

NOT SEEING AND SEEING NOTHING.
KANT ON THE TWIN CONDITIONS OF OBJECTIVE REFERENCE
Não vendo e vendo nada.
Kant sobre as duplas condições de referência objetiva

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Abstract: The article deals with the status and significance of Kant's distinction between intuition and concept as the two essential prerequisites for the objective reference of cognitions in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. More specifically, the article is concerned with Kant's account of the objective reference of cognitions *a priori* and with the conditions of the possibility of *non-empirical* knowledge in general and of *metaphysical* knowledge in particular. Section 1 presents Kant's transcendental project in its strategic role of providing the theoretical foundations for moral freedom. Section 2 elucidates the ground and function of the dualism that permeates Kant's critical philosophy. Section 3 details Kant's innovative account of sensuous intuition as one of the two basic elements of cognition. Section 4 addresses the original limitation of sensuous intuition as a mode of cognition and the latter's functional enhancement by the conceptual mode of cognition.

Key words: Concept. Intuition. Transcendental philosophy. *Critique of Pure Reason*. Blind intuition.

Resumo: O artigo aborda o status e a importância da distinção de Kant entre intuição e conceito como os dois pré-requisitos essenciais para a referência objetiva das cognições na Crítica da Razão Pura. Mais especificamente, o artigo está preocupado com o relato de Kant da referência objetiva de cognições *a priori* e com as condições de possibilidade de conhecimento não empírico em geral e do conhecimento metafísico, em particular. Seção 1 apresenta projeto transcendental de Kant em seu papel estratégico de fornecer as bases teóricas para a liberdade moral. Seção 2 elucidada a base e a função do dualismo que permeia a filosofia crítica de Kant. A seção 3 detalha a consideração inovadora de Kant de intuição sensível como um dos dois elementos básicos da cognição. Seção 4 aborda a limitação original da intuição sensível como um modo de cognição e aperfeiçoamento funcional deste último pelo modo conceitual de cognição.

Palavras-chave: Conceito. Intuição. Filosofia transcendental. Crítica da razão pura. intuição cega.

1. Introduction

“*Blinde haben starke imagination.*”

(Kant 1900, 15:141, see also 15:807)

This article supplements earlier work in which I assessed John McDowell's neo-Aristotelian account of Kant's functional differentiation between concepts and intuitions and argued against McDowell's thoroughgoing conceptualization of Kantian intuitions (Zöller 2010).¹ The present piece seeks to place the complex relation between intuition and concept in Kant into the wider context of the overall project of the *Critique of Pure Reason*. Accordingly, the focus of the article is on the status and significance of intuition and concept as the two essential prerequisites for the objective reference of cognitions. More specifically, the piece is concerned with Kant's account of the objective reference of cognitions *a priori* and hence with the conditions of the possibility of *non-empirical* knowledge in general and of *metaphysical* knowledge in particular. Section 1 presents Kant's transcendental project in its strategic role of providing the theoretical foundations for moral freedom. Section 2 elucidates the ground and function of the dualism that permeates Kant's critical philosophy. Section 3 details Kant's innovative account of sensuous intuition as one of the two basic elements of cognition. Section 4 addresses the original limitation of sensuous intuition as a mode of cognition and the latter's functional enhancement by the conceptual mode of cognition.

2. Transcendental Critique

Since its publication almost a quarter of a millennium ago, Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* has been the object of metacritique and refutation as much as of exegesis and interpretation. From Kant's former students and later friends, Herder and Hamann, through his then-famous rival, Jacobi, and his self-proclaimed successors, Fichte, Schelling and Hegel, to his avowedly violent reader, Heidegger, and further down to his congenial rereader, McDowell, Kant and his chief work have elicited both the extreme reaction of vehement

¹ For a detailed discussion of “blind intuition” in Kant that judiciously assesses the recent debate in the literature and offers a reading linking unconceptualized, “blind” intuitions with preconscious, “dark” concepts (*dunkle Begriffe*), see Grüne 2009.

rejection and the eager response of adaptation, appropriation and assimilation to further and farther philosophical agendas.

Exegetical and interpretive work on Kant's primary text also has varied widely in claim and scope, reaching from explanatory commentaries and informative dictionaries through comprehensive presentations to narrowly focused monographs and highly specialized journal articles, not to mention the labor devoted to the proper publication of Kant's work in editions that sought to do justice to the work's twin appearance in a first and a partially revised second edition. Currently we are awaiting the republication of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, in accordance with advanced editorial standards and practices, within the Academy Edition of Kant's Collected Works (Kant 1900) and the appearance of a multi-volume Kant Lexicon that is to reflect the state of the art in international scholarship on the philosopher and his work (Mohr/Stolzenberg/Willaschek 2015).

Still the almost two and a half centuries of continued and increasing work on the *Critique of Pure Reason* have connected as much as disengaged us from Kant's *magnum opus*. As professionally trained philosophers, we have been schooled in various ways of approaching Kant in general and the *Critique of Pure Reason* in particular that are informed by recent developments and current concerns in philosophy as much as by the intense immersion in Kant's own text. To be sure, without the past two hundred and thirty years of studies and scholarship on the *Critique of Pure Reason* we might still find ourselves in the strange situation of puzzlement, bewilderment and amazement that beset the early readers of the work when they first found themselves faced with its novel language, original thought and overreaching conception. But as a result of the intervening work with and on the *Critique of Pure Reason* we are also in danger of not really reading Kant but rather reading Kant through someone else and in effect reading that other person more than Kant, even when ostensibly reading Kant.

