the cleavage between thoughts that are "mine" and those that are "not-mine." He can only explain the synthesis of experience by conjoining the manifold of experience with the pure ego. As such Kant must claim that every thought has some knowledge of the self and that rather than being a personal consciousness, this self must be the featureless pure form of universal consciousness. But as James argues, both in his exposition of the five characteristics of thought and in his description of the phenomenal self, every thought is thought by a personal consciousness and some of these thoughts are thought of as "me" or as "mine" while others are thought of as "not-me" and as "not-mine".

If Humean ideas by themselves cannot form a self and if the featureless Kantian ego cannot explain the fact that our consciousness of self is both personal

and individual, James concludes that it must be the case that the self both unified and diverse. James finds that the self, rather than being some metaphysical entity or mere collection of distinct ideas, is the feeling of a unified self that is perceived with every new thought. Thus, just as one cannot distinguish the feeling of pain from pain itself, or the feeling of love from love itself, James concludes that so too one cannot distinguish the feeling of vested interest, the warmth and intimacy of selfhood, from the self.² As James writes, "We cannot realize our present self without simultaneously feeling [a vested interest]" (PP:333) not because the latter brings the former along with it, but because the latter *constitutes* the realization of our selves. Thus the feeling of vested interest is not only a mark that differentiates thoughts that belong to my personal consciousness from those that do not, it is in fact the ground of this differentiation.

Just as our present self is felt with warmth and intimacy, so too were our past thoughts branded with this form of vested interest. Thoughts of the self that I was yesterday -- of the things I owned, of the personal relations that I engaged in, of the thoughts I thought -- are remembered with the same feeling of being "mine" that marks the thoughts I am having in the present. I feel the same identification of my self with my thesis today that I felt yesterday. It hasn't stopped being mine because it has been revised and edited. Being marked with the same feeling of vested interest, thoughts of my past self stick-together with my present self-thoughts. They are mine in virtue of that same feeling of animal warmth. As James writes,

by a natural consequence, we will assimilate them [thoughts] to each other and to the warm and intimate self we now feel within us as we think, and separate them as a collection from whatever selves have not this mark. (PP:333)

² This analogy is borrowed from F. Bergmann, *On Being Free*, p. 81.

So, just as a cattle-brand indicates which beasts are owned by a particular rancher, so too does the feeling of warmth and intimacy brand those thoughts that belong to the self. The present self, perceiving the warmth and intimacy of previous thoughts, feels that they are part of the same self and this feeling of identity is what we mean when we say that "we are the same self that we were yesterday."

The second characteristic is that thought is always changing, that is, no two thoughts can ever be identical. We know from James's description of the phenomenal self that the constituents of the self, the things felt as "me" or as "mine", change with time and circumstance. Hume's theory of repeatable simple ideas with self-identical contents runs counter to this characteristic of thought since it posits the necessary recurrence of simple ideas with identical contents. Kant's eternal ego, being a timeless and immutable consciousness, is not an object of experience and is therefore unaffected by novel experiences. Thus, given the fact that it is indubitable that the self changes over time, we must conclude that the self can neither be a collection of repeatable self-identical ideas nor an eternal ego separate from experience.

James argues that the error inherent in both views stems from the need to posit a thinker behind thought. Hume cannot claim that thoughts unify themselves given his commitment to atomistic ideas³ and Kant, finding that experience is given as a disconnected and chaotic manifold of experience, must posit a transcendental thinker that synthesizes perceptions. But James is not committed to the view that experience is a disconnected chaotic manifold and so there is nothing in James's explanation of mental life that precludes the possibility that every new thought knows not only its own object, but also knows the object of its predecessor. Thus, unlike Hume, James can claim that thoughts unify themselves and is not forced to posit a self

³ See discussion of Hume on pages 25 and 26.

behind thought. While Hume could not find that identically repeatable thoughts could know not only their own contents but also those of their predecessors, James, not being committed to identical ideas, can easily claim that the transmission of consciousness is, to use Kant's metaphor,

as if elastic balls were to have not only motion but knowledge of it, and a first ball were to transmit both its motion and its consciousness to a second, which took both up into its consciousness and passed them to a third, until the last ball held all that the other balls had held, and realized it as its own. (PP:339)

James argues that we can only explain the fact that "Experience is remoulding us every moment, and our mental reaction on every given thing is really a resultant of our experience of the whole world up to that date" (PP:234) by admitting the "patent fact of consciousness that a transmission like this actually occurs." (PP:339) So, rather than assuming the substantial unity of a static self, James argues that self-unity is in fact the never-lapsing ownership of the self that is realized in every new thought. He writes that

Each later thought, knowing and including thus the Thoughts⁴ which went before, is the final receptacle -- and appropriating them is the final owner -- of all that they contain and own. Each thought is thus born an owner and dies owned, transmitting whatever it realized as its Self to its later proprietor. (PP:339)

The act of appropriation will be explained below, but what is important to note here is that the procession of constantly fluctuating thought entails that selfhood, i.e., the ownership of the stream of consciousness, is passed down from nascent thought to nascent thought and that this transmission of ownership is for James the only *real* and

⁴ For James, the capitalized "Thought" refers to one's present mental state, present self, or new or nascent thought. (PP:338)

verifiable unity of self. Thus the self is not, as Kant would have it, a single unified entity, but rather a series of self-constituents (empirical, social and spiritual selves) held together by a single perishing unified thought.

