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Perception and the Categories: A Conceptualist Reading of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*

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Abstract: Philosophers interested in Kant's relevance to contemporary debates over the nature of mental content—notably Robert Hanna and Lucy Allais—have argued that Kant ought to be credited with being the original proponent of the existence of 'nonconceptual content'. However, I think the 'nonconceptualist' interpretations that Hanna and Allais give do *not* show that Kant allowed for nonconceptual content as they construe it. I argue, on the basis of an analysis of certain sections of the A and B editions of the Transcendental Deduction, for a 'conceptualist' reading of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*. My contention is that since Kant's notion of empirical intuition makes essential reference to the categories, it must be true for him that no empirical intuition can be given in sensibility independently of the understanding and its categories.

Introduction

One of the basic distinctions that Kant draws in the first *Critique* is between sensibility and understanding. Sensibility, he tells us, is our receptive capacity to be affected by objects, while understanding is our spontaneous capacity to think of objects (A19/B33).[1] These two capacities constitute, for finite rational beings, the 'two stems' of cognition (A15/B29). Without the intuitions afforded by sensibility and the concepts supplied by understanding, cognition, Kant claims, would be impossible. He sums up this doctrine in his famous slogan, 'Thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind' (A51/B76). Recently, however, some Kant interpreters have come to think that 'blind intuitions', i.e. intuitions given independently of the understanding and its concepts (empirical or pure), are not only possible, but also play an important role in Kant's account of perception and imagination.[2] Intuitions and concepts may be required for cognition, these interpreters claim, but for mere perception only intuitions are needed. In this way such readings resemble contemporary 'nonconceptualist' positions in the philosophy of mind, which claim that the way a subject can represent the world is not always constrained by the concepts she possesses or deploys (nonconceptualism about mental content). On 'nonconceptualist' readings of Kant, perception can be nonconceptual because either the possession/application of concepts is not a necessary condition for perception ('state' nonconceptualism) or because the content of perception is nonconceptual ('content' nonconceptualism).

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There is, however, a line of thought running through the A and B editions of the Transcendental Deduction regarding the constitution of empirical intuition that I believe casts doubt on these nonconceptualist readings. The purpose of this paper, then, is to develop a 'conceptualist' reading of Kant's first *Critique* by tracing this line of thought.[3] My contention is that the application of categories—our a priori concepts of objects in general (B128)—is a necessary condition for intentional perception. I claim that no empirical intuition of a particular individual can be given in sensibility without being determined by (at least some) categories, but *not*, in contrast to some conceptualist readings, that the application of *empirical* concepts (e.g. 'dog' or 'house') is required for perception. Perception, in other words, may be so rich or fined-grained that it outstrips the empirical concepts a subject possesses/applies, although it will always be determined by the categories. Consequently, my view is that even if Kantian nonconceptualists can show that the empirical content of perception is nonconceptual, they cannot show that the pure content (i.e. the representation of space and time) of perception is nonconceptual on the basis of the first *Critique*. By and large I am concerned to show *that* these conclusions follow from Kant's argument in the Transcendental Deduction. Therefore—save the category of quantity—I will not address *how* each individual category (if they are all required at all times) functions in perception.

There are, I should note, other ways of arguing for a nonconceptualist reading of Kant than on the basis of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, e.g. the third *Critique*, Kant's views on incongruent counterparts, and perhaps his views on non-human animals. While these other possibilities are certainly worth pursuing, I will not address them in this paper, but will instead focus my attention on Kant's views in the first *Critique*. If it can be shown, as I hope to do, that the first *Critique* lends little support to the nonconceptualist reading, I will have gone a long way towards demonstrating Kant's conceptualism.

The structure of the paper is as follows. In Section 1 I will clarify how I am using Kant's terminology. I distinguish two different nonconceptualist readings ('state' and 'content') and present the general conceptualist reading in Sections 2 and 3, respectively. In Section 4 I analyze the central passage that seems to support a nonconceptualist reading. Sections 5 through 9 constitute my argument for Kant's conceptualism on the basis of the A edition of the Transcendental Deduction. But because I find the A Deduction insufficient to demonstrate this, in Section 10 I turn to §26 of the B edition of the Deduction in order to show that applying categories is a condition of the possibility for intentional perception of distinct individuals. I conclude, in Section 11, with some criticisms of Kantian 'content' nonconceptualism.

1. Terminology

Before we begin, some clarification of Kant's terminology is in order. Officially, an intuition (*Anschauung*) is a singular representation that is immediately related to an object (A19/B33; A320/B377; *JL* §1), and if it is related to that object through

sensation it is called an *empirical* intuition (cf. A20/B34). At A320/B377 Kant tells us that intuitions are a species of conscious representations. Thus, empirical intuitions are perceptions with consciousness, accompanied by sensation.[4] Intuitions are intentional representations since they are 'related' to (or directed at or about) objects. Unlike concepts, which are representations that can apply to multiple objects, intuitions are 'singular' representations because they represent one particular individual. And they are 'immediate' representations insofar as they represent without being mediated by other representations (cf. A68/B93). In this paper I will focus on what I take to be a paradigmatic case of an empirical intuition: a sense perception, i.e. having a perceptual image of a spatiotemporal particular, where such a perceptual image (1) is dependent on the presence of the particular and (2) is the mere consciousness of the particular *without* an accompanying judgment.[5]

Kant says, 'our mode of intuition depends on the existence of the object [*Objekt*]' (B72; cf. *P* 282), but unfortunately his notion of the 'object' of empirical intuition is vague. It might be an object in a loose sense, i.e. something indeterminate yet still representable, like a monochromatic field of color. On the other hand, the object might be understood in Kant's technical sense, i.e. as a fully objective and determined object of experience, representations of which are in agreement with each other and 'carry something of necessity with them' (cf. A104). However, as I am using the term, the 'object' of sense perception is something mid-way between these two extremes. It is, for me, a 'particular', e.g. a material macroscopic individual. I take this particular, moreover, to be determinate in the sense that it is represented as a spatiotemporal figure, which is perceived as distinct and unified against a background and persisting through time. The perception of this particular is thus more determinate than a field of color but less determinate than a full-blow object of experience/cognition. Therefore, I do not take perception to be 'objectively valid' in the sense of being 'universally and necessarily valid', for it does not imply a necessary connection among its representations. The perception of such a particular is not, I should add, a 'perceiving as', e.g. when one perceives a particular that is a house, it is not perceived *as* a house (which I take it would involve the empirical concept 'house').[6]

A concept (*Begriff*), according to Kant's official definition, is a general (universal or reflected (*JL* §1)) representation that is indirectly related to an object by means of a general feature (a mark) that can be common to several objects (A19/B33; A320/B377).[7]

Béatrice Longuenesse has drawn an influential distinction between two senses in which Kant uses the term 'concept' that is important to the debate over Kant's non/conceptualism (Longuenesse 1998: 46ff.). The first sense is the one we find in the *Logic*, in which a concept is a constituent of a judgment and a rule for inference. In this sense, a concept is a discursive representation that is the result of comparing different objects and reflecting on their similarities in order to abstract from them a representation that can be applied to several objects (*JL* §6 and §7). The second sense is the one we find in the A Deduction, where,

according to Longuenesse, 'a concept serves as a rule for the procedure for generating a sensible intuition' (Longuenesse 1998: 50). The concept does this by, as it were, directing the imagination to put together different representations in one particular way rather than another according to the marks of that concept (e.g. if the concept 'dog' is the rule, then through synthesis I will come to perceive the object as a dog, as being an animal, as being four-legged, etc.).[8] I will be arguing that concepts (categories) in the second sense—as a rule for guiding synthesis in the generation of an intuition—are required for perception (in the sense specified above).[9] With these considerations in mind let us turn to the nonconceptualist reading.[10]

2. The Nonconceptualist Reading

The inspiration for the nonconceptualist reading comes primarily from a passage in §13 of the Transcendental Deduction where Kant is motivating the problem to be solved, namely, whether or not we are entitled to apply the categories to objects a priori. Kant's worry is that the categories might not universally apply to all appearances given in intuition and that it might be possible that '[a]ppearances would nonetheless offer objects to our intuition, for intuition by no means requires the functions of thinking' (A90/B122–123). Nonconceptualists take this passage to imply that it is genuinely possible for us to have object-directed empirical intuitions independent of the activity of understanding and its concepts.

This possibility motivates Robert Hanna's interpretation of Kant's slogan 'thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind' (A51/B75). According to Hanna, Kant thinks that empirical intuitions and empirical concepts must be combined with one another, but 'only for the specific purpose of constituting objectively valid *judgments*' (Hanna 2005: 257, emphasis altered). Hence, he believes we can have 'empty concepts' and 'blind intuitions'. A 'blind intuition', on his account, is not a 'meaningless intuition' or a 'bogus intuition', rather an 'objectively valid nonconceptual intuition' (Hanna 2005: 257). Such intuitions are possible, on Hanna's reading, because the 'forms of intuition' (i.e. the formal spatial and temporal framework intrinsically present in all empirical perception), which allow us to be presented with particulars, are inherently nonconceptual representations (Hanna 2006: ch. 2). And more recently, he has given a Kantian argument for the thesis that the content of the perception of incongruent counterparts cannot in principle be conceptual given that the counterparts are not descriptively/conceptually distinguishable (Hanna 2008).

