



Hume on Modes

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HUME ON MODES

As thorough a critic as Norman Kemp Smith states in his investigation of the Treatise that "Hume's treatment of...the complex ideas of modes...need not detain us."¹ Whatever is interesting in this brief treatment, Smith suggests, rests on remarkable features of Humean doctrine, elsewhere expounded at length. This is true, I would agree, as a descriptive comment to the following degree. The category of modes is officially regarded by Hume as highly marginal, even dispensible. But it is not in fact the case that, intrasystematically, the work of modes can be duplicated in non-modal materials. In this discussion I will show that Hume mistakes the case, and attempts to diagnose the error's deep sources. To the naked eye, the mistake seems perhaps small and reparable. Placed under the microscope, we find an important philosophical conception is at stake.

Our raw material comprises the explanations of modality provided by Locke and Hume. Modes, according to Locke, are

complex ideas which, however compounded, contain not in them the supposition of subsisting by themselves, but are considered as dependences on, or affections of, substances; such are the ideas signified by the words, triangle, gratitude, murder, etc. (2.12.4).²

Hume's account is similar in appearance.

The idea...of a mode...is nothing but a collection of simple ideas.... The simple ideas of which modes are formed, either represent qualities, which are not united by contiguity and causation, but are dispers'd in different subjects; or if

they be all united together, the uniting principle is not regarded as the foundation of the complex idea. The idea of a dance is an instance of the first kind of modes; that of beauty of the second (I.I.VI).

The appearance of harmony is capped by the uniformity in examples: Locke also mentions 'beauty' (2.12.5) as a modal term, and between his 'murder' and Hume's 'dance' there is nothing to choose.

One small difference remains. The idea of dependence, prominent in Locke's sketch, is absent from the Treatise passage quoted. This disparity is eliminated by the following remark, temporarily withheld above:

the difference betwixt [substances and modes] consists in this, that the particular qualities, which form a substance, are commonly referr'd to an unknown something, in which they are supposed to inhere (I.I.VI).

Superficially then, both Locke and Hume might be thought to subscribe to the following theses. The designata of modal terms, but not of substantial terms, lack independence (I will call this 'the Modal Dependence Thesis' or 'MDT'). Modal terms designate complex ideas in the same way as do those substantial terms which designate complex ideas (this will be referred to as 'the Modal Complexity Thesis' or 'MCT'). But while Locke supports MDT, Hume rejects it, and whereas Hume advocates MCT, Locke -- when pressed -- will be found to disagree with it.

Let us start with MDT. To establish that the category of modes is regarded, intrasystematically, as superfluous by Hume is to confirm the disagreement here between the two theorists.

Hume categorically dismisses what Locke describes by the phrase 'a something I know not what' as contributing

to any particular idea of a substance. Accordingly, the designata of modal as well as substantial terms resolve identically under analysis, i.e. into combinations of simple ideas. Hume mentions a differentiating factor: the principle of union of simple ideas in the case of a substance scores higher in naturalness than in the case of a mode. The components of a substantial idea are "*closely and inseparably connected by the relations of contiguity and causation*" (I.I.VI), which are 'natural'. But Hume's own examples expose this as an ineffective device of differentiation, one to which Hume himself attaches little importance. Where is the unnaturalness in the case of the (modal) designata of 'beauty' and 'dance'? How -- more pointedly -- is the complexity involved in the (substantial) designata of 'dog' and 'table' more natural? Any difference here is one that Hume does well to play down and neutralise of all but sentimental significance.

In adducing the idea of naturalness to explain the difference felt by the common thinker between modes and substances, Hume is in fact undermining that feeling. One who cites naturalness in the way that Hume does already believes that modes and substances, perspicuously analysed, are uniform in constitution. Hume, in short, rejects MDT.

The dismissal of MDT rests on a basic premise of Humean doctrine: the ontological census is exhausted by simple ideas and their combinations. Consequently, as modes are complex ideas, they must be ontologically uniform with complex substances. But can this uniform categorisation, though it flows smoothly from the mentioned premise of doctrine, be defended -- not merely asserted -- against common thought? What moves does Hume make to show that if there is a clash the prerogatives of common thought are to be summarily abrogated?