The third characteristic is that thought is sensibly continuous. Being committed to the view that experience is comprised of simple distinct ideas and having provided no mechanisms through which these ideas are related to each other, Hume and Kant are unable to provide an account of how our thoughts come to be perceived in a continuous fashion. But as James explains, it is clear that our thoughts are not experienced as distinct entities but that they "melt into each other like dissolving views." (PP:248) The continuity of thought explains how the seemingly disparate constituents of the empirical self are united. We feel that we are the same selves we were yesterday precisely because there is no perceived break between our previous and our present selves. As James explains,

the distant selves appear to our thought as for having for hours of time been *continuous* with each other, and the most recent ones of them continuous with the Self of the present moment, melting into it by slow degrees. (PP:334)

This perceived continuity of self explains why the feeling of self persists over time. As James shows, the continuity of self is integral to the feeling of warmth that constitutes personal identity. He argues that when this perceived continuity of self breaks down, the feeling of personal identity is lost. When we think of ourselves as young children, we don't feel quite the same warmth and intimacy that marks our current adult lives. The identity of our present self with the self of our childhood is not a felt identity. We acknowledge that we may have felt what the child felt or acted the way the child acted, but we often feel that the child self is different from the self we have become. James explains that this dissociation of our child and adult selves arises as a result of gaps of memory (i.e., breaks in perceived continuity) and, "where the resemblance and the continuity are not longer felt, the sense of personal identity goes too." (PP:335)

It seems strange however to speak of thoughts and not of the mind as the seat of the self. Most of us believe that it is the mind and not thoughts that is the active agent of cognition. However, according to James, these activities can be inferred from the fourth characteristic viz., that every thought has an object that includes all that the thought thinks in a single pulse of consciousness. James argues that thoughts are neither mere passive images received by the mind, nor are they mental entities separate from the act of thinking. He points out that we can make no sense of thought without an act of thought. It is thus clear James argues, that thoughts are agents capable of the activities he ascribes to them. Furthermore, James points out that disparate things can only be related to each other by being thought-together in a single pulse of consciousness. As we have seen, both Hume and Kant run into problems by positing a thinker behind thought. Neither Hume's nor Kant's theory stands up under close scrutiny. Thoughts can no more be entities unto themselves than they can somehow inhere in or be synthesized by an eternal transcendental ego. James argues that we must therefore conclude that to say that "if things are thought in relation, they must be thought together, and in one something," is to say that if things are conjoined, they are related through the act of thinking (i.e., thought together in one thought). (PP:277) Thus, according to James, the unity of self is not merely a condition of knowledge, but rather is an object of knowledge perceived by the nascent thought. To say that the nascent thought recognizes the feeling of warmth and intimacy with its predecessor and thus appropriates it to itself is simply to say that there is a relation of sameness between the nascent thought and its predecessor and that this relation is felt or embodied in the present active thought.

James admits that it might appear that he is waffling on the role of the nascent thought. Sometimes he speaks of the nascent thought as inheriting the unity of the self (the awareness of self passed down from nascent thought to nascent thought), and other times of the nascent thought as being the seat of the feeling of personal identity (the nascent thought appropriating the existing stream of consciousness to

itself). In the first case the unity of self exists prior to the nascent thought, and in the second it comes into being only after being appropriated by the new pulse of consciousness. It would seem that to be a real unity that persists over time, the self must exist prior to the nascent thought; that inasmuch as "the unity of the selves is not a mere appearance of similarity or continuity, ascertained after the fact," (PP:337) there must be a genuine sameness of self. And yet, if the unity of the self exists prior to the nascent thought, then there would be no reason to propose the elaborate mechanisms of James's theory of personal identity: every new thought would simply be subsumed under an existing personal consciousness. However, this would entail that the self is some form of Kantian ego, an entity that exists independently of its thoughts. Yet, we know from James's critique of the Kantian ego that such an entity can neither be a personal consciousness nor a mutable self.

So it seems that James must have a self-unity that is both prior to the nascent thought in order for it to be a real unity and one that is created by the nascent thought so that we can account for the fact that the self changes over time. Given these constraints, James must somehow hold that there is a self-unity before the perception of the nascent thought and that the knowledge of this unity is passed down from one nascent thought to the next. That is, he must argue that the nascent thought is both the discoverer and creator of personal identity. James accomplishes this by proposing that the *ownership* of the stream of thought is inherited by each nascent thought. An analogy will help clarify this thesis.