Similarly, Lucy Allais claims that when Kant says experience involves intuitions as well as concepts, he is providing the necessary conditions for empirical *knowledge* of objects, as opposed to the 'conditions of something like phenomenal consciousness' (Allais 2009: 402).[11] Allais argues that for Kant, 'the role of empirical intuition is to present us with empirical particulars, and it does not depend on concepts to make this contribution' (Allais 2009: 386). On her view,

it is due to the spatial form of our intuitions that they can provide us with perceptions of particulars (Allais 2009: 402). Kant's argument in the Transcendental Deduction, she claims, does nothing to undermine his view from the Aesthetic that space, unaided by concepts, provides us with 'an egocentric, oriented, three-dimensional frame of reference which enables us to locate particulars . . .' (Allais 2009: 407).[12]

One important distinction in the contemporary debate over nonconceptual content that is relevant to my discussion of Kant is the distinction between 'state' and 'content' nonconceptualism (see Heck 2000). A 'state' nonconceptualist holds that a subject is not required to possess the concepts needed to specify the content of her mental state in order to be in that state. But this is only a thesis about what is needed for the subject to be in a particular state, i.e. a statement about which states are concept-dependent and which are concept-independent. The 'content' nonconceptualist, on the other hand, holds that the content of perception is of a fundamentally different kind (in semantic structure and psychological function) than the content of belief or judgment and that perceptual content can (or must) be nonconceptual, i.e. fail to have concepts as its constituents.

This distinction is important because it helps distinguish the possible nonconceptualist readings of Kant.[13] Allais holds that for Kant, the application of concepts is not required for being perceptually presented with particulars. And Hanna argues that the content of our intuitions of space and time is nonconceptual (Hanna 2006), but also that for Kant, there are perceptual states whose content, being essentially different from the conceptual content of judgments, cannot in principle be conceptual (Hanna 2008). Thus, Allais can be read as arguing for Kantian 'state' nonconceptualism, while Hanna can be seen as arguing for Kantian 'content' nonconceptualism (in addition to a version of Kantian 'state' nonconceptualism (Hanna 2005 and 2006)). One advantage the 'content' nonconceptualist has over the 'state' nonconceptualist is that the former can claim that even if the possession of concepts is required for perception, that content may still be nonconceptual. Thus, arguments successful against 'state' nonconceptualism may not be successful against 'content' nonconceptualism. Additionally, the 'content' nonconceptualist can hold that even if certain elements in the content of perception are conceptual, other elements, which are logically and semantically independent, may be nonconceptual—hence, there can be mixed or hybrid content.

While this distinction is important for differentiating various nonconceptualist readings of Kant, the interpretation given by the 'state' nonconceptualist is much easier to evaluate in the Kantian framework than that of the 'content' nonconceptualist. This is because Kant's argumentative strategy is typically to show how some x is the condition for the possibility of some other y and because he rarely mentions the nature of the content of the cognitive states he discusses. Thus, my interpretation mainly challenges the Kantian 'state' nonconceptualist reading. I do, however, devote some space to discussing Hanna's Kantian 'content' nonconceptualism about our representations of space and time, although I will not address his incongruent counterparts argument

because incongruent counterparts are not discussed in the first *Critique* and because this argument is not Kant's own, but only one inspired by Kant.[14]

3. The Conceptualist Reading

The chief conceptualist claim is that the understanding plays a role, not just in empirical thought or judgment, but also in empirical perception itself. Conceptualists point out that empirical intuition involves a synthesis that unites its distinct sensory impressions into a single representation of a determinate object (table) with determinate properties (brown). This synthesis, they argue, is always directed by rules, and these rules are concepts (cf. A105). Since the understanding provides these concepts, it governs the synthesis that makes perception possible. Hence, the activity of the understanding is a necessary condition for perceptions of objects, according to their argument.

On Hannah Ginsborg's interpretation, Kant's strategy in the Transcendental Deduction demonstrates his conceptualism. Kant intends, she says, for the Deduction to prove the 'radical claim that we require understanding in order for objects to be presented to us perceptually' and not the 'relatively uncontroversial claim that our empirical judgments require understanding' (Ginsborg 2006: 64). She maintains that Kant's aim in the Deduction—consistent with his anti-Humean agenda—is to demonstrate that the categories necessarily apply to all given appearances. '[H]is strategy', she claims, 'for showing that the unity of empirical intuition is 'none other than' the unity prescribed by the categories seems to depend on claiming that this unity is due precisely to the spontaneity of understanding' (Ginsborg 2008: 69). While I think Ginsborg is right about this, her argument is somewhat schematic, leaving out many important features of Kant's strategy in the Deduction. My interpretation seeks to remedy this by filling in the details of the A and B editions of the Deduction, which support a conceptualist reading of Kant.

All such readings of Kant hold that the understanding is involved in perceptual representation, but some of these readings are stronger than others. A strong conceptualism maintains that every perception requires the possession and deployment of an *empirical* concept (e.g. the perception of a dog requires the possession and application of the concept 'dog' to the perceptual synthesis). Ginsborg advocates a weaker conceptualism than this, since she denies that one must antecedently grasp empirical concepts (i.e. have discursive representations) in order to have a perception. According to her, the understanding is present in perception insofar as the subject is conscious of the normativity or appropriateness of the combination and association of her representations.[15] The conceptualism I will argue for maintains that having an empirical intuition requires the application of categories. So my reading is weaker than the strong version of conceptualism with respect to empirical concepts (since I do not think that every rule for perceptual synthesis is an empirical concept) but identical to it with respect to the categories. My argument, moreover, leaves open the possibility that

Kant is a conceptualist in Ginsborg's sense, since I am concerned first and foremost with the categories. An important motivation for my reading is Kant's claim in the Metaphysical Deduction that 'The same function which gives unity to the various representations *in a judgment* also gives unity to the mere synthesis of different representations *in an intuition*' (A79/B104–105). My view is that for Kant, the categories have an indispensable role (that of providing unity) not only in making judgments about what we perceive (higher-level spontaneous cognitive activity), but also in the mere perceptual presentation of particulars in empirical intuition (lower-level spontaneous cognitive activity).

4. Textual Analysis

On the face of it, Kant's remarks at A90/B122–123 support a nonconceptualist interpretation. He says,

> The categories of the understanding, on the contrary, do not represent to us the conditions under which objects are given in intuition at all, hence objects can indeed appear to us without necessarily having been related to functions of the understanding ... For appearances could after all be so constituted that the understanding would not find them in accordance [*gemäß*] with the conditions of its unity ... Appearances would nonetheless offer objects to our intuition, for intuition by no means requires the functions of thinking.

Hanna reads this passage literally, thinking that Kant is acknowledging that appearances given in intuition really do not have to be related to the functions of the understanding. This is, for Hanna, clear textual evidence that 'blind intuitions' are possible.

However, I think this interpretation loses its initial plausibility when these remarks are considered in light of the argument and conclusion of the Transcendental Deduction. I mentioned above that the point of this passage is to motivate the Deduction. Kant is contrasting the ease with which he achieved his goals in the Transcendental Aesthetic with how difficult the task of the Transcendental Deduction is. It was easy, he thinks, to show that the forms of intuition—space and time—apply to appearances necessarily and universally, but he acknowledges that *prima facie* the categories do not seem to apply to appearances necessarily and universally.[16]

Kant does indeed say 'appearances could after all be so constituted that the understanding would not find them in accordance with the conditions of its unity'. But immediately before this remark he says, '... but that they [objects of sensible intuition] must also accord with the condition that the understanding requires for the synthetic unity of thinking is *a conclusion that is not so easily seen*' (A90/B123 my emphasis). The not-so-easily-seen conclusion to be proved is that appearances *cannot* be given in intuition without being related to understanding *via* the categories.[17]

What Hanna is suggesting is that Kant's preferred view is the *pre-deduction* possibility that the categories do not necessarily apply to appearances given in intuition, and that appearances could be objects of our intuition without being related to the functions of understanding. We only need to consider the conclusion of the B Deduction to see that Hanna's proposal would undermine the success of the Deduction:

> [E]verything that may ever come before our senses must stand under the laws that arise *a priori* from the understanding alone (B160) . . . Consequently all synthesis, though which even perception itself becomes possible, stands under the categories, and since experience is cognition though connected perceptions, the categories are conditions of the possibility of experience, and are thus also valid *a priori* of all objects of experience. (B161)

I will be looking at this passage more carefully below (Section 10), but it is clear that the Deduction aims to show that the categories apply to *everything* given in sensibility. The Deduction has no hope of success if Hanna is right that appearances/intuitions can be given in sensibility without standing under the categories. The remainder of this paper is an attempt to show how certain features of the Deduction undermine the nonconceptualist claim that sensibility functions independently of the understanding in perception and establish the conceptualist claim that the categories are necessary conditions for perception.[18]

5. Synthesis

I will begin my interpretation of the A Deduction with the observation that every empirical intuition (including perceptions without judgments) involves a synthesis. This synthesis, I intend to show, is a necessary condition not only for perception, but also for its intentionality. Synthesis, says Kant, is the activity of 'putting different representations together with each other' (A77/B103). It is, moreover, a 'mere effect of the imagination' (A78/B103), in which the manifold of sense impressions (raw sensory material) contained in an empirical intuition is 'gone through', 'taken up', and 'combined' (A77/B102).[19] This synthesis functions to *unify* the manifold into a single representation, i.e. an empirical intuition of a particular (cf. A99).

