Kant and the "Mystery Hidden" in the Critique of Pure Reason: A Methodological Approach to the A-Deduction Argument*

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ABSTRACT
At the core of Kant's theoretical philosophy lies the deduction of the categories: his effort to secure the distinctiveness of sensibility and understanding and to provide a necessary relation between the domains of these faculties. The argument for this claim is presented in two different versions – i.e., the A and B editions of the Critique of pure reason – and is one of the most puzzling in Kant's corpus. The common view in the literature that considers the importance of the A-deduction and tries to present its structure is that it must be understood in the light of the B-deduction argument. I aim at contesting this view and offering an internal reconstruction of the A-deduction argument which reveals its unique methodology. The thesis advanced is that the A-deduction follows an analytical methodology and that this methodology does not allow the accomplishment of the task of the deduction stated in Kant's effort. At first, Kant's retrospect of the A-deduction (KrV, A XVI - XVII) is taken into account. After that, a consideration of the part of the argument described as 'subjective deduction' (KrV, A 94 - A 130) is carried out.

1. Presenting the problem

In the Preface to the first edition of the Critique of pure reason Kant sets forth that he is

> […] acquainted with no investigations more important for getting to the bottom of the faculty we call understanding, and at the same time for the determination of the rules and boundaries of its use, than those [… of the] deduction of the pure concepts of the understanding (KrV, A XVI).1

These words can be taken as Kant's brief exposition of the seminal task in the establishment of his critical enterprise. In other words, such a deduction would be in charge of setting the faculty of understanding on its own grounds and also providing its relation to the faculty of sensibility. Considered with respect to its aim, this deduction bears upon the justification of the proper method of philosophy, or, as Kant manes it, the justification of synthetic a priori judgments.

On the accomplishment of this task in the first edition version of the Critique, one reads a quite surprising though virtually ignored account:

> [a] certain mystery thus lies hidden here, […] the elucidation of which alone can make progress in the boundless field of pure cognition of the understanding secure and reliable: namely, to uncover the ground of the possibility of synthetic a priori judgments with appropriate generality, to gain insight into the conditions that make

[1] In quoting the *Critique of pure reason*, I use the standard reference to A and B, corresponding to the first edition (1781) and the second edition (1787). I generally follow Paul Guyer's translation indicated in the Bibliography. Whenever I don't, I mention the German text between brackets. All other Kant's texts are referenced in the Akademie Ausgabe (AA), with volume and page. In all quotations, bold and underline are my own.

every kind of them possible, and not merely to designate this entire cognition (which comprises its own species) in a cursory outline, but to determine it completely and adequately for every use in a system in accordance with its primary sources, divisions, domain, and boundaries (KrV, A 10).

Now, if the Critique is really meant to "uncover the ground of the possibility of synthetic a priori judgments", then why is Kant saying that "a certain mystery thus lies hidden" in this uncovering? In this paper, it is sustained that an answer to this question can be given in the light of the outcomes of the A-deduction argument. The thesis advanced is that the A-deduction argument follows an analytical methodology lacking an answer to the raised question, which approaches nothing less than the main task tackled in the Critique.

In spite of its prima facie negligible and unsuccessful character, the A-deduction argument is worth taking into account for at least two reasons: (i.) in it, Kant first sought the ground for his critical enterprise; (ii.) it is an indispensable starting point for the insight into the structure of the B-deduction argument and the critical philosophy as a whole.

In what follows, I shall undertake a systematic survey of the A-deduction argument and its analytical methodology. The paper is divided into two parts. The first one presents and discusses the Preface retrospect of the A-deduction. Three elements of the Preface passage are taken into account: Kant's distinction between 'two sides' of the deduction, his description of the 'chief end' of the deduction, and, finally, the argument that he characterizes as 'sufficient'. The second part attends to the 'side' of the argument that Kant named 'subjective deduction'. Three features of it are contended with: methodology, the concept of 'object', and the task of relating the understanding to sensibility. The paper as a whole can be described as an attempt to present the methodology followed in the A-

deduction argument and to justify why great deal of it was regarded as inappropriate to fulfill the 'proper task of pure reason'.

2. The retrospect of the 1781 argument

Just after asserting that the argument of the deduction holds the most important investigations of the Critique, Kant reminds the reader that, as to the certainty of this argument, an elucidation is to be taken into account.

In the Preface to the first edition, the fragment covering this elucidation can be read in a single paragraph and as a presentation of the whole structure of the argument of the deduction. For this reason, its full quotation is presented in the following and each topic approached in it will be discussed in three moments of the ensuing argumentation.

Kant words for such an elucidation are these:

[t]his inquiry, which goes rather deep, has two sides. One side refers to the objects of the pure understanding, and is supposed to demonstrate and make comprehensible the objective validity of its concepts a priori; thus it belongs essentially to my ends. The other side deals with the pure understanding itself, concerning its possibility and the powers of cognition on which it itself rests; thus it considers it in a subjective relation, and although this exposition is of great importance in respect of my chief end [Hauptzwecks], it does not belong essentially to it; because the chief question [Hauptfrage] always remains: 'What and how much can understanding and reason cognize free of all experience?' and not: 'How is the faculty of thinking itself possible?' Since the latter question is something like the search for the cause of a given effect, and is therefore something like a hypothesis (although, as I will on another occasion [bei anderer Gelegenheit] take the opportunity to show, this is not in fact how matters stand), it appears as if

I am taking the liberty in this case of expressing an opinion, and that the reader might therefore be free to hold another opinion. In view of this I must remind the reader in advance that even in case my subjective deduction does not produce the complete conviction that I expect, the objective deduction that is my primary concern would come into its full strength, on which what is said at pages 92-93 should even be sufficient by itself (KrV, A XVI-XVII).

2.1 The 'two sides' of the deduction

In reading that the deduction or the justification2 of the proper method of philosophy has 'two sides', we must bear in mind that Kant is alluding to one apparatus or mechanism of justification which has a double perspective: (i.) on the one hand, "the objects of pure understanding" and the task of "demonstrat[ing] and mak[ing] comprehensible the objective validity of its concepts a priori"; (ii.) on the other hand, a "subjective consideration

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2 On the equivalence of 'deduction' and 'justification', see Paton (1965, p. 313). Paton argues that "[t]he word 'deduction', Kant explains, is used in its juristic, and not in its logical, sense. It is concerned with vindicating a right, and not with establishing a fact. The transcendental Deduction of the Categories attempts to show the legitimacy of applying the categories to objects, and it might in English be called a 'justification', rather than a 'deduction', of the categories".