Consider the case of Farmer Jane and Farmer Sue. Farmer Jane owns no cows. She comes to a field and sees a herd of cattle. She cannot claim any of these beasts as hers because none wear her brand. Farmer Sue on the other hand is the heiress of her mother's ranch. She comes upon the same field, sees that some of the cows are marked with her brand, herds them up and brings them home. Farmer Sue can claim her cows because they are branded and "no beast would be so branded unless he belonged to the owner of the herd." (PP:337) But the cows are not hers

simply because they are branded, "they are branded because they are [hers]." (PP:337) That is, the cows are branded because they belong-together and belong to a single owner. James argues that the nascent thought inherits the ownership of the herd of thoughts in the same way that Farmer Sue inherits title to the cattle. Previous thoughts are branded with the feeling of self and are thus "herded" by the nascent thought through the act of appropriation. But the thoughts are not held-together only because they are branded. The personal identity formed by the nascent thought dissolves when it is replaced by a subsequent nascent thought. The past self can no more keep the stream of thought together than Farmer Sue's deceased mother could herd her cows. Without an owner in the form of a present self, the thoughts would be as free as if they were never branded at all. So, just as Farmer Sue had to go out and claim her cows, so too must the nascent thought go out and appropriate the past thoughts in the stream of consciousness. Given the fact that it is the ownership of thought, the right to unify the herd of previous thoughts that is passed down and not the already unified self, James can account for the fact that self-unity is both prior to the perception of the nascent thought and in turn actively created by the nascent thought.

The herd analogy is limited however by the fact that farmers and cows are different kinds of things and while the farmer may own the cattle, the cattle will never own the farmer. Thoughts on the other hand are the same kinds of things. They can appropriate their predecessors and in turn be appropriated by their successors. However, as James notes, the nascent thought (or present self) while it owns the herd of thoughts, is never an object in its own hands. He writes,

A thing cannot appropriate itself; it is itself; and still less can it disown itself. There must be an agent of the appropriating and disowning; but that agent we have already named. It is the Thought to whom the various 'constituents' [of the self] are known. (PP:340)

So the nascent thought cannot be both owner and owned and one and the same time. It appropriates the stream of consciousness but is not itself appropriated until it is replaced by the subsequent nascent thought. Thus James can both avoid the infinite regress of necessitating that every thought have an owner (if the nascent thought is never replaced it is never owned), and keep the insight that every thought is tied to a self while refusing to posit an immutable thinker.

Finally the fifth characteristic is that thought is interest driven. We know from looking at the phenomenal self that certain objects strike us with a vested interest, that is, they are felt as "me" or "mine." Hume's atomistic doctrine and Kant's transcendental ego are both unable to give a coherent account of the role and importance of interest in mental life because neither can provide an agent that feels this vested interest. Hume cannot account for interest because he must dissolve the self. Kant is also unable to explain interest because the only self in his theory is the pure form of thought divorced from any drives or desires. But for James, the vested interest felt by the nascent thought is essential to personal identity. The nascent thought will appropriate only those thoughts with which it feels a kinship or animal warmth so that only those thoughts felt with vested interest come to form the self. It is thus the feeling of interest that leads the nascent thought to its appropriations. Those thoughts branded with the feeling of self that inspire the nascent thought with a feeling of warmth and intimacy are for the nascent thought the sections of the stream of consciousness that hold the most interest.

Although the nascent thought recognizes the similarities it shares with some thoughts in the stream of consciousness and appropriates these to itself, it must be noted that this recognition and appropriation is not a choice. The nascent thought can no more appropriate thoughts that are not warm and intimate than it can reject thoughts that are felt as "me" or "mine." So the warmth and intimacy perceived by the nascent thought is not necessarily an enjoyable or pleasant feeling. We cannot distance ourselves from the actions we regret or the emotions that we dislike. While

the vested interest we feel can be a positive feeling of self-love and self-respect, it also includes those negative thoughts and emotions that are also (albeit reluctantly) felt as "me" or "mine."

We can sum up James's theory of personal identity as follows: There are five indubitable characteristics of thought. These are 1) every thought tends to a personal consciousness; 2) thought is constantly changing; 3) thought is sensibly continuous; 4) the object of thought includes all that the thought thinks in a single pulse of consciousness; and 5) thought is interest-driven. These facts of consciousness are unassailable. We also perceive a phenomenal self whose constituents include the material self, the social self, and the spiritual self. Both Hume's and Kant's theories deny or fail to account for these patent facts and are thus either unacceptable or paradoxical. However, if, like James, we embrace the five characteristics of thought and the feeling of self, the following theory of personal identity emerges. As it is clear from the first characteristic that all thoughts belong to a personal consciousness and that this personal consciousness can distinguish which thoughts belong to it from those that do not, we can infer that thoughts from the same personal consciousness tend to stick together. But as we cannot give a coherent account of a self behind thought, James concludes that it must be the case that the feeling of self is the self that we all experience. We also know given the second characteristic of thought and the constituents of the self that both thoughts and the self are constantly changing so we know that our selves are being continuously modified by new thoughts. The continuity of the self is explained by the fact that the selves are felt as being continuous with one another and as all belonging to the same "me." It is this continuity that gives us the feeling of self over time. The fourth characteristic tells us that the appropriation of the stream of thought is to be explained in terms of the relation of sameness, the warmth and intimacy perceived by the nascent thought which in turn is a special form of the thought-interest that is the fifth characteristic of thought.