At A120n he points out that this imaginative synthesis is a necessary condition for perception (= having an image):

> No psychologist has yet thought that the imagination is a necessary ingredient of perception itself. This is so partly because this faculty has been limited to reproduction and partly because it is believed that the senses do not merely afford us impressions but also put them together, and produce images of objects, for which without a doubt something more than the receptivity of impressions is required, namely a function of the synthesis of them.

Mere sensibility, it seems, can only supply us with impressions that are 'dispersed and separate in the mind', but it cannot, as he says, 'bring the manifold of intuition into an image' ('*das Mannigfaltige der Anschauung in ein Bild bringen*') (A120). Thus, if there is no synthesis to combine a dispersed manifold into an image, then there is no empirical intuition (perception), hence no possible vehicle for nonconceptual content (in the sense we are discussing).[20]

This imaginative synthesis is, additionally, a necessary condition for the *intentionality* of perception, i.e. intuitions without synthesis could not be directed at or related to their objects. I develop this point in what follows, but the idea, very roughly, is that without a synthesis to connect, hold together, and distinguish the 'raw material' (i.e. the qualitative or phenomenal matter) of our representations, the perception would not be about *something* at all, even an unidentified figure.[21] Suppose, for instance, I perceive a desk in front of me (not *as* a desk, but just as some particular). I will have various sensory impressions, of brown, of hard, of smooth, and so on. If these impressions are not put together or held together in some way, I would not even have a perceptual image of an unidentified particular against a background. Hence, synthesis is required for our representations to have even a minimal sense of determinacy, i.e. the determinacy of a figure against a background.

This point can be seen in Kant's descriptions of un-synthesized manifolds. At A120, he tells us that 'since every appearance contains a manifold, thus different perceptions by themselves are encountered *dispersed and separate* in the mind, a combination of them, which they cannot have in sense itself, is therefore necessary' (emphasis altered).[22] Hence, even in the presence of the desk there would be no intentional perception of it without a synthesis of the manifold of given sense impressions. Without a synthesis we would only have, he remarks, 'unruly heaps' of representations (A121) and a 'swarm of appearances' that would be 'as good as nothing for us' (A111).[23] An un-synthesized manifold does not even rise to the level of perceptual or figural representation.

One upshot of this conclusion is that I can block the 'content' nonconceptualist's possible move to claim that the element in perception, which enables it to be intentional, is logically and semantically independent of the imagination's spontaneous role in perception. This move is illegitimate because, as we see here, synthesis and intentionality are not logically distinct: only a synthesized intuition is an intentional intuition.[24]

6. The Threefold Synthesis

In the A Deduction, Kant identifies three aspects of synthesis: apprehension, reproduction, and recognition. I will argue here that these three aspects of synthesis are inseparable and that all are involved in perception (in a certain qualified way). To this end, I turn to the details of Kant's account of synthesis in the A Deduction.

In the synthesis of apprehension the mind 'runs through' the manifold of impressions in order to 'take them together' in a single representation (A99).

In the apprehension of, say, a house, my impressions are taken or held together as impressions of the same individual, but are at the same time distinguished from one another as distinct parts or aspects of the same individual (e.g. different perspectives of the house, the front, the side, the back, etc.). However, Kant tells us that apprehension presupposes another synthesis, the synthesis of reproduction, in which impressions that have been previously given are reproduced as the mind apprehends the manifold. If they were not reproduced as the mind moves from one to the next in time, Kant warns, the manifold would never be grasped in one unified representation, i.e. no perceptual image would arise. In other words, if one apprehends the manifold of impressions when intuiting a particular, one *thereby* reproduces those representations in the act of apprehension. In one example, Kant says that if in representing a line I would always forget or lose the preceding parts of the line as I proceeded to represent the next part of the line, then I would never have a representation of the whole line (A102). He concludes, 'the synthesis of apprehension is therefore inseparably combined with the synthesis of reproduction' (A102). Again, this is a condition for mere perception, not just for judgment.

But Kant goes on to mention a third aspect of synthesis, the synthesis of recognition in a concept (A103–6). He says, if at every moment each impression is a new representation for me, then I am not conscious that my impressions 'belong to the same act' (i.e. the same intuition). Consequently, my intuition 'would lack the unity that only consciousness can obtain for it' (A103) and the reproduction of my past representations would 'be in vain'. For each intuition there is a particular way (rather than some other) in which the manifold is reproduced, held together, and united in consciousness. Thus, Kant holds that in synthesis there is 'a *rule* in accordance with which a representation enters into combination [*Verbindung*] in the imagination with one representation rather than with others' (A121, my emphasis). Kant explicitly states that these rules—procedures for unifying the manifold of an intuition—are *concepts* (A106).

At this point, the 'state' nonconceptualist has an objection ready to hand. She can point out that while concepts serve as rules for synthesis when we *cognize objects*, they need not serve as rules when we simply *perceive particulars*. Indeed, at A106 where Kant claims that concepts serve as rules, he only says, 'All *cognition* requires a concept' (A106, my emphasis). Thus, when he speaks of the 'necessary synthetic unity' of the manifold, i.e. the kind of unity brought about when impressions are apprehended and reproduced in a determinate and *necessary* way according to a concept, the nonconceptualist can point out that this is the unity needed only for the cognition of an object. It is on account of the identification of a rule with a concept that Allais distinguishes synthesis (apprehension and reproduction) from 'conceptualization' (recognition) (Allais 2009: 396). We can, she believes, be perceptually presented with particulars through the synthesis of apprehension and reproduction alone. The additional step to have one's synthesis be guided by a rule (concept) is the conceptualization of our representations, and as such is unnecessary for *mere* perceptual representation.[25]

In my view this is a valid interpretive move. One's synthesis need not be necessary, nor must one be able to discursively represent the exact rule (e.g. 'house') guiding her synthesis in order to be perceptually presented with a particular. However, I am not claiming that every synthesis is guided by an empirical concept. Rather, I suggest that even if not all rules are concepts, *some rule* is always needed in synthesis to ensure that our intuitions are directed at particulars. A non-concept rule is simply a particular (but contingent) way that the imagination directs the reproduction and combination of impressions to unify an empirical manifold. A rule is needed, I think, because there is a *minimal sense of unity* required in any manifold for it to be 'brought to an image' (A120). At minimum, the impressions of a manifold must be connected and put together in *some* particular way so that there is some determinacy in the connection between those impressions, even if the particular connection is not necessary. We need a rule that, so to speak, tells the imagination that the representations it is reproducing and connecting are all representations of the same particular. Without this guidance, the impressions would remain scattered and swarming and intentional representation would be impossible. Indeed, Kant says that if there were no rule for guiding synthesis, i.e. if 'representations reproduced one another without distinction, just as they fell together', there would consequently be 'no determinate connection [between them] but merely unruly heaps of them' (A121).[26]

Imagine that you perceive a particular that is a house (although you do not perceive it *as* a house). If you are to have an image of this particular individual, the rule guiding your synthesis will determine that the representations of the door, window, and roof, but *not* the representations of the nearby tree branch, grass, or sidewalk, are to be combined into this representation. Again, the particular rule at work makes no difference for having some intentional representation or other. That is to say, your synthesis could have combined tree representations with roof representations to form an image of some unorthodox particular. But *that there is a rule* guiding synthesis ensures that your intuition is directed at some particular (orthodox or not).

'State' nonconceptualists tend to see the unity of the manifold as something needed only for full-blown cognition, but I want to urge that without some unity, not even mere perceptual representation is possible. If this is correct, and synthesis is a necessary condition for perception along with its intentionality, then it follows that a *rule-guided* synthesis is a necessary condition for perception along with its intentionality.