One may suspect that Paton's commentary provided the very *raison d'être* for Henrich's well-known "Kant's notion of a deduction and the methodological background of the first *Critique*", in which the latter considers "[…] the reasons for which Kant refers to the juridical paradigm, and why he could and did structure the first *Critique* in its entirety around constant reference to juridical procedures" (Henrich, 1989, p. 32).

of understanding", "concerning its possibility and the powers of cognition on which it itself rests" (All fragments in KrV, A XVI-XVII).

Now, a thorough discussion of this issue would require addressing the following two questions: What does this distinction mean? What is the systematic location, in the context of the argument of the deduction, of what Kant calls 'subjective side' and 'objective side'?

The enigmatic character considered in this distinction seems to justify its neglect by Kant's early critics as well as by a great number of commentators who are devoted to the reconstruction and the clarification of the Deduction argument.3

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3 To become aware of all early critics as well as commentators of the *Critique* would be an unapproachable task. Concerning Kant's critics, it is worth taking into account the reviews written in the 1780s, which, although approaching the deduction argument, do not make any reference to the passage of the Preface just quoted: (i.) *Attempt at a proof that there are no pure concepts of reason that are independent of experience* (1784), by G. G. Selle; (ii.) *Continuation of the examination of Professor Kant's thoughts about the nature of metaphysics – against the Analytic* (1785), by Dietrich Tiedemann; (iii.) *Institutiones logicae et metaphysica* (1785), by Jo. Aug. Henr. Ulrich; (iv.) *On Kantian forms of thought or categories* (1787), by Gottlob August Tittel. These reviews are presented and translated in Sassen (2000, pp. 193-230). With regard to commentators, it is worthwhile to mention that only four approaches of the deduction argument seem to discuss the passage quoted above. These approaches will be presented here and the consideration of their limitation, with respect to the deduction argument given in the first edition of the *Critique*, will be a task for the argumentation underlying the thesis of this paper, i.e., that in confronting the retrospect in the 1781 Preface with the structure of the argument given in this edition, one finds out that Kant tries to provide this argument with an analytical methodology. The approaches at issue are: (i.) Paton (1965, pp. 352-253 – footnote): "[w]hen Kant says this investigation is concerned with the question 'How is the *power of*

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We can only understand Kant's distinction between an 'objective' and a 'subjective' side of the Deduction argument in light of the two elements that account for the task of this argument and, along with this task, the justification of philosophy with a particular method. Namely, the validation of concepts in the domain of understanding, without counting on intuition in the domain of sensibility, and, as regards the use of these concepts on behalf of knowledge, a demonstration of the necessary relation between these domains.

In the first edition, Kant's words on the deduction project – the Preface passage (A XVI -XVII) as well as the text that actually corresponds to the argument (A 94 - 130) – do not seem to take into account the necessity of a conjoined justification of the above mentioned elements.

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thinking itself possible?', he ought to say rather 'How can the power of thinking give us *a priori* knowledge?'"; (ii.) Henrich (1969, pp. 642-643): "[i]n the preface to the first edition of the *Critique*, Kant himself distinguished an objective and a subjective side of the deduction (A XVI). The objective side makes the validity of the categories intelligible, the subjective investigates their relation to the cognitive faculties in us which must be presupposed if these categories are to be used. According to Kant, one can also distinguish these two aspects as the demonstration *that* the categories have validity, and the demonstration *how* they attain validity"; (iii.) Longuenesse (2000a, p. 57): "[…] this separation of the two aspects of the argument is a bit surprising. For if one takes it literally, the entire exposition of the threefold synthesis in its three successive versions, which contains the examination of 'the pure understanding itself, its possibility and the cognitive faculties upon which it rests' (A XVI), seems reduced to the status of mere opinion"; (iv.) Allison (2015, p. 198): "[i]t is difficult to avoid concluding from this [the quoted passage] that Kant was trying to have it both ways regarding the import as well as the status of the subjective side of the Deduction".

From the Preface passage, which is at hand now, it follows that the first element (the assurance of the objective validity of a priori concepts) is to be singly considered and suffices for the aim of the deduction project. Kant states that, in case of doubt regarding the second element (the relation of the understanding to the other powers of cognition), the proof of the first "[…] would come into its full strength" (KrV, A XVII).

It can be point out that, if the deduction is "[...] important for getting to the bottom of the faculty we call understanding, and at the same time for the determination of the rules and boundaries of its use" (KrV, A XVI); then, both elements implied in this task are to be taken into account and in a conjoined way. Let us consider how Kant tries to dismiss this requirement in the first edition by pointing to a 'chief end' and presenting a supposed 'sufficient' argument for the deduction.

2.2 The 'chief end' (Hauptzwecks) of the deduction

Kant justifies that the 'subjective side' of the deduction, which would establish the relation of the understanding to the other powers of cognition, can be disregarded on the ground of the assertion that this part of the investigation "[…] does not belong essentially to" his "[…] chief end" (KrV, A XVII).

Moreover, he comes to this assertion by presenting two questions: (i.) one belonging to the 'objective side' of argumentation and endowed with certainty, i.e., "What and how much can understand and reason cognize free of all experience?"; (ii.) the other pertaining to the 'subjective side' of argumentation and characterized as a 'hypothesis' or a mere 'opinion', i.e., "How is the faculty of thinking itself possible?" (Both fragments in KrV, A XVII). The former is defined as representing the 'chief end' of the deduction and the latter as liable to disregard.

The search for an insight into this distinction could lead to the interpretation of the second question as the inquiry into what, at the end of the Introduction to the Critique, Kant named "[…] a common but to us unknown root" of "[…] sensibility and understanding" (KrV, A 15 / B 29).