One might argue that this situation of estranged acquaintance that links as much separates us from Kant and his chief work is unavoidable as well as beneficial. Reading Kant in the medium of his past and recent reception and influence makes him a contemporary of ours, who shares our philosophical issues, interests and orientations. But such forged familiarity also tends to obstruct our view backward to Kant himself and to the plans and projects he pursued with each and all of his works, chiefly among them the *Critique of Pure Reason*. Given the enormous complexity, the multi-layered structure and the over determined

project that makes up Kant's chief work, a reconsideration of its authorial intent and a recollection of its original insight might be a welcome antidote to presentist readings that have their indisputable merit but also their unavoidable limitations when it comes to assessing how Kant himself thought and what, according to him, mattered philosophically.

The possible discrepancy between the current Kant and the historical Kant already arises when it comes to ascertaining the basic nature and the fundamental character of his philosophical project in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. Since its first publication and through today the work has been read as a contribution to many fields – from philosophical psychology and philosophy of mind through epistemology and philosophy of science to phenomenology and hermeneutics as well as semantics and pragmatics. Each of those readings can point to parts and aspects of the *Critique of Pure Reason* that seem to warrant such an approach. Yet in each of those cases disciplinary and methodological conceptions are brought to bear on a work that was conceived before those concepts even had arisen or had been developed. In fact in most of those cases it was Kant's work and specifically the *Critique of Pure Reason* that first gave rise, directly or indirectly, to the subsequent development of the respective field or method, from psychology through epistemology to philosophy of science.

It should come as no surprise then that the *Critique of Pure Reason* can seem a contribution to each of those fields, given that, to no small extent, they each grew out of that work. Nor should it be a surprise that none of the distinct disciplines and separate methods it engendered can quite capture the work's vast ambition and immense scope. The *Critique of Pure Reason* is a work in the philosophy of mind, but not only; it is a work in epistemology, but not entirely; and so on with all the approaches that manage to reach the *Critique of Pure Reason* without completely grasping it, to approach it without quite getting it, and to bring it into the present without retaining its deep ties to times other than ours, times both past and future.

In the absence of an established discipline and an approved method for his philosophical project, Kant drew on traditional terms to introduce and carry out his novel and innovative work. Notoriously he chose the technical term, “transcendental,” to designate his undertaking in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, employing the term both in its adjectival form to designate elements and features of his philosophy and in its substantival form, as “transcendental philosophy” (*Transzendentalphilosophie*), to characterize the overall project (KrV A 11f./B 25). In Kant's novel usage, the term retained from its earlier employment in the

scholastic doctrine of the transcendentals (unity, truth, goodness; see KrV B 113) the focus on features that transcended particular categorial distinctions in favor of features encompassing any category and ranging over all of them.

The formal definition of the term, “transcendental,” provided in the introduction to the *Critique of Pure Reason* (KrV A 11f./B25), focuses on the term's designation for a range and mode of inquiry that is directed to the investigation of other cognitions both inside and outside of philosophy. The specific target of philosophy in the transcendental mode are those cognitions and only those that involve cognitive claims regarding objects that are warranted independent of experience (“synthesis a priori,” KrVA 12/B 25). Kant declares it the task of transcendental philosophy to assess the conditions, the possibility and the bounds of any and all such cognition.

Given the specific sense of “transcendental” in Kant, the term is used in an unspecific and uncharacteristic way when it is made to designate any inquiry into possibility conditions or necessary conditions, as it has been employed again and again. Transcendental in Kant's technical sense is only the meta-cognition concerned with the conditions of the possibility of synthetic cognitions a priori or, alternatively put, with the conditions of possible a priori objective reference (Zöller 1984).² On this narrow definition, which effectively limits transcendental philosophy to *pure theoretical philosophy*, moral philosophy along with its critical foundation (as undertaken in the *Foundations for the Metaphysics of Morals* and the *Critique of Practical Reason*), falls outside of transcendental philosophy, due to the former's essential inclusion of conative and appetitive features (KrV A 14f., B 28f., A 801 note/B 829 note) deemed incompatible with the specific scope of transcendental philosophy.

Because of their very nature as instances of a priori knowledge of objects or as cases of a priori objective reference, the cognitions selected for systematic scrutiny in the *Critique of Pure Reason* are based not on experience but on reason. This turns transcendental philosophy into the project of investigating the cognitive potential of reason as such, of reason unaided by experience, in short of “pure reason.” Given Kant's conviction, nourished by the record of widespread disagreement about the reach of reason, that reason's ability to furnish synthetic a priori objective knowledge is as much under claim as it is under doubt, the transcendental project takes on the initial form of a comprehensive assessment of the

² For a sustained reading of the *Critique of Pure Reason* as a transcendental theory of a priori objective reference, see Zöller 1984 and Zöller 1989.

cognitive capabilities (or the lack thereof) of pure reason – an enterprise termed “critique” and giving rise to the work's descriptive title as “Critique of Pure Reason” (KrV A 12f./B 25f.).

