

# Naïve Realism In Kantian Phrase

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Early twentieth-century philosophers of perception presented their naïve realist views of perceptual experience in anti-Kantian terms. For they took naïve realism about perceptual experience to be incompatible with Kant's claims about the way the understanding is necessarily involved in perceptual consciousness. This essay seeks to situate a naïve realist account of visual experience within a recognisably Kantian framework by arguing that a naïve realist account of visual experience is compatible with the claim that the understanding is necessarily involved in the perceptual experience of those rational beings with discursive intellects. The resultant view is middle way between recent conceptualist and non-conceptualist interpretations of Kant, holding that the understanding is necessarily involved in the kind of perceptual consciousness that we, as rational beings, enjoy whilst allowing that the relations of apprehension which constitute perceptual consciousness are independent of acts of the understanding.

## 1. Introduction

Our textbook nativity stories often trace the foundation of analytic philosophy back to the rejection of neo-Hegelian idealism in Cambridge at the start of the twentieth century. It is less often appreciated that this rejection was also a rejection of *Kantian* idealism and, in particular, a rejection of Kant's account of the role the mind plays in shaping perceptual access to the world. The birth of analytic philosophy in both Oxford and Cambridge involved a sustained engagement with Kant's works and many of those involved in this undertaking – G.E. Moore, John Cook Wilson, H.A. Prichard – rejected Kant's account of perceptual consciousness as incompatible with a straightforward realism about our perceptual access to empirical objects.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The clearest statement of this rejection is in Prichard's *Kant's Theory of Knowledge* (Prichard 1909). Both Cook Wilson and Prichard lectured on Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* (Prichard 1909, p. iii) and Cook Wilson's writings (Cook Wilson 1926) contain a number of discussions of Kantian themes. Indeed, A.S.L. Farquaharson, in his memoir of Cook Wilson, goes so far as to trace the origins of the Oxford strand of early analytic philosophy back to questions posed by a student during Cook Wilson's lectures on Kant (Cook Wilson 1926,

These Oxford and Cambridge realists instead endorsed a view on which perceptual consciousness is constituted by a primitive relation of acquaintance or apprehension, one which presents the world to the perceiver by way of non-conceptual sensory capacities and without any input or intellectual activity from the apprehending mind (Cook Wilson 1926; Prichard 1909; Moore 1903b; Russell 1910, 1912). They differed, at least after some vacillation in Cambridge, as to the second relatum of this relation. The Oxford Realists held that this relation of apprehension is one that subjects stand in to ordinary empirical objects and their properties; the Cambridge Realists – motivated by considerations involving illusions and mistaken appearances – recanted this view in favour of the claim that it is a relation that subjects stand in to mind-independent but non-physical sense-data (Moore 1913; Broad 1923; see also Martin 2003; Hatfield 2013).

Let us call the view which remained in Oxford *naïve realism*. It encompasses a tradition in the philosophy of perception which stretches from Cook Wilson and Prichard to the recent writings of Mike Martin and Charles Travis amongst others. Naïve realist accounts of perceptual experience have become central in recent debates about our perceptual access to the world (Martin 2002a; Campbell 2002b; Brewer 2011; Travis 2013a). And the claim of these early realists was that naïve realism is incompatible with Kant's views on the nature of perception.

This may sound like common sense. After all, we all know that Kant is a transcendental idealist – and whatever transcendental idealism is, it doesn't sound very naïve, nor very realist. My aim in this paper is to show that this reaction is mistaken. Kant's account of perception has much in common with naïve realism, and the early-twentieth-century naïve realist conception of visual perception can be incorporated within a recognisably Kantian framework.

Why think that naïve realism is incompatible with Kant's views on the nature of perception? §2 will characterise naïve realism in more detail. For now, the following rough characterisation will suffice: naïve realism takes visual perceptual consciousness to be constituted by

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p. xix). The 1897 and 1898 dissertations which Moore submitted for the Trinity College Prize Fellowship examinations (Moore 2011) include sustained discussion of Kant's idealism and mark the start of Moore's conversion from idealism to realism; his 'Refutation of Idealism' (1903b) and 'Kant's Idealism' (1903a) – the title of the former containing a somewhat ironic allusion to Kant – include a rejection of Kantian claims about perception as incompatible with realism. See Hanna (2001) for further discussion of the anti-Kantian character of early analytic philosophy.

primitive relations of apprehension. Subjects can stand in these relations without representing the world as being a particular way. The objects of these relations are the ordinary empirical objects which populate the world around us. And in virtue of standing in these relations, perceptual consciousness presents us with the empirical world.

This account of visual perceptual consciousness has important affinities with Kant's discussion of our perceptual access to objects. I will outline the case in more detail in §3 below, but for now note that, according to the first *Critique*, there are two distinct faculties involved in human cognition: a passive faculty of sensible reception and an active faculty of the understanding (A50/B74). The role of sensibility is to provide us with objects; it does this through intuitions [*Anschauungen*] which relate us immediately to the objects of experience. In contrast, the role of the understanding is to enable us to think of objects, and it does this through the use of concepts [*Begriffe*] (A19/B33). Both capacities are drawn upon in our cognizing the world: 'without sensibility no object would be given to us, without understanding no object would be thought' (A51/B76). But 'these two faculties cannot exchange their functions. The understanding is not capable of intuiting anything, and the senses are not capable of thinking anything. Only from their unification can cognition arise' (A51/B76).

This division of our cognitive faculties appears to imply that sensibility alone is sufficient for the perceptual presentation of objects in intuition: 'objects are given to us by means of sensibility, and it alone yields us intuitions' (A19/B34). And 'intuition by no means requires the functions of thinking' (A91/B123); it is given 'prior to all thinking' (B132). This suggests that sensibility presents us with objects without any input from our conceptual faculties. Although this doesn't entail a naïve realist account of perceptual consciousness, it at least seems compatible with it and the potential similarities are intriguing.

So whence arises the incompatibility? The trouble arises because Kant appears to take back this initial characterisation of sensibility – or, at least, severely reinterpret it – in the Transcendental Analytic section of the first *Critique*. In contrast with sensibility, the understanding is a faculty for judging or thinking (A69/B94); it does this by means of concepts which represent what is common to more than one object (A19/B33); and all judgements are 'functions of unity among our representations' (A69/B94). But 'the same function which gives unity to the various representations in a judgment also gives unity to the mere synthesis of representations in an intuition' (A79/B105), and

‘all synthesis, through which even perception itself becomes possible, stands under the categories’ (B161). Thus perceptual consciousness itself involves acts of synthesis undertaken by the understanding and guided by conceptual capacities. And if perceptual consciousness involves acts of synthesis undertaken by the understanding, then purely sensible relations alone cannot suffice for perceptual consciousness, contrary to the tenets of naïve realism.

The Oxford Realist response to this supposed incompatibility is to reject Kant’s theory of perceptual experience. An alternative response is to deny that Kant held the understanding to be constitutive of perceptual consciousness. According to recent *non-conceptualist* interpretations of Kant (Hanna 2001, 2005; Allais 2009, 2012), Kant denies that the application of concepts is necessary for the perceptual presentation of outer particulars. One striking motivation for endorsing such a view consists in the ascription to Kant of some form of relational or naïve realist account of perception. As Allais puts it, ‘although he does not explicitly situate his view in terms of the theories of perception we discuss today, [Kant] clearly commits himself to a key part of the direct realist or relational position’ (2011, p. 382). The reasoning follows that of the Oxford Realists: if Kant held that sensibility alone suffices for perceptual consciousness, he cannot have thought the involvement of conceptual capacities necessary for such consciousness.

These non-conceptualist interpretations make naïve realism compatible with Kant by denying that Kant held the understanding to be necessarily involved in perceptual consciousness. On this picture, the understanding is not involved in ‘the basic capacity to perceive particulars but ... [only in] the capacity to apply empirical concepts in judgements’ (Allais 2012, p. 103). Such an account brings Kant’s theory of perceptual experience very close to the naïve realism of the Oxford Realists: perceptual consciousness presents us with outer particulars without any involvement of the understanding. But it does so by denying any necessary involvement of the understanding in perceptual consciousness.<sup>2</sup>

My aim in this paper is to present an alternative way to reconcile naïve realism and Kant’s theory of perceptual experience: one which holds, with naïve realism, that visual perceptual consciousness is

<sup>2</sup> Such views can allow the understanding to be causally relevant in bringing about perceptual consciousness. And they can allow occasions on which perceptual consciousness is cognitively penetrated by the understanding. But they deny that there is anything necessary about such penetration. See §3 below.

constituted by relations of apprehension but claims also that the understanding is necessarily involved in the perceptual experience of those rational beings with discursive intellects. The resultant view is middle way between recent conceptualist and non-conceptualist interpretations of Kant, holding that the understanding is necessarily involved in the kind of perceptual consciousness that we, as rational beings, enjoy whilst allowing that the relations of apprehension which constitute perceptual consciousness are independent of acts of the understanding.

The title of the paper comes from P.F. Strawson's 1979 paper, 'Perception and Its Objects'. In that paper, Strawson undertakes to provide a strict account of visual experience which in no way 'distort[s] or misrepresent[s] the character of that experience as we actually enjoy it' (Strawson 1979, p. 127). The resulting account of our ordinary conception of visual experience has been claimed to have affinities with both naïve realism *and* concept-involving accounts of perception.<sup>3</sup> And Strawson summarises it in the following words: 'mature sensible experience (in general) presents itself as, in Kantian phrase, an *immediate* consciousness of the existence of things outside us' (p. 132, emphasis in original). The words 'in Kantian phrase' are often excised in quotation. But they are my spur in what follows. For they offer the promise that a naïve realist account of visual perception can be accommodated within a Kantian account of experience, one which takes the understanding to be actively involved in perceptual consciousness contrary to both the Oxford realists and the non-conceptualist interpreters of Kant.

I'll proceed as follows. In §2 I set out a more specific characterisation of naïve realism and clarify its supposed tension with Kant's account of perceptual experience. In §3 I provide some reason for thinking both that Kant's account of sensibility can profitably be read on the model of a naïve realist account of visual perception and that Kant was committed to the involvement of the understanding in perceptual consciousness. In §4 I suggest a way in which a Kantian account of experience can make room for the naïve realist picture of visual perception by showing how naïve realism about visual experience is compatible with the essential involvement of the

<sup>3</sup> See Crane (2005a, pp. 245-57); Nudds (2009, p. 334 fn. 2) for references to Strawson in the context of motivating naïve realism; see Strawson (1979, p. 129) for the claim that 'sensible experience is permeated by concepts'; and cf. Strawson (1992, p. 62).

understanding in the perceptual consciousness of rational beings.<sup>4</sup> And in §5 I consider the relation of this Kantian form of naïve realism to Kant's project in the first *Critique*.