Nevertheless, this interpretation would have at least three problems: (i.) in the A-deduction argument, Kant would have attempted to investigate something which, in the Introduction, he defines as unavailable by any philosophical consideration; (ii.) the 'common root' of sensibility and understanding would not be something regarded as 'unknown', but something that – taken, in the words of the Preface passage, as a 'hypothesis' or an 'opinion' – could still be provided as knowledge; (iii.) from the claim, in the Preface passage, that, "on another occasion [bei anderer Gelegenheit]" (KrV, A XVII), it would be shown that the question "How is the faculty of thinking itself possible?" was not a matter of mere opinion; it would follow that, in the Introduction, Kant was declaring the Critique's failure in assuming the 'common root' as an indemonstrable principle.

Now, by setting as the 'chief question' (Hauptfrage) the consideration of "What and how much can understand and reason cognize free of all experience?", Kant does not detract from the importance of the question "How is the faculty of thinking itself possible?". On the contrary, the latter is characterized as "[…] of great importance in respect to [his] chief end" (KrV, A XVII).

What is the 'chief end'? With an answer, we return to the confluence of the two points which comprise the task of deduction: the validity of pure concepts without the help of the sensible domain of intuition and the restriction of their use, regarding human knowledge, to this domain.

It is important to bear in mind that, in the Preface passage, Kant seems to be aware that the 1781 argument gives an answer to what is raised as the 'chief question' (Hauptfrage), but does not provide what is assumed to be

the 'chief end' (Hauptzwecks) of the Deduction. For the latter, an answer to the question "How is the faculty of thinking itself possible?", which is also of "great importance" to it, would be required.4

Thus, Kant's claim that this question "does not belong essentially" to the 'chief end' can be read as his uncertainty, in the 1781 argument, about the 'second side' of the task of the Deduction. Namely, the 'side' that would provide the relation of the understanding with the sensible domain of intuition. In Kant's own words, its relation to "[…] the powers of cognition on which it itself rests" in order to provide human knowledge (All fragments in KrV, A XVII).

We must now consider the argument which Kant takes to be a justification of such knowledge without the

4 Here is a point of disagreement with Allison (2015, p. 199). Allison argues that "[…] when Kant claims that the objective side would be 'sufficient by itself' he should be taken to mean sufficient for the chief end of the *Critique* rather than for the deduction of the categories". An immediate, because perhaps the most obvious, question to be put to Allison's position would be this: how would the *Critique* achieve its chief end without the attainment of this end in the deduction argument? Moreover, Kant himself points out that the "chief end" of the *Critique* relies upon the deduction argument. In this regard, it is worth quoting two passages: (i.) *KrV*, A 88 / B 121: "[…] the reader must be convinced of the unavoidable necessity of such a transcendental deduction before he has taken a single step in the field of pure reason; for he would otherwise proceed blindly, and after much wandering around would still have to return to the ignorance from which he had begun"; (ii.) Prol, AA 04: 260: "[…] I proceeded to the deduction of these concepts, from which I henceforth became assured that they were not, as Hume had feared, derived from experience, but had arisen from the pure understanding. […] I could therefore take sure, if still always slow, steps toward finally determining, completely and according to universal principles, the entire extent of pure reason with regard to its boundaries as well as its content".

necessity of answering the question "How is the faculty of thinking itself possible?", and, therefore, achieving the 'chief end' of the deduction.

2.3 The 'sufficient' argument of the deduction

We have seen that, in the Preface passage, Kant advises the reader to disregard what he there describes as the 'subjective side' or the part of the 1781 argument which "does not belong essentially" to the 'chief end' of the deduction. Now we shall take into account the portion of the argument that he regards as endowed with certainty, i.e., what is defined as 'objective deduction' and characterized as an argumentation that "[…] would come into its full strength". Hence, "[…] what is said at pages 92-93 [and] should even be sufficient by itself" (All fragments in KrV, A XVII).

Admittedly, more important than the assumption of thirty-five pages of the 1781 argument characterized as mere opinion, is the presupposition of the sufficiency of deduction in only two pages of argumentation.5

The argument that, in the 1781 edition, Kant defines as 'sufficient' for answering the 'chief question' of the deduction is found in a single paragraph of perhaps unparalleled density (KrV, A 92-93 / B 125-126). Its structure can be presented as follows:

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5 In the secondary literature, it seems to be completely neglected that Kant conceives the sufficiency of 1781 version of the deduction in only two pages as well as how he presents the structure of the argument in these pages. Not even Henry E. Allison, who recently – in his *Kant's transcendental deduction*: an analytical-historical commentary (2015) – presented a thorough analysis of the deduction, mentions this fact and the structure of the supposed 'sufficient' argument.

(i.) The question now is whether concepts do not also precede a priori, as conditions under which alone something can be, if not intuited, nevertheless thought as object in general.
(ii.) All experience contains, in addition to the intuition of the senses, through which something is given, a concept of an object that is given in intuition or appears.
(iii.) Something is possible as an object of experience only under the presupposition of concepts which precede a priori this experience. (from (i.) and (ii.)).
(iv.) All empirical cognition of objects is necessarily in accord with such concepts. (from (iii.)).
(v.) Concepts of objects in general lie at the ground of all knowledge of experience as a priori conditions. (from (iii.) and (iv.)).
(vi.) The objective validity of the categories, as a priori concepts, rests on the fact that through them alone is experience possible (as far as the form of thinking is concerned). (from (v.)).
(vii.) Only by means of the categories can any object of experience be thought at all. (from (vi.)).
(viii.) Categories are related necessarily and a priori to objects of experience. (thesis, from (vii.)).

This is the argument that, in the Preface passage, Kant defines as 'objective deduction' and characterizes as 'sufficient'. In the following, three aspects of it are contended with, i.e., its structure, its reference and aim, as well as its methodology.

On the structure of the argumentation: the thesis presented in '(viii.)' takes the conditional premise given in '(i.)' – that is, "The question now is whether concepts do not also precede a priori" – as the ground of the proof. As a result, the thesis itself cannot avoid conditionality.

A passage following the argument (KrV, A 94) can certainly be interpreted as Kant's confirmation of this conditionality:

[t]he transcendental deduction of all a priori concepts therefore has a principle toward which the entire investigation must be directed, namely this: that they must be recognized as a priori conditions of the possibility of experience (whether of the intuition that is encountered in them, or of thought).