7. The Rules

The 'state' nonconceptualist can grant all this and say that mere perception requires only the *empirical rules of association* to guide its synthesis. The idea here is that the imagination combines and reproduces representations based on custom or habit. Representations that have often followed one another are

associated and connected to each other so that 'even without the presence of the object, one of these representations brings about a transition of the mind to the other in accordance with a constant rule' (A100, cf. B152). One representation, either belonging to the same manifold or past/possible manifolds, is called to mind in the presence of another representation with which it is associated. Allais appears to take this line when she remarks, 'Kant thinks that perceptual representation of particulars requires synthesizing in the sense of active processing, combining, grouping and associating of the manifold input of the sense. It does not follow that this must involve concepts . . .' (Allais 2009: 407). So I agree with the 'state' nonconceptualist that not every empirical synthesis is governed by an empirical concept. Kant seems to say as much in this passage from the *Jäsche Logic*:

> If a savage sees a house from a distance, for example, with whose use he is not acquainted, he admittedly has before him in his representation the very same object as someone else who is acquainted with it determinately as a dwelling established for men. But as to its form, this cognition of one and the same object is different in the two. With the one it is *mere intuition*, with the other it is *intuition* and *concept* at the same time. (*JL* §33)

The so-called 'savage' does not possess the concept 'house' and so he does not perceive the house *as* a house, although he perceives a large unrecognizable particular.[27] As we will see, however, Kant (at least in the A Deduction) thinks that even a synthesis guided by the rules of association is related to and dependent on the understanding.

8. Association and Affinity

The 'state' nonconceptualist is correct to claim that we do not always possess/apply the concepts corresponding to the rules guiding our empirical syntheses. But her appeal to associative rules does not curtail the line of thought I am pursuing here. If it did, and Kant thought that the contingent rules of association alone could guide the synthesis of empirical intuition, then his view would not be much different from that of his empiricist predecessors (e.g. Hume and Locke). Only if this were the case could sensibility and imaginative synthesis operate freely of any relation to the understanding, and only then could the 'state' nonconceptualist show that the composition of empirical intuitions owes nothing to the understanding or its concepts.

But I think it is *not* Kant's view in the A Deduction that associative rules operate independently of the understanding. After all, he asks, 'how is this association even possible?' and responds by saying, 'the ground of the possibility of the association of the manifold, insofar as it lies in the object, is called the *affinity* of the manifold' (A113). In other words, the empirical imagination could not associate appearances in the first place unless there is regularity and consistency in how appearances are given.[28] 'All appearances', he goes on to say,

'stand in a thoroughgoing connection according to necessary laws, and hence in a *transcendental affinity*, of which the *empirical* affinity is the mere consequence' (A114).[29] This transcendental affinity is what introduces all regularity into the flow of appearances, which, Kant reminds us, are 'not things in themselves, but rather the mere play of our representations, which in the end come down to determinations of the inner sense' (A101). Kant is saying that the associability of all our appearances finds its ground in the mind a priori.[30] This ground is the necessary relation that all appearances have to our one consciousness: the unity of apperception. In other words, our appearances are given with regularity and uniformity because they conform to the unity supplied by consciousness. Without this affinity of the manifold, the association of appearances would not be possible, and if our appearances were not associable, says Kant, 'a multitude of perceptions and even an entire sensibility would be possible in which much empirical consciousness would be encountered in my mind, but separated, and without belonging to *one* consciousness of myself, *which however, is impossible*' (A122, my emphasis). Thus, every perception whose synthesis is governed by rules of association relies on the affinity of the manifold, and is thus related to the unity of apperception in the understanding. Indeed, Kant says, 'The objective unity of all (empirical) consciousness in one consciousness (of original apperception) is thus the necessary condition even of all possible perception' (A123). I take this to be one place in which Kant rejects the possibility he raised at A90/B122–3, that appearances might be given independently of the understanding.

Up to this point we have seen that every empirical intuition involves a rule-guided synthesis, be it guided by empirical concepts or rules of association. Syntheses guided by concepts obviously yield conceptually determined perceptions. On the other hand, syntheses guided by the rules of association, while not determined by empirical concepts, are still related to the understanding insofar as they depend on the affinity of the manifold. In the next section I will show how every perception depends on the categories according to the A Deduction.

9. Transcendental Synthesis

While 'un-conceptualized' intuitions depend on the affinity of the manifold, this affinity itself, Kant tells us, depends on a 'pure', 'a priori', or transcendental function of the imagination: 'the affinity of all appearances (near or remote) is a necessary consequence of a synthesis of imagination that is grounded [*gegründet*] *a priori* on rules ... this can be called the transcendental function of the imagination' (A123). Now the transcendental function of the imagination is a transcendental synthesis, i.e. a synthesis of the pure manifold of space and time according to rules. Kant names this transcendental synthesis the *productive* synthesis of the imagination in the A Deduction (A118, A123) and the *figurative* synthesis or *synthesis speciosa* in the B Deduction (B151). In the Transcendental Aesthetic, Kant argued that our representations of space and time are not only

forms of intuition, but they are also (pure) intuitions themselves (A25/B39 and A32/B47). As intuitions, our representations of space and time involve a rule-guided synthesis to bring unity to its manifold (A123), just as our empirical intuitions do.[31] Kant clearly states that the understanding is the source of the rules for the productive synthesis: the categories, which are a priori concepts of objects in general that bring unity to the pure manifold (A119 and A123–125).

> In the understanding there are therefore pure *a priori* cognitions that *contain the necessary unity of the pure synthesis of the imagination in regard to all possible appearances*. These, however, are the *categories*, i.e. pure concepts of the understanding . . . it follows that the pure understanding, by means of the categories, is a formal and synthetic principle of all experiences, and that appearances have a *necessary relation to the understanding*. (A119, emphasis added)

And now we get our first full glimpse of how all perception is related to the categories: empirical intuition requires a rule-guided synthesis of its manifold, which depends on the affinity of the manifold, which presupposes a figurative synthesis of the pure manifold, which in turn is related to the transcendental unity of apperception, the source of the rules for this pure synthesis: the categories.

* * *

Despite all this, I do not think that the A Deduction is sufficient to demonstrate Kant's conceptualism. First, the 'state' nonconceptualist can claim that when Kant is discussing how perception presupposes a transcendental synthesis according to the categories he is only discussing the necessary conditions for making objectively valid perceptual judgments. In addition, she can claim that Kant's remarks about the unity introduced into the pure manifold by a category-guided synthesis is his explanation of the necessary conditions for generating, in Allais's words, 'our representation of the unified objective space that is the object of study of geometry' (Allais 2009: 404). Unfortunately, the A Deduction does not provide me with the resources to rebut this objection (though I will argue that the B Deduction does).

Second, I claimed above that for Kant, the affinity of the empirical manifold presupposes the transcendental affinity of the manifold. But one might point out[32] that in the B Deduction Kant seems to repudiate this thesis when he allows that there may be 'empirical laws' or 'laws of association' (rather than mere rules) governing empirical intuitions (B142 and B152). Moreover, in the third *Critique* Kant recognizes a gap between the formal laws of the understanding and particular empirical laws, which the power of judgment (that finds general laws in particular laws) is supposed to fill (*CPJ* 20: 209–210).[33] Since the link between the empirical synthesis and the transcendental synthesis according to the categories has not been established for perception, the 'state' nonconceptualist

can continue to hold that neither the application of empirical concepts nor the categories is needed for perception.

Nevertheless, I do think the A Deduction has shown us something important, namely that when we look at the details of generating an empirical intuition we find that all three aspects of synthesis—apprehension, reproduction, and recognition—are essentially involved in its generation (when rules are understood in my sense, as ways in which the imagination directs the combination of the manifold). Although the A Deduction cannot stop the 'state' nonconceptualist from trying to accommodate those spontaneous ingredients into sensibility, in what follows I will attempt to reestablish the connection between the empirical synthesis and the transcendental synthesis by showing that every threefold empirical synthesis presupposes a transcendental synthesis with the same threefold structure and that the rules for this synthesis must be concepts: the categories.

10. Perception and the Categories

10.1.

At §21 of the B Deduction, Kant appears to begin a new argument in which he aims to show that 'from the way in which empirical intuition is given in sensibility that its unity can be none other than the one the category prescribes to the manifold of a given intuition in general' (B144/145).[34] Then in §26, where this argument is executed, he states his aim again: 'For if the categories did not serve in this way [as laws[35] for the combination of the manifold of intuition], it would not become clear why *everything that may ever come before the senses* ['*wie alles, was unseren Sinnen nur vorkommen mag*'] must stand under the laws that arise *a priori* from the understanding alone' (B160, my emphasis). Clearly, if he intends to show that 'everything that may ever come before the senses' stands under the categories, then even sense perception without judgment stands under the categories. This goal makes sense, especially since Kant begins his argument with a statement about how perception is possible:

> First of all I remark that by the *synthesis of apprehension* I understand the composition of the manifold of an empirical intuition, through which perception, i.e. empirical consciousness of it (as appearance), becomes possible. (B160)

Note that Kant is speaking of how the mere empirical consciousness of an appearance (= *undetermined* object of intuition) becomes possible. So I take it that objectively valid perceptual *judgments* are not at stake here. Given the way Kant begins this proof, I do not think the 'state' nonconceptualist can simply qualify the goal of §26 as providing conditions for thought or judgment. Moreover, it will become clear as the argument unfolds that Kant is interested in the relation between the spatiotemporal manifold and perception, rather than in the necessary conditions for representing the pure intuitions of space and time as

objects of scientific/theoretical study. In the first step of his (six step) argument, Kant reminds us that:

> We have *forms* of outer as well as inner sensible intuition *a priori* in the representations of space and time, and the synthesis of the apprehension of the manifold of appearances must always be in agreement [*gemäß* sein] with the latter, since it can only occur in accordance with this form.

