# Type Distinctions of Reason and Hume’s Separability Principle

## Introduction

Commentators such as Kemp Smith (1941, p.266), Mandelbaum (1974), and Bricke (1980, p.71) have taken the distinctions of reason to pose either a counterexample to or a limitation of scope on the Separability Principle. This worry has been convincingly addressed by various accounts such as Garrett (1997, pp.58-64), Hoffman (2011), and Baxter (2011). However, I argue in this paper that there are two notions of ‘distinction of reason’, one concerning particular instantiations (token distinctions of reason) and one concerning general ideas (type distinctions of reason). Discussion of the distinctions of reason in the secondary literature has without fail focused on token distinctions of reason, but I will argue that type distinctions of reason prove problematic for Hume’s Separability Principle. I find a way around this problem that is consonant with Hume’s account of general ideas, but which can hardly be said to be an account that he explicitly or even implicitly endorsed.

## The Separability Principle and the Distinctions of Reason

Hume’s Separability Principle plays an important role in Book 1 of the *Treatise*, and is invoked numerous times in various discussions: for instance, it is crucial to establishing that the principle that ‘*whatever begins to exist, must have a cause of existence*’ is not intuitive or demonstrative (THN 1.3.3.1; SBN 78-9), the metaphysical distinctness of cause and effect in the beginning of his famous discussion on induction (THN 1.3.6.1; SBN 87), the thesis that perceptions can exist independently of a larger mind (THN 1.4.2.39; SBN 207), and the more general thesis that perceptions can exist independently of any other existence (THN 1.4.5.5; SBN 233), among others.[[1]](#footnote-1) Clearly, Hume relies frequently on this principle: it is no idle spectator, but gets its hands dirty time and time again.

He sets it out in his discussion of general ideas:

First, We have observ’d, that whatever objects are different are distinguishable, and that whatever objects are distinguishable are separable by the thought and imagination. And we may here add, that these propositions are equally true in the *inverse*, and that whatever objects are separable are also distinguishable, and that whatever objects are distinguishable are also different. For how is it possible we can separate what is not distinguishable, or distinguish what is not different? (THN 1.1.7.3; SBN 18)

Here Hume states that two objects are different if and only if they are distinguishable, and two objects are distinguishable if and only if they are separable, which Baxter (2011, p.161) refers to as the Mental Separability Principle. Baxter (pp.161-4) gives an excellent analysis of the relevant terminology which I think is both correct and uncontroversial. Baxter takes ‘different’ to mean numerically distinct; ‘distinguishable’ to mean that we can tell them apart; and ‘separable by the thought and imagination’ to mean that it is possible to think of one without the other. As Baxter (p.163) points out, the Mental Separability Principle, along with Hume’s Conceivability Principle (that is, the principle that anything clearly conceivable is possible), stated in THN 1.1.7.6 (SBN 19), implies that anything ‘separable by the thought and imagination’ is metaphysically separable. This entails that if two objects are distinguishable and hence numerically distinct, then they are metaphysically separable.[[2]](#footnote-2) I will refer to this principle simply as the Separability Principle; it is this principle that will concern me in this paper.[[3]](#footnote-3)

Towards the end of the section entitled ‘Of Abstract Ideas’ (THN 1.1.7; SBN 17-25), Hume discusses the ‘distinctions of reason’, which are distinctions we draw that seemingly do not imply genuine metaphysical separability:

Before I leave this subject I shall employ the same principles to explain that *distinction of reason*, which is so much talk’d of, and is so little understood, in the schools. Of this kind is the distinction betwixt figure and the body figur’d; motion and the body mov’d. The difficulty of explaining this distinction arises from the principle above explain’d, that *all ideas, which are different, are separable*. For it follows from thence, that if the figure be different from the body, their ideas must be separable as well as distinguishable; if they be not different, their ideas can neither be separable nor distinguishable. What then is meant by a distinction of reason, since it implies neither a difference nor separation? (THN 1.1.7.17; SBN 24-25)

Hume cites three examples of the distinctions of reason: mentioned above are figure and body, and motion and body moved, and Hume discusses the case of colour and figure as an example in the next paragraph (THN 1.1.7.18; SBN 25). In order ‘to remove this difficulty’, Hume appeals to the ‘foregoing explication of abstract ideas’ (THN 1.1.7.18; SBN 25). Taking the example of the colour and figure of a globe of white marble, Hume remarks that ‘we distinguish the figure from the colour by a *distinction of reason*’ by viewing them ‘in different aspects, according to the resemblances, of which they are susceptible’, for instance by noting that the globe of white marble resembles a white cube in respect of its colour, but a black globe in respect of its figure (THN 1.1.7.18; SBN 25).[[4]](#footnote-4)

Up until a few decades ago, the distinctions of reason were taken to be problematic for the Separability Principle. Kemp Smith (1941, p.256), Mandelbaum (1974, p.246), and Bricke (1980, p.71) all take distinctions of reason to pose either a counterexample to or a limitation of scope on the Separability Prinicple, and one can follow their line of thought: the distinctions of reason are cases in which two things are distinguishable and hence numerically distinct, and yet not metaphysically separable, which seems a straightforward violation of the Separability Principle.

 There has been considerable pushback against this view in recent years, and rightly so, given that Hume offers a response to these putative counterexamples, founded on his account of abstract ideas, which he claims is able to ‘remove this difficulty’ (THN 1.1.7.18; SBN 25). For instance, Garrett (1997, pp.62-4) argues that distinctions of reason are distinctions between general ideas, whereby Humean general ideas are ideas of particular instances that achieve general signification because of their disposition to revive the custom to bring to mind a ‘revival set’ (in Garrett’s terminology) of ideas of other particular instances that resemble them in the suitable respects. We can indeed distinguish between the general ideas of colour and extension, but this is merely a distinction between classes of perceptions, which are both separable and distinguishable—considered as white, a white marble will bring to mind white objects; considered as spherical, it will bring to mind spherical objects. However, the particular instances of colour and body within a single object are inseparable from each other, and indeed are indistinguishable. Cummins (1996, p.71) similarly suggests that distinctions of reasons are only ‘distinctions of discourse’: the only distinction occurring in such cases is a difference in kinds to which the object belongs. Hoffman (2011, p.1134) takes a different approach, arguing that we can distinguish the white globe’s colour from its figure by means of ‘the further thought of the resemblance the globe has’ with both white cubes and black globes, in addition to the thought of the white globe’s colour and figure; what is distinguishable and separable are the additional thoughts regarding different resemblances, while the idea of the white globe’s colour is not in itself distinguishable from the idea of the white globe’s figure. Similarly, Baxter (2011, p.167) argues that in the case of the distinctions of reason, we draw a distinction ‘by considering the object in the light of a certain resemblance and not considering it in the light of certain others’. These considerations are both distinct and separable, while the white globe’s colour will not be distinguishable nor separable from the white globe’s figure. Another approach is taken by Brand (1992, p.13), who argues that any distinction we purport to draw between the white globe’s colour and figure is a mistake; we erroneously believe that we are considering only the white globe’s colour when we are in reality considering both its colour and figure. There is no genuine distinction here, nor is there any separation. Hakkarainen (2012) argues that the Separability Principle only applies to ‘real distinctions’, and not to either distinctions of reason or ‘partial distinctions’ such as those that hold between complex perceptions and their constituents. In sum, there is no shortage of plausible interpretations according to which the distinctions of reason conceived above do not pose a genuine threat for the Separability Principle.[[5]](#footnote-5)