Interpreted in this manner, we can see how James incorporates the fundamental insights of both atomism and holism into a unified theory. The five characteristics of thought are indubitable, the constituents of self are felt with warmth and intimacy, and the theory of personal identity, one that recognizes both the unity and the diversity of the self, arises from the integration of the five characteristics of thoughts and the remarks on the constituents of self. So tightly woven is James's theory of personal identity that, being built on unassailable facts of consciousness, it appears that this theory should be as obvious as the simple fact that thinking goes on. It will be my task in the next and final section of this thesis to analyse the strength of James's claims.

SECTION SIX -- *A Critique of James's Theory of Personal Identity*

As we saw in the previous section, James holds that the self is both an aggregate of self-constituents and a unified perishing nascent thought that knows these constituents and appropriates them to itself. James thus incorporates both Hume's insight that the self is a composite of distinct elements and Kant's commitment to a unified self to obtain what he believes is a complete and consistent theory of personal identity that not only explains the persistence of self over time but also accounts for the five characteristics of thought and the key features of the phenomenal self. James's most controversial claim is that personal identity can only be explained by making the nascent thought the thinker. He writes: "*If the passing thought be the directly verifiable existent which no school has hitherto doubted it to be, then that thought is itself the thinker.*" (PP:401) In this section I evaluate James's claims and determine if he is right or wrong in affirming that "the passing Thought itself is the only verifiable thinker." (PP:346)

My critique of James's theory of personal identity is given on two levels. On the first level I treat his remarks on personal identity as an objective theory that tries to establish the mechanisms through which the persistence of self is explained. I argue that James's theory, while seemingly compatible with the five characteristics of thought, perverts them in such a way as to render them highly questionable rather than unassailable. On the second level I treat James's examination of mental life as a subjective account that simply describes the way the self feels. If interpreted as saying *nothing more* than what was already asserted by the five characteristics of thought, his analysis while indubitable, is philosophically empty. As my critique is tied directly to the five characteristics of thought I take each up in turn one last time and evaluate their role and significance.

The first characteristic is that every thought is part of a personal consciousness. This fact of consciousness coupled with the feeling of vested interest leads James to conclude that nascent thoughts felt with vested interest appropriate to themselves all thoughts they perceive as having this same feeling of self. For James, appropriating perishing nascent thoughts are the only verifiable personal thinkers we need suppose. He argues that the feeling of self constitutes the self.

There is an obvious objection this treatment of the self. If the thought is the only thinker, then thoughts must think other thoughts. But if the object of a thought includes *all that the thought thinks*, then any thought conceived by the nascent thought would not be a new thought but rather would be part of the nascent thought's object. James's theory is able to give a clear account of how a nascent thought can appropriate existing thoughts in the stream of consciousness. For example, three thoughts could form a personal identity in the following manner: the first thought would know only its own object. The second thought, knowing itself and the thought that came before it, would recognize that they both have the same feeling of vested interest and appropriate it to itself; i.e., it would think them both and think that they are the same. The third thought knowing itself, the second thought and the first thought, would recognize that all three have the same feeling of vested interest and appropriate them to itself by thinking them all and thinking that they are the same. The chain of past selves is thus like a Russian doll where the largest doll contains the series of the smaller replicas of itself. Each doll, a whole unto itself, is engulfed by the next doll in the series. In the same manner, James explains that every nascent thought is a unity unto itself as well as the receptacle of all the previous thoughts which it resembles. James explains how the nascent thought is thus the only thinker we need suppose. However, if thought is the only thinker, then James must also argue that it is the nascent thought that thinks its successor.

James explains the perception of new thoughts as follows: he writes that "Out of the infinite chaos of movements, of which physics teaches us that the outer world

consists, each sense-organ picks out those which fall within certain limits of velocity." (PP:284) As there is an interest attached to some of these sensations, new thoughts are born when we pay particular attention to this or that motion. So from "an undistinguishable, swarming *continuum*, devoid of distinction or emphasis, our senses make for us, by attending to this motion and ignoring that, a world full of contrasts, or sharp accents, of abrupt changes, of picturesque light and shade." (PP:284-5) James initially writes that it is the mind that engages in this selective process. Having subsequently shown that the only thinker we need suppose is the nascent thought, James must then conclude that it is the nascent thought that thinks other thoughts. But, if the object of thought is "*all the thought thinks*, exactly as the thought thinks it, however complicated the matter, and however symbolic the manner of thinking may be," (PP:276) then the new thought, being thought by the present thought, cannot be a thought unto itself but must be part of the existing thought's object. An example may help make this clear. As the object of a thought includes all the thought thinks, then if the thought thinks of a tree, the object of the thought includes the tree. Likewise, if the thought thinks another thought, then the second thought (the one thought by the original thought) is part of the first thought's object. Having made the nascent thought the only thinker we need suppose and having established that every thought is thought by some thinker, James must then conclude that it is the nascent thought-- the only agent of cognition in James's mental ontology -- that thinks subsequent thoughts. But, if every new thought is thought by the nascent thought and if the object of thought includes all that the thought thinks, then James is forced to conclude that there is just one nascent thought thinking other thoughts that then become part of its object. Specifically, all the thoughts thought by the nascent thought (who is after all the only possible thinker) would be parts of the nascent thought's object instead of independent thoughts unto themselves. We would thus have an underlying self in the form of the one thinking thought rather than James's "perishing and not ... immortal or incorruptible" Thought. (PP:345) All new pulses of

thought would be parts of the object of the same original thinker. We would have only one fully independent thought rather than a series of active appropriating thoughts. James cannot defend the view that "the passing Thought itself is the only *verifiable* thinker." (PP:346)