At the point of first publication, the project begun and grounded by the *Critique of Pure Reason*, comprised a future metaphysics of nature and a future metaphysics of morals in correlation to the twin areas in which the critical founding of transcendental philosophy deemed synthetic knowledge a priori possible, viz., metaphysical first principles of material nature in space and time and metaphysical first principles regarding the moral nature of human agents (KrV A XXI, B XLIII, A 841f./B 869f.). Kant subsequently saw the need to supplement the *Critique of Pure Reason* with a further *Critique*, the *Critique of Practical Reason* (1788), and eventually with yet another *Critique*, the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* (1790). The unforeseen growth of the critical project led him to reclassify the first *Critique* informally as “critique of pure speculative reason” (KrV B XXII).

The work's redescription was to indicate its focus on reason's cognitive faculty (*Erkenntnisvermögen*) and specifically on the latter's employment independent of experience – by contrast with the second *Critique's* concern with reason's conative capacity (*Begehrungsvermögen*), specifically with the latter's practical faculty to sufficiently determine the will independent of other, empirical motives, and with the third *Critique's* occupation with reason's role – under the guise of the power of reflective judgment – in the aesthetical and logical pursuit of the principle of purposiveness (*Zweckmäßigkeit*) in nature and art.

Still the first *Critique* was to remain a *primum inter pares*, not just the first installment in a series of three but the basis for the other two and the precondition for their interrelated emergence. In fact, renaming the *Critique of Pure Reason* into a “critique of pure speculative reason” did not quite do justice to the work's vast scope, which included in addition to the negative, destructive critique of speculative reason's reach for the metaphysical objects of old (soul, world and God), undertaken in the Transcendental Dialectic, a positive, constructive critique of the non-empirical features underlying experience and hence inherent in the objects of experience, offered in the Transcendental Analytic along with the Transcendental Aesthetic preceding it.

Most importantly, though, the revised unofficial title, “Critique of Pure Speculative Reason,” obscured the first *Critique's* central concern with the possibility of freedom and thus, indirectly but essentially, with the possibility of morality, including that of morally relevant reason. While the *Critique of Pure Reason* nowhere veers off its chief focus on the

range of pure reason in the latter's *cognitive* claims and carries through its investigations with utter impartiality and no extraneous regards, the strategic motivation for undertaking the critique of reason was to assess the limits as much as the extent, the bounds as much as the grounds of pure rational cognition, in view of a possible conceptual space for the practical and specifically moral requirements of reason and the freedom they entail (KrV B XXVII-XXIX).³

To be sure, Kant's ultimate concern with practical reason in undertaking the *Critique of Pure Reason*, as revealed in the dramatic phrase of freedom to be “saved” or “salvaged” (*retten*, KrV A 536/B 564), does not amount to a premeditated manipulation of theoretical reason and its principal critique by the idiosyncratic interests and characteristic concerns of practical, volitional reason. Rather Kant methodically pursues the specific agenda of the first *Critique* without letting himself be detracted by foreign agendas. Yet again and again in that very work he gathers the results obtained to assess them in the wider perspective of the “the entire vocation of the human being” (*ganze Bestimmung des Menschen*, KrV A 840/B 868). In this comprehensive perspective the critique of reason, as it is undertaken in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, aims beyond theoretical reason at practical reason, beyond nature at freedom, beyond knowing at willing, beyond thinking at doing and beyond school wisdom at world wisdom.

3. Critical Dualism

The founding and forging of transcendental philosophy undertaken in outline in the *Critique of Pure Reason* turns on a basic feature that distinguishes Kant's account of cognition from prior and posterior accounts. According to Kant, the faculty of cognition is not a single capacity, subject to further differentiation, yet *originally simple*. Rather with regard to its enabling ground, cognition is twofold, hence *originally complex*. To be sure, the generic title, “faculty of cognition,” remains in operation to designate the ensemble of the two originally distinct kinds of cognition recognized by Kant. But the common term, which serves the convenience of referring to both kinds of cognition together, does not denote a single and

³ The first to notice and appreciate the wider scope of the *Critique of Pure Reason* was Karl Leonhard Reinhold, in publications dating from 1786 to 1787 (Reinhold 2005 and Reinhold 2007).

simple concept of the cognitive faculty as such. It is merely a logical title, to which no entity with an identity of its own corresponds.

The basic dualism that can be found in the account of cognition of the *Critique of Pure Reason* partakes in a more general dualist disposition in Kant. In each of those cases, two related items, while subordinated under a common term and a nominal covering concept, form a twin set no member of which is to be reduced to the other or to some third item. For one, Kant distinguishes the theoretical and the practical use of reason as the specifically different basic capabilities of reason (“faculties,” *Vermögen*) for the cognitive determination of objects and for the conative determination of actions, respectively. Moreover, Kant's entire philosophy, to the extent that it relies on the resource of reason (“pure philosophy,” KrV A 841/B 869), is supported by the twofold distinction between appearances and things in themselves as the two basic ways of considering things or of classifying objects. The designation of the latter differentiation as “critical distinction” (*kritische Unterscheidung*, KrV B XXVIII) reflects its fundamental import for Kant's critical project, which aims at distinguishing (Greek *krinein*) what is distinct but what may have been falsely conflated, confused or collapsed.

To be sure, Kant's principled criticism aims at more than distinction and difference. On the basis of the distinctions and differentiations that prove warranted and required, the critical philosophy investigates the forms of unity and the modes of unification that link what is distinct. It is characteristic for the critical account of such unification and integration that the distinctions remain. Expressed in metaphors favored by Kant, the distinct items are not merged but bridged and provided with a way or means of “transition” (*Übergang*, Kant 1900, 5:176) from one to the other. Typical forms of unification adduced by Kant are the introduction of a common and connecting “third” (*Drittes*, KrV A 138/B 177) that is akin to both of the distinct items but also different from each of them, and the integration of distinct items into the encompassing whole of which they are constitutive members.