## Distinguishing Two Forms of Distinctions of Reason

However, there is another form of distinctions of reason that proves problematic, as I will argue. Let us distinguish between two forms of distinctions of reason: token and type. Token distinctions of reason distinguish particular instances that seem inseparable, such as the distinction between a globe’s whiteness and its sphericality; these are the distinctions of reason that Hume discusses in THN 1.1.7.18 (SBN 25), and which the secondary literature has exclusively focused on. However, there is another form of distinctions of reason that seems to have gone largely unrecognised by both Hume and the secondary literature.[[6]](#footnote-6) Consider type distinctions of reason, which distinguish general ideas that are inseparable; examples of this include distinctions between the general ideas of MOTION and BODY MOVED, FIGURE and EXTENSION, and TRIANGULARITY and TRILATERALITY.[[7]](#footnote-7) Hume never explicitly considers the possibility of such distinguishable and hence numerically distinct and yet inseparable general ideas in his philosophy. But, as I will argue, he should have, as these pose a real threat to his Separability Principle. It should be noted that general ideas are no less important to our cognitive lives than particular ideas, given that almost every thought that we form involves general terms; any problem for Hume’s framework with respect to general ideas is one that he should take seriously indeed.

 To establish that type distinctions of reason are problematic for Hume, let us briefly examine Hume’s account of general ideas. Upon noticing ‘a resemblance among several objects’, we ‘apply the same name to all of them’ (THN 1.1.7.7; SBN 20). This general term brings to mind a determinate idea (henceforth exemplar), as well as a custom to revive other resembling ideas that also fall under the general term in question. Depending on the needs of our reasoning, this custom will revive this or that idea that suitably resembles the exemplar (THN 1.1.7.8; SBN 21). Familiarly, a general idea for Hume is really just a determinate idea (that is, the exemplar), along with a custom or disposition to revive suitably resembling ideas. These exemplars are ideas that are ‘*particular in their nature, but general in their representation*’ (THN 1.1.7.10; SBN 22).

What would it take for there to exist a type distinction of reason? Type distinctions of reason involve two general ideas that are distinguishable and hence numerically distinct, but not metaphysically distinct. There are two components to a general idea: a particular idea brought to mind by a general term (that is, the exemplar), and the custom by which the exemplar brings to mind suitably resembling ideas. As will shortly become clear, I take this custom to encompass the revival set of the general idea. In light of this analysis, for there to be a type distinction of reason, there would have to be two distinguishable general ideas which share both their exemplars as well as their customs.

Perhaps one might try and defend Hume from the threat of type distinctions of reason by arguing that when we distinguish two coextensive general ideas, we are merely distinguishing the *names* annexed to these ideas; the two general ideas are in fact identical, and the only difference between them is that they are associated with different names. I take this response to be highly unsatisfactory, for two reasons.

First, an analogous reply is available to Hume when dealing with the token case: he might have maintained that what distinguishes the colour of a cube and its figure is that they are simply called different things. Of course, he does not appeal to such a reply, and with good reason—a difference of name seems to correspond to a mere distinction rather than any genuine metaphysical separability, insofar as it indicates a fact about us rather than a fact about the world. Thus, there would remain a distinction without genuine separability, which constitutes a counterexample to the Separability Principle. Similarly, appealing to a difference of names with regard to type distinctions of reason seems as though it would fare no better.

The second reason that such a reply is unsatisfactory is that in distinguishing, say, FIGURE and EXTENSION, we seem to be distinguishing a great deal more than a name. The two play very different roles in our conceptual frameworks—FIGURE seems to be a general idea regarding shapes and so forth, while EXTENSION seems to be a general idea about areas and volumes and so forth. Any account that delivered the result that FIGURE and EXTENSION were identical general ideas seems deeply unsatisfactory. Thus, a distinction of name alone does not seem sufficient for avoiding this problem, unless it corresponded to some distinction in the psychologistic associations of the general ideas. I will go on to argue that there is no such distinction between necessarily co-extensive general terms.

Having established the deficiency of such a putative response, we can finish motivating the problem at hand. Note that exemplars for different general ideas can always be identical, if the revival sets share a member at all. An exemplar for one general idea can be an exemplar for another (THN 1.1.7.9; SBN 21-22).

 Might it be maintained that as it turns out, no two general ideas with exactly the same particular ideas in their revival sets in fact share the same exemplars? It seems unlikely that among all the people in the world, past and present, there has never been a case of the same exemplar being used for FIGURE and EXTENSION, for example. Thus, what must make the difference between two general ideas is the ‘custom’ which is ‘so entire’ as to be able to distinguish them.

 What would it be for two identical exemplars to share exactly the same custom? Custom is a disposition or power: Hume speaks of the resembling ideas revived by custom being not ‘in fact present to mind, but only in *power’* (THN 1.1.7.7; SBN 20, emphasis added), which seems paradigmatically dispositional. After all, the custom to revive suitably resembling ideas is really just a disposition to bring to mind these ideas.[[8]](#footnote-8) Hume states that there is no distinction between power and its exercise (THN 1.3.14.34; SBN 171, THN 2.1.10.4; SBN 311-312); this means that the power of custom to bring forth suitably resembling ideas in the case of general ideas is really the same as the instances of resembling ideas brought to mind. So if two general ideas share the same exemplar, any difference between these general ideas must be found in the suitably resembling perceptions, the ‘exercise’ of this power (i.e. custom) being the resembling perceptions brought to mind. The following worry might be raised: perhaps when Hume rejects a distinction between power and its exercise, Hume is not claiming that a power is identical to its effects (as I have claimed), but rather that power is reducible to the pattern of objects or events that make up an instance of causation: that is, power would be identical to the cause-effect pairs involved in its exercise. This does not unduly affect my point: *ex hypothesi*, a type distinction of reason would involve the same exemplar and the same revival set, and so both the causes (the exemplar) and effects (the revival set) involved in the exercise of custom would be identical for both general ideas, leaving my argument intact.