Indeed, modalization in two moments of this passage seems to amount to the recognition that the thesis "Categories are related necessarily and a priori to objects of experience" is not something demonstrated, but something "toward which the entire investigation must [still] be directed". In a word, in the quoted argument, it is not ensured that the categories actually are "a priori conditions of the possibility of experience", but merely that "they must be recognized as" such.

On the reference and the aim of the argumentation: in the Preface passage, Kant stated that the argument at A 92-93 had reference to "the objects of the pure understanding" and aimed at "demonstrat[ing] and mak[ing] comprehensible the objective validity of its concepts a priori" (KrV, A XVI).

Nevertheless, in a close consideration of this argument, one can find at premise '(iv.)' a different reference, i.e., "empirical knowledge of objects". Moreover, the possibility of this reference relies necessarily upon what at premise '(i.)' is defined as belonging to the domain of pure understanding and, therefore, "thought as object in general". Hence, according to what is outlined at premise "(v.)", such reference count on the presupposition that "[**c**]**oncepts of objects in general** lie at the ground of **all knowledge of experience**".

The proof ensuring this presupposition would precisely account for the demonstration that the faculty of

understanding, by itself, can provide the ground of "all knowledge of experience".

With regard to this aim, one finds, at premise '(vi.)', the categorical assertion that "[t]he objective validity of the categories, as *a priori* concepts, rests on the fact that through them alone is experience possible". As this premise lies on the same ground of the thesis of the argument – namely, on the conditionality of premise '(i.)' – it should also be taken as something that still "must be" demonstrated.

On the methodology of the argumentation: from the two previous sections, it can be pointed out a conditional structure as well as an unstated reference and an unachieved aim for the argument that, in the Preface passage, Kant regarded as 'sufficient'. We may now consider the methodology behind these outcomes.

It is important to realize that these outcomes are due to Kant's own making. That is, a direct consequence of his attempt at disregarding – in the Preface passage as well as in the A 93-94 argument – the contribution of the sensible domain to human knowledge.

Admittedly, in searching, within the 'sufficient' argument, for a contribution of the sensible domain to the alluded 'empirical cognition of objects' or 'knowledge of experience', one will find no answer as to what its role is.

Yet, Kant seems to attempt at developing an **analysis** of the concept of experience, which is assumed as composed by intuitions and concepts (premise '(ii.)'), in order to account for the thesis that "[c]ategories are related necessarily and *a priori* to objects of experience" (presented in '(viii.)').

Strawson (1966, pp. 31-32), while explicitly supporting this analytical methodology and just before describing Kant's further argumentation on the deduction as "[…] an essay in the imaginary subject of transcendental psychology", states:

I have treated the Deduction as an argument, which proceeds by analysis of the concept of experience in general to the conclusion that a certain objectivity and a certain unity are necessary conditions of the possibility of experience. And such an argument it is.

Ameida (1998, p. 154), most probably following Strawson, argues that:

[…] the method of proof used by Kant in the Deduction [...] can be summarized, I believe, in the observation that it is possible to establish the truth of a proposition A by proving that it is the necessary condition of the truth of another proposition B. It remains, thereby, the problem of realizing how to independently establish, i.e., without circularity, the truth of this dependent proposition B. This problem is solved, however, by showing that accepting this dependent proposition is part of the formulation of the problem, as this proposition implies the formulation of the problem in the assumption of the truth of proposition A. Hence, we will have the following argumentative strategy: A is true because it is a necessary condition of B, and B is true, by hypothesis, because it belongs to the formulation of the question concerning the truth of A.
This is, in my view, the argumentative scheme of Deduction.

Had Kant accepted the sufficiency of Strawson's proposed 'argument' or Almeida's 'argumentative scheme', he would have reached the aim of the deduction with the mere analysis of the concept of 'experience'.6 As to Kant's

[6] See Henrich (1969, p. 650). Henrich argues that "[t]he papers documenting Kant's reflections on the different methods for a transcendental deduction postdate the second edition of the *Critique* by almost ten years. Of course it is possible to show that

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own overall aim within the deduction argument, i.e., ruling out the real possibility of unconceptualized or unconceptualizable appearances, we can say that the so called 'objective deduction' fails to accomplish this aim.

Recalling the three aspects of the 'objective deduction' discussed above may give us a clue to the understanding of this failure: (i.) an argument structured upon a conditional premise does not hold an assertive conclusion that categories are 'necessarily and a priori' related to objects of experience; (ii.) the reference of this argument, namely, (an object of) experience, which implies both sensible and intellectual features, is not pictured in the concept of an 'object of the pure understanding'; (iii.) a methodology departing from an analysis that takes this reference to be a hybrid compound and prospects its justification in the segregation of an intellectual ground, i.e., the categories, does not rule out the possibility that the ground lies in the sensible side and, therefore, comes out to be an empirical determination of human knowledge.

On the proposed analytical methodology, the following questions are worth raising: How would this methodology account for the deduction of the categories as to "the determination of the rules and boundaries of its use" (A XVI)? Why, then, in the Preface passage, Kant points to the insufficiency of the 'objective deduction' for what he takes to be the 'chief end' of his investigations and asserts that "on another occasion" (A XVII) this end would be attained?

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all the ideas necessary for a deduction according to the analytical method had been already available to him when he published the first edition of the *Critique*". See also Henrich (2001, p. 101). Here, Henrich argues that "[…] in terms of the design of his system, in 1762 Kant would already have a proposal for a program that could fundamentally be carried out on the basis of the analytical method".

A consideration of the second 'side' of Kant's investigations in the A-deduction argument – i.e., that which he named 'subjective deduction' – may help us answering these questions.