As we saw, the idea of naturalness, brought to bear in distinguishing complex ideas, cuts across our normal

differentiation into modes and substances. Plainly, the failure of naturalness to provide a basis for duplicating the patterns of common thought would only count against the latter, and hence against MDT, if independent reasons could be advanced for disregarding the common classifications. We would otherwise not know why we are expected to agree to the introduction of naturalness to do work here. Hume does bring such a reason forward, viz. that common classifications involve reference to 'an unknown something'. Because the latter notion is utterly mysterious, 'metaphysical' in Hume's inquisitional sense -- 'Commit it to the flames!' -- we are obliged as ontologists to expunge it.

This reason is clearly inadequate. No one disputes the claim that we commonly distinguish a mode such as beauty from a substance such as a (beautiful) vase by saying that the former is dependent, the latter ontologically self-sufficient. But we simply do not commonly say that the independence of the latter links with a substratum.

This criticism falls far short of sustaining the common view of modes and substances against Hume's. It does however show that Hume's discussion, considered as a prosecution of and not merely a verdict against common thought, has the form of an ignoratio elenchi. By pinning a metaphysical supplement on common thought, Hume is prejudging its defensibility on the point at issue. It is specious to cite the impotence of Hume's own idea of naturalness, metaphysically aboveboard though it may be, to do work that is somehow done in common thought -- viz. to distinguish modal from substantial designators -- as a ground for dismissing common thought as incoherent or otherwise severely flawed.

If we scrutinise Hume's own words we can detect that as soon as his attention is diverted from the emotive issue of that '*fiction*', an extra-experiential substratum, he falls happily into the common mode of talk that is supposedly tainted thereby. Consider the phrase 'different

subjects' which figures in the passage quoted above from the Treatise. What could 'subject' mean here? There is no doubt that Hume reads it as synonymous with 'substance'. But this reading is insupportable. For Hume would be appealing to a prior understanding of substantial composites in order to distinguish modes, when the entire distinction is intrasystematically problematic. The construal might be defended if substantial designators preceded modal ones into discourse. But, ignoring the fact that we have no reason to believe that this is the case, one could then distinguish modal from substantial terms by reference to temporal order of introduction, and naturalness would be an inessential mark. Intrasystematically, the only non-question-begging reading of 'subject' is 'combination of simple ideas'. But as a mode is itself regarded as a combination of simple ideas by Hume, the account would be, if not circular, then certainly unhelpful. It is plain that the term 'subject' must be taken as a dummy for the common 'thing'. This either commits Hume to a substratum -- for he himself explains 'thing' in contrast with 'substance' by reference to such a support -- or else (and this is of course the option to be selected) it commits him to conceding that common practice involves no vitiating metaphysical supplements.

Hume could cut his way through the preceding tangles by a single stroke. He could assert that common thought is hopelessly confused and decline the task of trying to make even marginal sense of it. If common thought is hopelessly confused, it would not then be surprising, or of any critical note, that Hume gets into the kind of trouble lately described. He becomes embroiled because he overgenerously tries to give common thought the benefit of a non-existent doubt.

But while this bold stroke extricates Hume, it fails to reckon with the backlash. Those who are not convinced that common thought is a hopeless cause will now

redouble their defensive efforts. For the idea behind the bold stroke is to abridge any examination of common thought in an effort to persuade us, its practitioners, that it is beyond salvage. So it is admitted that whatever is essential to Hume's discussion is not relevant to the evaluation of common thought. All we are offered is a competing thesis that is incommensurate with familiar categories.

This indicates that we must follow some different line of interpretation. I have no doubt that in denying a difference between modes and substances Hume relies on what looks like the clear impossibility, for one equipped ontologically as he is, of locating a decisive difference between them. But, as we have seen, the facts of common practice are so inhospitable to this conclusion as to make it virtually certain that other factors are playing into the ensemble.