This critique applies only if we treat James's analysis of personal identity as an explanatory theory (which he clearly intends it to be). If James limits his treatment of mental life to the five characteristics of thought and the phenomenal self, that is, if he argues only that every thought belongs to someone and that this belongingness is perceived as the feeling of "me" or "mine," then the above criticism would not apply. Nothing in our initial presentation of the first characteristic leads us to suppose that in addition to being had by a personal consciousness, that every thought is a personal consciousness. However, taken in this very thin sense, the first fact of consciousness would do very little philosophical work. The fact that every thought is perceived by some personal consciousness adds nothing more to our knowledge of personal consciousnesses than the fact that there are thinking things. This fact taken on its own cannot explain why we have a personal consciousness, how we came to be aware of our personal consciousness, what it could possibly mean to be a personal consciousness, nor give us any criteria by which we could come to define personal consciousness. Thus, while indubitable, this bare fact of consciousness is philosophically empty.

The second characteristic is that thought is always changing. We know from James's examination of the phenomenal self that the objects that inspire the feeling of vested interest vary according to temperament and circumstance. From these facts James concludes that thought is always changing because every new thought comes into being with an awareness of the thoughts that came before. That is, our thought is always changing because the content of a thought will always depend on and include some of the content of prior thoughts. As such, no two thoughts could ever have identical content.

James compares this process to the passing down of a title. We know from our examination of his theory of personal identity, that James can explain the fact that there is a unity prior to the conception of the nascent thought *and* a unity that is in turn created by the nascent thought by concluding that it not the self that is passed down from thought to thought, but rather the *ownership* of the past selves that is transmitted. James then argues that "Each Thought is thus born an owner, and dies owned." (PP:339). However, when pushed to justify the "patent fact of consciousness that a transmission like this actually occurs," (PP:339) rather than providing explanatory mechanisms of thought, James responds

I assign no reason why the successive passing thoughts should inherit each other's possessions ... [because] ... the reason, if there be any, must lie where all reasons lie, in the total sense or meaning of the world. (PP:401)

Not only does James fail to explain how the nascent thought could be born an owner, he also fails to explain how a single pulse of consciousness could appropriate other thoughts. As the appropriator of other thoughts, the nascent thought must be aware of its own feeling of warmth and intimacy, recognize the warmth and intimacy of other thoughts, and appropriate these other thoughts to itself. Yet, as all of these activities (i.e., knowing, being aware of, feeling, and appropriating) are mental activities, James must conclude that each of these activities rather than being part of the object of the nascent thought, are thoughts unto themselves. Just as the feeling of love is a thought unto itself, so too must the feeling of vested interest be a distinct perception. Just as the judgment "this is the same pen that it was yesterday" is a thought independent of any other thought, so too is the judgment "I am the same self that I was yesterday" a thought independent of any other. James treats all feelings, all judgments, in short all mental activities, as thoughts. So, if the nascent thought is the thinker, then every activity of the nascent thought should bring about a new nascent thought. Thus, the feeling of warmth and intimacy would be a thought, the recognition

of this same warmth and intimacy in other thoughts would be a thought, and the judgment that these thoughts are the "same as me" would be a thought. In order to preserve James's theory of personal identity each of these new nascent thoughts would also have to know their predecessors, find them warm and intimate and appropriate them to themselves and each of these activities would in turn create new nascent thoughts that would have to know their predecessors, find them warm and intimate, appropriate them to itself and thus create new nascent thoughts *ad infinitum*. James says that thought is always changing but fails to acknowledge that each and every change (in this case the activities attributed to the nascent thought) brings about a new nascent thought. If James can't explain how the self is thought-together in a single thought, he can't explain how it is ever thought-together at all.

Clearly this objection does not apply to the simple fact that thought is always changing. Rather, what James fails to explain is how this ever-changing nature of thought entails that every thought can come into existence as the owner of the stream of consciousness. If James were to limit his analysis to the plain facts that thought is always changing and that the constituents of the self are mutable, he would not fall into this infinite regress. However, neither would he be saying anything of philosophical importance. He could not explain why thought is always changing, make any inferences about what it may mean to say that thought is always changing, give any explanation about the mechanisms by which thought changes. In short, he could deduce nothing more from this patent fact of consciousness.