3. The 'subjective deduction' argument

In a passage that belongs to the 'side' of the argument which might "not produce the complete conviction" (A XVII) – and, most likely for this reason, peculiar to the 1781 edition –, Kant clearly addresses the task of the deduction:

[t]he pure understanding is thus in the categories the law of the synthetic unity of all appearances, and thereby first and originally makes experience possible as far as its form is concerned. But we did not have to accomplish more in the transcendental deduction of the categories than to make comprehensible this relation of the understanding to sensibility and by means of the latter to all objects of experience, hence to make comprehensible the objective validity of its pure a priori concepts, and thereby determine their origin and truth (KrV, A 128).7

7 Allison (2004, p. 159) argues that "[…] the B-Deduction argument is structured in such a way as to make it evident that the central problem is the demonstration of a connection between the intellectual and sensible conditions of human cognition. Although this is likewise true of the A-Deduction, it is obscured there by the way in which Kant presents his argument". In a footnote to this passage, Allison (2004, p. 475) specifies that "[i]t is not, however, completely obscured. A case in point is the suggestion that the purpose of such a deduction is 'to make comprehensible this relation of the understanding to sensibility and by means of the latter to all objects of experience' (A 128)". In a recent work, Allison (2015, pp. 278-279) argues that "[t]he

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At first glance, it might appear that at this passage, which is offered as the outcome of the 1781 argument, Kant had succeeded in achieving the 'chief end' or the task of the deduction. A systematic consideration of the argumentation preceding this outcome may suggest, however, that the situation is not so clear cut.

Accordingly, what should be understood is why, in the Preface passage, Kant himself casted doubt on the the certainty of this outcome. In this case, three features of the so called 'subjective deduction' call for comment: its methodology, the concept of 'object' held in it, and the relation of the understanding to sensibility.

3.1 On the methodology of the 'subjective deduction'

Presumably, the main reason behind Kant's rewriting of the transcendental deduction is methodological in nature.

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significance of this remark [from A 128] […] stems from the fact that it underscores the nature of the problematic underlying the Deduction. […] [T]his problematic must be viewed in light of Kant's sharp distinction between sensibility and understanding [and…] the issue shifted to the question of their integration, particularly with respect to *a priori* cognition (the problem of the synthetic *a priori*)". One can also find an appropriate presentation of the problem of the deduction in Henrich (1969, pp. 650-651): "[b]esides the task of providing the objective validity of the categories, Kant also assigned to the deduction the task of making intelligible the possibility of relating the understanding to sensibility".

Notwithstanding Allison's and Henrich's precise approaches of the problem of the deduction, it is at least curious that, not even Allison, who devotes his *Kant's transcendental deduction* (2015) exclusively to the deduction problem, makes any comment on the reasons Kant had to dismiss the A-deduction argument on behalf of this problem .

Hence, we must consider that, if the 'chief end' or the task of the deduction is the same in both editions – i.e., establishing the validity of the categories in the domain of the understanding and their legitimate use in the domain of sensibility –, in the 1781 edition, there is a peculiar methodological attempt at achieving it.[8]

This is because – following the argument of A 92-93, which Kant called 'objective deduction' and maintained in the second edition – the methodology of the so-called 'subjective deduction' argument is also structured as analytic.

As one can consider already in the presentation of the argumentative strategy which is peculiar to the latter argument:

> [i]t is entirely contradictory and impossible that a concept should be generated completely a priori and be related to an object although it neither belongs itself within the concept of possible experience nor consists of elements of a possible experience. For it would then have no content, since no intuition would correspond to it though intuitions in general, through which objects can be given to us, constitute the field or the entire object of possible experience […].

[8] In fact, it is in light of the consideration that both editions face the same task with different methodologies that one can understand Kant's remark on the A-deduction argument given in the in the 1786 *Metaphysical foundations of natural science*: the "[…] lack [Mangel] concerns only the manner of presentation [Art der Darstellung] and not the ground of explanation [Erklärungsgrund]" (*MAN*, AA 04: 474). Translation is my own. Thus, one can point out the defense of the autonomous establishment of the faculties of understanding and sensibility and, as regards to the justification of human knowledge, the search for a necessary relation between them, as elements which are both figuring in the critical enterprise as a whole.

Hence if one wants to know how pure concepts of the understanding are possible, one must inquire what are the a priori conditions on which the possibility of experience depends and that ground it even if one abstracts from everything empirical in the appearances. A concept that expresses this formal and objective condition of experience universally and sufficiently would be called a pure concept of the understanding (KrV, A 95-96).

The fundamental premise underlying Kant's argumentative strategy in this passage is that a concept which is generated a priori and related to an object is necessarily contained in the concept of a possible experience and, therefore, generated out it. This on the ground of the assumption that reference to an object can only be make in the field of possible experience, which furnishes the only condition under which objects can ever be given, i.e., intuition.

It follows, thereby, the conclusion that one can "know" that "pure concepts of the understanding are possible" taking into account "the a priori conditions on which the possibility of experience depends and which ground it even if one abstracts from everything empirical in the appearances".

In a word, the 'side' of the argument that Kant named 'subjective deduction' adopts as its methodology the analysis of the concept of possible experience and aims at establishing that, within this experience, "pure concepts of the understanding are possible".9

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9 This analytical methodology proposed in the A-deduction argument is also supported by the text peculiar to the 1781 Introduction to the *Critique*. In the first lines of this Introduction, Kant states the necessity of distinguishing, as to "possible experience", what concerns "*a priori* cognitions" – which are "clear and certain for themselves" – from what matters merely to "experience" – this one "cognized only *a posteriori*". In order to

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As it is also acknowledged by another passage, which seems to hold Kant's central attempt at justifying an analytical methodology in the A-deduction argument:

[…] cognition […] is a whole of compared and connected representations. If therefore I ascribe a synopsis to sense, because it contains a manifold in its intuition, a synthesis must always correspond to this, and receptivity can make cognitions possible only if combined with spontaneity. This is now the ground of a threefold synthesis, which is necessarily found in all cognition: that, namely, of the apprehension of the representations, as modifications of the mind in intuition; of the reproduction of them in the imagination; and of their recognition in the concept. Now these direct us toward three subjective sources of cognition, which make possible even the understanding and, through the latter, all experience as an empirical product of understanding (KrV, A 97-98).

According to this passage, by means of an analysis of a possible experience – transcendentally characterized as "cognition" or a "whole of compared and connected representations" –, which is the result of the activity of the

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do that, he assumes that "[…] what is especially remarkable is that, even among our experiences, cognitions are mixed in that must have their origin *a priori* and that perhaps serve only to establish connection among our representations of the senses. For if one removes from our experiences everything that belongs to the senses, there still remain certain original concepts and the judgments generated from them, which must have arisen entirely *a priori*, independently of experience, because they make one able to say more about the objects that appear to the senses than mere experience would teach, or at least make one believe that one can say this, and make assertions contain true universality and strict necessity, the likes of which merely empirical cognition can never afford" (*KrV*, A 2).

three "subjective sources" (sense, imagination and apperception), one could grasp the possibility of the faculty of the understanding and the legitimacy of its pure concepts. This strategy relying upon the assumption that the upshot of the activity of these three sources implies the pure concepts of the understanding.