The eponymic critical distinction introduced in the *Critique of Pure Reason* and drawn upon in the subsequent installments of the critical trilogy as well as in other chief works of Kant – the distinction between appearances and things in themselves – is in turn based on a prior distinction from which the former form emerges as a “doctrinal concept” (*Lehrbegriff*, KrV A 491/B 519). The most fundamental distinction along with the dualism it entails is that between cognition's two capabilities: that of objects being given and that of objects being

thought. Only the latter capability, which involves the actual production of thoughts-about-objects, can be considered a “faculty” (*Vermögen*) in Kant's activist and productivist understanding of the term. By contrast, the capability of objects-given is, on Kant's terminology, an “ability” (*Fähigkeit*, KrV A 19/B 33).

The distinction between the *passive* cognitive mode in which objects are given and the *active* cognitive mode in which objects are thought leads Kant to attribute the former mode to the mind's “receptivity” (*Empfänglichkeit*) and the latter to its “spontaneity” (*Spontaneität*, KrV A 50/B 74). While “spontaneity” designates the faculty of origination or of bringing something about “on one's own initiative” (Latin, *sponte sua*), “receptivity” marks the ability of undergoing, or being subjected to, determination by way of “impressions” (*Eindrücke*, KrV A 50/B 74). The common character that unites the active and the passive mode of cognition is their relatedness to objects, with the latter taken in a most basic sense that still abstracts from *how* the objects are given and thought.

Drawing on a botanical metaphor, Kant calls the two basic cognitive capacities the two “stems” (*Stämme*) of all cognition, referring to their possible “common root” as, to us at least, unknown (KrV A 15/B 29). From Hegel to Heidegger and well into the present there have been attempts to detect the alleged common root of the receptive and the spontaneous branch of the transcendental tree of knowledge. Typically those trials have involved the identification of the alleged common root with one or the other further faculty or force introduced in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, chiefly the “power of the imagination” (*Einbildungskraft*), which Kant himself assigns the position of a link between the receptive and the spontaneous cognitive capability (KrV A 100-102, B 151f.). Yet Kant's own focus is not on some original unity underlying the distinction between cognitive receptivity and spontaneity but on the cooperation and co-functionality of the two, which are shown to properly perform their separate cognitive functions only in unison.

Given the essential joining of receptivity and spontaneity in the enterprise of cognition, their disjunctive introduction in separate parts of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, the *Transcendental Aesthetic* and the *Transcendental Logic*, has to be put into the proper perspective provided by the subsequent account of their conjunctive relation. The unavailability of a common root does not turn the two cognitive stems into separate trees that could grow and flourish each on their own. Nor does their cooperation sought render the two stems of cognition indistinguishable or identical.

A more technical term for the two stems of cognition and their conjunct disjunction would be that of “elements,” based on the common designation of the Transcendental Aesthetic and the Transcendental Logic as a “Transcendental Doctrine of Elements” (*Transzendente Elementarlehre*) or “elementary science” (*Elementarwissenschaft*, KrV A 16/B 29), as opposed to the “Transcendental Doctrine of Method” (*Transzendente Methodenlehre*), with which the *Critique of Pure Reason* concludes (KrV, A 707/B 735). The physico-chemical concept of “element” conveys both the analytic feature of an ultimate, irreducible component and the synthetic feature of such a component interacting or merging with another component to form a composite or complex unit. Moreover, the connotation of plurality inherent in the conceptuality of cognitive elements is apt to counter and cancel the impression or expectation of a ranking between the basic modes of cognition, suggesting instead equal important and mutual need.

To be sure, the concept of elementary cognitive modes in Kant is complicated by the dual purpose of the Transcendental Logic – more specifically, the latter's first part, the Transcendental Analytic –, which serves both to introduce the thinking-of-objects as the other of the two elements of cognition and to combine the distinct cognitive elements into the composite whole of fully functioning, objectively valid cognition. The precise point of the reentry of the aesthetic element in the Transcendental Logic is the transition from the “metaphysical deduction” (KrV B 159) of the pure concepts of the understanding (categories *qua* “notions,” KrV A 320/B 377) to their transcendental deduction (KrV A 77ff./B 102ff.).

Already one of Kant's first commentators, J. S. Beck, and many interpreters of the *Critique of Pure Reason* since have taken the prominent treatment and the foremost function of the aesthetic element outside the Transcendental Aesthetic and in the Transcendental Analytic as an occasion and a justification for reconceiving the entire work along the lines of a (transcendental) logic into which the aesthetic mode of cognition would be radically integrated. In Kant himself, though, the presentation of the aesthetic cognitive element precedes the logical element in the manner of a pre- and extra-logical condition for the operability of the logical.

In an alternative interpretive move that has a long tradition going back to Fichte, Schelling and Hegel, the presentational precedence of the Transcendental Aesthetic over the Transcendental Logic has been taken to suggest, invite or require a sequential arrangement of the constitutive components that make up the *Critique of Pure Reason*. Typically the

sequence of the receptive and the spontaneous mode of cognition is given a narrative or dramatic rendition in the manner of a pragmatic history of consciousness, a story of self-consciousness or a phenomenology of mind. Again, the sober language of cognitive elements is apt to counteract such dramatizations with the reminder of the separate but equal parts played by receptivity and spontaneity in the comedy of cognition.