 The key question, then, is whether we can find two general ideas that bring to mind exactly the same ideas, that is, two general ideas that corresponded to properties that are necessarily coextensive. Note that it is not enough for these properties to be *in fact* coextensive, since the imagination can construct complex ideas as it pleases:

Nothing is more free than the imagination of man; and though it cannot exceed that original stock of ideas, furnished by the internal and external senses, it has unlimited power of mixing, compounding, separating, and dividing these ideas, in all the varieties of fiction and vision. (EHU 5.10; SBN 47)

So properties like ‘being renate’ (i.e. having a kidney) and ‘being cordate’ (i.e. having a heart) would not be problematically coextensive: although our world is such that all creatures with kidneys have hearts, we can certainly imagine creatures with hearts but lacking kidneys, and vice versa.[[9]](#footnote-9) What is needed to pose a problem for the Separability Principle is a case whereby two general ideas with the same exemplar corresponded to properties that are *necessarily* coextensive.

Perhaps one might attempt to defend Hume from such cases on the basis that general ideas only bring to mind some but not all resembling ideas (THN 1.1.7.7; SBN 20-21); perhaps EXTENSION brings to mind a certain subset of extended ideas, and FIGURE brings to mind a different subset of figured ideas, and the two subsets might not be coextensive. Again, I find this defence unconvincing, since there is nothing contradictory about the possibility that the two exemplars will bring to mind the exact same ideas in at least one case. Indeed, when the same person is considering both coextensive general ideas, the ideas brought forth are more rather than less likely to be the same, since the ideas revived by EXTENSION will be fresher in my mind when I think of FIGURE.

I will proceed to argue that there are a number of cases involving coextensive general ideas. That said, it should be emphasised that my objection only requires that *one* such case fits the bill to problematise the Separability Principle.

One stock example from the contemporary literature on coextensive properties is that of trilaterality (the property of having three sides) and triangularity (the property of having three angles). Anything triangular will be trilateral, since a closed figure with three sides will necessarily have three angles. These predicates unquestionably apply to exactly the same objects; therefore, the general ideas TRIANGLE and TRILATERAL will correspondingly have the same revival set. Of course, Hume never explicitly mentions any such distinction. Thus, it is open for one to object that Hume does not in fact think these two general ideas to be genuinely distinguishable and hence distinct. This would involve a bit of bullet-biting; *prima facie*, since TRIANGLE is a general idea regarding angles and TRILATERAL is a general idea regarding sides, the two seem quite distinguishable. But given that Hume never in fact distinguishes these two general ideas, perhaps this is a bullet he would be happy to chew. Interpretive matters aside, the philosophical point remains—TRIANGLE and TRILATERAL seem like distinct general ideas, and such a case presents a counterexample to Hume’s Separability Principle. However, the interpretive point can still be pressed, for regardless of whether Hume would be willing to bite the bullet with respect to TRIANGLE and TRILATERAL, I do not think that such cases are the only examples of type distinctions of reason.

Crucially, there are a few examples of such problem cases that can be found in Hume’s discussion of token distinctions of reason.[[10]](#footnote-10) Given that these cases involve general ideas that Hume himself explicitly distinguishes, it seems undeniable that he would consider them to be distinguishable. Thus, in accordance with the Separability Principle, it should follow that these general ideas should be separable. If such general ideas are genuinely co-extensive, then this poses a legitimate threat to the Separability Principle.

One of Hume’s listed examples of token distinctions of reason provides such a case when considered in type form: MOTION and BODY MOVED correspond to properties that are necessarily coextensive.[[11]](#footnote-11) Given that ‘[t]he idea of motion necessarily supposes that of a body moving’ (THN 1.4.4.7; SBN 228), motion entails a body moved. However, the reverse case is less clear. With respect to particular instances, Baxter (2011, p.166) points out that we can separate any given moving body from motion: we can form an idea of a given moving body ceasing to move. In explaining why Hume nevertheless cites motion and body moved as an example of a (token) distinction of reason, Baxter speculates that Hume might simply be using standard examples from the existing literature without necessarily agreeing with them.

Whatever one thinks of the token case, it seems clear that ‘motion’ and ‘body moved’ are coextensive properties. MOTION will apply to all particulars to which BODY MOVED does, in the same way that UNMARRIED will apply to the particulars that UNMARRIED MAN does; anything that falls under the extension of BODY MOVED will also fall under the extension of MOTION. Given further that motion necessarily presupposes a body moving (THN 1.4.4.7; SBN 228), BODY MOVED applies to all particulars to which MOTION does. We can appeal to considerations of symmetry to drive home this point. Since ‘separable’ and ‘distinguishable’ are symmetric relations, and since we cannot separate BODY MOVED from MOTION, this indicates that we also cannot separate MOTION from BODY MOVED. And the same applies for the converse.

It is true that we can conceive of a body that is not in motion, as Baxter notes. However, this does not indicate a separation of MOTION and BODY MOVED. Such a case shows that MOTION and BODY are not coextensive general ideas. However, it does not show that MOTION and BODY MOVED are not coextensive, because such a case does not concern any body being moved: *ex hypothesi*, the body in question is not moved, and thus does not fall under the extension of BODY MOVED. Thus, my point remains: MOTION and BODY MOVED are coextensive.