His point is that the representation of space and time is required for, or implicit in every perception. Hence, we get the argument's first premise:

(1) The synthesis of apprehension/perception presupposes the representation of space and time.

But Kant's remark here has another crucial feature. Because the apprehension of anything in space and time can occur only if it 'accords' with our representations of space and time, we must acknowledge that

(2) Whatever is a necessary condition for the representation of space and time is a necessary condition for apprehension/perception.[36]

Kant's third move is to point out, as he did in the Transcendental Aesthetic, that along with being forms of our intuition, space and time are also represented as intuitions.

> But space and time are represented *a priori* not merely as *forms* of sensible intuition, but also as *intuitions* themselves (which contain a manifold), and thus with the determination of the *unity* of this manifold in them (see the Transcendental Aesthetic). (B160)[37]

Not only are space and time represented as intuitions, says Kant, they are represented as containing a *united manifold*. Hence his third premise:

(3) Space and time are represented as intuitions containing a unified manifold.

To represent space and time as united intuitions is, as he said in the Aesthetic, to represent different spaces as parts of one unique and all-encompassing space and to represent different times as parts of one unique and all-encompassing time, respectively (A25/B39 and A31/B47). From the conjunction of the last two premises he draws the following conclusion:

> Thus even *unity of the synthesis* of the manifold, outside or within us, hence also a *combination* with which everything that is to be represented as determined in space and time must agree, is already given *a priori*, along with (not in) these intuitions, *as condition of the synthesis of all apprehension*. (B161)[38]

In other words,

(4) The unity of the spatiotemporal manifold is a necessary condition for the apprehension/perception of anything in space and time—(2), (3).

It is crucial to see that just as the perception of appearances must be in accordance with the forms of intuition, perception also requires that space and time be represented as intuitions with unified manifolds. Although Kant does not explicitly mention the figurative synthesis here, it is clear that a transcendental synthesis of the imagination (mentioned in §24) is responsible for the unity of the pure manifold. This unity is, as he says here, given 'along with' but not 'in' the intuitions of space and time. Kant is reiterating his earlier point that while a manifold may be given in sensibility, its combination 'can never come to us through the senses' since 'we can represent nothing as combined in the object without having previously combined it ourselves' (B129–30). Because the pure manifold is given without unity, it must be combined by the spontaneous activity of the transcendental imagination. But like any synthesis, the figurative synthesis operates according to rules:

> But this synthetic unity can be none other than that of the combination of the manifold of a given *intuition in general* in an original consciousness, in agreement with the categories, only applied to our *sensible intuition*.

Here he echoes his claim from §24 that the figurative synthesis operates 'in accordance with the categories' (B152). The categories, in other words, serve as rules for the transcendental synthesis of the pure manifold. Here, then, is his fifth premise:

(5) The unity of the pure manifold is none other than the unity of the categories.

From the conjunction of premises (2) and (5) Kant draws his conclusion:

> Consequently all synthesis, through which even perception itself becomes possible, stands under the categories, and since experience is cognition through connected perceptions, the categories are conditions of the possibility of experience, and are thus also valid *a priori* of all objects of experience. (B161, emphasis altered)

(6) Therefore, the pure manifold unified by the categories is a necessary condition for apprehension/perception—(2), (5).

Here we have an explicit statement about the necessary conditions for mere empirical perception (in contrast to cognition or judgment). Perception 'stands under the categories' (*steht unter den Kategorien*) because its synthesis of

apprehension conforms to the spatiotemporal manifold united by the categories.[39] Of course we also get an additional statement about the necessary conditions for *cognition* in the second clause of the last sentence: 'the categories are conditions of the possibility of experience' because 'experience is cognition through connected [*verknüpfte*] perceptions'. The fact that Kant draws two conclusions in the final sentence—one about perception and another about cognition—shows that he is concerned, not only (or even primarily) with the conditions required for cognition or judgment, but also with the conditions required for mere empirical perception. Hence, even when empirical intuitions (*pace* Hanna) occur 'prior to thought' (and do not involve empirical concepts) we cannot explain how they are possible without reference to the categories.[40] This, I think, helps validate Kant's claim in the Metaphysical Deduction that the 'same function that gives unity in a judgment gives unity in a mere intuition' (cf. A79/B104–105).

10.2.

At the note to B160–1 Kant makes a new and important distinction between the 'forms of intuition' and 'formal intuitions'. It might be objected by the 'state' nonconceptualist that when Kant is discussing the unity of space and time required for perception in §26, he must only be discussing what is needed for *perceptual judgments* because the note tells us that only formal intuitions require the unity of the understanding. The forms of intuition, on the other hand, are sufficient for *mere perception* and do not require the unity of the understanding, according to this objection. Allais, for example, claims that the forms of intuition 'enable us to be presented with empirical particulars as uniquely located in an oriented and egocentrically-centered three-dimensional framework' (Allais 2009: 404), and that representing space as the form of outer intuition 'is a condition of the possibility of being presented with distinct particulars' (Allais 2009: 411). For Hanna, the forms of intuition are nonconceptual representations of space and time, which supply the 'egocentrically oriented formal-structural spatiotemporal framework' that makes all empirical intuition possible (Hanna 2006: 119). He tells us that these forms have the 'subjective unity of consciousness' (unity that is not necessarily related to the unity of apperception), and are distinct from formal intuitions or, what he thinks is the same thing, pure intuitions, which have the 'objective unity of consciousness' (unity that is necessarily related to the unity of apperception) (2005: 277 and 2006: 124).

However, if we look closely at the note to B160–1, a very different view emerges. Kant begins by saying that when we represent space as an object to study its formal features (as is done in geometry), we have a formal intuition. A formal intuition, he tells us, contains a united manifold, which 'presupposes a synthesis which does not belong to the senses' through which 'the understanding determines the sensibility', but whose unity 'belongs to space and time, and not to the concept of the understanding'. It is important to note that Kant is

addressing how space must be represented if geometry is to be possible, but the body of the proof in §26 explicitly addresses how space (and time) must be represented if empirical perception of mere appearances is to be possible. Thus, the 'state' nonconceptualist is correct that formal intuitions are not needed for perception, but she is wrong to think that formal intuitions are central to the §26 proof.

Are the forms of intuition, then, all that are required for perception, without any help for the understanding? I do not think so, for the 'state' nonconceptualists have not adequately explained where the unity of the forms of intuition (needed for locating and relating particulars in space) comes from. Indeed, they have not acknowledged that Kant clearly states at B160–161n, 'the *form of intuition* merely gives the manifold'. This should remind us of Kant's remark at A120n: 'something more than the receptivity of impressions is required [to produce images of objects], namely a function of synthesis of them'. To merely be presented with particulars requires empirical as well as transcendental synthesis, because an un-synthesized manifold—empirical or pure—is insufficient to generate intuitions of particulars, much less to order and relate those particulars. Consequently, what is needed for perception is that the forms of intuition be represented as unified intuitions according to the categories.

So I think Allais is correct to claim that representing space is a condition for intentional perception, but her nonconceptualist reading depends on ignoring what is actually required for that representation, since some of its ingredients—e.g. the unity provided by the categories—are conceptual. As for Hanna, his account faces two problems: (1) His contrast between forms of intuition (having 'subjective unity') on the one hand and formal/pure intuition (having 'objective unity') on the other, is misleading, for Kant explicitly states that the forms of intuition (or sensibility) are identical to pure intuitions: 'Accordingly the pure form of sensible intuitions in general is to be encountered in the mind *a priori*, wherein all of the manifold of appearances is intuited in certain relations. *This pure form of sensibility itself is also called pure intuition*' (A21/B35; cf. A27/B43). The difference between the forms of intuition and pure intuitions consists in two ways of considering our representation of space and time: space and time are forms of intuition insofar as we consider them in relation to the matter of appearance, but they are pure intuitions insofar as we consider them apart from that matter (cf. Longuenesse 1998: 217–8). Thus, it is not as if the forms of intuition are only required for perception and pure intuitions are only required for (geometric) cognition. Rather, as §26 showed us, the forms of intuition presupposed in all perception are at the same time pure intuitions (containing unified manifolds).[41] (2) Even if space and time are only represented as pure spatial and temporal forms in perception, Hanna's only explanation for the 'subjective unity' of their nonconceptual content is that sensibility 'has its *own* ''lower-level spontaneity'' (what Kant calls the spontaneity of the *synthesis speciosa* or ''figurative synthesis'' of the imagination)' (Hanna 2008: 62; see his 2006: 86). First, Kant only ever uses the phrase 'subjective unity' with respect to the empirical manifold (§18) and not with respect to the forms on intuition.

