

## *Kant, Perception, and Disjunctivism*

### **The Question – What *did* Kant think about intentionality?**

Over the past thirty years, Kant has been read variously as a conceptualist representationalist, as a nonconceptualism representationalist and as a naïve realist. All of these approaches face significant obstacles. My aim is to sketch an alternative.

### **Some Definitions and a Textual Desideratum**

‘Naïve Realism’ = The phenomenal character of veridical visual experience is essentially determined by non-representational, acquaintance-like, relations to mind-independent objects.<sup>1</sup>

‘Soft disjunctivism’ = The veridical case and the hallucinatory case differ in significant psychological respects.

‘Hard disjunctivism’ = There is no common psychological element in the two cases.

The nearest Kantian equivalent to our use of ‘perception’ is ‘intuition’, ‘*Anschauung*’.<sup>2</sup> All other things being equal, we should prefer readings on which non-rational animals can also have intuitions.

### **Three Sets of Texts**

#### *Denial of Accuracy.*

‘Truth or illusion is not in the object, in so far as it is intuited, but in the judgment about it, in so far as it is thought. It is therefore correct to say that the senses do not err—not because they always judge rightly but because they do not judge at all’. (KrV, A294/B350; similarly Anth 7:146 )

This suffices to rule out straight forwardly representationalist readings of intuition, and also to rule out more sophisticated McDowellian style approaches when combined with our desideratum above.

*Particularity.* The way concepts relate to particulars is ‘mediate, by means of a mark, which can be common to several things’. Intuition, in contrast, is ‘immediately related to an object and is singular’ (KrV A320/B377).

Strong and weak readings of this passage are available. Compare:

‘[I]ntuitions represent objects *immediately* because they *present* the particular object itself, as opposed to being representations that enable us to think about it whether it is present or not. (Allais 2009: 389)

‘The distinction of intuition and concept thus corresponds to the distinction between the particular and the general’ (Gardner 1999: 66)

#### *Anti-Relationalism.*

‘*Sensibility*...contains two parts: *sense* and the *power of imagination*. – The first is the faculty of intuition in the presence of the object, the second the faculty of intuition even *without* the presence of the object.’ (Anth. 7:153)<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For current purposes, ‘constitution’ formulations are equivalent provided Russellian proposition representationalism is fenced off.

<sup>2</sup> I’m going to ignore pure intuitions: ‘intuition’ throughout means empirical intuition.

<sup>3</sup> Similarly KrV: ‘*Einbildungskraft ist das Vermögen, einen Gegenstand auch ohne dessen Gegenwart in der Anschauung vorzustellen*’ (B151).

‘The difference between truth and dream, however, is not decided through the quality of the representations that are referred to objects, for they are the same in both.’ (Prol. 4:290)

There is also a complex positive account of hallucination involving imagination and inner sense (e.g. Stephenson 2015:505).

*Stock Take.* Not NR, and not any simple form of relationalism; but also not any form of representationalism.

### **Steps towards an Alternative Reading – Soft Disjunct and Property Clusters**

*An Austinian Step.* Drop object-involving notions of phenomenal character: V and H states have the same phenomenal character but nevertheless are psychologically significantly different. This difference earns its keep some other way.

*Johnstonian Property Clusters.* V and H states are both relations to property clusters; this explains the shared phenomenology. The difference is that in the V case the profile is actually instantiated and in the H case it is not

It is a scene type or *sensible profile*, a complex, partly qualitative and partly relational property, which exhausts the *way* the particular scene before your eyes is if your present experience is veridical....Despite including such relations to a particular place and time, the layout is a relational type rather than a token, a universal rather than a particular. Different things could instantiate the same spatio-temporal layout... This means that the objects of hallucination and the objects of seeing are in a certain way akin; the first are complexes of sensible qualities and relations while the second are spatio-temporal particulars instantiating such complexes.’ (Johnston 2004:134)

*Textual Fit?* ‘Intuition’ means particular instantiation. Compare K’s response to the ontological argument (A600/B628). ‘Schemata’ generated by the ‘imagination’ are sensible profiles which may or may not be instantiated. K distinguishes thus them both from images (too particular) and from concepts (not sensory enough). The imagination can:

[S]pecify the shape of a four-footed animal in general, without being restricted to any single particular shape that experience offers me or any possible image that I can exhibit in concreto. (A141/B180)

Elsewhere he glosses as a ‘monogram’, ‘outline’ [*Umriß*], ‘sketch’ [*Zeichnung*] or ‘silhouette’ [*Shattenbild*] (KrV A142/B181, A833/B862 A570/B598). It is thus a *Versinnlichung* of a concept (KU 5:351–2). All this explains the apparently contradictory statements re imagination as enabling intuition ‘even *without* the presence of the object.’

### **Some Problems – Particulars and Sensory Integration**

Johnston style accounts face some familiar problems. I think some are tractable: e.g. Pautz’s 2007 original [P] ‘Necessarily, if x is visually aware of y, then y must occupy physical space before x’ or the worry about globally uninstantiated universals (the latter at least in a Kantian context). But the same basic problem which bedeviled K arises here too – in a sensory context, how do you tell a story about the supposed presence of the universal that doesn’t collapse back into particularity? The best we can do it seems is a particular that serves some kind of exemplary role – and it is no accident strands of the phenomenological tradition went down this route in their story about the imagination. But it readmits sense data and undermines the key Johnstonian defence re screening off.