However, the same might be thought untrue of Hume’s two other offered examples of (token) distinctions of reason: COLOUR and FIGURE, and BODY and FIGURE. COLOUR and FIGURE are not coextensive, because we can have a purely tactile impression of figure that would lack any colour whatsoever, for instance a congenitally blind person’s impression of a cube. It might be maintained that there might nevertheless be a type distinction of reason in the vicinity. Hoffman claims that for Hume, COLOUR and VISUAL FIGURE correspond to properties that are coextensive:

It is well known that Hume agrees with Berkeley that colour and visual figure cannot exist separately. Colour cannot exist without some figure or other, and a figure detected by sight must have some colour. (Hoffman 2011, p.1131)

However, even this weakened claim might be disputed. Arguably, a sensible minimum of colour would lack figure, since it would not be extended; something might be thought to have figure only if it has extension. Thus, COLOUR and VISUAL FIGURE would not correspond to properties that are necessarily coextensive. Similarly, BODY and FIGURE might seem to correspond to necessarily coextensive properties at first blush. After all, any particular that FIGURE applies to, BODY will also apply to. And any extended body will have figure, being extended.[[12]](#footnote-12) However, if a body of minimum size lacks figure, the two general ideas do not correspond to properties that are necessarily coextensive.

Even so, there are two general ideas in this vicinity that indeed correspond to properties that are necessarily coextensive, that is, FIGURE and EXTENSION.[[13]](#footnote-13) Hume points out that ‘What is extended must have a particular figure’ (THN 1.4.5.9; SBN 235). Similarly, anything that has figure has extension: ‘The termination of these three dimensions [of length, breadth, and thickness] is what we call figure. This figure is moveable, separable, and divisible’ (THN 1.4.5.15; SBN 239). Given that figure is divisible, it comprises more than one sensible minimum, and so it has to be extended. Thus, FIGURE and EXTENSION correspond to all the same particulars: anything that is extended has figure, and anything that has figure has extension. The distinction between the two therefore constitutes a type distinctions of reason, on the assumption that a body of minimum size lacks figure.

It may perhaps be objected that Hume in THN 1.4.5.15 (SBN 239) is only discussing three-dimensional figures, and so perhaps minima (which lack any dimension) in fact have a figure—indeed, we might be inclined to see them as spherical, in the way we think of particles as spherical. The issue of whether bodies of minimum size have figure is not something that I need to stake my argument on, since even if minima indeed have figure, there would still be a type distinction of reason in the vicinity. On this assumption, EXTENSION and FIGURE would not be a type distinction of reason. But if bodies of minimum size have figure, then BODY and FIGURE would be a type distinction of reason, since minima have figure without being extended. As established above, ‘What is extended must have a particular figure’ (THN 1.4.5.9; SBN 235), and so extended bodies must have figure. *Ex hypothesi*, non-extended bodies (i.e. those of minimum size) also have figure. Thus, all bodies have figure. Similarly, any figure at all would constitute a body—it is impossible to have a figure without possessing some body or another. Thus, BODY and FIGURE would constitute a type distinction of reason.

Moreover, on the assumption that visual minima have figure, another type distinction of reason would be that of COLOUR and VISUAL FIGURE, for reasons explained above. Any extended patch of colour would have visual figure, since what is extended must have a figure (THN 1.4.5.9; SBN 235). *Ex hypothesi*, non-extended colour (i.e. those of minimum size) also has figure. Thus, anything coloured has visual figure. Similarly, anything with visual figure has to be coloured (in line with the Berkeleian arguments that Hume adopts arguing against the primary/secondary quality distinction). Since anything coloured has visual figure, and anything with visual figure is coloured, COLOUR and VISUAL FIGURE constitute a token distinction of reason.

In short, whether or not one thinks that bodies of minimum size have figure, one has to concede that there exist counterexamples to the Separability Principle—either FIGURE and EXTENSION constitute a type distinction of reason; or BODY and FIGURE, as well as COLOUR and VISUAL FIGURE, do.

Having examined some examples of type distinctions of reason, it should be obvious that nothing Hume says regarding token distinctions of reason can prove of any help in this regard. Hume’s strategy with respect to token distinctions of reason turns on the possibility of there being distinguishable and separable general ideas in the vicinity. But this does not help us when general ideas themselves are distinguishable without being separable.

It is edifying to note that a similar issue arises when Hume argues that we cannot appeal to his analysis of the distinctions of reason to explain any distinction between an object and its existence:

Our foregoing reasoning concerning the *distinction* of ideas without any real *difference* will not here serve us in any stead. That kind of distinction is founded on the different resemblances, which the same simple idea may have to several different ideas. But no object can be presented resembling some object with respect to its existence, and different from others in the same particular; since every object, that is presented, must necessarily be existent. (THN 1.2.6.6; SBN 67)

Here Hume says that his analysis of the distinctions of reason cannot be applied, because any object that resembles X will also resemble X’s existence, since everything that is presented is presented as existing. It might be thought that Hume does not seem to consider the possibility that something could resemble X’s existence (*qua* existing) but yet not resemble X. For instance, red’s existence might resemble blue’s existence (since they both exist), but red might not resemble blue. However, it is important to note that Hume is talking about resembling X *simpliciter*, and not resembling X in some respect. So while red might not resemble blue *qua* colour, this is inconsequential, since we are not distinguishing red’s existence from red’s colour (which would be unproblematic), but red’s existence from red. And it seems that if red’s existence resembles blue’s existence, then red would resemble blue to the same extent.

The point is that because X and X’s existence will resemble all the same ideas, Hume’s analysis of the distinctions of reason cannot apply in such cases, since this analysis depends on a differential resemblance between respects; as Cummins (1991, p.77) points out, to draw a distinction of reason between X and Y, X must resemble an object that Y does not. Although this case differs from type distinctions of reason insofar as the former concerns particular instances and the latter concerns general ideas, the two are relevantly similar in one very salient respect: both involve two ideas bearing the same similarity relations to all ideas, which Hume takes to preclude his analysis of the distinctions of reasons from applying.

The above discussion in THN 1.2.2.6 (SBN 67) highlights why we cannot differentiate coextensive general ideas by pointing to the different resemblances that they have to the same objects. For instance, it is tempting to say that we might be able to distinguish TRIALTERAL and TRIANGLE because the exemplar of TRIANGLE resembles its revival set in virtue of having three angles, while the exemplar of TRILATERAL resembles its revival set in virtue of having three sides. Unfortunately, Hume lacks the resources to make such a distinction. In particular, he can only distinguish different resemblances by pointing to *extensional* differences rather than *intensional* differences between them. As there are no extensional differences with regard to the resemblances involved in type distinctions of reason, Hume cannot distinguish these resemblances. He explicitly says that to differentiate resemblances, we require the same idea to have resemblances ‘to several different ideas’, but because ‘no object can be presented resembling some object with respect to its existence, and different from others in the same particular’, there is no differential resemblance to be appealed to with regard to an object and its existence (THN 1.2.6.6; SBN 67). That is, because there is no *extensional* difference with regard to the resemblances of an object and those of its existence (we cannot produce an object that resembled an object but not its existence), there is no distinction with regard to their resemblances. Similarly, there is no distinction between the resemblances involved in type distinctions of reason.