Second, in §24 he asserts that the figurative synthesis belongs to the understanding insofar as it is spontaneous, and that it functions according to the categories. So, not only is the figurative synthesis *not* the low-level spontaneity of sensibility, but also if the forms of intuition require the figurative synthesis, then they must (*pace* Hanna) have 'objective unity' (i.e. be necessarily related to the unity of apperception).

Kantian 'state' nonconceptualists call upon passages where Kant says that our form of intuition is 'that which allows the manifold of appearance to be intuited as ordered in certain relations' (A20/B34). But I do not think remarks like this can be understood apart from Kant's story in the Analytic, where he discusses what is required for empirical perception of particulars. In my estimation Longuenesse is correct to claim that the notions of 'form of intuition' and 'pure intuition' are retrospectively clarified in light of Kant's discussion of the figurative synthesis in §24 and §26 (Longuenesse 1998: 217). She points out that it is consistent with Kant's initial definition of sensibility in the Aesthetic to see the forms of intuition as merely providing a manifold (Longuenesse 1998: 221). 'The capacity (receptivity)', says Kant, 'to acquire representations through the way in which we are affected by objects is called sensibility' (A19/B33). Later, he says, 'the manner in which [the manifold] is given in the mind without spontaneity must be called sensibility' (B68). However, as a capacity that also yields intuitions related to objects, merely providing an un-unified manifold is insufficient. In my view it is the function of the figurative synthesis to supplement the sensibility by providing that unity (according to the categories) needed for intuitions to be directed at objects, which appear ordered and related.

10.3.

Although we have looked closely at Kant's argument in §26, the relation between perception and the categories is still ambiguous. It is not apparent, for instance, what it means for perception to be 'in agreement' with the unity of the pure manifold, nor is it evident what it means for that unity to be 'in agreement' with the categories. What needs to be determined, then, is the relation between (a) apprehension/perception and the unity of the pure manifold, (b) the unity of the pure manifold and the categories, and (c) apprehension/perception and the categories. What I hope to show in the following analysis is that each of these relations is one of (conceptual/transcendental) *dependence* or *grounding*.

We should note, first of all, that from B160 to B162 three of the five occurrences of the term 'in agreement' (*gemäß*) refer to the relation between the empirical synthesis of apprehension and the unity of the pure manifold. Only once does Kant say that the unity of the pure manifold must be 'in agreement' with the categories (B161). And only in the term's final occurrence does Kant link perception directly to the categories by saying the former must be 'in agreement' with the latter (B162).

So what is the relationship between the synthesis of apprehension and the synthetic unity of the pure manifold (relation a)? We can begin by looking at the section following the conclusion of §26 (B161) where Kant explains further how perceptions stand under the categories (B162). He says,

> Thus if, e.g. I make the empirical intuition of a house into perception through apprehension of its manifold, *my ground is the necessary unity of space* and of outer sensible intuition in general. I as it were draw its shape [*Gestalt*] in agreement [*gemäß*] with this synthetic unity of the manifold in space. (B162, emphasis altered)[42]

The first sentence of this passage clearly suggests that the relation between perception and the unity of the pure manifold is one of grounding or dependence. Kant's remark here is the application of his earlier claim that whenever we perceive something in space we represent a unified spatial manifold (step 3 above). Our representation of a unified spatial manifold is thus the 'ground' of perception insofar as it must 'be in place prior to' (i.e. conceptually/transcendentally prior to) the apprehension of anything in space.

The unity of space is the 'ground' of perception, not only because the representation of the pure manifold is presupposed in every perception, but also because its synthesis cannot even occur unless it is 'in accordance' with, or in *conformity* with the unity of space (and time) (cf. B160). So when Kant says, I 'draw' the shape or figure of the house 'in agreement' with the unity of the spatial manifold, he means that the impressions of the empirical manifold are synthesized—'gone through, taken up, and combined' (A77/B102)—into an image of the house *in space*. Only on the condition that space (and time) is united can any of my impressions be synthesized into an image of a unified particular in space (and time). If the pure manifold were not so united, it would, similar to an un-synthesized empirical manifold, lie in 'unruly heaps' (cf. A121). 'Unruly heaps' of spatial manifold would not, I take it, provide a ground according to which the empirical manifold is synthesized into an image of a house nor would they allow us to order or locate particulars in space.

If relation (a) is one of dependence, how then shall we understand the agreement of the unity of the pure manifold with the categories (relation b)? The only time Kant claims that the unity of the pure manifold is in agreement with the categories, he says, 'this synthetic unity can be none other than that of the combination of the manifold of a given intuition in general in an original consciousness, *in agreement with the categories*, only applied to our sensible intuition' (B161). The 'state' nonconceptualist might think that Kant is saying that the unity of the pure manifold is merely similar, but not identical to the unity provided by the categories. The unity of the pure manifold would, on this reading, be in agreement with the categories if it were *conducive* to the subsequent application of the categories. But I think this reading is too weak given what Kant actually says in §26.

In the house example, he claims that the unity of the pure manifold, with which the apprehension of the house is in agreement, is *identical* to the category of quantity:

> This very same synthetic unity, however, if I abstract from the form of space, has its seat in the understanding, and is that category of the synthesis of the homogeneous in an intuition in general, i.e. the category of *quantity*, with which that synthesis of apprehension, i.e. the perception, must therefore be in thoroughgoing agreement. (B162)

When we consider only the unity apart from space, we find, says Kant, that that unity *is the same as* the category of quantity. In this example, the category of quantity brings unity to the pure manifold—the very task of a rule for synthesis. If the category of quantity did not serve as a rule for the figurative synthesis, the pure manifold would not have unity. That is to say, since the spatial manifold is composed of spaces, which are given dispersed and separate in sensibility alone, the manifold requires a (transcendental) synthesis (according to the categories) to bring it unity. Thus, the pure manifold *depends* on the category of quantity for a rule, thus its unity.

Now we are in a position to understand the relationship between perception and the categories (relation c). We have seen that perception *depends* on the unity of the pure manifold and that unity *depends* on the categories. It follows that perception too *depends* on or is *grounded* on the categories. Perhaps the most explicit statement of this thesis occurs later in §26:

> Now since *all possible perception depends* [*abhängt*] on the synthesis of apprehension, but the latter itself, this empirical synthesis, *depends* on the transcendental one, *thus on the categories*, all possible perceptions, hence *everything that can ever reach empirical consciousness*, i.e. all appearances of nature, as far as their combination is concerned, stand under the categories. (B164-5, my emphasis)

This conclusion is precisely what Kant set out to demonstrate in §26, namely, that everything that may 'ever come before our senses' or 'ever reach empirical consciousness' 'stands under', i.e. depends on, the categories. This happens to be just the line of thought I have been tracing: perception depends on empirical synthesis, which depends on a transcendental synthesis according to the categories.

10.4.

Having shown how Kant's argument is supposed to work and the nature of the 'agreement' between perception, the unity of the pure manifold, and the categories, I want to explore just how the category of *quantity* functions in the content of the intentional perception of a spatial particular.

In the figurative synthesis the pure manifold is taken up, reproduced, and unified under the guidance of the category. Kant calls this synthesis *figurative* because it takes pure given space and limits off a portion of it to generate a figure. Quantity serves as a rule for how to limit off a portion of the spatial manifold to generate *a particular figure in a particular location*.[43] This limiting off of the spatial manifold is what allows a region of space to have distinct boundaries separating it off from its surroundings and distinguishing it from other regions of space. In other words, the category of quantity serves as a general rule to 'configure' or 'structure' the spatial manifold in such a way that a unified particular in space is perceived. The manifold of an empirical intuition is formed into an image in agreement with or in conformity to the way in which the spatial manifold is combined, limited off, or configured by the figurative synthesis. So we can see that without a category guiding the figurative synthesis, our perception would not be directed at a particular individual, i.e. not be intentional at all. This is a fascinating result, because Allais admits that her account 'still leaves us needing to understand why spatiality should be a condition of the intentionality of perception' (Allais 2009: 413). It turns out that spatiality is a condition of intentional perception because of the function of the categories in our representation of space.