The operative term here is *Kantian*: I do not take myself to show that these are Kant's ways of thinking about the issues. Contemporary ethics distinguishes between *Kant's* ethics and *Kantian* ethics (O'Neill 1989, Part III; Wood 2008, ch. 1.1). Kant's ethics is 'the theory that Kant himself put forward' whilst Kantian ethics is 'an ethical theory formulated in the basic spirit of Kant, drawing on and acknowledging a debt to what the author of the theory takes to be his insights in moral philosophy' (Wood 2008, p. 1). The account of visual experience motivated in this paper is put forward in the spirit of a *Kantian* approach to the philosophy of perception. What I hope to provide are some suggestions for how the naïve realist insight can be accommodated within a recognisably Kantian framework for thinking about the distinction between sensibility and the understanding and the involvement of each faculty in perceptual consciousness.

One caveat before I begin: I will conduct this discussion within a framework of empirical realism and put to one side issues about how my proposal relates to transcendental idealism. This is not because I think the relation unimportant. Rather, I take it that transcendental idealism is Kant's explanation for certain features of our empirical cognitive life and thus that we can investigate Kant's account of how our intellectual capacities are active in perceptual consciousness whilst remaining neutral on the question of whether this aspect of cognition requires a transcendental idealist explanation.

## 2. Naïve Realism

Some definitions. The *phenomenal properties* of an experience are those in virtue of which there is something it is like to have the experience. The *phenomenal character* of an experience consists of its phenomenal properties. We type visual experiences by their phenomenal character: two visual experiences are of the same fundamental kind if and only if they have the same phenomenal character (Soteriou 2005, p. 194). *Relational* theories of visual experience are those on

<sup>4</sup> I confine myself here to visual perception. Kant draws distinctions between the five senses in the *Anthropology*, in particular distinguishing the objective senses of touch, sight and hearing from the subjective senses of taste and smell (*An* 7:154). These differences may be important in thinking about what a Kantian account of each sense would look like and I do not want to prejudge that issue here.

which the phenomenal properties of the experiences involved in vision essentially involve non-representational relations of apprehension in which subjects stand to objects. *Representational* theories of visual experience are those on which the phenomenal properties of visual experiences essentially involve representational properties. The qualifier ‘non-representational’ in the definition of relational theories reflects the fact that relational theorists take the relations of apprehension involved in visual experience to be primitive and not explicable in terms of the perceived object being represented as being some particular way (Brewer 2011, p. 94; Soteriou 2011, p. 225).

Some notes. First, this framework characterises theories which aim to give an account of the subjective character of visual experiences. Theories which don’t aim to give such an account – such as, perhaps, Burge (2010) – are not covered by this framework. Second, certain representational theories claim to allow visual experience to possess relational elements in virtue of its involving a representational state with singular or *de re* content (Schellenberg 2011): these views sometimes present themselves as being both relational *and* representational. But to the extent that these views take the relations involved in visual experiences to be explained in terms of representational content, they do not count as relational theories according to this framework.

We can use these distinctions to map the three dominant views in the philosophy of perception literature.<sup>5</sup> *Naïve realism* is a relational theory of visual experience: it holds that a certain class of visual experiences, namely those involved in visual perceptions, have a phenomenal character which involves relations of apprehension holding between perceivers and empirical objects and their features. *Sense-datum theories* agree with naïve realism that the phenomenal properties of the experiences involved in visual perception consist of relations of apprehension but deny that the relata of these relations are ordinary empirical objects. *Intentional* theories hold that the phenomenal properties of visual experience are representational.

Intentional theories come in two stripes, depending on whether one takes it that the representational properties which determine the phenomenal character of a visual experience are constrained by the concepts possessed by the subject of the experience. Conceptualist intentional theories hold that subjects of visual experiences must possess the concepts required to specify the content of those

<sup>5</sup> See Martin (2002a), Crane (2005b) and Nudds (2009) for characterisations of the debate along these lines.

representational states which determine the phenomenal character of visual experience; non-conceptualist intentional theories reject this claim. This terminology should not be confused with the use of the terms ‘conceptualism’ and ‘non-conceptualism’ in the Kant literature. In what follows I shall use the terms exclusively in the Kantian sense and put to one side these versions of intentional theories.<sup>6</sup>

Naïve realism is sometimes expressed as the claim that visual perceptions have empirical objects and their features as constituents (Martin 2004, p. 39; Nudds 2009, p. 334; Campbell 2002b, p. 116). This is accurate so long as the notion of constitution is understood to rule out views on which visual perception has an object-dependent representational content (McDowell 1994; Brewer 1999). On these latter views, empirical objects can perhaps be said to constitute visual perception, for they feature in the object-dependent representational content which itself constitutes the phenomenal character of visual perception. This is not the sense of constitution which characterises naïve realism: for the naïve realist, empirical objects constitute visual perception through our non-representationally apprehending them.

A further distinction. We can distinguish *strong* and *weak* forms of each theory. Strong representational theories hold that *all* of the phenomenal properties of visual experiences are representational properties. Weak representational theories hold that at least *some* of the phenomenal properties of visual experiences are representational properties. Mutatis mutandis for relational theories. Some naïve realists explicitly commit themselves to strong relational theories (Brewer 2007, p. 89) but there are no grounds for thinking that all must do so

<sup>6</sup> One question about this framework is where to place the account of perception defended by John McDowell (1994, 1998). Relational theorists often cite him as a proponent of a representational theory of perceptual experience, on the grounds that McDowell takes perception to have a certain sort of content (Brewer 2007). McDowell disputes this characterisation: he takes his view to show that the proper account of the relational aspect of perception cannot do without representational notions and thus that relational views are compatible with perceptual experience having content (McDowell 2008a, 2013a), albeit content which is ‘intuitional rather than propositional’ (McDowell 2008b, p. 200). This makes it difficult to place McDowell in the above framework. McDowell has some characteristics in common with naïve realist relational theories since he holds that ‘[i]f something in one’s surroundings is in view for one, that is a relation one stands in to it’ (2013a, p. 144). But this relational aspect is not primitive since he takes visual perception to be, at root, a representational notion, and to be cashed out in a distinctive notion of content. I will put McDowell’s account of perception to one side in what follows. Since McDowell draws explicitly on Kant in setting out his account of perception (2008a, p. 262–4), there is no reason to think that his account is in tension with Kant’s views on the nature of perceptual consciousness.



(Soteriou 2011, p. 225; Phillips 2005). In what follows I will confine myself to strong naïve realism since the early twentieth-century realists who took their naïve realism to be incompatible with Kant's account of perceptual consciousness were strong naïve realists. But to the extent that the conflict between naïve realism and Kant turns on whether there exists a primitive relation of apprehension which is independent of the activity of the understanding, the incompatibility claimed by the early twentieth-century realists will also encompass weak naïve realism even if such views hold that there is more to perceptual consciousness than relations of apprehension.<sup>7</sup>

Why think that naïve realism is incompatible with Kant's account of the involvement of the understanding in perception? The case for incompatibility is set out most forcefully by H.A. Prichard in his 1909 book *Kant's Theory of Knowledge*, written whilst he was a Fellow of Trinity College, Oxford. In his survey of English language commentaries on the first *Critique*, W.H. Walsh sums up the book as follows: '*Kant's Theory of Knowledge* is ... not so much a serious study of Kant as a work using Kant as a stalking-horse in an argument for independent philosophical conclusions. Yet it remains, for all the crudities of its interpretation and the insensitivities of its author, an impressive book' (Walsh 1981, p. 732). Both of these comments seem to me to be accurate: Prichard's opposition to Kant takes place in the service of his own philosophical account of perception and knowledge, but the resulting account is one of considerable philosophical interest.

The account of perception and knowledge which Prichard elucidates and defends is one firmly situated in the Oxford Realist tradition. The starting point is the claim that acts of knowing are, by definition, distinct from the things known (Prichard 1909, pp. 108, 118). Knowledge must be sharply distinguished from judgement, opinion and belief: 'Knowledge is *sui generis* and therefore a "theory" of it is impossible. Knowledge is simply knowledge, and any attempt to state it in terms of something else must end in describing something which is not knowledge.' (p. 245) This matters for any account of perception because empirical knowledge presupposes perception (p. 133) and because the perception of spatiotemporal particulars puts one in a position to know about them (pp. 133-5). Perception must therefore be understood as a way of apprehending a reality

<sup>7</sup> See Gomes (2014) for an application of this distinction to the debate about Kant's views on perception.

independent of our acts of knowing which thereby makes us knowledgeable of it.

Prichard uses this framework to motivate a naïve realist account of perception: perception is the passive faculty by means of which we sensorily apprehend individuals which are independent of the act of perceiving them (pp. 27-30, 133); it is a non-propositional mode of awareness which takes particulars as objects (pp. 44-5); it thus differs fundamentally from the conceptual apprehension of universals or facts (pp. 28, 44). Such an account of perception is required, Prichard claims, if we are to hold on to the Oxford Realist conception of knowledge. And it is this account of perception which forms the basis of Prichard's opposition to Kant.<sup>8</sup>

At issue is Kant's notion of synthesis (1909, p. 217). Kant introduces synthesis as the activity of 'putting different representations together with each other' (A77/B103); it is a 'necessary ingredient' (A120n) in the perception of objects because otherwise the manifold of intuition would be 'dispersed and separate in the mind' (A120); without synthesis we would have only 'unruly heaps' of representations [*Vorstellungen*] (A121). But 'the same function which gives unity to the various ideas in a judgement also gives unity to the mere synthesis of various ideas in an intuition' (A79-80/B105-106) and all combination is an act of the understanding (B130; see also B137). Thus the perceptual presentation of particulars in intuition involves an act of the understanding.