Thus far, we have established that type distinctions of reason indeed constitute an exception to the Separability Principle. But had Hume been aware of this problem, would it have concerned him? Might he have been inclined to simply admit counterexamples to the Separability Principle, in the same way he seems happy to admit that the missing shade of blue constitutes an exception to the Copy Principle?

I do not that think this would be an appealing route for Hume to take. Notably, unlike with the missing shade of blue, he seems keen to resist counterexamples to the Separability Principle with regard to token distinctions of reason. If he thought that these putative counterexamples merited resolution, it seems natural that type distinctions of reason should be similarly problematic. Moreover, it should be noted that even if Hume would have in fact been unconcerned with exceptions to the Separability Principle, if we are able to find an adequate account that accommodates the putative counterexamples, then there seems little need to take such a theoretical hit. I will argue in the next section that there is indeed such an account; although it is not one that Hume availed himself of, it is much in the spirit of his overarching framework, and I see no principled reason why he could not accept it.

It might be noted that this issue has parallels to contemporary philosophy: the metaphysical analogue of this problem is commonly cited as an objection to set and resemblance nominalism. Set nominalists, like Lewis (1986, pp.50-69), typically take properties to be constituted by sets of objects to which the property in question applies, while resemblance nominalists, like Rodriguez-Pereyra (2002), typically take properties to be constituted by sets or classes of objects that resemble in the relevant respect. For such accounts, any two necessarily coextensive properties must be identical.[[14]](#footnote-14) Although Hume provides a psychological account of general ideas rather than a metaphysical account of properties, he nevertheless faces an analogous difficulty with regard to necessarily coextensive general ideas. One crucial difference is that while it is open to the set or resemblance nominalist to admit that necessarily coextensive properties are in fact identical (a line that Lewis (1986, p.55) gestures at in saying that there is a sense in which ‘being triangular’ and ‘being trilateral’ are the same property), any such attempt to bite the bullet on Hume’s behalf will lead to a gnashing of teeth; admitting a counterexample to the Separability Principle, which does considerable lifting in the *Treatise*, imposes a substantial philosophical cost on Hume’s system. Since we can distinguish FIGURE from EXTENSION, the two cannot be identical, on pain of violating the Separability Principle.

## Attempted Solutions

Having put Hume into a corner, can we now defend him against the objection that type distinctions of reason threaten his Separability Principle? As mentioned previously, I do not take him to have recognised type distinctions of reason as a potential problem for the Separability Principle; his only discussions on distinctions of reason concern token distinctions of reason, such as distinctions drawn between a globe’s whiteness and its sphericality. Thus, it is unsurprising that he does not so much as gesture towards any solution to this worry. Nevertheless, I will attempt to propose a solution on his behalf, while recognising that it is not one that he explicitly or even implicitly endorsed.

First, I will examine some strategies that I think fall short. First, it might be maintained that the Separability Principle simply does not apply to general ideas,[[15]](#footnote-15) because general ideas are not numerically distinct from that to which they apply; a set or plurality of ideas is plausibly not numerically distinct from its constituent members. Since numerical identity only applies to beings (c.f. THN 1.1.5.4; SBN 14), and since pluralities are arguably non-beings (Hume seems to deny them existence in claiming that ‘existence in itself belongs only to unity, and is never applicable to number, but on account of the unites, of which the number is compos'd’ (THN 1.2.2.3; SBN 30)), and since the Separability Principle concerns numerical identity and distinctness, general ideas might be thought to lie beyond the scope of this principle.

However, it seems that the relation of numerical identity should hold for pluralities as it does for individuals: for instance, two sets are identical if they have the same members. Hume does limit numerical identity to beings in THN 1.1.5.4, but there is no indication that he does not think of pluralities as beings. While it is true that he claims that ‘existence in itself belongs only to unity, and is never applicable to number’ in THN 1.2.2.3, he does not mean that pluralities lack existence, but only that their existence depends on that of unities. As it stands, this attempted strategy remains insufficiently motivated.

The natural way to go about distinguishing coextensive general ideas is to introduce more structure into Hume’s account of general ideas, and I believe we can find a resolution to the problem along these lines. As always, the devil is in the details. How might we go about introducing such structure? A tempting initial thought is to look to the contemporary analogue of this issue for inspiration. I will explore such a strategy, before explaining why I think it does not work. Rodriguez-Pereyra (2002, p.97) responds to the objection of necessarily coextensive properties by suggesting that triangularity and trilaterality are relations rather than properties; moreover, they are not the same relations, because the two predicates apply in virtue of different relations (standing in some relation to three sides, vs. standing in some relation to three angles). Lewis (1986, p.56) suggests a very similar account. The idea is that 'triangular' has in its resemblance class not triangles, but rather sets of ordered pairs of a particular and three angles, and 'trilateral' has in its resemblance class not triangles, but rather sets of ordered pairs of a particular and three sides. So despite the fact that all individuals with three sides are individuals with three angles, the resemblance classes of 'triangular' and 'trilateral' are not coextensive, because the members of the class are not *individuals with three sides*/*angles* (that is, triangles), but rather ordered pairs involving angles or sides respectively. By introducing structure at the level of the objects in the sets of triangularity and trilaterality (in making the members of the sets ordered pairs rather than triangles), we get the result that the sets constituting triangularity and trilaterality are not coextensive (or even overlapping).

Although this suggestion seems to work for Rodriguez-Pereyra’s and Lewis’ purposes, there are reasons to doubt that it is a natural fit for Hume.