In a word, through an analysis of a possible experience justified as the outcome of a threefold synthesis one would come to the justification of the conceptual apparatus underlying it: the categories. Thus, the so called 'subjective deduction' seems to count on an analytical method examining the activity of the three subjective sources that form this synthesis. This aiming at justifying that the result of their activity rests on pure concepts of the understanding.10

We shall consider how this analytical methodology bears upon Kant's attempt at providing a solution to two essential problems held in the A-deduction argument. Hence, in the flowing sections, it will be worth inquiring into the concept of 'object' and the relation of the understanding to sensibility.

3.2 The concept of 'object' in the 'subjective deduction'

In order to grasp what Kant is getting at in the A-deduction argument, it is essential that we delve into what he means by the concept of 'object' in this argument. This shall lead us to the recognition of a unique approach of this concept in the 1781 edition of the Critique.

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10 Although not pointing up a peculiar methodology of the A-deduction argument, Longuenesse (2000a, p. 58) gives an accurate statement that seems to support it: "[…] the method of the A deduction […] consisted in uncovering the 'threefold synthesis' underlying the psychological genesis of our empirical cognitions".

Kant's first consideration of the concept at issue is given in the following passage:

> […] here then it is necessary to make understood what is meant by the expression 'an object of representations'. We have said, above, that appearances themselves are nothing but sensible representations, which must not be regarded in themselves, in the same way, as objects (outside the power of representation). What does one mean, then, if one speaks of an object corresponding to and therefore also distinct from the cognition? It is easy to see that this object must be thought of only as something in general = X, since outside of our cognition we have nothing that we could set over against this cognition as corresponding to it (KrV, A 104).

This passage contains the gist of Kant's 1781 approach of the concept of an 'object' of human cognition. In this dense bit of text, which belongs to the section of the A-deduction argument entitled "on the synthesis of recognition in the concept", Kant points out that an object resulting from this conceptual activity of synthesis is not given as "appearance". Whereas the latter is "nothing but" a sensible representation; the former, since undetermined on behalf of human knowledge, is "thought of only as something in general = X".

This characterization "of an object corresponding to and therefore also distinct from the cognition" leads to a duality between what, in the domain of the faculty of receptivity (sensibility), would be given as mere representation and what, in the domain of faculty that operates discursively (the understanding), would be thought as an indeterminate object.

This duality is also emphasized in another passage, in which Kant states the task of the deduction as the guarantee that "[…] appearances [which] are not things in themselves, but themselves only representations, […] in

turn have their object, which therefore cannot be further intuited by us, and that may therefore be called the non-empirical, i.e., transcendental object = X" (KrV, A 109).

In the subjective deduction argument, this task faces the problem that "[t]he pure concept of this transcendental object (which in all of our cognitions is really always one and the same = X)", in this characterization, "refers to nothing" in the domain of sensibility (Both fragments in KrV, A 109). Correlatively, a determination stemming from such a concept would be merely undecided in the faculty of the understanding and unrelated to what is given as appearance.11

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11 See Perin (210, pp. 116-117): "[i]n the suppressed passages of the Chapters 'On the deduction of the pure concepts of the understanding', 'On the ground of the distinction of all objects in general into *phenomena* and *noumena*', and 'The paralogisms of pure reason', Kant supports two theses that are peculiar to the 1781 edition of the *Critique*: (i.) the 'object' of reference, given 'outside of us' in space, could only be determined as a thing in itself, what, within the limits of Kantian idealism, does not comprise any determination at all. Hence, the conclusion of the paralogism of ideality that '[…] the existence of all objects of outer sense is doubtful' (*KrV*, A 367; see also *KrV*, A 376); (ii.) what is 'drawn' outside of general logic in order to establish the determination of an object, this one distinct from and also related to knowledge, has as its reference merely what Kant defines as 'transcendental object = X' (See *KrV*, A 109 and A 250-251). […] the dismissal of these theses, along with their systematic consequences, may be taken as the main reason leading Kant to replace and rewrite the argumentation of the *Critique* in the 1787 edition. […] *The 1781 position* implied three instances of objects: (i.) appearances, internal representations of the subject; (ii.) things-in-themselves, unknown to this subject; (iii.) the transcendental object, an indeterminate correlate to appearances. *In the 1787 position*, the justification of appearance, not as a mere representation of the subject, but as an effective object of knowledge, implies the presupposition of something permanent in space. Nevertheless,

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Considered in light of the distinction between a transcendent object = X and an object of a mere sensible representation (an appearance), the duality of Kant's concept of 'object' would also outline his approach of the 'chief end' or the task of the deduction in the 1781 argument.12

3.3 The task of relating sensibility and understanding in the 'subjective deduction'

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the main premise that underscores Kant's critical philosophy is maintained in both editions, i.e., that this presupposition cannot rely upon something unknown to the subject".

12 On Kant's abandonment of the 1781 concept of 'object', see Robinson (1987, p. 45). Robinson considers that "[…] the disappearance of the A-Deduction's Threefold Synthesis marks a significant change in Kant's view of combination, and that this change represents an important new development in Kant's thinking concerning the nature of the object of knowledge". In another passage – Robinson (1987, p. 52) – this consideration is justified: "Kant is thus driven in the B-Deduction to abandon that immanent combination which the Threefold Synthesis was designed to support. But he cannot abandon the position that combination is an accomplishment of the mind: the validity of the categories, and with it the possibility of synthetic *a priori* knowledge, depends on this position. He must devise a way to the mind to accomplish combination without the requirement of the immanent of all the representations to be combined. And he does this by locating the combination, not in the compound *representation*, but in the object itself.

This object cannot, however, be the A-deduction Transcendental Object = X […]. Kant had already rejected the realist thing in itself and phenomenalist (Berkeleyan) versions of the object of knowledge; now he is obliged to abandon also the coherence-tag version (the Transcendental Object = X)".