The nature of this act of the understanding is a delicate issue. Béatrice Longuenesse distinguishes 'two aspects of the activity of understanding' (Longuenesse 1998, p. 63): the understanding as rule-

<sup>8</sup> See Kalderon (2011), Kalderon and Travis (2013) and Hatfield (2013) for recent naïve realist readings of Prichard; see also Marion (2000) which suggests a similar reading. Prichard's contemporaries focused on this aspect of his view: see, for example, Price's discussion of Prichard's views on perception in his biographical memoir of Prichard in the *Proceedings of the British Academy* (Price 1947). The Editor has pointed out to me a passage in which Prichard distinguishes perception from 'perception in the full sense' and claims that the latter includes both perception and conception (1909, p. 29). This passage might suggest that Prichard endorses only a weak form of naïve realism since it appears to allow two elements to perceptual consciousness: a primitive relation of apprehension and the conceptual representation of the object perceived. But Prichard does not return to the notion of 'perception in the full sense' in his writings, and his extensive discussion of the problem of illusory experiences does not make use of any conceptual element to perceptual consciousness in providing an account of illusory experiences. For these reasons, I take Prichard's basic notion of perception to capture perceptual consciousness proper. His discussion of perception in the full sense seems like an attempt to capture the fact that there is an intentional use of verbs of sense-perception (as Anscombe 1965 was later to point out). Thanks to the Editor for helpful discussion of Prichard's views.

giver for the synthesis of the manifold in intuition and the understanding as combiner of concepts in judgement. Similarly, one might distinguish between acts of the understanding which gather representations together in accordance with concepts, and those which involve attributing general attributes to representations. The details don't matter for Prichard: on either construal, perceptual consciousness constitutively depends on the activity of the understanding. And it is this which Prichard takes to be incompatible with naïve realism.

Why is the constitutive claim incompatible with naïve realism? For Prichard, the constitutive claim entails that knowledge 'consists in an activity of the mind by which it combines the manifold of sense on certain principles ... and by which it thereby gives the manifold relation to an object' (p. 230); knowledge-enabling perceptual consciousness thus depends on an act of combination undertaken by 'the productive faculty of the imagination, which, in combining the data into a sensuous image, gives them the unity desired' (p. 225). But according to naïve realism 'the act of combination cannot confer upon [sense-elements] or introduce into them a unity which they do not already possess' (p. 226). The views thus disagree about whether perceptual consciousness relates us immediately to objects without any activity of the understanding. Prichard takes his naïve realism to stand opposed to Kant in renouncing any need for combinatorial activity on the part of the mind to relate us to objects: objects are given to us through primitive, non-conceptual, relations of apprehension.<sup>9</sup>

This criticism is sometimes thought to rely on Prichard's phenomenalist reading of Kant (e.g., Bird 1962, pp. 2-17) but the opposition cuts deeper. It turns on a tension, as Prichard sees it, between the idea of perception as a non-conceptual taking in of empirical particulars and the Kantian claim that perceptual consciousness depends on acts of the understanding. For the naïve realist, the character of our experience is determined solely by a primitive relation of apprehension which holds between subject and empirical particular. For Kant,

<sup>9</sup> See Prichard (1909, ch. 9) for the full development of this argument. Brewer (2006, p. 174f) expresses a related line of thought. Kalderon (2011, p. 236f) and Travis (2013b) discuss Prichard's argument. Prichard's discussion encompasses a number of other issues, including, for example, the question of how to account for the unity of the objects of perceptual consciousness (pp. 224-6); the perceptibility of general features of objects (pp. 226-7); and the grounds for synthesis (pp. 214-7). On some of these topics, Prichard's disagreement with Kant may turn on issues distinct from the question of whether the understanding is constitutively involved in perceptual consciousness. Thanks to a referee for emphasising this point.

perceptual experience involves a process of synthesis in which sensory elements are combined in accordance with categorial concepts. These claims pull in opposite directions: on one account, perception gets its character from our sensory capacity to apprehend objects; on the other, it arises from the intellectual activity of combining sensory elements in accordance with concepts. Prichard's claim is that it cannot be both. Something has to give.

The same thought finds expression in some contemporary expressions of strong naïve realism. Bill Brewer, Charles Travis and William Fish each oppose their form of naïve realism to any view on which experience has representational content on the grounds that phenomenal character is determined by the empirical objects perceived and not by any intellectual activity of the subject (Brewer 2011; Travis 2013b; Fish 2009). Mark Kalderon makes the opposition explicit: his Prichard-influenced form of naïve realism is presented in opposition to Kant's claims about the role of synthesis in perception (Kalderon 2011, pp. 235-6). As in Oxford Realism, the claim that perceptual consciousness is constituted by primitive relations of apprehension is said to be incompatible with the thought that perceptual consciousness constitutively depends on acts of the understanding.

The response of the Oxford Realists is to reject Kant. But if there are grounds for thinking that Kant's account of sensibility has naïve realist relational elements, then something more needs to be said. In the next section I will provide a brief overview of the reasons for thinking that Kant's account of sensibility can profitably be read on the model of a naïve realist account of visual perception. This leaves the Kantian with a question of how to make compatible naïve realism and Kant's account of the role the understanding plays in perceptual consciousness.

### 3. Sensibility and the understanding

#### 3.1 *Sensibility*

Lucy Allais notes that interpretations of Kant 'have gone down many of the same roads as have philosophical accounts of perception' (Allais 2007, p. 465) – to which one might add the clause 'a full decade later'.<sup>10</sup> Kant's account of sensibility has been read on the model of sense-datum theories of perceptual experience (Broad 1978; Strawson

<sup>10</sup> Given that Mike Martin's 'The Transparency of Experience' and John Campbell's *Reference and Consciousness* were both published in 2002, this paper continues the trend.

1966); conceptualist intentional theories of perceptual experience (McDowell 1998; Abela 2002); and non-conceptualist intentional theories (Hanna 2005, 2008). Allais's own work – despite its reference to contemporary non-conceptual theories (Allais 2009, p. 386) – is best read as completing the taxonomical space by providing support for a naïve realist interpretation of Kant (Allais 2009, p. 394; 2010, p. 60; 2011, pp. 379–83; see also McLearn 2016).

What grounds are there for explicating a naïve realist account of visual experience in Kantian phrase? Although the physical sensory capacities of human beings receive little attention in the first *Critique*, Kant makes clear in the *Anthropology* that the five senses are forms of outer sense (7:153), and that vision, in particular, is a form of objective empirical intuition (7:154). Outer sense is a mode of sensibility by which we are presented with objects external to the subject (A22/B37) and, as a form of outer sense, the objects of visual experience are presented to us as situated in space (A22/B37) and distinct from ourselves (*An* 7:156). More generally, outer sense is a mode of our capacity 'to acquire representations [*Vorstellungen*] through the way in which we are affected by objects' (A19/B33) and it does this by means of intuitions [*Anschauungen*] which relate us immediately to the objects of experience (A19/B34). Are there any reasons to think that this account of sensibility involves naïve realist commitments?<sup>11</sup>

An immediate obstacle to any naïve realist interpretation of Kantian sensibility is the frequency with which the term '*Vorstellung*' and its plural '*Vorstellungen*' feature in the first *Critique*. Both Guyer and Wood and Kemp-Smith translate '*Vorstellung*' as 'representation', and Kant explicitly identifies perception as a form of *Vorstellung* in the so-called stepladder (*Stufenleiter*) passage at the start of the Transcendental Dialectic (A320/B376–7). If perception is a form of

<sup>11</sup> Note that we need to distinguish Kant's use of the term 'experience' [*Erfahrung*] from our contemporary use. (See McLearn forthcoming, §1 and the next section, below.) Kant is clear that *Erfahrung* involves a process of conceptual synthesis and as such is determined by the concepts a subject possesses (B218–9). This would seem to rule out a naïve realist reading of *Erfahrung*. But *Erfahrung* is 'a kind of cognition requiring the understanding' (Bxvii) and Kant often uses the term to pick out a kind of perceptual judgement rather than a perceptual experiential state (e.g., B166, A176/B218, A189/B234). Since Kant is explicit that visual perception is a form of objective empirical intuition (*An* 7:154; cf. *Prol.* 4:283; *Prol.* 4:283; A180/B222), the question to be pursued here is whether the sensory consciousness involved in outer intuition [*Anschauung*] can be understood on naïve realist lines and Kant's claims concerning the way in which *Erfahrung* is determined by a subject's concepts don't settle that issue. Thanks to a referee for raising this issue.

*Vorstellung*, and ‘*Vorstellung*’ is to be translated as ‘representation’, then it would seem that Kant endorsed some form of representational or intentional theory of perception.

The translation of ‘*Vorstellung*’ as ‘representation’ is often justified on the grounds that Kant uses the Latin term ‘*repraesentatio*’ in a parenthetical aside which seems designed to explicate the term (A320/B376). But the literal translation of ‘*Vorstellung*’ is a putting (*stellung*) before (*Vor*), and Werner Pluhar’s recent translation prefers the term ‘presentation’, as did Wolfgang Schwarz in his 1982 concise version (Kant 1982) and C.D. Broad in his Cambridge lectures (Broad 1978). More generally there are strong hermeneutical grounds for thinking that Kant’s use of the term ‘*Vorstellung*’ doesn’t commit him to thinking of perception as representational in the way in which such a claim is understood by intentional theories of perceptual experience.

Let me highlight two issues. The first concerns sensations [*Empfindungen*]. Kant defines a sensation as ‘the effect of an object on the capacity for representation, insofar as we are affected by it’ (A19/B34), and gives as examples taste and colour, ‘effects accidentally added by the particular constitution of the sense organs’ as Kemp Smith has it (A28). And, at least with regards to his account of sensation in the first *Critique*, the dominant view has it that Kant took sensations to be non-intentional states: mere modifications of sensory consciousness which do not represent states of affairs.<sup>12</sup> Yet in the stepladder passage, Kant places sensation under the genus *Vorstellung*: a sensation is a *Vorstellung* with consciousness which relates solely to a subject as a modification of its state (A320/B376). If these views are right that sensations are non-intentional states, then Kant’s use of the term ‘*Vorstellung*’ cannot commit him to our contemporary notion of representation.

The second issue concerns our understanding of the history of Kant interpretation. It’s unsurprising that Broad uses the term ‘presentation’ to translate ‘*Vorstellung*’ favouring, as he does, a sense-datum interpretation of Kant (Broad 1978, pp. 18-9). For if the term ‘*Vorstellung*’ were to commit Kant to an intentional theory of perception, a relational reading of Kantian experience would be ruled out by fiat – and sense-datum theories are versions of a relational theory. This is sometimes missed by those who treat naïve realism as if it were the

<sup>12</sup> George (1981); Westphal (2004, p. 44); Hanna (2005, p. 254); see Dickerson (2003, p. 24) for an opposing view.

only form a relational theory can take. And though there is much to object to in sense-datum interpretations of Kant, it is surely too much to hope that their falsity be shown simply by Kant's use of the term '*Vorstellung*'. Charity towards our predecessors requires that we invoke an understanding of '*Vorstellung*' which doesn't settle the issue of whether Kant endorsed a representational or relational theory of perception. The prevalence of '*Vorstellung*' and '*Vorstellungen*' in the *Critique* shouldn't tell against a naïve realist account of Kantian sensibility.