Arguably, the traditional view of Hume’s psychology is an imagistic one. On such a view, Rodriguez-Pereyra’s and Lewis’ line falls short. It is all well and good to speak in the abstract of a particular standing in a triangular relation to three sides, but once we try and form an imagistic idea of such an entity, it would have to take the form of a triangle for Hume. Accordingly, for Hume an idea of a particular standing in a relation to three sides would be exactly the same idea as an idea of a particular standing in a relation to three angles, since both would merely be images of triangles. A commitment to ideas being completely determinate sensory entities can be seen to be implied by a number of passages. In THN 1.1.7.6 (SBN 19), Hume says: ‘’tis utterly absurd to suppose a triangle really existent, which has no precise proportion of sides and angles’. Similarly, in THN 1.1.7.3 (SBN 18-19), Hume claims that in thinking of quantity or quality we must conceive of an exact notion of the degree; we cannot imagine a length of line without thinking of its particular length. Compare also with how Hume says that we cannot think of a length without its breadth in THN 1.2.4.12 (SBN 43), at least for things which have both length and breadth.[[16]](#footnote-16) Given this, an idea of a particular standing in a trilateral relation to its three sides would just be an image of a triangle. And the same holds true of an idea of a particular standing in a triangular relation to its three angles. But this means that the ideas revived by the exemplars of TRIANGLE and TRILATERAL would be exactly identical, and the counterexample to the Separability Principle remains. The structure that Rodriguez-Pereyra and Lewis attempt to introduce does not take for this (admittedly crude) imagistic psychological framework.

It could be maintained that there might be room within an imagistic theory of the mind to claim that two identical images of a triangle might nevertheless stand for two different things. For instance, Hume takes it that a thousandth and a ten-thousandth of a grain of sand are represented by the very same image, and are distinguished only by ‘a distinct idea of these numbers and of their different proportions’ (THN 1.2.1.3; SBN 27). Such a strategy seems doomed. For one, while two images of a part of a grain of sand can be distinguished by what they represent (a thousandth versus a ten-thousandth of a grain of sand) the very problem with the images of the trilateral and the triangle is that the things that they represent—that is, the class of triangular and trilateral things—are also identical, and so there does not appear to be room for Hume to make an analogous move here.

It is true that ascribing an imagistic theory of meaning to Hume is contentious. In particular, ‘New Humeans’ such as Wright (1983), Strawson (1989), and Kail (2007) maintain that there is room for a non-imagistic relative ideas, which are ideas known only by our knowledge of a relation and an idea that bears this relation to them. However, this should provide little succour to those who would be inclined to import Lewis’ and Rodriquez-Pereyra’s strategy to Hume. For one, while such an account might work for TRIANGULAR and TRILATERAL, it is difficult to apply this framework to the Humean examples such as FIGURE and BODY, for instance: what would be the relata involved in FIGURE, and with BODY? Even putting this worry aside, it is highly unclear how one would go on to incorporate relative ideas into any such account—the general ideas of TRIANGLE and TRILATERAL would have to be relative ideas, but this seems both unmotivated and implausible. If one is to hope for such a solution with regard to the problem of this paper, the onus lies with them to spell out the details of how such an implementation would work. For my part, I am not optimistic.

Most significantly, I believe that there is a more natural, and more adequate, answer in the vicinity.

The idea behind this strategy is to make use of intermediate determinables. The determinate/determinable distinction is a distinction between the generality of properties, determinate properties falling under more general determinable properties. Determinable properties are the more general forms of the determinates that fall under them. For instance, ‘length’ is a determinable, while ‘2cm long’ is a determinate of it. I believe that appealing to an analogue of this distinction as applying to general ideas allows us to rescue Hume from the worry of type distinctions of reason. Specifically, my proposal turns on the claim that we structure and order our general ideas in accordance with determinates and determinables. This is not to commit to any substantive metaphysical thesis regarding the nature of properties; it only makes a claim about certain psychological associative relations in our mind.

In order to account for type distinctions of reason, I propose that Hume could have introduced more structure via general ideas bringing to mind not particular instances, but rather lower determinables. Let us examine the metaphysical analogue of this issue with regard to properties. For instance, consider the structure of the property ‘colour’ when considered according to its lower determinables. ‘Colour’ is a determinable, and it has under it lower determinables, such as ‘Blue’, ‘Red’, and ‘Purple’, which in turn have other determinables under them (e.g. ‘Cerulean’, ‘Teal’, etc.), and so forth, terminating in the determinate colours.

Whatever the case with the metaphysics, Hume could have adopted an analogous structure into his psychological theory of general ideas. The problem posed by type distinctions of reason can be solved by taking general ideas to bring to mind general ideas of lower determinables (rather than particular instances), if such determinables exist, or particular instances if no lower determinables exist. These general ideas of lower determinables could in turn bring to mind general ideas of yet lower determinables (if they exist), which bring to mind general ideas of lower determinables, and so forth until the process finally terminates with the lowest determinables bringing to mind particular instances. These general ideas of lower determinables would be, this additional structure aside, in line with Hume’s account: they would be particular ideas, which become general in their representation by being annexed to a general term that brings forth the suitable custom (THN 1.1.7.10; SBN 22).[[17]](#footnote-17)

To see how this strategy would solve the problem posed by type distinctions of reason, let us examine the case of FIGURE and EXTENSION. The exemplar of FIGURE would be accompanied by a custom that would bring to mind some general ideas of lower determinables, such as TRIANGLE and QUADRANGLE. These exemplars would bring to mind some general ideas of lower determinables, such as RIGHT ANGLED TRIANGLE, ISOCELES TRIANGLE, TRAPEZIUM, RHOMBUS, and so forth, until the process finally terminates in particular instances of the various figures. Meanwhile, the exemplar of EXTENSION would be accompanied by a custom to bring to mind general ideas of lower exemplars involving ‘length, breadth, and thickness’ (THN 1.4.5.15; SBN 239). One possible configuration would be EXTENSION bringing to mind, among other lower determinables, a general idea of EXTENSION WITH THICKNESS 1MM, which would have under it all figures with thickness 1mm, but with varying lengths and breadths. Although both FIGURE and EXTENSION finally terminate in the same particular instances (since everything extended has figure and vice versa), the two are clearly accompanied by a different custom, because the process by which they arrive at these instantiations differ considerably; they bring to mind completely different general ideas of lower determinables, which bring to mind yet different general ideas of lower determinables under them. While FIGURE has the custom to bring to mind the general ideas of TRIANGLE, QUADRANGLE, and so forth, EXTENSION has the custom to bring to mind the general ideas of EXTENSION WITH THICKNESS 1MM, and so forth. Since FIGURE and EXTENSION differ with respect to their custom, they are different, distinguishable, and separable, in accordance with the Separability Principle.