Let us begin to unravel the knots by returning to the contrast between Hume and Locke. On Hume's diagnosis, the superaddition of a substratum should take a Lockean mode into a Lockean substance; for the reference to a substance is the sole difference that Hume anywhere acknowledges in his critical allusions to Locke's account. But Locke would have an easy time blocking this imputation. (It will be noted that Locke cites a substratum in a highly ironic way, styling it 'the supposed or confused idea of substance' (2.12.6).) Consider Locke's mode 'murder'. As Locke claims, we regard a murder as dependent or non-self-subsistent. But on what does it depend? Locke would certainly reply, with the man in the street, that it depends on a murderer and a victim, both of which are quite knowable, not on an unknowable substratum crouching behind the appearances. Note how we can translate this into favoured Humean terms without prejudice. If modes and substances are, ontologically speaking, collections of ideas, then the collection designated by, say, 'the murder in Ford's Theatre' depends

on the collections designated by 'John Wilkes Booth' and 'Abraham Lincoln'. Again no mention of a substratum.

The dependence of modes on substances in this fashion is so clear that it is difficult to see how Hume could mistake the case. A useful move here is to point back to Hume's ontology and remark that it is hard to see how one collection could depend on another. If there are two discrete collections, they are, it seems, ipso facto independent. But this directs us to examine whether the sense in which modes are dependent is the very sense in which collections can be.

There is of course a clear and available sense in which collections can depend on one another. If collection x includes collection y as a proper part, then x depends on y in a quite straightforward sense: if y were not, then x would not be. In short, wholes are dependent on their parts. But if we look more closely, we see that the dependence of modes on substances cannot be interpreted in the suggested fashion.

Consider the mode 'murder'. If we follow the preceding line, we will be driven to say that a murder, qua dependent, is a whole of which independent substances are parts. But this is something which we would stubbornly resist saying. Forced to employ the language of parts and wholes we would much rather say that a specific murder is a part of that whole in which one man, a murderer, shoots another, his victim, or otherwise does him in.

Without pretending to any exactitude of expression, we can conclude that there is a rough asymmetry between the dependence of a whole on its constituent parts, and that of a mode on a substance. If we hold to the first sense of 'dependence', this provides something of an excuse for Hume's denial of MDT. This denial would of course mean not that modes are independent in the way that substances are, but that their dependence is not a dependence of wholes on constituent parts. But it is wholly implausible to

suppose that this fragile option captures anything that Hume has in mind in rejecting MDT. He obviously means to assert that in every sense that counts, modes are as independent as substances.

What -- we may now ask with greater control -- is the sense in which modes are dependent? Consider the following example. A trio of stones depends on the stones which compose it. The trio is a whole of which the individual stones are parts. But a triangle of stones (each marking a vertex) depends not only on the stones, but on their being disposed non-linearly. Now 'triangle' is a modal designator. If there is a triangle then, as Locke would say, there must be additional elements, e.g. stones, and these must be disposed in a specific way, viz. as vertices. Similarly a mode like murder depends not only on two actors, but on their being disposed in a suitable way vis-a-vis each other, e.g. as shooter and target or as stabber and stabbed. Over and above the relationship of parts to a whole -- of the individual stones to the trio, of the individual actors to the pair -- we must, in explaining the nature of a mode, allude to some specific fashion in which the parts are arranged or disposed. If the dependence of modes connects with the disposition of parts over and above their mere contribution as constituents to a larger whole, this would provide a basis for giving sense to the term 'dependence', which differs from the sense in which wholes depend on their parts.³

The question which arises at this point -- and it is of cardinal significance that the question is a good one even within the restrictive borders of Hume's ontology -- is as follows. What prevents Hume from acknowledging this different style of dependence? Obviously, given simple ideas, they may be disposed in different ways, and whatever language is used to describe the various dispositions may be domesticated by Hume without stretching his ontology. As I said at the start, it seems that Hume is intrasystematically mistaken in treating modes as comprising a

dispensable category; he would seem to be in a position to make the categorical distinction without violating his basic ontological commitments.