As it was indicated before in the discussion of the methodology of the 1781 argument, the task of the deduction consists in demonstrating that "receptivity can make cognitions possible only if combined with spontaneity" (KrV, A 97). Presented in its generic form, this task implies the insight into the "relation of the understanding to sensibility" (KrV, A 128). Furthermore, it was also noted in the discussion of the concept of 'object' that, in the first edition of the Critique, this task faces the situation that the 'reference' of the concepts of the understanding would not be given in the domain of sensibility.

Now we shall advance a detailed consideration of the passages in which, in line with his conception of the object of cognition, Kant approaches the task of the deduction in the A-deduction argument.

A first passage facing the task of the deduction is given in the section "provisional explanation of the possibility of the categories as a priori cognitions". In it, Kant argues that

> [w]ere the unity of synthesis in accordance with empirical concepts entirely contingent, were not concepts based on a transcendental ground of unity, it would be possible for a swarm of appearances to fill up our soul without experience ever being able to arise from it. But, in that case, all relation of cognition to objects would also disappear, since the appearances would lack connection in accordance with universal and necessary laws, and would thus be intuition without thought, but never cognition, and would therefore be as good as nothing for us. The a priori conditions of a possible experience in general are at the same time conditions of the possibility of the objects of experience.
> Now I assert that the categories that have just been adduced are nothing other than the conditions of thinking in a possible experience, just as space and time contain the conditions of the intuition for the very same thing. Hence, they are also fundamental concepts for thinking objects in general which correspond to the appearances and have a priori objective validity, which was just what we really wanted to know (KrV, A 111).

Kant is here describing the task of the deduction following the same strategy considered in the so called 'sufficient argument' from A 92-93. This means that his argumentation is again resting upon a hypothetical premise: were not the categories "based on a transcendental ground of unity", then "it would be possible for a swarm of appearances to fill up our soul without experience ever being able to arise from it", and, on account of this, "all relation of cognition to objects would also disappear".

Indeed, this conditionality, which is pointed out in the passage at issue and presumed in the A-deduction argument as a whole, results from the fact that, in the 1781 edition, Kant counts on an analytical methodology allowing for a concept of experience that is taken to be an outcome of the activity of the three "subjective sources" of human mind.

In the passage just quoted, Kant assumes this concept of experience and tries to go backwards in order to present the legitimacy of the categories which would be lying as its foundation. Therefore, Kant's methodological strategy can be presented as follows: experience, as a set of organized perceptions, relies upon a transcendental principle of unity, which, in turn, implies pure concepts that ensure the reference of cognition to objects.

In the second paragraph of the passage, taking the conditionality of his state of affairs for an assertion, Kant claims that the categories, which "are nothing other than the conditions of thinking in a possible experience", "are also fundamental concepts for thinking objects in general which correspond to the appearances and have a priori objective validity".

Moreover, this 'correspondence', relating an undetermined general object of the understanding and a mere appearance fitting sensibility, remains to be proved or as something that one still "really want[s] to know". Rendering Kant's own words: it remains to be

demonstrated that intuition attended by thought catches sight of cognition.13

Another passage which calls for comment is the one announcing imagination as a faculty that accounts for the a priori synthesis of the manifold.14 Now, Kant states that:

[b]oth extremes, namely sensibility and understanding, must necessarily be connected by means of this transcendental function of the imagination, since otherwise the former would to be sure yield appearances but no objects of an empirical cognition, hence there would be no experience (KrV, A 124).

Two features of this passage merit discussion. The first is that the "connection" of the "extremes" is not proved but merely presupposed. Indeed, neither in this nor in other passages of A-argument does Kant provide any justification for the fact that "[b]y means [of imagination] we bring into combination the manifold of intuition on the one side and the condition of the necessary unity of apperception on the other" (*KrV*, A 124).[15] That is why Kant furnishes a

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[13] Kant's well-known statement is given at *KrV*, A 51 / B 75: "[t]houghts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind".

[14] On this characterization of imagination in the first edition of the *Critique*, see also: (i.) *KrV*, 120: "There is thus an active faculty of the synthesis of this manifold in us, which we call imagination"; (ii.) *KrV*, A 123: "The imagination is therefore also a faculty of a synthesis *a priori*, on account of which we give it the name of productive imagination, and, insofar as its aim in regard to all the manifold of appearance is nothing further than the necessary unity in their synthesis, this can be called the transcendental function of the imagination".

[15] Here is a point of disagreement with Longuenesse (2000a, p. 61) on this issue. She argues that "[a]ccording to the A

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modalized assertion, i.e., "sensibility and understanding **must necessarily be connected** by means of this transcendental function of the imagination".

The second noteworthy feature of the passage concerns Kant's claim that, without any role played by the understanding, sensibility alone "would to be sure yield appearances". It is difficult to avoid concluding from this that Kant's position in the A-deduction argument is in contradiction with the accomplishment of the task of the deduction. That is, in contradiction with the necessity of the deduction in order to rule out the possibility that "[…] appearances could after all be so constituted that the

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Deduction, the synthesis or combination of the sensible manifold (whether it is the manifold of an empirical representation or the manifold of a pure representation, such as that of space and time) was performed by imagination. The *unity* of this synthesis, that is, the 'consciousness of the unity of the act' to which each apprehended and reproduced element belongs, was yielded by transcendental apperception which 'in its relation to the synthesis of the imagination' is the understanding. Thus the function of synthesis attributed to imagination clearly served as a *mediator* between the sensible given and the unity of understanding". Longuenesse is clearly able to sum up Kant's overall argumentation and his systematic intentions behind it. Yet, it is important to take into account that, as a consequence of the duality in his conception of the object of knowledge (i.e., transcendental object = X *versus* appearance), Kant does not provide any justification for the assumed thesis that transcendental apperception is related to the synthesis of the imagination. Now, this means that for imagination to "serv[e] as a *mediator* between the sensible given and the unity of understanding", Kant needs to prove that the unity of the representations of what is **given** in sensibility is the very same of that by the faculty of the understanding providing that "[…] the manifold is **thought** as belonging to one object [Objekt]" (*KrV*, A 129). I cannot see how the A-deduction argument would accomplish this task.

understanding would not find them in accord with the conditions of its unity" (*KrV*, A 90 / B 123).