The third characteristic is that thought is sensibly continuous. We have seen that James gives this perceived continuity an important role in the explanation of personal identity. The unity of the self involves not only a perceived resemblance between its various constituents, but also a *never-lapsing* ownership of the stream of thought. In order to appropriate other thoughts to itself, a nascent thought must then feel both the sameness of warmth and intimacy with its predecessors, and must also know that it is the owner of the stream of consciousness. According to James

however, the attribution of self knowledge to every thought is an example of mistaking the thought's knowledge of itself with our knowledge of the thought. (PP:275) He maintains that "*thought may, but need not, in knowing, discriminate between its object and itself.*" (PP:275) But if a thought does not discriminate itself from its object, that is, if a nascent thought has no self-awareness, how then could it know that it was the owner of the stream of consciousness?

James explicitly says that while the nascent thought may "feel its own immediate existence ... nothing can be known about it till it be dead and gone." (PP:341) Thus, he admits that the nascent thought is the "darkest in the whole series" (PP:341) that is, because it cannot appropriate itself, it cannot be treated as an object until and unless it is appropriated by a subsequent nascent thought. But if "nothing can be known about" the nascent thought, then how is it that this thought feels a vested interest, recognizes that the other thoughts in the stream of consciousness share a similar vested interest and knows that it is the owner of these thoughts? Is James not guilty of committing the same form of fallacious reasoning he had attributed to Kant?

Given its role in the formation of personal identity, the Jamesian nascent thought must know quite a bit about its own object. It must know some part of itself because it can only judge other thoughts similar to itself if it can compare something of itself to another thought. It must know all the previous thoughts and, being known by the nascent thought they too are a part of the nascent thoughts object (so once again the nascent thought must know part of itself). And, it must know that it owns all these previous thoughts. While reason tells us that the nascent thought must know all these parts of itself in order to be able to appropriate other thoughts, James maintains that the appropriation of past thoughts can be accomplished by Thoughts entirely unconscious of themselves. He writes that in cases where the self-awareness of the nascent thought is so limited as to include only the bare feeling of momentary existence that

The sense of my bodily existence, however obscurely recognized as such, may then be the absolute original of my conscious selfhood, the fundamental perception that *I am*. All appropriations may be made to it, by a Thought not at the moment immediately cognised by itself. (PP:341 f.n.)

This cryptic statement is supposed to show how James can claim both that there is a never-lapsing ownership of thought and that thought need not know itself in order to be the seat of personal identity. However, it is at the very least unclear how a dim nascent thought can perform this function. If James is saying that the dim nascent thought cannot appropriate other thoughts to itself, we must infer that the "never lapsing ownership" of the stream of nascent thoughts is sacrificed in such cases. If on the other hand James is saying that while the thought does not know itself, it does have a feeling that appropriates the other thoughts, then I would ask how the dim thought whose content is limited to the feeling of vested interest is aware of the shared continuity and resemblance with the other thoughts of which it has no awareness? A nascent thought can neither feel nor judge something the same as itself if it has no knowledge of that to which it is being compared. The nascent thought then, in order to appropriate the stream of thought, must have knowledge of the thoughts contained therein. And, given the fact that there are a multitude of thoughts in our streams of consciousness, the nascent thought's knowledge must be great indeed.

I am not disputing the obvious fact that thought is sensibly continuous. However, we must ask ourselves whether this patent fact of consciousness increases our philosophical knowledge of mental life in any way. Clearly philosophy is interested in the way the world is and not just in the way the world feels. Affirming that the thought process feels continuous does not tell us anything more than saying that pain feels injurious or that love feels nice. None of these claims is debatable, but none of them give us any additional knowledge about the objective nature of thought.

The fourth characteristic is that the object of thought includes all that the thought thinks just as the thought thinks it in a single pulse of consciousness. Now if

thought is the only thinker and if everything that the thought thinks is part of its object, then James is forced to conclude that every thought is the subject of its own object. Specifically, if a nascent thought thinks that it is the same as the previous thought, the nascent thought is the subject of the judgement of sameness and the judgment of sameness is *this same nascent thought's* object. And yet James's critique of the Kantian tradition clearly shows that he considers this identity of subject and object to be indefensible. He writes:

when it is furthermore said that the agent that combines is the same 'self-distinguishing subject' which 'in another mode of its activity' presents the manifold object to itself, the unintelligibilities become quite paroxysmal, and we are forced to confess that the entire school of thought in question, in spite of occasional glimpses of something more refined, still dwells habitually in that mythological stage of thought where phenomena are explained as results of dramas enacted by entities which but reduplicate the characters of the phenomena themselves. (PP:368-9)

The problem that James is trying to avoid is the one addressed in the discussion of the first characteristic; viz., if a thought thinks other thoughts which then become part of the original thought's object then James is left with a thought that thinks not only its object but also thinks itself. In this case there would be no distinction between the object of thought and the subject of thought and James's charges against the Kantian idealist theory of self would apply equally to his own treatment of personal identity. That is, he would then explain the phenomena of thought "as results of dramas enacted by" the entity which "but reduplicate[s] the characters of the phenomena themselves." (PP:369) In other words, by making thought the thinker and including all that the thought thinks in the thought's object, James would then make the thought the subject of its own object. The thought is the subject of the feelings, recognitions, and appropriations, but these activities (given the fourth characteristic) must also be part of the thought's own object.