Are there any positive reasons for endorsing such a reading? In the rest of this section I will mention four reasons for thinking that Kant's account of outer sense can profitably be read on the model of a naïve realist account of perceptual experience and that it is therefore appropriate to explicate a naïve realist account of visual experience in Kantian phrase. These reasons are not decisive: it would take more space than I have available to make the case in detail.<sup>13</sup> But I suspect that the strongest consideration against a naïve realist interpretation of Kant is the thought that naïve realism conflicts with Kant's claim that the understanding is involved in perceptual consciousness. To this extent, the wider argument of this paper is intended to buttress the considerations appealed to in this section.

(1) *Accuracy conditions*: the standard way to explicate what is involved in visual experience possessing representational content is via the notion of an accuracy condition (Tye 2009, p. 252; Siegel 2010; see also Searle 1983, p. 43; Peacocke 1983, p. 5). Visual experiences are representational because they possess conditions which specify ways the world must be in order for the representational content of the experience to be true. Thus if Kant endorsed some form of a representational theory of perception, he would be committed to thinking of perceptual experiences as assessable for truth and falsity.

Yet according to the account of error Kant sets out at the start of the Transcendental Dialectic, the deliverances of the senses do not themselves admit of truth or falsity: 'It is correctly said that the senses do not err; yet not because they always judge correctly, but because they do not judge at all' (A293). The possibility of error enters only with judgement: it is when one judges that things are thus and so that one takes a stand assessable for truth and falsity. But '[i]n a representation

<sup>13</sup> McLear (2016) provides a detailed defence of the ascription to Kant of a form of naïve realism on which perceptual consciousness involves being immediately acquainted with aspects of the mind-independent environment.



of sense (because it contains no judgement at all) there is no error' (A294/B350). This diagnosis is repeated in the Logic lectures: 'Truth and error are found ... only in judgements' (BL 24:83; see also JL 9:53, VL 24:825). If the deliverances of the senses do not admit of truth or falsity, they cannot set accuracy conditions in the manner required by representational theories of perception.<sup>14</sup>

One response to this line of thought is to distinguish accuracy conditions from truth conditions. One might hold, for example, that only conceptually structured content can be truth-apt whereas non-conceptual content can be assessed for accuracy without possessing truth conditions. And if this is right, then Kant's claim that the deliverances of the senses lack truth conditions is compatible with the claim that they possess accuracy conditions, when accuracy conditions are understood in this weaker way.

The problem with this suggestion is that Kant states, in the passages quoted above, that illusion and error are found only in judgements (A293/B350). And it is hard to see why he would say this if he thought that intuitions had representational content which could be assessed for accuracy. Those who do distinguish accuracy conditions from truth conditions do so because they think that the former can explain illusion and misrepresentation without adverting to the type of conceptually structured content they take to be essential to the latter. Kant's insistence that illusion is to be found only in judgement makes it implausible that he thought the deliverances of the senses were assessable for accuracy but not truth.<sup>15</sup>

(2) *Generality*: the link between representational content and accuracy conditions holds because states with representational content represent things as being a certain way (Crane 1992, p. 139). Bill Brewer has argued that to represent a particular as being a certain way is to relate that particular to a general condition that must be met in order for the content of the representation to be true (Brewer 2006, pp. 172–4). Generality is thus 'essentially involved in the notion of perceptual content' (Brewer 2006, p. 172). This is clearest in the case of the thought that *a* is *F*: 'Here, a particular object, *a*, is thought to be *a specific general way, F*, which such objects may be and which infinitely

<sup>14</sup> McLear (2016, §4.1) develops this line of thought as an argument against ascribing to Kant any form of representational theory.

<sup>15</sup> Note also that there is no evidence that Kant anywhere endorses the claim that intuitions are assessable for accuracy, so there is a burden on a representational theorist who wants to make this move to provide a positive reason for reading Kant in this way. Thanks to a referee for making this point.



many qualitatively distinct objects are' (Brewer 2006, p. 173, emphasis in original). But it also holds, Brewer claims, for representations with singular or doubly demonstrative content, such as the representation 'that man is thus'. Such representations 'again represent a particular thing as being a determinate general way, which, again, infinitely many qualitatively distinct possible objects are' (2006, p. 173).

What does Brewer mean in claiming that representational content essentially involves generality? I take the thought to be something like the following: all representational content – whether singular or general – involves specification; it requires a selection from amongst the ways the world could be in order to fix the way which determines the truth conditions for the representational state. This is true even if the selection involves demonstrative terms and is incompatible with the falsity of what is selected. Consider Brewer's example of perceiving a red ball. In this case, the colour and shape are selected as relevant from a set of parameters including the ball's weight, shape and cost. And within the selected parameters of colour and shape, some unique value for its colour and shape are selected as setting the correctness conditions on the experience. Any variation from these unique settings results in the experience being inaccurate. This selection – this singling out – showcases a kind of generality essentially tied to representational content: all content involves the selection and categorisation of determinate general conditions which specify a way the world must be in order for the content of the experience to be true.<sup>16</sup>

This feature of representational content is hard to square with Kant's insistence on the *particularity* of intuitions and his contrast with the *universality* or *generality* of concepts (A19/B33; A68/B93; A320/B376-7; *JL* 9:91). It is concepts which represent 'what is common to several objects' (*JL* 9:91) whereas intuitions singularly and immediately relate us to particular objects without a detour through general marks common to all such objects (A19/B33). Sebastian Gardner speaks for many when he claims that '[t]he distinction of intuition and concept thus corresponds to the distinction between the particular and the general' (Gardner 1999, p. 66; cf. Strawson 1966, pp. 20-1). Thus if outer sense proceeds by means of *Vorstellungen* which lack generality – and if Brewer is right to think that representational theories of perception are committed to

<sup>16</sup> Charles Travis also links the notions of representational content and generality. See the Introduction to his 2013a and many of the essays therein.

perceptual experiences possessing such generality – then outer sense cannot be modelled on representational theories of perception.<sup>17</sup>

(3) *The object-dependence of intuition*: outer sense proceeds by means of intuitions, the defining characteristics of which are immediacy and singularity (A19/B33, A68/B93, A320/B377, *JL* 9:91, *VL* 24:905). Kant tells us in the *Prolegomena* that ‘an intuition is a representation of the sort which would depend immediately on the presence of an object [*Anschauung ist eine Vorstellung, so wie sie unmittelbar von der Gegenwart des Gegenstandes abhängen würde*]’ (*Prol.* 4:281) and later in the second-edition of the *Critique* that an intuition ‘is dependent on the existence of the object’ (B72). As Allais puts it, ‘a clear and straightforward way of understanding [this claim] ... is to see intuitions as representations which essentially involve the presence to consciousness of the particular things they represent’ (Allais 2010, p. 59). On this reading, intuitions are object-dependent relations which require the presence of the object intuited.<sup>18</sup>

If this reading is to be rendered plausible, some explanation must be given of those passages in which Kant appears to allow the possibility of intuitive representations in the absence of the objects perceived.<sup>19</sup> But, alongside textual exegesis, defenders of this approach typically offer us further structural reasons for taking intuitions to be object-dependent states. Allais argues that the object-dependence of intuitions is required to make sense of Kant’s argument for transcendental idealism in the *Transcendental Aesthetic* (Allais 2010) and that the object-dependence of intuition plays a crucial role in Kant’s account of mathematics (Allais 2010, pp. 61–2). Robert Hanna takes

<sup>17</sup> Can this worry be avoided by arguing that Brewer’s notion of generality is wider than Kant’s, such that Kant’s insistence on the particularity of intuitions is compatible with their involving generality in Brewer’s sense? One might argue that since Kant didn’t recognise the existence of singular concepts (*JL* 9:91), the particularity of intuitions is compatible with their involving the generality associated with *singular* representational content. But Kant’s denial of the existence of singular concepts occurs in the context of his drawing a distinction between the way in which intuitions and concepts relate us to objects, and one way to put the points of Brewer and Travis is that singular content relates us to objects in much the same way as general content, through the setting of determinate general conditions. See Travis (2013a) on the substantive issue and Thompson (1972); Land (2013) for the case against treating Kantian intuitions as singular terms.

<sup>18</sup> See also Hanna (2001, pp. 209–10); cf. Stephenson (2015) for an opposing view.

<sup>19</sup> For example, (B278–9, *An* 7:153; 7:167); see Stephenson (2015) for other relevant passages. One option in accounting for these passages is to claim that they show only that inner intuitions are not object-dependent. See McLearn (2014, §6) for a version of this suggestion.

object-dependence as essential to any understanding of Kant's account of the synthetic (Hanna 2001, ch. 4). Let me add a further consideration.

In the B-Preface, Kant draws a distinction between *cognition* and *thought*. We can have cognition of an object 'only insofar as it is an object of sensible intuition' (Bxxvi; cf. B166) whereas our thoughts 'have an unbounded field' (B166). That is to say, *cognition* of objects requires intuitions; *thought* about objects does not. Compare this to the characterisation of cognition and thought offered in the footnote at Bxxvi:

To **cognize** an object, it is required that I be able to prove its possibility (whether by the testimony of experience from its actuality or *a priori* through reason). But I can **think** whatever I like, as long as I do not contradict myself, i.e., as long as my concept is a possible thought, even if I cannot give assurance whether or not there is a corresponding object somewhere within the sum total of all possibilities. (Bxxvi, emphasis in original)

Here the claim is that *cognition* of objects requires being able to prove the possibility of the object in question; *thought* about objects does not.

How do these two characterisations of the distinction between cognition and thought relate to one another? Kant seems to think that cognition requires sensible intuition because intuition enables subjects to prove the possibility of the objects intuited. But why should he think that? The object-dependence of intuition provides a straightforward answer: intuitions allow us to prove the possibility of objects because such intuitions are not possible in the absence of the object perceived. When a subject intuits a particular object she stands in a relation which requires the presence of that very object: it is for this reason that intuition enables you to prove an object's possibility. Taking intuitions to be object-dependent states explains and illuminates Kant's account of the distinction between cognition and thought.<sup>20</sup>

Such object-dependence can be easily modelled on a naïve realist relational account of perception. According to such accounts, the objects of perception feature as constituents of a subject's perceptual experiences. It follows from this claim that perceptual experiences are object-dependent: having an experience of this kind requires the

<sup>20</sup> See Gomes and Stephenson (forthcoming) for further discussion of the relation between the object-dependence of intuitions and the possibility of cognizing objects.

presence of the object perceived. A naïve realist account of outer sense which takes intuitions to be relations to objects captures the object-dependence of Kantian intuitions.