Similar accounts may be offered regarding the other examples of type distinctions of reason. MOTION will bring to mind general ideas of lower determinables involving speed and acceleration, while BODY MOVED might bring to mind general ideas of lower determinables involving the size of the moving bodies, among perhaps other lower determinables. This analysis can also be applied to the case of triangularity and trilaterality. TRILATERALITY naturally brings to mind general ideas of determinables involving length of sides (e.g. TRILATERALS WITH SIDES OF LESS THAN 5 INCHES), while TRIANGULARITY will bring to mind general ideas of determinables involving degree of angles (e.g. RIGHT-ANGLED TRIANGLES). Some determinables may overlap between the two; say TRILATERAL WITH THREE EQUAL SIDES vs. TRIANGLE WITH THREE EQUAL ANGLES; or TRILATERAL WITH THE SQUARE OF ONE SIDE EQUAL TO THE SUM OF THE SQUARES OF THE OTHER TWO SIDES, and TRIANGLE WITH ONE RIGHT ANGLE. But not all of them will, and this is sufficient to distinguish the two general ideas. Similarly, the case of EQUILATERAL TRIANGLE and EQUIANGULAR TRIANGLE is also easy to accommodate, since EQUIANGULAR TRIANGLE will not have lower determinables involving the length of sides, unlike EQUILATERAL TRIANGLE.

Having put forward the account, we can now weaken it to render it more psychologically plausible. For instance, the custom of a general idea would not need to bring to mind *all* general ideas of lower determinables within a level, which would be psychologically impossible, but merely a selection of these general ideas. This parallels the fact that Hume’s account does not require that all instances of a general idea be revived by the custom, but only some, according to the needs of our reasoning (THN 1.1.7.7; SBN 20-21). Similarly, one might allow for the ‘skipping’ of levels in the psychological associations of some individuals (e.g. one goes straight from thoughts of FIGURE, to TRIANGLES, straightaway to particular instances). This weakened account is nevertheless sufficient for rescuing Hume’s Separability Principle, since we require merely a rather coarse-grained structure to differentiate type distinctions of reason—FIGURE and EXTENSION may be distinguished by their bringing to mind at least some general ideas of lower determinables, even if these lower determinables are non-exhaustive or skip certain levels.

It might be objected that lower determinables could be rendered specific enough so that we could not genuinely distinguish type distinctions of reason.[[18]](#footnote-18) For instance, FIGURE might have as a lower determinable not RECTANGLE *per se*, but RECTANGLE OF WIDTH 5MM AND BREADTH 10MM. Given a similar specificity for EXTENSION, this might lead to the two general ideas having all the same lower determinables. Of course, this is not how the determinate/determinable distinction is traditionally conceived of in metaphysics. In any case, whatever the case with the analogous metaphysical issue, this picture seems particularly implausible as a psychological thesis (which is what I am concerned with). It seems unlikely that my general idea of FIGURE brings to mind lower general ideas of such specificity such as RECTANGLE OF WIDTH 5MM AND BREADTH 10MM; this is simply not an association that comes naturally to us. In contrast, FIGURE bringing to mind lower general ideas such as RECTANGLE seems a much more plausible conception. In this way, the distinction between FIGURE and COLOUR relies upon certain natural associative principles of the mind, which is very much in line with Hume’s general framework.

In general, not all ways of dividing a general idea into determinables are created equal. This precludes a certain metaphysical promiscuity (whereby any way of carving up a general idea is as good as any other), and also ensures that a general idea has a determinate characterisation. As suggested above, what fixes the relevant determinables for a given general idea is going to boil down to question of psychological fact: which associations are the natural ones? Some degree of variance is inevitable, and perhaps some linguistic systematisation is called for to fix and standardise the ‘correct’ determinables for a given general idea, not unlike the systematisation that takes place with regard to our moral language (THN 3.3.1.16; SBN 582). The details of this are beyond the scope of my paper, but this should suffice as a sketch of how such an account might proceed.

It is true that this leaves my Hume somewhat at the mercy of the empirical data: for this account to succeed, our general ideas should in fact bring to mind ideas of lower determinables. But it is my view that if there is anything Hume is happy to be hostage to, it to the empirical facts. For my part, I make no claim here about the truth or otherwise of this psychological thesis. I state it only as a commitment that Hume would have to make if he is to avail himself of my solution to the problem of type distinctions of reason. The fact of the matter is that we do distinguish between general ideas such as TRIANGULAR and TRILATERAL. As it stands, Hume’s account struggles to accommodate this datum. If the account I suggest here genuinely does obtain in reality, then Hume can safely maintain his broad framework of general ideas and his commitment to the Separability Principle. If it does not, then it seems that Hume might be forced to more radically revise his account.

One might wonder if such an account would unduly compromise the corrective function of habit. In particular, whenever we are tempted to falsely generalise a feature peculiar to the exemplar, custom ‘makes us immediately perceive the absurdity’ involved (THN 1.1.7.14). However, if custom only recalls lower determinables, then its ability to play this corrective function seems hindered.

In response, two things might be noted. First, lower determinables will often be sufficient to demonstrate the falsity of an illegitimate generalisation. If our exemplar of TRIANGLE is right-angled, any temptation to treat all triangles as right-angled will be quickly dispelled by custom summoning lower determinables such as ISOCELES TRIANGLE and so forth. If our exemplar of TRIANGLE is shaded grey, it is highly unlikely (although not impossible) that all our exemplars of lower determinables will also be shaded grey, again allowing for custom to play its corrective function.

Second, in the unlikely case whereby lower determinables are insufficient to reveal the falsity of a generalisation, there is no reason why these exemplars of lower determinables should not go on to bring to mind lower determinables under them, and so forth, leading to a counterexample eventually springing to mind. Of course, the extent to which our custom acts in this respect will vary, and indeed, in daily life it is not unusual for us to form false generalisations when our custom is not sufficiently proactive in this regard. But such a process will be sufficient to explain why we can typically tune out the irrelevant features of the exemplar in our reasoning.