None of this is to say that the object of thought does not include "all that the thought thinks, exactly as the thought thinks it, however complicated the matter, and however symbolic the manner of the thinking may be." Rather this critique confirms that we must be careful not to add a substantive kernel to the object of thought that is not already present in its conception. If the nascent thought must go out and appropriate the stream of consciousness it must actively think *after* its initial conception and this act of appropriation is then an addition to the initial object of thought. Thus, it must be the case that this act of appropriation either forms a new nascent thought unto itself (in which case we get the infinite regress described above,) or it must be the case that James has himself rejected the fourth characteristic of thought by overextending the object of thought to include cognitions not present in the thought's object upon the thought's initial conception.

Finally the last characteristic is that thought is interest-driven. We clearly give more attention to some things and less to others. Likewise, it is also indubitable that out of the all the things we perceive, we feel that some are "me" or "mine," and that some are "not-me" and "not-mine." Now James says that the self is the feeling of self. He also says that the feeling of self is the feeling of vested interest. It must therefore be the case that the self is the feeling of vested interest. However, while it seems an obvious truth to say that there can be no self without the feeling of self, just how clear it is that the feeling of self or of vested interest is the self?

This feeling of self is for James the only active agent we need suppose in order to explain mental life. The nascent thought, or more particularly that part of the nascent thought's object that feels a vested interest, is the Thinker. But how could the feeling of interest be interested? Clearly there can be no love without the feeling of love, but how could the feeling of love itself experience love? Similarly, there can be no pain without the feeling of pain, but can it make sense to say that the feeling of pain causes pain? The feeling of love and the feeling of pain are reactions; emotions that are caused by certain stimuli. They are not however the agents of themselves.

How then can James coherently maintain that it is the feeling of interest that is interested?

This is not to say that we don't all feel interest and that this interest is most significantly attached to things we conceive as being "me" or "mine." Yet if this interest is simply an emotion among other emotions, it give us no more philosophical information that the characteristic that it is indubitable that we all feel pain. While this fact of consciousness may help us to better describe our mental lives, it in no way *explains* why we feel the way do, how we came to feel this way, or help us to define this "me" that feels interest or pain other than the simple fact that it is a "me" capable of feeling interest or pain.

Thus I conclude that James's philosophical explanatory mechanisms are incompatible with his five facts of consciousness. What makes James's case most interesting is the fact that his theory uses these same five facts of consciousness as its foundational structure. I also conclude that these five facts remain impervious to my criticism so long as they are not construed as saying anything more than what was established in the first section of this thesis. As subjective facts of consciousness, the five characteristics of thought remain unassailable facts of mental life that must be accepted as true by any reasonable inquirer. My ultimate conclusion then, is that one must be wary of the search for mechanisms of thought. Neither the atomists, the holists, nor James's attempt to bridge the two theories is able to explain mental life without at the same time contradicting or omitting its undeniable features.

CONCLUSION

While my ultimate conclusion is that James's theory of personal identity must be rejected, the main goal of this thesis was to present James's theory of personal identity as a coherent and consistent whole. I also wanted to underline the role and importance of James's critique of Humean atomism and Kantian transcendentalism. To achieve these ends I have shown how James begins his analysis from the five facts of consciousness viz., 1) that every thought belongs to a personal consciousness; 2) that thought is always changing; 3) that thought is sensibly continuous; 4) that every thought has an object that includes all that the thought thinks in a single pulse of consciousness; and 5) that thought is interest-driven. I established that both Hume's atomism and Kant's transcendentalism run counter to each of these unassailable facts. I looked at James's description of the phenomenal self and described the importance and the role of the feeling of vested interest. I then showed how James's theory of personal identity arose from the five facts of consciousness, both Hume's and Kant's failure to account for these facts, and the feeling of vested interest. Finally I argued that James's theory of personal identity, while originating from indubitable facts of mental life, nonetheless contradicted the five characteristics of thought from which it was generated.

Thus James, like Hume and Kant his predecessors, runs his philosophical commitments over the patent unassailable facts of subjective life. What makes James's case particularly interesting however, is the fact that his philosophical commitment is to the very five facts of consciousness that are contradicted by his theory. As an explanatory theory of the persistence of self over time James's notion of appropriating nascent thoughts must clearly be rejected. However, there are two questions that in my opinion remain to be asked. This first is "what has James shown us?"; and the second is, "what is the value of James's work?"

In answer to the first question I refer the reader to sections one through four. James clearly establishes five incontrovertible facts of consciousness and gives a description of the phenomenal self that must be admitted to be true by atomist and holist alike. James also shows how both traditions fail to account for these facts and how they run into paradoxes and confusions as a result. So, while perhaps not the building blocks of a philosophically defensible explanation of self-persistence, the five characteristics of thought and the description of the phenomenal self are nonetheless important factors we can employ to judge the worth of philosophical theories of self.