As it stands, this consideration is compatible with a representational theory of perceptual experience which takes the content of perceptual experience to be object-dependent. But note that it doesn't follow from the fact that the content of a state is object-dependent that the state itself is object-dependent (Martin 2002b) so more would need to be said about how the object-dependence of the content of experience secures the object-dependence of intuitions themselves. More importantly, Kant is clear that, in the case of thought, the fact that the content of a thought is non-contradictory does not suffice to show that its content is *really possible* (Bxxxvi). The onus is thus on the representational theorist to explain how placing object-dependent content within perceptual experience suffices to show that the content of that experience is really possible. For if the non-contradictory content of a thought is insufficient to prove its possibility, it is unclear how making that content part of a perceptual state serves to make it sufficient.

(4) *The Fourth Paralogism and the Refutation of Idealism*: the Kantian phrase with which Strawson summarises his account of visual experience alludes to Kant's claim in the Refutation of Idealism that 'the consciousness of my own existence is at the same time an immediate consciousness of the existence of other things outside me [*das Bewußtsein meines eigenen Daseins ist zugleich ein unmittelbares Bewußtsein des Daseins anderer Dinge außer mir*]' (B276). Kant's target in the Refutation is the 'problematic idealism' of Descartes, a topic which was originally covered in the A-Edition of the Fourth Paralogism. And there is much in both sections which lends support to a naïve realist account of Kantian sensibility.

Consider first the details of Kant's attack on problematic idealism. Kant's charge in these passages is that problematic idealism leaves the existence of material objects open to question since it requires one to infer the existence of material objects as the cause of representations which lie within us (A368-372; B276). This complaint has both epistemological and cognitive dimensions. Epistemological because such idealism leaves the existence of material objects 'far from certain' (A372) and thus unknown; cognitive because the inference from effect to cause leaves it 'absolutely impossible to comprehend how we are to acquire cognition [*Erkenntnis*] of their reality outside us' (A378). In both cases, the causal story by means of which problematic

idealism aims to explain our cognitive contact with the world is claimed to be lacking.

This charge reappears in the naïve realism literature. John Campbell writes of views which take the relation between perceptual experiences and empirical objects to be purely causal: ‘How can effects provide you, the subject, with any conception of what their causes are like?’ (Campbell 2002a, p. 132; cf. Child 1994, pp. 147-9). Campbell’s target here is not only sense-datum models of perceptual experience, but also representational theories which hold that material objects causally determine the representational content of experience (Campbell 2002a, pp. 132-3). The thought is that such theories leave us cognitively isolated from the world precisely because they involve a ‘conception of conscious experience as something that is merely an effect of external objects’ (Campbell 2002a, p. 133). That is, they assume ‘that the only immediate experience is inner experience, and that from that outer things could only be **inferred**...’ (B276, emphasis in original).<sup>21</sup>

Campbell uses this argument to motivate a naïve realist relational account of perception. On a naïve realist view, ‘[w]e have to regard experience of the object as reaching all the way to the object itself’: only so can we allow conscious experience a role in explaining our ability to think and know about material objects (Campbell 2002a, p. 143). Similarly, Kant takes the upshot of his argument against problematic idealism to be a view of perceptual experience on which ‘outer experience is really immediate’ (B276), one which ‘grants to matter, as appearance, a reality which need not be inferred but is immediately perceived’ (A371). It is only by thinking of perceptual experience as reaching out to the particulars in our environment that we can ‘prove the existence of objects in space outside me’ (B275). The Refutation of Idealism supports a naïve realist reading of outer sense.

These four considerations, taken together, do not force upon us a relational reading of Kantian sensibility, but it is not obvious that we should expect Kant’s texts to be unequivocal in this way. Instead we should note how these aspects of Kant’s account of sensibility can be easily accommodated within a relational framework. I take this to provide some support for the explication of a naïve realist account of visual experience in Kantian phrase.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>21</sup> See Gomes (2013) for more on the relation between this aspect of naïve realism and Kant. Cook Wilson makes a similar point in his 1904 letter to G.F. Stout (Cook Wilson 1926, pp. 769-73).

<sup>22</sup> Is the naïve realist reading of Kantian sensibility in tension with Kant’s scientific realism? Kant draws a distinction between the empirical thing-in-itself and the empirical appearance at

### 3.2 *Understanding*

What are our options? I've set out the Oxford Realist case for thinking that naïve realism is incompatible with the claim that acts of the understanding are constitutive of perceptual consciousness. And I've set out the reasons for thinking that Kant's account of sensibility has naïve realist elements. One way to resolve this tension is to deny that Kant thought the understanding constitutive of perceptual consciousness. There are two ways one might do so. First, one might deny that the understanding is constitutive of perceptual consciousness but hold that Kant took it to be necessarily involved in a certain sort of perceptual consciousness, namely that enjoyed by rational beings with discursive intellects. Second, one might take the stronger line that the understanding is not constitutive of perceptual consciousness nor even necessarily involved in the perceptual consciousness of rational beings with discursive intellects. It is important to recognise that these are two different ways of denying the constitutive claim; the understanding may be necessarily involved in the perceptual consciousness of rational beings without being constitutive of it.

This gives us three options when thinking about the role of the understanding in perceptual consciousness: acts of the understanding are constitutive of perceptual consciousness; acts of the understanding are necessarily involved in the perceptual consciousness of rational beings but not constitutive of perceptual consciousness; acts of the understanding are not constitutive of perceptual consciousness nor necessarily involved in the perceptual consciousness of rational

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A45-6/B62-3, and it is natural to read this as a form of the primary/ secondary quality distinction. More generally, for Kant, the properties that the empirical thing-in-itself really possesses are those which science ascribes to it – roughly, force and motion – whereas the properties possessed by the empirical appearance are dependent, in some way, on human perceivers and their sense organs. Does this mean that empirical objects don't have the qualities that we naïvely attribute to them, contrary to naïve realism? First, note that naïve realism can allow that 'the idiosyncracies of the perceiver may affect phenomenal content' (Campbell 2002b, p. 119) since perceptual consciousness is constituted by relations, and the nature of both relata can affect the nature of the perceptual relation. And second, naïve realism is incompatible with scientific realism only if it follows from scientific realism that the things we ordinarily take ourselves to be related to don't actually exist – that the world is nothing more than force and motion. And there is no reason to think that Kant's distinction between the empirical thing-in-itself and empirical appearance commits him to thinking of the empirical appearance as less than empirically real. See Langton (1998, ch. 7) for a careful discussion of Kant's scientific realism, and Hanna (2006, ch. 4) for an argument that this scientific realism doesn't entail the idealism of manifest objects and their qualities. Thanks to a referee for raising this issue.

beings. Call these the strong, intermediate and weak claims respectively.<sup>23</sup>

Recent *non-conceptualist* interpretations of Kant defend the weak claim. According to non-conceptualist readings, Kant's view is that we can be perceptually presented with particulars without any input from the active faculty of the understanding (Allais 2009, 2012; Hanna 2001, 2005; McLear 2016). Since Kant introduces the understanding as 'a **faculty for judging**' and tells us that all judgement proceeds via concepts (A69/B94, emphasis in original), this is often expressed as the claim that one can be perceptually presented with particulars without the application of concepts. Non-conceptualist readings hold that 'for Kant, the application of concepts is not necessary for our being perceptually presented with outer particulars' (Allais 2009, p. 394).

Such readings can be used to eschew any felt tension between Kant's theory of cognition and a naïve realist account of visual experience. For if Kant thinks that we can be visually presented with an outer particular without applying any concepts, then there is no obstacle to our conceiving of such visual presentation as consisting in a relation of apprehension holding between subject and perceived particular. By denying that the understanding is necessarily involved in perceptual consciousness, non-conceptualism opens up the space for a Kantian form of naïve realism. Lucy Allais (2009, 2012) motivates the link between non-conceptualism and relational theories of perception in just this way.

Some *conceptualist* interpretations adopt the strong claim. Griffith, for example, claims that, for Kant, 'perception depends on empirical synthesis, which depends on a transcendental synthesis according to the categories' (2010, p. 22), where this dependence is to be understood as '(conceptual/transcendental) dependence or grounding' (p. 20). It is claims of this sort which the Oxford Realists took to be

<sup>23</sup> Defenders of the weak claim can allow that there are some cases in which acts of the understanding cognitively penetrate perceptual consciousness. One example might be the kinds of perceptual experiences involved when subjects with sophisticated conceptual repertoires engage with certain works of art. This means that there is a spectrum of views one can hold, with the intermediate claim that the understanding is necessarily involved in, though not constitutive of, the perceptual consciousness of rational beings lying at one end, and the view that the understanding is not involved in perceptual consciousness at all lying at the other. Extant weak views seem to fall towards the latter extreme. Both Allais and Hanna make much of the fact that the understanding is involved only in the capacity to think about empirical objects (Allais 2012, pp. 103-6) and make objectively valid judgements (Hanna 2013), and neither discusses any cases in which the understanding penetrates perceptual consciousness. But one could endorse a weak view which allowed some cases of penetration. Thanks to a referee for discussion.



incompatible with naïve realism and ascribing such a view to Kant is in tension with the thought that his account of sensibility involves naïve realist elements.

The intermediate claim falls in between the standard characterisations of conceptualism and non-conceptualism in the Kant literature. Hannah Ginsborg, for instance, defends conceptualism by arguing that ‘Kant is committed to a view on which perceptual synthesis involves the exercise of understanding’ (2007, p. 11) – a claim which is neutral between the intermediate and strong formulations. On the intermediate view, the understanding is necessarily involved in the perceptual consciousness of rational beings but it is not constitutive of perceptual consciousness. This is a non-conceptualist position, in so far as it denies that the understanding is constitutive of perceptual consciousness. But it is a conceptualist position, in so far as it takes the role of the understanding, in discursive beings, to extend beyond mere thought about objects into all instances of perception.