4. Sensuous Intuition

In addition to employing functional terms for the two stems of (human) cognition that reflect the passive and active cognitive modality, viz., receptivity and spontaneity, Kant identifies the two key cognitive elements with the more mentalistically cast concepts of “sensibility” (*Sinnlichkeit*) and “understanding” (*Verstand*, KrV A 15/B 29). The latter term takes up the modern designation for the intellect (Latin, *intellectus*) with its focus on the rule-governed activities that the mind brings to bear on the raw material of cognition, generically described as “representations” (Latin *ideae*, German *Vorstellungen*). By contrast, the term, “sensibility,” is taken from its contemporary generic meaning of “pertaining to the realm of the senses” and used by Kant for the designation of a kind or form of cognition specifically and exclusively linked to the operation of the senses.

In Kant's technical usage, the term “sensibility” is detached, though, from the reference to a physiologically concrete form of sensing and not associated with any of the five senses traditionally distinguished. Instead Kant subjects sensibility to the twofold distinction, to be found in Locke and others, between an “outer sense” and an “inner sense” (*äußerer Sinn*, *innerer Sinn*) (KrV A 22/B 37). The absence of physiological specifics in Kant's characterization of sensibility is typical for the procedure of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, which reduces cognitive factors and forces to a non-specific, “transcendental” core meaning that focuses on the function exercised rather than on the concrete circumstances of the function's material manifestation.

In addition to contrasting the two basic modes of cognition as receptivity and spontaneity and aligning the former with sensibility and the latter with the understanding, Kant refines the basic cognitive distinction in terms of the different cognitive conveyances involved. More specifically, he attributes to receptivity the furnishing of “intuitions” (*Anschauungen*) and to the understanding the formation of “concepts” (*Begriffe*, KrV A 19/B

33). The linkage of the formation and deployment of concepts with the understanding continues a long-standing logical tradition that has the understanding provide the concepts to be used in judgments, which in turn enter into (syllogistic) inferences.

By contrast, the association of sensibility with intuition is both novel and surprising. Traditionally “intuition” (Latin *intuitus*, *intuitio*) designated the immediate intellectual grasp of a cognitive matter, as opposed to a conceptually mediated, discursive mode of intellectual cognition. Due to its directness of reference, intuitive cognition was considered superior to conceptually mediated cognition and typically associated with a superior intellect or the intellect of a superior being, as in the divine intellect and its immediate and complete intuition of all things.

Kant disengages intuition from its intellectualist lineage and explicitly links the intuition under scrutiny in the *Critique of Pure Reason* with sensibility. In a radical break with the conventional conjunction of intellect and intuition, he identifies the cognitively relevant kind of intuition as “sensory” (*sinnlich*), thereby pairing two terms that the tradition would have considered incompatible, and joins them in the novel coinage “sensory intuition” (*sinnliche Anschauung*). So new is Kant's de-intellectualization and radical sensification of intuition that there is no direct definition offered – or available – for the term “sensory intuition.” In the opening section of the Transcendental Aesthetic (§ 1 in the counting of sections first introduced in the second edition), when first introducing sensory intuition, Kant rather singles out intuition as that kind of cognition through which, ultimately, all reference to objects takes place and which alone refers to objects “immediately” (*unmittelbar*, KrV A 19/B 33).

Instead of providing a formal definition of intuition, Kant introduces the novel concept by focusing on a special kind or case of intuition that especially exhibits the distinctive features that mark (sensory) intuitions in their difference from (discursive) concepts. Once the meaning of intuition has been established paradigmatically, it is extended – in suitably modified form – to other kinds and cases of intuition. The focal point of Kant's elucidation of sensuous intuition is the notion of a “pure intuition” (*reine Anschauung*, KrV A 20/B 334f.). On Kant's account, such an intuition is the result of an artificial procedure by means of which a complex of features involving intuition is methodically decomposed.

More specifically, Kant has standard cases of intuition, in which an intuition's immediate reference to objects is based on “sensation” (*Empfindung*) resulting in “empirical

intuition” (*empirische Anschauung*) and its undetermined object, “appearance” (*Erscheinung*), undergo a twofold abstraction. First, all conceptual features possibly tied up with an the object of empirical intuition are to be disregarded. Second, the artificial abstraction process is to be extended to the content included in empirical intuition, i.e., sensations (KrV A 19f./B 33f.).

On Kant's account, what is left over after the two-stage purification process of a given appearance – its clearing of concepts and its purging of sensations – is the mere form of intuition, the “pure form of sensory intuitions in general” (*reine Form sinnlicher Anschauungen überhaupt*, KrV A 20/B 34), to be precise. Kant regards such a pure form as the necessary condition inherent in the mind due to which the contingent content of intuition (“manifold,” *Mannigfaltiges*) can present itself in certain ways (“certain relationships,” *gewisse Verhältnisse*, KrV A 20/B 34). The pure form of intuition thus provides the basic formal framework within which contentually concrete intuitions are able to arise.