But more than making intentional perception possible, quantity determines, in part, what the content of the intuition is when it guides a synthesis of the pure manifold.[44] In perception, the particular will be represented as having features common to all spatiotemporal objects, e.g. appearing as a distinct figure extended in space at a particular location. Hence, the content of perception (when other categories are applied) will involve concepts of very general features of objects. Importantly, it is not that in empirical perception we think or judge that the particular is thus and such a height or thus and such a distance from myself, rather, in perception, what is represented has the appearance it does in virtue of having its manifold be synthesized according to a category; an appearance which *can be* (but is not yet) measured, judged, or quantified.

Much more needs to be said about how the categories of quality, relation, and modality function in perception, but we have here an example of how one category—quantity—makes perception possible and determines its content by serving as a rule for the synthesis of the pure manifold.

11. 'Content' Nonconceptualism

As a 'content' nonconceptualist, Hanna thinks that the content of our intuitions can be nonconceptual. Although he has argued that the content of the perception of incongruent counterparts cannot in principle be conceptual (Hanna 2008), I am not concerned with that argument here. More pertinent to our concerns (i.e. the question of Kant's non/conceptual in the first *Critique*) is Hanna's view that the content of our representations of space and time is nonconceptual (Hanna 2006:

93, 122–3). What I want to dispute is that the first *Critique's* Transcendental Aesthetic offers direct support for this thesis.

In the 'Metaphysical Expositions' of space and time in the Aesthetic, Kant argues that space and time are a priori representations and that they are pure intuitions (see A23-A32/B38-B48). What is at stake in arguments for the latter thesis is what sort of representations space and time are—concepts or intuitions. But to show that Kant thinks of them as intuitions (rather than concepts of space and time) is not *eo ipso* to show that the content of those intuitions is nonconceptual. What must be demonstrated is that those intuitions need not be combined with concepts or that the generation of those intuitions owes nothing to the understanding and its concepts (something that I have tried to show is false). The only obvious sense in which the representations of space and time are nonconceptual (according to the Aesthetic) is the sense in which those representations are themselves not concepts. Consequently, Hanna's 'content' nonconceptualism is not supported by Kant's claim here in the Aesthetic alone (though it may have support from elsewhere).

Before concluding, I want to mention one objection the 'content' nonconceptualist can make. She can claim that because empirical intuition and pure intuition are logically and semantically independent, even if the former contains conceptual content the latter may not, or, conversely, even if the latter contains conceptual content the former may not. The 'content' nonconceptualist is right to recognize this distinction, for my reading does not show that the content at both levels is conceptual. However, I have only sought to establish that even when specific empirical concepts are not applied and do not figure into the content of perception, very general concepts of objects (categories) must be applied and do figure into the content of perception. Because all empirical intuition presupposes pure intuition, empirical content as such is only an abstraction from the total content of perception (thus never empirically realizable on its own), which always requires spatiotemporal content that involves the categories. Hence, all perceptual content is *at least* mixed or hybrid content for Kant in the first *Critique*. This point is well illustrated by the 'savage' example from the *Jäsche Logic*. The 'savage' need not apply the empirical concept 'house', nor must it figure in the content of his perception, for him to have an empirical intuition of a large unrecognizable particular. But his mere perception of a distinct and unified particular, set in contrast to a background, in relation to other particulars, contains conceptual content and requires (at least) the application of the category of quantity.[45]

Conclusion

This concludes my exposition of how the categories are involved in perception. I have argued that for Kant, even when perceptual synthesis is not governed by an empirical concept it is nevertheless governed by the categories. If I am right in attributing this position to Kant, then the categories function as conditions of the possibility of sensible givenness, in addition to judgment. Indeed, I take it to be a

mark of Kant's idealism that the content of perception—particularly the formal features of appearances—depends in part on the conceptual activity of the understanding. Thus, for Kant, perception is not merely a passive state in which we are receptive to the way the world is, but it involves our spontaneous capacity for conceptual activity. Hence, the categories turn out to be more pervasive in human experience (broadly construed) than they do on other readings (e.g. the nonconceptualist readings), which treat them only as conditions for thinking and judging. Consequently, the distinction between sensibility and understanding is not demarcated simply by the difference between passively perceiving the world and actively thinking or judging about the world. The reading I have given suggests instead that for Kant, these two fundamental capacities are so deeply intertwined and interconnected that there is always a receptive as well as a spontaneous element even in our lower level mental states like perception.[46]

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NOTES

[1] All references to the *Critique of Pure Reason* will be given in the standard A/B format. All quotes from the first *Critique* are from the Guyer and Wood translation. References to the *Jäsche Logic*, the *Prolegomena*, and the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* are denoted by the abbreviations *JL*, *P*, and *CPJ*, respectively.

[2] See Hanna 2005, 2006, 2008; Allais 2009; Watkins 2008; and Young 1988.

[3] For other conceptualist readings of Kant see Sellars 1968; McDowell 1994; Abela 2002; and Ginsborg 2008.

[4] In contrast to empirical intuitions, Kant also speaks of pure intuitions, which are conscious representations of space and time without any sensation (A20/B34 and B146). Later we will see that all empirical intuition presupposes pure intuition.

[5] I am not concerned here with the content of sensations or unconscious representations. Watkins 2008 deals with the nonconceptual nature of sensation.

[6] It is important to recognize that perception, in the sense I understand it, does *not* qualify as 'experience' in the Kantian sense. 'Experience itself', he says, 'is a kind of cognition which requires understanding' (Bxvii; cf. B147). I take perception to be pre-cognitive, i.e. more primitive than thought or judgment, in the sense that one does not need to have thoughts or make judgments about a house in order to perceive a particular that is a house. Nonetheless, I intend to show that while perception is not 'objectively valid', it still involves conceptual activity.

[7] An empirical concept is one that arises out of experience through the acts of comparison, reflection, and abstraction (e.g., 'house', 'dog'; cf. A2/B2; *JL* §6). By contrast, a pure concept can arise from the understanding itself apart from experience or sensation (A11/B24; *JL* §3). Kant's categories, which I will be focusing on, are our pure or a priori concepts of objects in general.

[8] Cf. A141/B180 where Kant says, 'The concept of a dog signifies a rule in accordance with which my imagination can specify the shape of a four-footed animal in general, without being restricted to any single particular shape that experience offers me'. Also see A106 where Kant says the concept 'body' serves as a rule for the cognition of outer appearances.

[9] I must warn the reader that Allais denies that concepts in the first sense are needed for perception: 'My concern', she says, 'is with whether, according to Kant, having and applying concepts *understood as general rules which are essentially constituents of judgments* is necessary for the perception of particulars' (Allais 2009: 389). I am arguing that the involvement of concepts, understood as general rules *for synthesis*, are required for perception. The problem for Allais is that *no one* is arguing that *Kant* thought concepts as constituents of judgments are needed for perception. She cites McDowell as one who argues for this, but in the passage Allais gives from *Mind and World*, McDowell is merely articulating his own view (albeit one inspired by Kant). And even if she were successful in her argument, Allais will not have refuted the most obvious sense in which Kant appears to be a conceptualist, i.e. where concepts serve as rules for perceptual synthesis.

[10] One might protest that I have neglected some crucial questions here, e.g. what is required to possess the categories (self-conscious awareness of the categories or the innate capacity or potential to have the categories)? Do infants and non-human animals possess the categories? These questions will seem pressing if Kant is read as presenting a psychological account of the actual processes involved in perception or an account of what the subject is aware of in perception. But these questions will be peripheral to an exposition of the first *Critique* if, as I do, we read Kant's transcendental philosophy as a conceptual project of determining what cognitive tools are needed to *explain* the possibility of certain cognitive activities. So the issue is whether the categories figure in an *explanation* of how perception is possible, and not the issue of when and how a subject comes to consciously possess certain concepts. Moreover, it seems that Kant is not concerned with explaining the possibility of anything but human cognitive activity in the first *Critique*: 'For we cannot judge at all whether the intuitions of other thinking beings are bound by the same conditions that limit our intuition and that are universally valid for us' (A27/B43). Also, '[w]e are acquainted with nothing except our way of perceiving them [objects], which is peculiar to us, and which therefore does not necessarily pertain to every being, though to be sure it pertains to every human being' (A42/59).

[11] Allais is only concerned to attribute to Kant what Jeff Speaks (2005) calls 'relative' nonconceptual content: the idea that the subject can have a perceptual representation with certain content without possessing the relevant concepts to describe that content.

[12] Sometimes nonconceptualists point out that the activity of perceptual synthesis, distinct from that of conceptualizing, is a 'mere effect of the imagination' (A78/B103), which they argue properly belongs to sensibility (cf. A124; B151). Although the debate between Kant's non/conceptualism sometimes turns on the question of whether the imagination properly belongs to sensibility (as Allais and Hanna believe) or to understanding (as Ginsborg believes), my argument, to its strength I think, remains neutral on the question. Thus, even if the nonconceptualist is correct in attributing the imagination to sensibility, my argument still goes through. I do not, in fact, think that the debate hinges on this question at all. Kant clearly sees the imagination as an intermediate between sensibility and understanding (cf. A124; B150–152). When he does speak of the relation between imagination, sensibility, and understanding he speaks of how different aspects or functions of the imagination 'belong to' sensibility or understanding, e.g., *insofar* as intuitions are sensible, the imagination belongs to sensibility

(A124) or *insofar* as the imagination 'is determining' and not 'determinable', it belongs to understanding (B151).