The Oxford Realists claim that naïve realism is incompatible with the strong claim. But they take it to follow from this that the understanding is not involved in perceptual consciousness at all. Similarly, non-conceptualist readings that ascribe a form of naïve realism to Kant deny that the understanding is necessarily involved in the perceptual consciousness of discursive beings. The availability of the intermediate reading suggests a middle position. It may be possible to defend a Kantian form of naïve realism on which the understanding is necessarily involved in discursive perceptual consciousness without being constitutive of perceptual consciousness. This would make naïve realism compatible with Kant’s claims about the role of the understanding in perceptual consciousness without endorsing the weak reading. It is an intermediate position of this sort that I offer below.<sup>24</sup>

Before I do so, it will be useful to consider some of the reasons for rejecting the weak reading. We can think of the debate between the strong and intermediate views on one side, and the weak view on the other, as a dispute about where best to limn the domain of the understanding. Strong and intermediate readings hold that the

<sup>24</sup> McDowell may seem to offer us an intermediate position of this sort, for although he takes the understanding to be constitutive of perceptual consciousness, he is clear that he means it to be constitutive of *our* perceptual consciousness, allowing that there might be other forms of perceptual consciousness which stand to our form of perceptual consciousness as a different species of the same genus (McDowell 2011, pp. 20–1, 54–7). Matt Boyle (2012) provides a helpful framework for thinking about this kind of position. I comment on the relation between my proposal and that of McDowell and Boyle below.



understanding reaches out to perception itself: the understanding is necessarily involved in the perceptual consciousness of discursive beings. Weak readings deny that the understanding is required for perceptual consciousness: the perceptual presentation of particulars can take place in the absence of concepts, but we require the understanding in order to cognize them in a certain way. On this view, the involvement of the understanding may still be required for us to engage in a certain sort of thought about objects but it is not required for the perceptual presentation of particulars.

How should we decide between these readings? A multitude of considerations have been raised by parties on both sides of this debate and I do not have space to consider them all here. But it will be useful to begin by summarising some of the reasons given for rejecting the weak reading's claim that the understanding is not necessarily involved in our being perceptually presented with outer particulars.<sup>25</sup>

The falsity of the weak reading is sometimes motivated by appeal to the opening paragraphs of the Transcendental Logic in which Kant distinguishes sensibility from the understanding and notes their inter-relation (A50-52/B74-76). But this will not suffice. Kant's claim in these passages is only that the unification of sensibility and the understanding is required for *cognition* [*Erkenntnis*] (A51/B76), and this falls importantly short of claiming that their co-operation is required for perception itself.

One might attempt to draw a link from these passages to perception by noting that Kant held experience [*Erfahrung*] to be 'a kind of cognition requiring the understanding' (Bxvii), for if the understanding is active in cognition, and if experience is a kind of cognition, then the understanding is active in experience. But Kant's use of the term 'experience' is not continuous with that of contemporary philosophers of perception and it is open for non-conceptualists to hold that at least some of Kant's uses of the term pick out a form of judgement made on the basis of perceptual experience rather than the experience itself (e.g., B166, A176/B218, A189/B234). On this reading, those passages in which Kant claims that *Erfahrung* requires the active, combinatorial input of the understanding (A93/B126) show only that the understanding is required for a certain sort of empirical judgement or thought.

<sup>25</sup> I provide a more detailed discussion of the debate in Gomes (2014) from which some of the following is drawn.

There is nothing thus far which motivates the involvement of the understanding in *perception*.

It is for this reason that the debate between weak readings and their opponents has largely focused on whether the understanding is active in intuition [*Anschauung*]. In contrast to his use of term '*Erfahrung*', Kant tells us explicitly that visual perception is a form of objective empirical intuition (*An* 7:154; cf. *Prol.* 4:283) and that empirical intuition is the means by which we are perceptually presented with objects (*A*180/*B*222; *Prol.* 4:283). Thus if the understanding is essentially involved in *Anschauung* itself, this would seem to tell against the weak claim since it would show that the discursive activity of the understanding is involved in the very perception of distinct particulars.

There are two prominent reasons why commentators have thought that Kant held the understanding to be involved in intuition: his account of the role synthesis plays in the representation of intuitions and his aims in the Transcendental Deduction of the Categories. Let me summarise these considerations briefly.<sup>26</sup>

The central points on synthesis were discussed above. Kant takes perception to involve acts of synthesis, ones in which the manifold of intuition, given to us through sensibility, is taken up and combined through an act of the understanding. This act of the understanding – one in which 'the understanding determines the sensibility' (*B*160n.) – confers a unity on the manifold of intuition. It does so by combining the manifold of intuition in accordance with the *a priori* rules which govern synthesis. These rules are the categories. 'Consequently all synthesis, through which even perception itself becomes possible, stands under the categories...' (*B*161). The understanding is necessarily involved in perceptual consciousness in virtue of the perceptual presentation of particulars requiring an act of synthesis which combines the manifold of intuition in accordance with the categories.

Second, Kant's stated aim in the Transcendental Deduction is to show that 'without their [the categories] presupposition nothing is possible as object of experience' (*A*93/*B*125) for 'the objective validity of the categories, as *a priori* concepts, rests on the fact that through them alone is experience possible' (*A*93/*B*126). His argument in support of this conclusion turns on the necessity of combining the

<sup>26</sup> I discuss these issues at greater length in Gomes (2014), arguing that weak readings cannot provide an account of the Transcendental Deduction's role in answering Humean scepticism about our justified use of *a priori* concepts.

manifold of intuition. Since ‘the combination of the manifold in general can never come to us through the senses’ (B129), Kant argues that it must be the understanding, through the use of a priori concepts, which brings representations under the original synthetic unity of apperception required for combination. The conclusion is that ‘the manifold in a given intuition also necessarily stands under the categories’ (B143).<sup>27</sup>

These considerations have been challenged and disputed by those who advocate a weak reading. I will not assess their responses here. For our purposes it is enough to note the *prima facie* textual evidence for taking Kant to hold that the understanding is necessarily involved in perceptual consciousness, contrary to the weak reading.

Do these considerations motivate the strong reading? In the final section of this paper I will return to the considerations noted above to see whether they can be met by a view which holds that the understanding is not constitutive of perceptual consciousness but is, nevertheless, necessarily involved in the perceptual consciousness of rational beings. For now I want to show that there is nothing which precludes a Kantian form of naïve realism from allowing the necessary involvement of the understanding in the perceptual consciousness of rational beings, contrary to the implication of the Oxford Realists. This is the task to which I turn in the next section.

#### 4. Unification

Let us return to Oxford Realism. Prichard’s opposition to Kant’s account of perceptual experience centres on an assumption about the character of perceptual consciousness: that it either involves a primitive relation of apprehension or a synthesis of sensory elements in accordance with concepts. Part of what is valuable about Prichard’s discussion is that he teases out the way in which these options are distinct: the primitive relation of apprehension which characterises naïve realism is fundamentally different in kind from the state with categorial content which arises from Kant’s synthesis of sensory elements. And since they are fundamentally different, any aspect of phenomenal character which is explained by relations of apprehension

<sup>27</sup> Note that these considerations motivate ascribing to Kant the specific claim that certain a priori concepts – the categories – are essentially involved in perceptual consciousness. In what follows I will take it that the understanding is necessarily involved in perceptual consciousness for Kant through the activation of categorial concepts specifically.

cannot involve the synthesis of sensory elements in accordance with concepts. But, given this insight, why should we accept that there is no more to perceptual consciousness than primitive relations of apprehension? In short: why can perceptual consciousness not have both aspects?

This question is raised with particular force by Prichard's successor at Trinity College, H.H. Price, in his 1932 book *Perception*. Price was an undergraduate in Oxford and a post-graduate in Cambridge, and his book bears the imprint both of Cook Wilson's Oxford Realism and the Cambridge tradition of G.E. Moore and C.D. Broad. In *Perception* Price defends a sense-datum theory of perception according to which sensory experience involves being aware of a 'given' object of experience, which Price terms a 'sense-datum' (1932, p. 3). This involves one important point of contact with and one important divergence from the naïve realism endorsed by Prichard. The point of contact is that both share an understanding of perceptual experience as involving a primitive and non-conceptual relation of sensory apprehension: in the terminology of §2, both views endorse *relational* theories of perception. The divergence is that Price, in common with Moore and Broad, takes the domain of this relation to be wider than that of mere perception: all sense experience, including illusions and hallucinations, involves the sensory apprehension of an object of experience. Perception cannot be, then, a relation to ordinary, empirical objects.

For our purposes, what is important about Price's discussion is that he combines this relational account of sensory apprehension with a conceptual aspect to perceptual consciousness. Perceptual acceptance – the most basic form of perceptual consciousness (p. 139) – has two elements: the sensory apprehension of a non-physical sense-datum and the *being under an impression that* things are a certain way. This latter element, which Price borrows from Cook Wilson (p. 140), is a representational state in which the subject takes for granted *that* things are a certain way. It is part of perceptual consciousness proper, and not simply a postliminary judgement based on the sensory acquaintance (pp. 140–1): when one perceives a tree, one is acquainted with a non-physical sense-datum and under the impression *that* it is a tree: 'The sense-datum is presented to us, and the tree dawns on us, all in one moment' (p. 141).

On Price's account, perceptual consciousness thus has two elements: a relational aspect of sensory apprehension, the objects of which are particulars; and an intentional aspect of taking for granted that things are a certain way, the object of which is a proposition. Taking

for granted that things are a certain way does not involve judging that things are that way – it is pseudo-intuitive rather than discursive (p. 150) – but the content which one takes for granted is of a sort to feature in judgement (p. 167). Thus perceptual consciousness involves both a non-conceptual relation to non-physical particulars and the conceptual representation of things as being a particular way. Contrary to Prichard's assumption, perception has both relational and representational aspects.<sup>28</sup>

Price's one-time student, Wilfrid Sellars, follows him in endorsing a dual component theory of perception, one which is explicitly Kantian in motivation and form (1956, 1968, 1978). According to Sellars, perceptual consciousness has two aspects: an intentional aspect of taking things to be a certain way and a sensory aspect of sensing. The former draws on the conceptual capacities of the subject whereas the latter is wholly non-conceptual. And whilst there is some dispute amongst readers of Sellars as to how we are to understand this sensory component, at the least it seems clear that whereas Price took the sensory component to consist of a primitive relation of apprehension to sense-data, Sellars takes it to involve some sort of sensory modification of the subject. The aim of Sellars's dual component account is to respect Kant's distinction between sensibility and the understanding whilst showing how the latter can be necessarily involved in the perceptual consciousness of rational beings. The result is a self-consciously Kantian version of a dual component theory.