Because Hume appears capable of making the distinction it is puzzling that he fails to make it in a consistent way. But this is not in fact a reparable oversight on his part. To get at the deeper reasons for his stand, we may proceed by focussing on Locke's. MCT, the thesis that modal terms, in the fashion of substance terms, designate complex ideas, enters here. Locke, I said, disagrees. But he certainly seems -- does he not? -- to be agreeing.

Scrutinizing the passage, a way of overruling the appearance presents itself. Why does Locke say 'complex ideas, however compounded'? Unless Locke were using 'complex' and 'compound' so that the latter does not expand on the former, nothing would be lost if the qualifying clause were dropped entirely. An interpretation is available which makes sense of the precise way in which Locke formulates his thought. On this interpretation, the words would be composed better thus: 'basic modes⁴ are complex ideas which contain not the supposition of self-subsistence, and however basic modes are compounded, the resulting compounds are also modal and therefore do not, in turn, contain in themselves the idea of independence'. If this is correct, Locke is making two distinct points. First, he is saying that modes which are not themselves compounded of other modes -- 'basic modes' as I have called them -- are nevertheless characteristically complex. (Locke never spells out the character of this complexity, save by pointing to its salient consequence, that modal designators are not taken to designate independent entities.) So we are directed to distinguish the complexity of modes from the complexity of compounds, the latter of which, as we saw, is also describable in terms of dependence: a compound depends on its constituents. Second, Locke is making a

further point about the generative reach of modal compounding. No addition of modes to modes (if 'murder' and 'dance' are modal terms, 'murder-dance', an instance of which I recall seeing in a recent 007 film, is a compound modal term) will generate a substance. This second point clashes with a view to which Hume is committed. Because modes are combinations of ideas for Hume, as are substances, there is no reason why two modal designators might not, when compounded, designate just those elements which a substantial designator picks out.

While Locke does not therefore advance the crucial question -- What is it about modes that makes them dependent? -- he does at least make clear that modal complexity is not fundamentally a complexity of parts.

I do not have the temerity to say unreservedly that the interpretation offered of Locke's words is correct. At his best, Locke is a maddeningly careless writer. But the interpretation is plausible and gains important additional support from the surrounding texts. Locke goes on, for example, to adduce 'dozen' as designating a modal compound: '[it is] nothing but the ideas of so many distinct units added together' (2.12.5). So here modal compounding, carried however far, to 'score', 'gross', 'billion', etc., remains within the modal circle. But of what is the idea of a dozen compounded? Of the idea of a unit. But then the latter must itself be modal and non-compound. It must be modal because, ex hypothesi, a compound mode is compounded of modes. Consequently, Locke's claim that modes are complex ideas applies to this mode, though it is non-compound or basic.

Why doesn't Locke say these things more clearly? One reason is that he uses 'unit', as does Hume, primarily as a substantial designator (cf. 2.12.6 and I.II.II), which prevents him from mentioning it as designating the basic mode of which the idea of a dozen is compounded. To make the required distinction here would have taken a logical subtlety which was several hundred years distant.⁵ Locke's

choice of 'simple mode' to pick out what we would now describe as a 'uniform compound mode' also might be responsible for his failure to put the preceding points more sharply. Note how Locke uses 'simple' in an asymmetric fashion in the case of substances. 'Simple substance' does not designate a compound of basic substances of the same kind, but any single one of the latter. Had Locke kept to the same style of expression for modes, he would quickly have found himself saying that simple modes are complex, and this would obviously have forced a rethinking along the lines followed above.

We may conclude then that Locke disagrees with Hume on MCT. Locke's claim that modal ideas are complex is not intended to imply that they are made up of simple ideas in the compositional fashion described by Hume. Consequently, Locke does not get into any embarrassment over an inability to discern any difference between modes and substances.

A particularly illuminating result of the foregoing is that, pace Hume's explicit presentation, there is no incoherence in the idea of a mode of the designatum of a term for a simple. This provides a vivid sense of Hume's error on MDT and MCT. Concerning MDT: If a modal term may apply to⁶ a simple idea (i.e. an ontologically basic Humean substance) then modes will of course be dependent on substances, and asymmetrically so. Concerning MCT: By roughly the same token, the complexity of modal ideas is not fundamentally compositional (though compound modes, like murder-dance, can be concocted ad lib).