[13] Thanks to an anonymous referee for the journal who pointed out the importance of this distinction for my discussion.

[14] The question of whether Kant would accept this argument as it is stated in Hanna's 2008 is an interesting question but beyond the scope of this paper.

[15] Ginsborg explains that 'in perceptual synthesis the subject does not merely combine or associate her representations, but, in so doing, takes herself to be doing so appropriately, or as she ought' (Ginsborg 2008: 71). Her thought is that one can be conscious of this appropriateness without grasping a concept or having one's synthesis be guided by a concept. On her version of conceptualism, it is the understanding that introduces this normativity into perception, which turns out to be identical to the application of concepts. I think this alternative way in which concepts can be involved in synthesis is an intriguing proposal, but my argument introduces the understanding at the transcendental level of synthesis involving the categories and not empirical concepts or normative-associative rules as she has it.

[16] For example, Kant says of the category of cause, 'it is not clear *a priori* why appearances should contain anything of this sort [that given some cause A, some effect B must necessarily follow] . . . and it is therefore *a priori* doubtful whether such a concept is not perhaps entirely empty and finds no object anywhere among the appearances' (A90/B122).

[17] Ginsborg (2008: 70; 2006: 63), Longuenesse (1998: 226), as well as Allison (2004: 160–161) see the possibility Kant presents at A90/B122 as one he ultimately rejects.

[18] It is possible that Hanna could concede that if his nonconceptualist interpretation is true then the Deduction is unsound, but still insist that we can draw important conclusions about the nature of Kant's Critical Philosophy. The burden of proof, it could be argued, is on me to show that the Deduction is sound so that I do not beg the question against the nonconceptualist. However, this strategy does concede that Kant is a conceptualist—just one with failed arguments for his conceptualism. And Hanna spends considerable space in his (2005 and 2008) articles putting forth arguments for the existence of nonconceptual content that he attributes to Kant. So I do not think this strategy is really available to him. Moreover, the burden of proof would *not* be on me to show that the Deduction is sound. Rather, all that needs to be shown to establish that Kant is a conceptualist is what the Deduction is *supposed* to demonstrate, namely that the categories apply to *everything* given in sensibility. Showing that this argument is sound is a different project altogether.

[19] There can be a synthesis of multiple intuitions into one complex intuition, but for any single intuition (at least ones representing particulars) there is always a synthesis of its manifold of sense impressions.

To be fair, both definitions I am using here refer to cognition and not to perception. Here are the two definitions in full: 'Only the spontaneity of our thought requires that this manifold first be gone through, taken up, and combined in a certain way on order for cognition to be made out of it. I call this action synthesis' (A77/B102); 'By *synthesis* in the most general sense, however, I understand the action of putting different representations together with each other and comprehending their manifoldness in one cognition' (A77/B103). However, Kant explicitly says elsewhere that perception involves synthesis too, e.g. the A120 note I cite here in my text. What I mean to highlight is the general activity of synthesis involved in both cognition and perception.

[20] Nonconceptualists will likely admit all this since they typically argue that imagination, the faculty responsible for synthesis, belongs to sensibility. So the point that

all manifolds require spontaneous activity (imaginative synthesis) is certainly not decisive against the nonconceptualist reading, but it nevertheless obliges the nonconceptualist to accommodate spontaneous activity into sensibility.

[21] Again, the 'something' perceived is a spatiotemporal particular and not an objective and necessary object of experience.

[22] One might ask 'what is this combination necessary for?' It is certainly needed for cognition, but I think also for having the mere image of a particular (cf. A116, A117, A120, A122).

[23] The phrase 'as good as nothing to us' is no doubt open to interpretation. As I understand it, unsynthesized manifolds would be as good as nothing for us because not even an image or figure (not to mention cognition) could arise from them.

[24] The 'content' nonconceptualist might also say, even if generating an image involves synthesis and/or concepts, one may still perceive particulars—as someone experiencing 'blindsight' does—without the corresponding perceptual image. It is true that a distinction must be made between perceiving and imaging when we discuss the possibility of nonconceptual content today. But Kant does not make this distinction, nor was he aware of the phenomenon of 'blindsight', thus, it is safe to bracket this issue when discussing Kant's views. I thank the anonymous referee for the journal for pointing out these possibilities.

[25] Similarly, Hanna claims that 'an act of intuition can occur without any act of conceptualization, and also an intuition can be objectively valid independently of a concept' (Hanna 2005: 259).

[26] Here I take 'determinate connection' to be the minimum determinacy of perceptual representation.

[27] Hanna employs this passage in support of his 'state' nonconceptualist reading: 'Kant's point is not that he [the 'savage'] lacks all (on-line) conceptual capacities whatsoever: he merely lacks a specific (on-line) capacity for conceptualizing *houses*' (Hanna 2005: 262). Allais appears to make the same use of Kant's example (Allais 2009: 388).

[28] He says, for example, at A100, 'If cinnabar were now red, now black, now light, now heavy, if a human being were now changed into this animal shape, now into that one . . . then my empirical imagination would never even get the opportunity to think of heavy cinnabar on the occasion of the representation of the color red . . . without the governance of a certain rule to which the appearances are already subjected in themselves, then no empirical synthesis of reproduction could take place'. See A113 and A122 as well as Paton 1965: 445–448.

[29] I acknowledge that Kant does seem to repudiate this thesis later in the B Deduction and the *CPJ*. See Section 9 below.

[30] In the Doctrine of Method, where he criticizes Hume for thinking that there is no necessity in causation, Kant says that the affinity of the manifold 'has its seat in the understanding and asserts a necessary connection, into a rule of association, which is merely found in the imitative imagination' (A766/B794).

[31] In the next section I address the important distinction between the forms of intuition and formal intuitions, which appears in the B (but not A) Deduction.

[32] As an anonymous referee for the journal pointed out to me.

[33] See Hanna 2009: Section 4.

[34] In Allison's estimation, the argument starting at §21 is meant, 'to establish the applicability of the categories to whatever is given under the conditions of human sensibility . . . In short, it attempts to link the categories (albeit indirectly) to the *perception* rather than the *thought* of objects' (Allison 2004: 162).

[35] At A126 Kant says, 'Rules, so far as they are objective . . . are called laws'.

[36] This is Allison's reading of the passage as well. He thinks that Kant intends 'to indicate that whatever turns out to be a necessary condition for the determinate representation of space and time will also be a necessary condition for the apprehension or perception of anything intuited in space and time' (Allison 2004: 194).

[37] See below (Section 10.2) on the notorious note to B160–161.

[38] Cf. A115: 'But pure intuition (with regard to it as representation, time, the form of inner intuition) grounds the totality of perception *a priori*'.

[39] Paton seems to draw the same conclusion: 'If this is true, the synthesis of apprehension necessary for sense-perception must conform to the categories' (Paton 1965: 542). The 'this' refers to the need for a transcendental synthesis according to the categories.

[40] In Hanna's view, intuitions have nonconceptual content because of what he calls their 'priority-to-thought': 'Kant says that "that representation that can be given prior to all thinking is called *intuition*" (*CPR* B132), and all thoughts essentially involve concepts, so intuitions can be given prior to concepts' (Hanna 2006: 102). However, this line of reasoning is invalid. Just because thought involves concepts and intuition occurs prior to thought, it does not follow that intuition does not also involve concepts. What is missing here is a premise to the effect that intuitions do not also essentially involve concepts. Of course this is precisely what's at stake in the debate over Kant's non/conceptualism.

[41] This is not to deny that formal intuitions are not also pure intuitions through which we determinately intuit space and time as singular, infinitely given wholes. It is only to say that we can consider the forms of intuition implicit in perception to be pure intuitions as well.

[42] I think it is clear that Kant is not just dealing with a single case in which our perception (here the perception of a house) happens to stand under a particular category (here quantity) because he continually states that he is concerned with 'all apprehension', 'all synthesis', and 'all appearances given in sensibility'.

[43] Unfortunately, Kant's example is not detailed enough to determine just what sort of unity each category brings to the spatiotemporal manifold and how each category makes perception possible. Perhaps the category of *relation* might be required for perception of particulars standing in particular relations to one another.

[44] It does not, that is, determine the empirical or qualitative sensual content.

[45] Even Hanna's description of what the 'savage' perceives points to the presence of the categories: 'but when [the "savage"] gets closer, by contrast, he sees it more simply as a slightly-bigger-than-mid-sized material object over there' (Hanna 2005: 265). Notice that the house is *perceived as* a material object in a particular location on Hanna's account. I take both of these features to be a result of the involvement of the categories.

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