The key challenge for such theories is to explain how the two components of perceptual consciousness relate to each other such that we have one unitary, though complex, perceptual state. Sellars takes the relation between the two components to be causal (1963, pp. 90-1) but this raises a question about whether the intentional component is really part of perceptual consciousness proper. Price denies that the non-conceptual component is temporally prior to the intentional component (1932, pp. 150-1) but doesn't explain what binds them together in perceptual consciousness. This is a topic that any dual component theory will need to address.

Nevertheless, we have a model for making naïve realism compatible with the involvement of the understanding in perceptual

<sup>28</sup> It is unclear to me whether Price takes both of these elements to contribute towards the phenomenal character of perceptual consciousness. If he does, then he should be classified as a *weak relational* theorist in the terminology of §2. If not, his account is close to the one I offer below.

consciousness. We need to recognise, with Price and Sellars but contra Prichard, that perceptual consciousness can have both relational and representational aspects. But instead of taking the non-conceptual aspect of perceptual consciousness to be a relation to sense-data, as in Price, or mere sensory modification of the subject, as in Sellars, we need to insist that the phenomenal properties of perceptual consciousness are constituted by relations of apprehension to ordinary empirical objects. The result would be a naïve realist account of visual experience in Kantian phrase: visual perception involves a primitive relation of apprehension which determines the phenomenal character of the visual experience and intentional content which represents empirical particulars as falling under the categories.

Price himself hints at just such a Kantian position, noting that perceptual consciousness would involve, on his view, concepts ‘which are not exemplified in the intuited data at all and cannot be abstracted from them - namely those concepts which make up the notion of “material thinghood”’ (Price 1932, pp. 168-9). By replacing Price’s sense-data with the ordinary, empirical particulars of Prichard’s discussion, we have the outlines for a Kantian form of naïve realism on which one is immediately related to empirical particulars and under the impression that they are subject to categorical concepts. The rest of this section expands on this suggestion.

The picture I will suggest looks as follows: Kantian intuitions are non-conceptual apprehensions of empirical particulars, distinct from ourselves and situated about us in space. These relations alone determine the phenomenal character of visual experience: hence *naïve realism*. But when one stands in such a relation to empirical particulars, the manifold of intuition is synthesised in accordance with the categories in a process governed by the understanding. The result is a representational state which represents empirical particulars *as* subject to the categories. This representational state is not itself an intuition; it is the representation of an intuition and its representational properties are not among the phenomenal properties of the visual experience. But the obtaining of the state bears a necessary connection to the presence of the intuition: a representational state with this content obtains in virtue of a subject with a discursive intellect standing in an intuitive relation of this kind. The understanding is thus necessarily involved in perceptual consciousness, not through constituting the intuition itself, but through the presence of a representational state

which obtains whenever a discursive intellect intuits empirical particulars in a certain way.<sup>29</sup>

On this account, visual experience has two elements: intuitions which determine the phenomenal properties of visual perceptions and a representational state which obtains partially in virtue of those intuitions. We can mark these two aspects as follows: when a subject S visually perceives an ordinary empirical object E,

- (1) S intuits E, and
- (2) It seems to S as if she intuits E.

The relation in (1) is a non-conceptual relation of apprehension; the representational state in (2) is the outcome of a process of synthesis and it represents E as subject to the categories. The two components are related: the representational state in (2) obtains *in virtue of* a subject with a discursive intellect standing in the non-conceptual relation of apprehension.

Let me expand on these claims in turn:

- (1) *Intuitions are non-conceptual apprehensions of empirical particulars*: this claim secures the naïve realist account of sensibility motivated in §3. It provides a straightforward reading of Kant's claim that intuitions relate us to objects singularly and immediately. Intuitions are singular because they are relations to particulars (A320/B377) and immediate because they present us with particulars directly (cf. Brewer 2006, pp. 172-3). This explains why 'all thought ... must ultimately be related to intuitions, thus, in our case, to sensibility, since there is no other way in which objects can be given to us' (A19/B33): intuitions are non-conceptual apprehensions of empirical particulars which give us objects in such a way that they can be the objects of thought.
- (2) When one stands in such a relation to empirical particulars, the manifold of intuition is synthesised in accordance with the categories in a process governed by the understanding: although intuitions are non-conceptual, they still have structure. This is how they differ from sensations: non-intentional modifications of a subject's consciousness (A320/B376). The matter

<sup>29</sup> This way of thinking about the phenomenal character of perception draws on Matthew Soteriou's 'Content and the Stream of Consciousness' (2007) and, in particular, his account of how mental processes relate to mental states; see his (2013) for further development and detail.

of empirical intuition – its manifold – is sensation; its form is space, the pure form of outer intuition. It is the matter of intuition – sensation – which is open to synthesis by the imagination in accordance with the categories.

- (3) *The result is a representational state which represents empirical particulars as subject to the categories:* the synthesis of the manifold of intuition is a rule governed process, guided by the understanding. As outlined in §§15-19 of the B Deduction, the role of this synthesis is to take the sensory elements which are given to us in sensibility and bring them under the unity of apperception. In order for it so to bring them, they need to be synthesised in accordance with the a priori rules of combination. The result is a representational state which represents the world as a world of persisting unities, subject to causal relations.

Since this synthesis is governed by the a priori rules of combination, the only concepts which are guaranteed to feature in the representational state are the a priori concepts which characterise the perceived particular. The fact that the intuitive apprehension of the particular can be characterised by certain *empirical* concepts makes available the possibility of those concepts featuring in the representational state, perhaps through rules of association understood as operating in a largely Humean manner. But the involvement of empirical concepts is not a necessary feature of the state.

- (4) *This representational state is not itself an intuition; it is the representation of an intuition:* Prichard's claim is that those primitive relations of apprehension which constitute the character of perceptual consciousness cannot themselves be the outcome of a product of synthesis. This is because those primitive relations of apprehension relate us immediately to objects without any input from the understanding, whereas synthesis is undertaken by the understanding in accordance with concepts. It follows from this that the synthesis of the manifold of intuition cannot result in an intuition: synthesis results in a representational state with categorial content whilst intuitions are non-conceptual relations to particulars. One might think this to be a juncture at which this account is *Kantian* rather than Kant's own, for Kant's account of



synthesis is often read as holding that the product of synthesis is an empirical intuition (Griffith 2012, §5). I return to this issue in §5. For now it is enough to show that this Kantian form of naïve realism can allow the necessary involvement of the understanding in our perceptual consciousness.

Note, though, that this does involve an important departure from the account of perceptual consciousness offered by Price. In Price's model, the intentional aspect of perception represents how things are in the world; its content concerns only the empirical particular and its perceived properties. In contrast, the representational state which results from synthesis is one which represents the intuition, i.e., the non-conceptual relation of apprehension which a subject stands in to the relevant empirical particular. Experience thus has an intentional content which also involves both the empirical particular and the *subject* of the experience: it seems to the subject as if *she* intuits the empirical particular. I will return to the reasons for this divergence in §5 below.

- (5) ... and its representational properties are not among the phenomenal properties of the visual experience: since visual perception is a form of empirical intuition (*An* 7:154; *Prol.* 4:283), it is intuitions which determine the phenomenal character of visual experience. The representational state with categorial content which is the outcome of synthesis is not an intuition, so its properties are not amongst the phenomenal properties of visual experience.<sup>30</sup> Nevertheless, there is a tight connection, to be outlined below, between the intuitions which determine the phenomenal properties of visual experience and the representational state which arises through categorial synthesis of the manifold of intuition. When a subject with a discursive intellect has an experience of a certain sort – when she has intuitions of kind *I* – she stands in representational state *R* as a result of the combinatory activity of the understanding. This connection is necessary. Since *R* obtains partially in virtue of *I*, one can specify the phenomenal character of the visual experience indirectly by highlighting state *R*, to which *I* has given rise. This means that a specification of the phenomenal character

<sup>30</sup> This is a requirement of strong naïve realism. Removing the restriction would result in a form of weak naïve realism. See §2 above.

can appeal to state *R* despite it being *I* which determines that phenomenal character (cf. Soteriou 2007, pp. 557-9).

- (6) ... *the obtaining of the state bears a necessary connection to the presence of the intuition*: there is a necessary connection between the presence of an intuition in a subject with a discursive intellect and the obtaining of the relevant representational state. This connection is not causal: the presence of the intuition does not cause a process of synthesis which gives rise to the representational state. Rather, the representational state obtains *in virtue of* a subject with a discursive intellect standing in the intuitive relation.

This relation of *obtaining in virtue of* is a distinctive relation of metaphysical dependence. It has been the subject of recent discussion in metaphysics with a number of metaphysicians arguing that we need to make use of such a notion in formulating metaphysical disputes (Fine 2001; Rosen 2010). Some examples standardly used to illustrate this relation include the claims that an act is pious *because* the gods love it; that the mental is *nothing more than* the physical; that legal facts are *determined by* the social facts. Matt Soteriou (2007, pp. 551f) uses an example of Helen Steward's (1997, p. 72f) to illustrate the connection in question: the state of a body of liquid being at a certain temperature for an interval of time *obtains in virtue of* the motion of its molecules. In each case, the higher level item is grounded in the existence of the lower level item providing us with 'a distinctive kind of metaphysical explanation, in which explanans and explanandum are connected, not through some sort of causal mechanism, but through some constitutive form of determination' (Fine 2012, p. 37).

Recent discussions have attempted to characterise the logical features of this relation. Two of these are relevant for our discussion. First, this grounding relation is stronger than a mere modal connection, since two items can necessarily covary without one holding in virtue of the other (Dancy 1981, pp. 380-2; Fine 2012, p. 38). It is for this reason that the relation needs distinguishing from mere supervenience. Second, the grounded item is not identical with its ground, nor is it any less real than its ground: both ground and grounded exist, and the latter obtains in virtue of the former (Fine 2012, pp. 38-9). Some will wonder whether there is any such relation – stronger than mere causation, stronger than necessary covariance, weaker than

identity – which can do this work, but I will proceed as if the relation is unproblematic.<sup>31</sup>

My claim is that the representation of the intuition obtains in virtue of the intuition being present in a subject with a discursive intellect.<sup>32</sup> The intuition is not identical to the representational state, because the intuition is a non-conceptual relation of apprehension whilst the representational state involves categorial concepts, and intuitions cannot be identical to or constitute conceptual states (*JL* 9:91). Rather the representation of the intuition obtains partially *in virtue of* the presence of that intuition, for *what it is to be* in that representational state just is for the intuition to be present in a subject with a discursive intellect. The explanation of this dependence is that the manifold of intuition is necessarily subject to an act of categorial synthesis in order to bring the manifold under the unity of apperception. Since this synthesis is guided by the a priori rules of the understanding, the resultant representational state is one which makes use of categorial concepts. On this way of thinking about the mechanics of Kant's theory of perceptual experience, the role of synthesis is to import the intuition into the content of the representational state whilst explaining why it must be that such states obtain whenever discursive intellects stand in intuitional relations.