While it is not necessary to adduce this limiting type of case to refute Hume, it has the singular advantage of enabling us to diagnose exactly why he says what he does. The key is this. Suppose a modal designator applies to the designatum of a simple substance term. Logic leaves two options. The content of the mode is either identical to that of the substance, or it differs. Now Hume's claims commit him to the first option. That he does not

explicitly state this is due to the fact that his discussion of modes is restricted to the arena of the ontologically complex, i.e. combinations of simple substances, where it is much easier to mistake the case, e.g. the mode can be taken to differ from the compound substance in content by taking in only part of the compound. Hume virtually says that the constituents of modal ideas are taken from different subjects. But in this limiting case the likelihood of committing such an error disappears: there is only a single subject, and it is a simple idea. So Hume would have to state clearly that the content of the two is identical. Thus Hume's rejection of MDT.

But this clashes with MCT, which Hume supports.

If the content of a modal term is identical with that of a simple substance term, then the former can have no more complexity than the latter. And the latter, ex hypothesi, is a simple idea. Clearly, something has gone wrong.

There is however another option for Hume, viz. that the content of the mode differs from that of the substance. But how could this be when the substantial idea is simple? Hume himself provides the answer, in his discussion of what he calls '*distinctions of reason*' (cf. I.I.VII). Such distinctions -- Hume offers as an example the distinction between an object and its shape -- are the results of abstraction, and can be generated from simple ideas. It immediately furnishes a very clear explanation both of what Locke regards as the non-combinatorial complexity of modes and of the kind of dependence which modes show upon substances to say that modal ideas are the results of abstraction from substantial ones. Note how the Humean problem thereby vanishes. A modal designator may apply to the designatum of a simple substance term without collapsing into the latter inasmuch as the content of the modal term is abstract vis-a-vis the substance. The designatum of the modal term, a mode, is to be distinguished from the substance of which it is a mode.

But Hume's own idea of distinctions of reason is

adduced here to bail him out. Why doesn't he use it himself?

One signpost is provided by the fact that modes, like compound substances, are treated by Hume as ontologically real, both being complexes of ontologically real simples. On the preceding account, modes, qua dependent upon abstraction, lose their reality. For distinctions of reason contrast with real ones. So our query may be sharpened. Why doesn't Hume agree to demoting modes to a secondary ontological status?

To appreciate why, we must go at the intrasystematic option with greater delicacy. From a commonsense viewpoint, the usual abstract results of distinctions of reason are qualities. For example, I may distinguish the colour of an object from its shape. Thus, the copula in 'The table is red' would link an ontological abstraction with something which is ontologically real.⁷ Now a quality term like 'red' is, in common usage, an adjective and not a noun: 'red' does not permit 'reds', 'the red', 'a red', and so forth, these latter forms being permissible for nouns alone. (I continually stress that these remarks are made from the viewpoint of common usage for the following reason. 'Red' is a designator of a simple idea for Hume. Note how he speaks of '*collections of particular qualities*' (I.I.VI). So it would permit noun-like manipulations like pluralisation. The remarks made here thus have to be taken formally or structurally and reapplied to examples that Hume would accept. I do not do this because, first, Hume's own illustrations of distinctions of reason are from common usage, and second, the subtle formal facts would be that much more difficult to grasp if a problem of unfamiliar and odd examples was added.) Modal terms are however nominal. Plural forms and combinations with articles are completely natural for 'dance', 'murder', 'triangle', and the like.

The difference here emerges clearly if we note that the noun form related to (the adjective) 'red' is

'redness'. This last does not designate or apply to anything in space-time. In modern terminology, it corresponds to the concept red: to speak of redness is akin to speaking of the concept, and not of what the concept applies to or subsumes. But 'murder' applies straightforwardly to regions of space-time without designating a spatio-temporal substance, just as does the adjective 'red'. If we seek a form like 'redness' for the modal term, we find it, on the model of 'dogkind' or 'caninity', in 'murderhood'.