This strategy is in the spirit of Garrett’s (2015) account of general ideas:

There is perhaps a rough-grained way of individuating Humean concepts according to which any two abstract ideas with the same revival set would qualify as “the same concept,” no matter how that revival set is actually generated… On a narrow-grained and arguably more useful way of individuating concepts, however, the identity of a concept may be determined at least partly by the manner in which its revival set is actually determined. (It may also be determined partly by associated inferential or conceptual roles, which may differ even when revival sets do not). (Garrett 2015, p.124)

Elsewhere in the same work, Garrett also says:

Although [Hume] does not mention the possibility, there is no bar in principle to an abstract idea (such as DOG) itself occurring within the revival set of another abstract idea (such as MAMMAL)’. (Garrett 2015, p.75)

Putting these together suggests something similar to my account. That said, some differences should be noted. First, Garrett never considers the problem that I motivate in this paper; rather than developing it as a specific response to a worry, he proposes it as a part of a more general interpretive framework. Consequently, my account does not depend on many elements of Garrett’s account (e.g. the notion of ‘sense-based concepts’). Second, as it stands, Garrett’s account cannot resolve the problem of type distinctions of reason. Garrett only claims that abstract ideas *may* occur within the revival set of another, but, as we have seen, to address the worry of this paper, abstract ideas *must* do so when they can at all, and indeed, will constitute the *entirety* of the revival set when they occur thusly. Finally, Garrett sees his account as Hume’s own, whereas I do not believe my account to be one that Hume countenanced: it is Humean rather than Hume’s.

At the end of the day, the account I offer above is certainly not one that can be found in Hume’s text, and moreover, the problem does not seem to be one that he recognised in the first place. Nevertheless, the amended account of general ideas does not seem to be one that Hume would have had any obvious reason to be unfriendly towards, and on the whole seems at least consonant with what he says on the matter.[[19]](#footnote-19)

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1. In references to Hume’s texts throughout the paper, ‘THN’ refers to the *Treatise of Human Nature*, and ‘EHU’ to the *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*. Arabic numerals refer to section and paragraph numbers (EHU), or to book, part, section, and paragraph numbers (THN). SBN numbers refer to the pagination from the Selby-Bigge editions of these two works. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The Conceivability Principle is not a biconditional, which is why the Separability Principle derived from the Conceivability Principle and the Mental Separability Principle is not a biconditional. But the converse of the Separability Principle (that if two things are metaphysically distinct, they are numerically and distinguishable) seems perfectly plausible. That said, I do not need the converse for my purposes, and so I set it aside. Thanks to an anonymous referee for this journal for helpful discussion. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Weintraub (2007) is a rich discussion of separability in Hume, although her focus differs slightly from mine. Her main concern is the principle that all perceptions are separable (which she careful disambiguates into six different principles), whereas mine is the principle that whatever is mentally separable is metaphysically so. She acknowledges that the principle that ‘whatever objects are separable [in thought] are also… different’ is not her concern in her paper (p.730). Of course, these two principles are intimately related, and will often be deployed together, for instance in the discussion of the distinctions of reason (p.734). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Elsewhere, I have suggested that the distinction between the intentionality and qualitative character of some passions might also be viewed as a distinction of reason (Qu 2012). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Baxter (2011) raises a separate issue for token distinctions of reason, arguing that Hume needs the respects of resemblances involved to be different, and yet they are identical to the object itself, and thus with each other. This interesting and deep problem is beyond the scope of my paper, and I set it aside here. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Weintraub (2007, p.737) is a notable exception: she touches on the issue of coextensive general ideas, although since the separability principle that she is concerned with differs somewhat from mine, she understandably does not develop the discussion in the direction that I do in this paper. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Note that when referring to general ideas, I follow the contemporary convention of capitalising names of concepts (e.g. PET FISH). [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Indeed, Butts (1959, p.213) refers to Hume’s account of general ideas as a ‘dispositional theory’. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Garrett (2015, p.56) makes the point that Humean abstract ideas must make use of ‘expanded’ revival sets that include ideas of merely possible resembling things that are not believed to exist. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. If we take the Separability Principle to be a necessary truth, any distinction between ‘different’, ‘distinguishable’, and ‘separable by the thought and imagination’ also seem to constitute a type distinction of reason, given that they would necessarily apply to all the same pairs of things. If we likewise take the Conceivability Principle to be a necessary truth, then we can also include in this family of type distinctions of reasons the notion of ‘metaphysically separable’. I set this aside because I am not confident that the Separability Principle or the Conceivability Principle are relations of ideas. Thanks to Maiko Yamamori for this interesting suggestion. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. In this discussion I use ‘body’ to indicate ‘object’ in a general sense, as opposed to a notion of body as potentially distinct from perceptions. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. At least, any extended *finite* body will have figure. For exegetical convenience, I bracket the issue of extended infinite bodies. If such infinite bodies are under consideration, one can substitute ‘BODY’ with ‘FINITE BODY’ in my discussion. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Figure and extension will also be a token distinction of reason, since the particular figure of an object (say, a ball), will be inseparable from its particular extension. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Contingently coextensive properties can be accommodated by subscribing to modal realism, as Lewis and Rodriguez-Pereyra do. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. An analogous ‘exemption’ solution to this is pursued in Hakkarainen (2012) in response to a different problem for the Separability Principle. Hakkarainen argues that there is a potential threat to the Separability Principle in the form of the distinction between complex perceptions and their constitutent simple perceptions, since the two are non-identical and are yet metaphysically inseparable insofar as removing the constituent will destroy the complex. Hakkarainen argues that we might treat such a distinction as a ‘partial distinction’ which, like he argues is the case for distinctions of reason, are exempt from the Separability Principle. The considerations that he raises relating to partial distinctions do not straightforwardly apply here. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Hume defends the geometers’ definition of a line as ‘length without breadth’ (THN 1.2.4.9; SBN 42). [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. In correspondence, Jonathan Cottrell suggests that the reason that general ideas might bring to mind general ideas of lower determinables might be due to the fact that the general ideas are formed by abstraction from these general ideas of lower determinables. For instance, COLOUR brings to mind YELLOW and BLUE, because it is causally formed by abstracting from these general ideas. This seems a very plausible fit for Hume’s theory of the mind. Moreover, Jonathan Cottrell also points out that this might be taken to constitute a psychologistic analysis of the metaphysical determinate/determinable distinction on Hume’s behalf. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Thanks to Jonathan Cottrell for raising this objection. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. For detailed and insightful comments on earlier drafts of this paper, I am indebted to two anonymous referees for this journal, as well as Donald Baxter, Jonathan Cottrell, and Don Garrett. For much helpful discussion on the paper, I am deeply grateful to Bob Beddor, Ben Blumson, Jay Garfield, Cathay Liu, Abelard Podgorski, and Maiko Yamamori. I would also like to thank audiences at the National University of Singapore and Kyoto University for their excellent and stimulating comments in the Q&A. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)