Yet Kant's focus in the opening pages of the *Transcendental Aesthetic* is not on the formative feature of the pure form of intuition but on the latter's status as an intuition in its own right, and as a pure intuition at that. In addition to lending its form to possible non-pure, material intuitions, the pure form of intuition is to be regarded as itself of the, as yet undisclosed, nature of an intuition. Moreover, the pure intuition is to be identified as that which remains from an empirical intuition and its object, the appearance, after the subtraction of any conceptual and sensational content. It is this form that makes an intuition, any (sensory) intuition, an intuition. In the opening section of the *Transcendental Aesthetic* Kant claims that there are exactly two kinds of such a pure form of intuition – in short, two pure forms of intuition –, which are at once pure intuitions. These are space and time (KrV A 22/B 36).

The *Transcendental Aesthetics* devotes to each of the twin forms of intuition an “exposition” (*Erörterung*, Latin *expositio*; KrV B 38) through a series of analyses that uncover the nature of space and time by a succession of negative and positive arguments. First Kant rules out that the space-concept is empirically based. Instead it is shown to involve a necessary representation that precedes any and all empirical spatial representation. Second Kant rules out that space, by now established to be an a priori representation, has the discursive character of a concept. Rather with regard to its original representation, devoid of any further determinations, space is argued to be an “intuition a priori” (*Anschauung a priori*, KrV A 25/B 39). The arguments for time are developed in an analogous manner.

The crucial features that settles the intuitional rather than conceptual nature of space (and time) in the Transcendental Aesthetic is the latter's mereological peculiarity. According to Kant, space is originally one, and all particular spaces are but parts of an original, all-encompassing space. Moreover, the spatial parts ("manifold," KrV A 20/B 34) do not additively compose the spatial whole but are "limitations" (*Einschränkungen*) of the antecedent spatial *totum* (KrV A 25/B 39). Finally, the whole that is original space does not contain its parts "under itself" (*unter sich*), as in the case of lower, more specific concepts subordinated to higher, more general concepts. Rather original space contains "in itself" the potential parts into which space can be parceled (KrV B 39f.). Accordingly, for Kant, space is, originally, an infinite virtual entity ("given infinite quantum," *unendliche gegebene Größe*, KrV B 39f.) of which all finite spaces are the infinitely many possible delimitations. Mereologically speaking, in the case of original space the whole precedes the parts and not vice versa.

It deserves mentioning that the characterization of space as a virtual *totum* pertains only to original space. Particular, plural spaces already involve the actualization of whole space by procedures of limitation. Similarly the characterization of space as pure intuition pertains primarily to original space. In any particular space the purity of spatial intuition, to the extent that it involves the absence of any conceptual factor or feature, is already suspended through the intervention of the understanding with its conceptual and judgmental forms, assisted by the productive power of the imagination (KrV A 94f., A 97, B 151f.). Moreover, original space is not a manifest form of space to be encountered among objects or entities. It represents the artificially prepared and methodically objectified formal condition of all intuiting in space. Based on an occasional hint by Kant, one could characterize original space as an "idea," to be sure not as an idea of reason but as the sensuous equivalent of such an idea, an "intuitive idea" so to speak.

To be sure, it is easy to overlook and underestimate the highly artificial, methodically crafted status of original space *qua* pure intuition, when Kant himself, in his popular rereading of the *Critique of Pure Reason* in the *Prolegomena* (1783), offers the restated results of the Transcendental Aesthetic in answer to the question "How is mathematics possible?", and when, moreover, he adds some paragraphs to the same effect to the Introduction and the Transcendental Aesthetic in the second edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason* (1787; KrV B 20, B 430f., B 48f.). Yet in all those cases the reference to original

space is not offered as a sufficient and complete account of the possibility of mathematics, implying the absence of conceptual and judgmental features, but in order to adduce the specific, necessary but not sufficient condition involving pure intuition that distinguishes mathematics from other sciences, in particular from natural science (*Naturwissenschaft*) and the latter's specific condition involving pure concepts.

The rationale behind Kant's potentially misleading treatment of space (and time) in the *Transcendental Aesthetic* is that of marking an original distinction between space (and time) as pure intuition, on the one hand, and the conceptual ingredients of cognition subsequently featured in the *Transcendental Analytic*, on the other hand. The introduction of concepts into the very deliverances of sensibility (intuitions), as presented in the *Transcendental Deduction* and the *Schematism of the Pure Concepts of the Understanding*, far from undercutting the distinction between receptivity and understanding, presupposes their original difference as the basis for the complex negotiation between the respective requirements of the twin elements of cognition. In this perspective it is not the pre-conceptual givenness as such, much less some given empirically contingent content, that requires mediation with concepts and imagination-geared take-up procedures on the part of the understanding but the differently natured make-up or constitution of pure intuitions of sensibility, on the one side, and pure concepts of the understanding, on the other side.

The laborious legacy of the *Transcendental Aesthetic* to the *Transcendental Analytic* is compounded by the fact that Kant draws weighty ontological conclusions from the expositions of space and time. Given their original status as pure intuitions and hence their essential involvement in (human) sensibility, space and time cannot be regarded as properties of the things themselves but only as the intuitional forms of things as the latter appear to us under the conditions of sensibility, hence from the “human standpoint” (*Standpunkte des Menschen*, KrV A 26/B 42). Accordingly, space and time along with everything intuited in space and time possess ontological status only for the realm of appearances (“empirical reality”) and lack such status with regard to the things (in) themselves (“transcendental ideality,” KrV A 28/B 44, A 35f./B 52).

As a result of the formal-ontological conclusions drawn from the analysis of space and time, the comprehensive task of the *Transcendental Analytic* is more demanding yet than that of somehow linking the specifically different cognitive elements of intuition and concept.