Now suppose Hume were to co-classify modal designators along with other terms arrived at by abstraction. A severe problem would face him. The behaviour of paradigm substance nouns like 'dog' is exactly like that of the modal term 'murder'. But 'murder', ex hypothesi arrived at by a process of abstraction, does not designate anything ontologically real. It designates a mode. Accordingly, like 'red' which designates a quality, it at best applies to real items. Murders would thus essentially have a conceptually mediated character. For distinctions of reason are, precisely, conceptual distinctions: they concern how we conceive reality as opposed to how it is in itself.⁸ As a result, a direct application of the term 'murder' in a grammatically designative fashion would correspond, in logic, to a similar application of 'red', conceived as abstract. From Hume's ontological viewpoint, both uses pick out non-concrete aspects of ontologically basic items. (Hume uses the word 'aspect', the English translation of the Latin 'modus', at I.I.VII.) In short, any factual statement with a modal nominal in subject position would not be ontologically perspicuous. The real form of 'The murder is horrifying' would be like that of 'The red is flashing'. The subject term of the latter works out thus: 'that to which red applies' (in this case, usually a light). As such, it is pseudo-designative. Mutatis mutandis, the subject term of the former is more perspicuously taken thus, in a clear non-designative manner: 'that to which 'murder' applies'.

These results are intrasystematically catastrophic for Hume. One could easily say that 'dog', or any other underived nominal, is of the same character, and hence that a use thereof involves conceptual interference with the ontologically basic character of things. A grammatically designative use of 'dog' would amount, in logic, to an application thereof which is better represented thus: 'whatever it is about the disposition of reality which enables it to be truly subsumed under dog', on the pattern of the use of 'red' above. There would be no linguistic resource Hume could reasonably single out as designating something real.

One last-ditch response might be attempted. It may be insisted that the truth of MDT locates a difference. Dogs are real because they do not depend on anything else. Modes like murder, though spoken of by means of nouns, are dependent on substances which are independent.

But this response, a very illuminating one coming from the Humean quarter, fails. It rests, first of all, on the common sense view which Hume rejects, in accordance with which we distinguish modes from substances. But we do not make that distinction -- any more than the distinction between modes and qualities -- by way of singling out concrete from non-concrete elements of reality. The distinction is made as a conceptual one primarily, not as an ontological one, *i.e.* to mark a conceptual dependence or asymmetry. For example, we could say, alternatively, that it is part of our understanding of 'murder' that, when it applies, the nouns 'murderer' and 'victim' will also, and ipso facto, apply. As I noted in passing, the common-sense truth of MDT is not the same as that of the different thesis of substantial independence.

It is not then surprising that Hume's ontological presuppositions lead to his rejection of MDT. Failing such a rejection, he would be driven to grant the presumptive truth of the claim that all substance designators are equally subject to the dependence thesis which makes

nonsense of his ontological doctrine that simple ideas alone are basic entities, self-subsistent, concrete, genuinely substantial, and are a foundation for all else.

This completes my diagnostic treatment. The result serves as a useful springboard for several panoramic remarks on the history of philosophy. As I suggested, Hume's dilemma helps us to pinpoint a parting of the ways.

Begin with the word 'aspect'. For Hume, specifically conceptual distinctions, distinctions of reason, are distinctions between aspects of real objects, but do not themselves mark boundaries between real, i.e. fully concrete or ontologically independent, items in the world. The overtones of the word 'aspect' identify two ways in which a theorist might seek to handle Hume's dilemma, i.e. the problematic character of the distinction between modes and substances. One way is best illustrated by Spinoza; the other by Kant. The crude line-up finds in Hume a confused Spinozist, in Locke an ur-Kantian.