A third and last passage on the task of the 'subjective deduction' is presented as the "[s]ummary representation [Summarische Vorstellung]" of the 1781 argument. Here (*KrV*, A 129), Kant says that

> […] if we have to deal only with appearances, then it is not only possible but also necessary that certain a priori concepts precede the empirical cognition of objects [Gegenstände]. For as appearances they constitute an object [Gegenstand] that is merely in us, since a mere modification of our sensibility is not to be encountered outside us at all. Now even this representation - that all these appearances and thus all objects [Gegenstände] with which we can occupy ourselves are all in me, i.e., determinations of my identical self - expresses a thoroughgoing unity of them in one and the same apperception as necessary. But this unity of possible consciousness also constitutes the form of all knowledge of objects [Gegenstände] (through which the manifold is thought as belonging to one object [Objekt]).

It is noteworthy taking into account that this passage counts on the equivalence between what, due to sensible representations, is constituted as an object (*Gegenstand*), and what, owing to pure concepts of the understanding, is "thought as belonging to one object (*Objekt*)".[16] That is,

[16] Allison (2015, p. 380 - footnote) points out that "Kant uses two terms that are translated as 'object': '*Object*' or '*Objekt*' and '*Gegenstand*'" and argues that "[i]t must be emphasized, however, that the distinction is between two conceptions of an object rather than between two kinds of objects". This commentary, as it is considered in Allison's own intention, covers only the B-deduction argument. Indeed, in the second edition of the *Critique*, Kant seems quite aware that what is set down as 'appearance' should pertain both to the sensible and the intellectual domains

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Kant is here relying on the assumption that the unity of representations given in sensibility "in one and the same apperception" is the same "unity of possible

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of human knowledge if the deduction is to achieve its task. In the A-deduction argument, on the other hand, the duality between 'appearance' (*Gegestand*) and the 'transcendental object = X' (*Objekt*) seems to rule out such an interpretation.

Thus, here there is another point of disagreement with Longuenesse (2000b, p. 102) as to her attempt to understand the B-deduction in line with the Kant's concept of object which is peculiar to the A-deduction argument. She argues that "[…] already in the first part of the [B] Deduction, the notion of an object is to be analyzed as involving (i) the 'undetermined object of an empirical intuition' (the appearance of the Transcendental Aesthetic), (ii) the object of the *synthesis* of appearances (cf. §17 of the Deduction, at B137: 'the *object* is that, in the *concept* of which the manifold of a given intuition is *united*' – all emphases are Kant's), and (implicitly) (iii) the transcendental object, namely the object we presuppose as independently existing, and by reference to which we seek agreement among our synthesizes representations". Were this proposal accepted, one would have to justify how Kant could get on with the task of the deduction dealing with a multiple characterization of the object of knowledge. Moreover, one would have two important consequences for Kant's position: (i.) "the transcendental object, namely the object we presuppose as independently", taken as that "to which we seek agreement among our synthesized representations", would be the very first ground of his theory of cognition. Therefore, Kant would have to admit that cognition is based on the object and not on the mode of cognition of the subject; (ii.) the admissibility of the outcomes of the Aesthetic within the first step of the B-deduction would imply the abandonment of the self-sufficiency of the sensible and intellectual domains of human cognition.

consciousness" which ensures in the understanding that "the manifold is thought as belonging to one object".[17]

This consideration of the task of relating sensibility and understanding in the 'subjective deduction' completes our survey of the A-deduction argument. Presented in the summary form of the three passages in which Kant approaches this task, the 'subjective deduction' can be seen as based upon a fundamental duality between the sensible and the intellectual domains of human knowledge. Together, the hypothetical presumption of the categories for a concept of experience stemming from the threefold synthesis (*KrV*, A 111), the postulation of imagination as a transcendental function connecting the faculties of sensibility and understanding (*KrV*, A 124), and the assumption of the identity of a ground unifying representations in the domain of these faculties (*KrV*, A 129), point to the need for another methodological approach to the transcendental deduction. Kant's call for the disregarding of the 'subjective deduction' in the Preface passage seems to be the very first recognition of this need.

4. Concluding remarks

I have argued that the A-deduction argument follows an analytical methodology and that the insufficiency of this methodology is the reason behind Kant's replacement of this argument. The A-deduction is usually thought to be ruled out down to the B-deduction structure. On the interpretation I propose, by contrast, understanding the

[17] As Barker (2008, p. 274) puts it: "[…] whether or not the argument is sound, Kant believes he has shown that transcendental apperception is not just a subjective condition of thought, but that it is also a necessary condition of objective cognition".

replacement of the A-deduction demands attending to the features justifying its unique methodology.

Compared to existing accounts, a methodological interpretation of the A-deduction argument has significant advantages: (i.) it explains the details of the A-deduction's outline provided in the Preface to the first edition of the Critique; (ii.) it makes it possible to describe the relation of this outline to the argument of the A-deduction; and, finally, (iii.) it explains the insufficiency of the argument by itself, thus justifying Kant's discontentment at it in the Preface, and the methodological difference in the strategy he would adopt in the B-deduction.

If the thesis of this essay is convincing, it has important implications for the understanding of Kant's theoretical philosophy. Spelling out all these implications lies beyond the scope of this paper. Yet, I do want to mention, as a guise of closing remark, just one important consequence that is virtually ignored in the literature and which seems to account for Kant's overall verdict on the methodology of the deduction argument. Namely, his treatment of the question "How is the faculty of thinking itself possible?" (KrV, A XVII).

While in the A-deduction the answer to this question was disregarded on account of a methodology implying the analysis of experience in a subjective consideration of the understanding and the "[…] the powers of cognition on which it itself rests [den Erkenntniskräften, auf denen er selbst beruht]" (KrV, A X VI – XVII); in the B-deduction, its answer would be the starting point for an autonomous justification of the categories as well as for the assurance of their relation to sensible intuition. In spite of following a methodology unsuitable for fulfilling the 'proper task' of the deduction, the A-deduction argument presented this task quite well. That is, in it one finds the two main features of Kant's theoretical philosophy: the distinctive character of sensibility and understanding and the necessity of a relation between them. These, I suggest, are the features

with which any serious interpretation of the deduction of the categories must deal.

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