Faced with the results of the Transcendental Aesthetic, the Transcendental Analytic not only has to establish the principal pertinence of the concepts of the understandings for the intuitions of sensibility. The transcendental treatment of concepts and judgments also has to impart a measure of objectivity to the deliverances of sensibility, which, as such, are “mere appearances” (*bloße Erscheinung*, KrV A 45/B 62) and “representations of appearance” (*Vorstellungen von Erscheinung*, KrV A 42/B 59).

5. Blind Vision

Kant's drastic description of the independent but insufficient contribution of sensuous intuitions to fully functional cognition notoriously states that, in the absence of concepts, intuitions are “blind” (KrV A 51/B 75). The statement of which it constitutes the second half – supplemented by the assertion that in the absence of intuitions, concepts are “empty” – typically is taken to refer specifically to the project of the Transcendental Deduction of establishing the objective reference of the pure concepts of the understanding (categories) “categories *in concreto*.” Yet the statement occurs at the very beginning of the Introduction to the entire Transcendental Logic, including the Transcendental Dialectic, and should be taken to refer to concepts of all kinds as being in need of intuitional warrants. To be sure, the way intuitions serve to validate concepts may vary widely, as indicated by Kant's reference to an intuition as “in some way” (*auf einige Art*, KrV A 50/B 74)) corresponding to a concept.

The wider scope of Kant's wary warning about empty concepts and blind intuitions can be understood to include, in addition to the categories and their schemata, ideas or pure concepts of reason, which, when properly assessed, receive their intuitional warrant through corresponding intuitions not directly and immediately but by way of procedures involving analogy and indirection. In particular, Kant introduces the quasi-schemata provided to speculative ideas in the latter's regulative function of orienting the systematic completion of empirical knowledge (KrV A 674f./B 702f.). Moreover, the later account of the indirect, analogical representation of ideas in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* adds to the schematism of concepts of the understanding the symbolism of the concepts of reason (Kant 1900, 5: 351f.).

A further feature worth noting about the insinuation of “blind intuitions” is a certain functional disparity between the two scenarios involved in Kant's terse statement about

concepts without intuitions and intuitions without concepts. In the *Critique of Pure Reason* and elsewhere Kant actually calls certain concepts “empty,” specifically citing their lack of intuitional warrant (e.g., A 292/B 348, A 486/B 514, A 596 note/B 624 note). Those cases include cognitive claims based on concepts and rational inferences alone and represent instances of formally fallacious reasoning based on erroneous philosophical views, as exposed in the Transcendental Dialectic. By contrast, Kant does not really refer to a specific intuition as “blind” nor does he explicitly employ and actually apply the appellation “blind intuition.” To be sure, this circumstance should not be taken to undercut Kant’s earlier claim that intuitions without concepts are blind. Rather the lack of instances that might fall under the latter description and specifically the factual absence of “blind intuitions” in Kant attests to the artificial, methodically conditioned and hence strategically restricted character of any intuition that is pure in the original sense of being entirely devoid of conceptual components.

Given the elusive nature of “blind intuitions” in Kant, the question arises what it is about intuitions that makes them subject to the possible predicate “blind,” when considered in separation from anything conceptual (“without concepts”). This question is all the more pressing, given that the German term “*Anschauung*,” just as its English equivalent, “intuition,” and its rendition in other languages, draws etymologically on the very word for seeing or regarding (German *schauen*, Latin *videre*). What could possibly be the point in originally linking the term “intuition” with the predicate “blind,” when the very meaning of intuition invokes the notion of sight or vision, thereby placing the term in a long tradition of linguistic practice and philosophical coinage that conceives of cognitive matters in terms of visual phenomena?

To begin with, the term “blind” does not only, and not even originally, refer to a person lacking the faculty of sight. As the opposite of “seeing” with its etymological linkage to distinguishing and making out (German *scheiden*), the term rather refers to a state of non-distinction and to a lack of transparency, hence to opacity. In English the latter sense of “blind” as “opaque” is preserved, e.g., in the word for a window treatment that blocks both the view in and the view out, a special type of such a blind being a “Venetian blind” (Portuguese *veneziana*). By extension, the German word “*blind*,” just as its equivalent in other languages, can be used to designate an object or entity that, either generally or temporally, eludes sighting, such as a blind spot, a blind passenger or a blind date. In all these cases, blindness is not an affliction or impairment but a condition of limited or absent visibility.

Kant himself draws on the sense of "blind" as meaning "lacking discrimination" when he calls the unfree, instinctually determined "faculty of choice" (*Willkür*) to be found in non-rational animals or brutes "blind choice" (*blinde Willkühr*), in contradistinction to the "free choice" (*freye Willkühr*) exercised by human beings (Kant 1900, 15:460, see also 18:256). Similarly, there is talk of "blind chance" (*blinder Zufall*, KrV A 74f./B 99f.; *blindes Ohngefähr*; KrV A 228/B 280) and "blind ... necessity" (*blinde... Notwendigkeit*, KrV A 228/B 280) in Kant. Specifically with respect to human agency, Kant considers "inclination" (*Neigung*) in its basic mode of operation, regardless of whether it happens to be morally minded or not, "blind and servile" (*blind und knechtisch*, Kant 1900, 5:118). He also uses "blind" to designate what cannot be seen in the metaphorical sense of something that cannot be understood, as when he notes, "Blind is what one cannot comprehend" (*Blind ist, was man nicht einsehen kan*. Kant 1900, 17:588).