However, in answer to the second question, I would caution against using these facts of consciousness as criteria of theory-soundness. If James's theory of personal identity has taught us nothing else, it should have made apparent the dangers of philosophical theories. Hume considered simple ideas as incontrovertible facts of consciousness, basic building blocks of the simplest nature. Kant held that the manifold nature of perception was irrefutable given the distinct nature of the senses. James gave us five characteristics of thought that were unassailably true. And yet, as we have seen, all three philosophers ran their theories over the facts. Thus, I conclude that the value of James's theory is twofold. On the one hand it provides us with worthy critical tools and on the other, it serves as an example of the confusions that arise as a result of attempting to quantify over so intricate and mysterious a thing as subjective mental life.

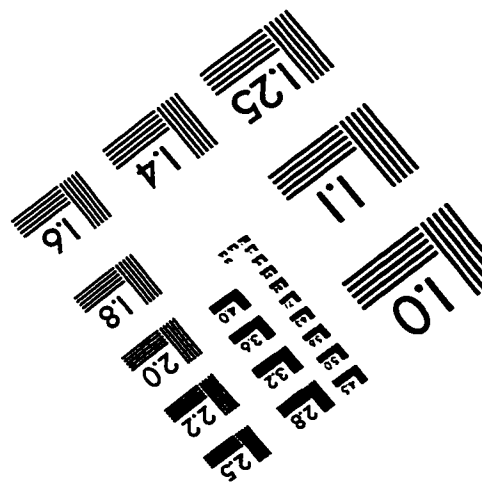
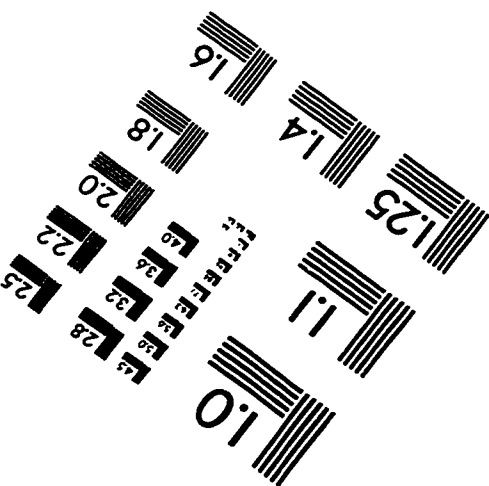
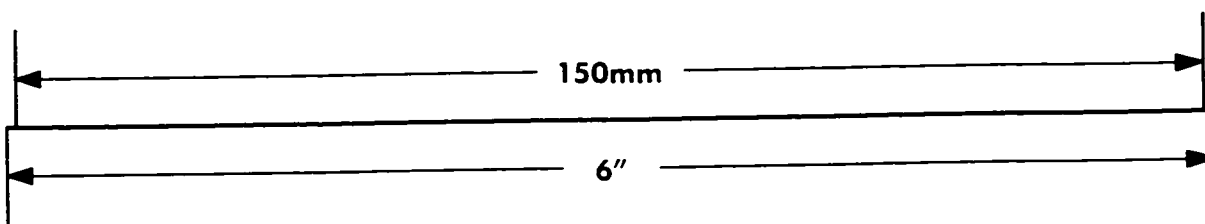
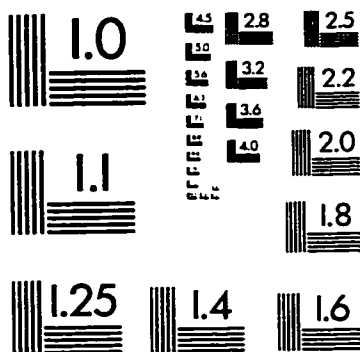
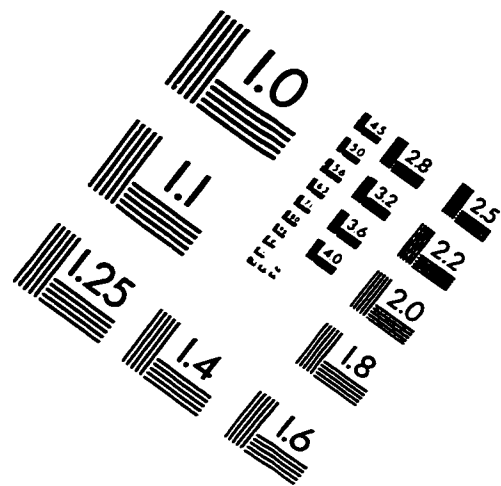
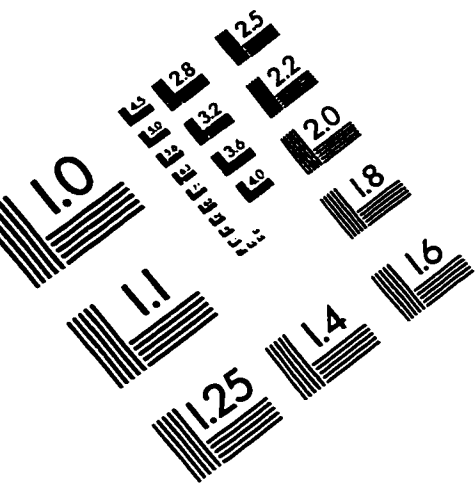
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