Spinoza agrees that all human representation of reality is aspectual: we grasp substance, through those attributes available to us, via modes of the latter, e.g. material objects as modes of substance under the attribute extension. Because our grasp of substance is modal, Spinoza deplors human cognition as unequal to the task of representing reality as it is.⁹ His stand here is not unequivocal, to be sure. Themselves modes of the reality they seek to know, human representers ipso facto have some line on the character of the latter in their own natures. But he insists that only 'God does not know things through abstractions or from general definitions [sc. conceptually]'.¹⁰ Spinoza takes very seriously the modal character of human cognition, and thus rejects any style of thought whose main resource is concepts as unequal to the philosopher's ontological enterprise. From a conceptual viewpoint, an ontologist can say no more than this, that reality is whatever conceptual terms apply to (not designate), and there is no telling whether the concepts

applied reflect its nature. So Spinoza counterposes an absolute sense of ontological concreteness with a rejection of all conceptual resources of representation as fundamentally modal, as representing reality abstractly. It is indeed by proceeding along these lines that the underlying implications of Humean doctrine must be developed.

Kant too agrees that all representation is aspectual. He puts this by asserting that we cognise appearances and not things in themselves, which is a transform of the claim that we cognise things as they appear, or aspects of things, and not things as they are. But Kant draws precisely the opposite conclusion. For him the philosophical enterprise ceases to be an ontological one as conceived by the preceding theorists, and he is accordingly free to make the distinction between concreteness and abstractness within the conceptual realm. The proper sense of 'concrete', according to Kant, is the sense in which distinct principles of knowledge can be disclosed, not the sense in which distinct foundational entities can be located. Thus, to take just one example, the principle of apperception is a foundation of Kantian metaphysics. But apperception is not regarded, à la Descartes, as self-subsistent mentality: it is a function whose requirement of satisfaction can be certified a priori. Similarly for space, time, causality, and so forth.

From our historical vantage point, Kant codifies his new stand with great adeptness. Note, for instance, how he insists that '[t]he knowledge yielded by understanding, or at least by the human understanding, must...be by means of concepts',¹¹ while holding that 'every concept is an abstract concept'.¹² All cognitive representation of the world is, in other words, aspectual. But this does not prevent Kant from supplying -- in fact it liberates him to give -- new and intraconceptual senses to notions like concreteness and substantiality. The character of the difficulties Hume runs up against in trying to sustain his rejection of MDT have already shown us that these new senses

are close to those rooted in common thought: to this extent Kant is a descriptive metaphysician. In Locke's insistence on the centrality of conceptual resources for human knowledge (cf. 3.3.1-4), as well as in his equivocal stand on whether MDT entails the thesis that substances are in some absolute sense concrete and independent, we see the ragged outlines of a position that invites, even if it does not oblige, development along Kantian lines.

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1. The Philosophy of David Hume (London: Macmillan, 1966), p. 254.
2. References in this form are to book, chapter and section of Locke's Essay; those in roman numerals to book, part and section of Hume's Treatise.
3. It is worth remarking that this defense of MDT is not a defense of the different thesis that substances are independent. Locke seems to believe that the first entails the second. I am not therefore saying that Locke is right where Hume is wrong. Both may be wrong.
4. It would be more natural to speak here of 'simple' than of 'basic' modes. But Locke co-opts the former adjective to describe compounds of modes of a single kind.
5. I allude of course to Frege.
6. 'Apply to' here is to be distinguished scrupulously from 'designate'. A modal term designates a mode. The mode is a mode of a substance. The modal term therefore applies to and does not designate the substance.
7. This copula is predicative. The basic Humean propositional link is different. Hume's basic 'A is B' links the real ideas designated by 'A' with those designated by 'B', the link being additive or combinatorial. Hume's failure to distinguish the two copulas obviously has a hand in preventing the right conclusions' being drawn.

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8. This thesis of the illicitness of concepts figures generally in pre-Kantian philosophy. For a rationalist version, cf. Descartes, Principles of Philosophy, II.XII.
9. Cf. in particular Ethics, 1.15.Note.
10. Letter to Blyenbergh, in Works of Spinoza, Volume II, translated by R. H. S. Elwes (New York: Dover Publications, 1955), p. 333.
11. Critique of Pure Reason, translated by N. K. Smith (London: Macmillan, 1964), A68/B93.
12. Logic, translated by R. S. Hartman and W. Schwarz (Indianapolis and New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1974), p. 105.