Based on Kant's widespread usage of the term "blind" to convey restricted or obstructed visibility, to call intuitions without concepts "blind" should not be taken as the outright contradictory claim that a mode of seeing (*Anschauung*) is denied the capacity for vision. Rather the implied term "blind intuition" should be taken to refer to a specific situation in which the vision involved in intuition is obstructed, obscured or occluded. More specifically, the condition of blindness accrues to intuitions if and when they are believed to operate without the additional involvement of concepts. In such cases, where intuitions actually but falsely are believed to function without concepts, the intuitions, upon close inspection, will turn out to malfunction, and this in such a way that, rather than affording visibility and vision as intuitions are supposed to do, the intuitions in question – those without concepts – are "blind." In this regard, then, intuitions without concepts are indeed analogous to concepts without intuitions. In both cases, the belief in functional independence is erroneous and misleading.

In addition to being mistakenly taken for fully functioning intuitions, intuitions without concepts also can be deliberately designed and hence artificially created products of a critical reflection intended to convey the specific but limited contribution that intuitions as such, unaided by concepts, make to the cognition of objects. In such a case, the term "blind," when applied to intuitions, need not exhibit a defect but may serve to describe a specific mode of functionality. In particular, the pairing of the visual connotation of the term "intuition" (*Anschauung*) with a term connoting a lack or an absence of visibility, i.e., "blind," can

convey the limits of what intuition as such is able to bring into view, while retaining the notion that intuition involves some sort of sight.

According to the Transcendental Aesthetic of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, the specific and exclusive contribution of intuition – of intuition as such and by itself – is the presentment of a manifold as yet unordered and, to that extent, undetermined. Due to the form contributed by the pure intuition in its principal role as a form of intuition, the manifold of intuition includes the spatial and temporal proto-structure of next-to-each-other (space) and after-each-other (time) among the manifold. But as the very term “manifold” (*Mannigfaltiges*), artificially coined by Kant, suggests, what is intuited is not a determined order of a spatial or temporal kind, but a mere preorder, proto-order or orderability that is amenable to many, in fact, to infinitely many ways of lending order and bringing determination to the manifold of intuition.

At the most general, “transcendental” level, the manifold of intuition is a “pure manifold” (*reines Mannigfaltiges*) and encompasses space and time as infinite given wholes or *tota* ready for limitative determination to particular places and times. At the specific, “empirical” level, the manifold includes materials under the guise of “sensation” (*Empfindung*) that are ready to serve to individuate the possible spaces and times of the pure manifold of intuition and to turn the latter into manifold empirical intuition. Yet within the specific systematic scope of the Transcendental Aesthetic and its firm focus on intuition as such and by itself, no limitation, determination or particularization of the manifold occurs. Put in the optical imagery suggested by the talk of intuitions possibly being, or having to be regarded as, “blind,” intuition brings into view the manifold as such along with the latter's amenability to being ordered, yet still without any determination to such order. This may seem a minor, minimal contribution but it is one necessarily needed for the subsequent establishment of an order to be determined by formative factor outside of, but not independent of, intuition.

The narrow but essential cognitive contribution of intuition as such is confirmed by the fact that the very forms of intuition, which are first introduced in the Transcendental Aesthetic, make a return appearance in the Transcendental Analytic, where they are subject to various modes of determination. Far from being external prerequisites of cognition, intuitions enter into the completion of cognition at the conceptual level and thus are systematically integrated into the constitution of complete cognition. In particular, the Transcendental

Analytic introduces the power of the imagination (KrV B 151f.) and the faculty of the understanding as forces that shape and transform intuitions by way of synthesis and unification. In the process, the form of intuition turns into “formal intuition” (KrV B 160 note) and virtual space turns into circumscribed or inscribed space (*Beschreibung*, KrV B 154f.).

Most importantly, though, the categorial forms of the understanding bring into play the notion of an object, invariant to subjective perception, resistant against imaginary manipulations, and indicative as well as expressive of objective, normatively binding features that make up an entire world of objects. To be sure, the objective reference of the categories in their original status as “forms of thinking” (*Gedankenformen*, KrV B 150) is limited to the very thinking of such an object (“transcendental object,” KrV A 109), with no object actually given or ascertainable – hence the characterization of concepts alone and on their own as “empty.” It is only by resorting to (possibly) given intuitions that the categories and the empirical concepts under their guidance are able to turn empty reference into the reference to (possible) empirically determined objects. And inversely, it only by being taken up into processes of conceptual determination governed by the categories that intuitions as such, “blind” as they are on their, are turned into formal and material features attributed to (possible) empirical objects.

Viewed against the background of the limited vision attributable to intuition as such and by itself, concepts come with their own visual impairment. Sensory intuitions, considered as such, may be regarded as blind in the sense of not being able to see – at least of not being able to see anything beyond the manifold they contain. Categorial concepts considered as such, by contrast may contain the very form for the thinking of objects, but as original modes of sight they are singularly defective in lacking actual objects to be seen. While intuitions as such cannot see (beyond their manifold), categorial concepts as such see nothing (in particular). It is only under the constellation of mutual aid and enhancement that originally blind intuitions and originally empty concepts supplement each other to constitute cognition proper along with the latter's object domain, empirical objects in space and time.

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