It is this relation of metaphysical dependence – this relation of *obtaining in virtue of* – which explains why the two elements should be classed as parts of one complex perceptual state. For the two elements are not merely causally connected, as in Sellars's dual component theory, nor merely co-present, as perhaps in Price. Rather, the intentional element is grounded in the relational element and the result is a

<sup>31</sup> This seems acceptable in a Kantian context since we plausibly need to appeal to something like a grounding or in virtue of relation in order to characterise a number of Kant's own views. Consider, for instance, his claim that real possibilities are grounded in how things are in actuality (*OPA* 2:77-79). For further discussion of the grounding relation see the papers in Correia and Schnieder (2012).

<sup>32</sup> For the sake of convenience, let the grounding relation hold between facts, where the right hand side of the relation encompasses a plurality (Audi 2012, Rosen 2010). And let the use of square brackets pick out facts. Then we can state the claim as follows: [it seems to S as if she intuits E] is grounded in [S intuits E], [S has a discursive intellect]. If we further distinguish full grounding from partial grounding [Fine 2012, p. 50], then [it seems to S as if she intuits E] is fully grounded in [S intuits E], [S has a discursive intellect]; and partially grounded in [S intuits E]. Since only full grounding suffices for metaphysical necessitation, only [S intuits E], [S has a discursive intellect] will necessitate [it seems to S as if she intuits E]. And since the grounding facts are only sufficient for the grounded fact, the proposal is neutral on the question of whether [it seems to S as if she intuits E] can obtain without [S intuits E], [S has a discursive intellect].

complex episode of perceptual consciousness with both relational and intentional aspects.

A final point. Note that this connection between the representational state and the intuition holds only for subjects with a discursive intellect. This allows for the possibility of creatures who lack a faculty of understanding standing in intuitive relations to empirical particulars without the obtaining of a representational state involving categorical concepts. Some have suggested that there are grounds for holding that Kant thought of non-human animals in this way (Allais 2009, pp. 406-7; McLearn 2011). This proposal is compatible with such a view: non-human animals are perceptually related to empirical particulars in the environment despite lacking the capacity to represent such particulars as falling under concepts. As Kant puts it in his discussion of the different levels of cognition in his lectures on logic, '[a]nimals are acquainted with objects too, but they do not cognize them' (*JL* 9:64-5; see also *VL* 24:846; *FS* 2:59) and this is precisely because they do not represent them as subject to concepts.<sup>33</sup>

This model of visual experience combines a naïve realist account of the phenomenal character of visual experience with the necessary involvement of the understanding in perceptual consciousness. It thus provides an account of visual experience intermediate between the claim that the understanding is constitutive of perceptual consciousness and the claim that the understanding need not be involved in perceptual consciousness at all, doing justice to those strands of Kant's

<sup>33</sup> If non-human animal perception lacks a representational component, does that mean that animals lack the capacity to perceive things *as* being a certain way? Many think it plausible that animals not only see objects, but see them *as* having certain features (Burge 2010, pp. 34-42), and if explanation of this aspect of animal perception required the presence of a representational component, then this would seem to tell against the above suggestion. But this aspect of animal perception can be captured by the relational component of perceptual consciousness, without any appeal to a representational element, since the relata of the primitive relations of sensory apprehension which constitute perceptual consciousness include not only empirical objects but also their properties. An animal which apprehends the leaf and its particular colour sees the leaf *as* green. So the representational element to human perceptual consciousness isn't required to explain the possibility of perceiving *as*. An interesting implication concerns the possibility of properties which we can't be related to via sensory relations of apprehension but which nevertheless structure perceptual consciousness in such a way that we see things *as* having those properties. The possibility of seeing things *as* having these properties is only possible given the representational component to perceptual consciousness. This is important if one is sympathetic to the Kantian thought that we cannot intuit categorical properties, such as that of causality. For if we can see one thing as causing another, as Ducasse and Anscombe each claimed (Ducasse 1965; Anscombe 1971) but cannot intuit causal relations, then the explanation of this will need to turn on the representational element to perception. Thanks to the Editor for raising these issues.

thinking noted in §3 of this paper. But it also, I believe, provides a way of thinking about visual experience which is attractive in its own right: visual perception relates us immediately to empirical particulars through a non-conceptual mode of apprehension but, as beings with discursive intellects, this apprehension suffices for the presence of a content-bearing state which represents things as being a certain way. Contrary to the implications of Oxford Realism and non-conceptualist interpreters of Kant, naïve realism is compatible with the necessary involvement of the understanding in perceptual consciousness.<sup>34</sup>

## 5. Cognition

My aim in this paper has been to show that we can formulate a version of naïve realism in Kantian phrase. And this has involved showing the compatibility of naïve realism with the intermediate claim that the understanding is necessarily involved in the perceptual consciousness of rational beings. But one might think that Kant was committed to the stronger claim: that acts of the understanding are constitutive of perceptual consciousness. And nothing I have said has shown that naïve realism is compatible with that claim. This final section will consider this issue.

I noted two reasons for thinking that Kant held the understanding to be involved in perceptual consciousness: his account of the role synthesis plays in the representation of intuitions and his aims in the Transcendental Deduction of the Categories. Do these considerations motivate the strong claim that the understanding is constitutive of perceptual consciousness or only the intermediate claim that the understanding is necessarily involved in the perceptual consciousness

<sup>34</sup> How does this proposal compare to that offered by McDowell? The most important difference is that whereas McDowell takes the intentional aspect of perception to be basic, the view offered here takes the primitive relations of apprehension to be basic, thus securing a form of strong naïve realism of the kind endorsed by the Oxford Realists. But it also differs from McDowell's in the way in which it works out the intermediate claim. For McDowell, the understanding is constitutive of our perceptual consciousness alone but it shapes our perceptual consciousness in such a way that there is no highest common factor between rational and non-rational perceptual consciousness (McDowell 2011, pp. 20-1, pp. 54-7; Boyle 2012). The account offered here allows a highest common factor to rational and non-rational perceptual consciousness, namely the presence of primitive relations of apprehension. It can thus provide what McDowell's and Boyle's proposals lack: an answer to the question of what makes non-rational perceptual consciousness a form of perceptual engagement with the world. But see Boyle (2012, pp. 419-20) for an expression of suspicion as to whether this question relies on a mistaken assumption.

of rational beings? This textual question cannot be settled here. In what follows I present some preliminary considerations.

On synthesis: many have thought Kant's discussion of synthesis to commit him to the claim that the obtaining of an intuition constitutively depends on an act of synthesis, in particular the discussion of 'the synthesis of apprehension in intuition' at A98–9 and B160–1. And if all synthesis is undertaken by the understanding (B130) then the understanding is constitutively involved in perceptual consciousness, contrary to the intermediate claim. In contrast, the account of visual experience I have set out above holds not that intuitions depend on acts of synthesis but that *representations* of intuitions depend on acts of synthesis. This makes the role of synthesis compatible with the intermediate claim but only, one might think, by departing from Kant's texts.

Clinton Tolley (2013, pp. 122–4) has recently argued otherwise. According to Tolley, there is a distinction between the mere *having* of an intuition and the representation of an intuition *as* an intuition, and the passages noted above show only that acts of synthesis are required for the representation of an intuition as such. For example, when Kant claims that '[e]very intuition contains a manifold in itself, which however *would not be represented as such* if the mind did not distinguish the time in the succession of impressions on one another ...' (A99, emphasis added), the claim is that synthesis is required for intuitions to be represented *as such* [*als ein solches vorgestellt*], not simply for them to be represented or presented [*vorgestellt*]. Similarly the requirement that the manifold of intuition be synthesised if it is 'contained in one representation' (A99) is compatible with it not being required for the existence of the intuition. This way of reading those passages makes the outcome of synthesis not an intuition but the *representation* of an intuition as on the model of visual experience proposed above.

Tolley's reading of these passages makes them compatible with a denial of the strong claim that the understanding is constitutive of perceptual consciousness. If it is to convince, we need to consider all the passages which have been thought to show that intuitions constitutively depend on acts of synthesis. I won't undertake that task here.<sup>35</sup> It is enough to note that there is a plausible reading of Kant's claims about synthesis which takes them to support the intermediate claim without supporting the strong claim. And if that is right, then the

<sup>35</sup> See Tolley (2013, pp. 122–4) for the full defence.

account of visual experience I have offered can be made compatible with Kant's text.<sup>36</sup>

The issue of the Transcendental Deduction is more difficult. The requirement here is to make sense of Kant's aim in the Deduction of justifying our use of certain a priori concepts. In order for Kant to accomplish this task, it is not enough for him to show that we must, of necessity, apply the categories to the objects of experience, for that is compatible with our application of the categories to such objects being mistaken. He needs to show, further, that the categories *really* must apply. Only so will Humean scepticism about our use of a priori concepts be neutralised.<sup>37</sup>

The worry about the intermediate interpretation is that it can only show that we must necessarily apply the categories to the objects of experience. On the model of visual experience presented above, for instance, the understanding is necessarily involved in perceptual consciousness, but not in the generation of intuitions. This leaves open the possibility that although we necessarily experience objects as falling under the categories, that which is given to us in intuition does not fall under the categories. Were this possibility to hold, visual experience would systematically mislead us as to the categorial nature of objects in the world. And absent a way to rule out this possibility, one might think that the Humean problem remains.

This is an important concern and one which arises for all those who want to deny the strong constitutive claim (Gomes 2014). A number of options are open in response. One is to deny that Kant needs anything more than the subjective necessity of applying the categories to answer Humean scepticism. A second is to agree that Kant wants more than that, but hold that his strategy in the Deduction is inconsistent with his view of perceptual consciousness (Hanna 2011). A more palatable

<sup>36</sup> Does Tolley's reading of these passages make them compatible with the weak reading? For that to be the case, it needs to be made plausible that the representation of an intuition as such – that representation which results from synthesis – is just a judgement that things are a certain way. But certain passages in §26, discussed by Tolley (pp. 123-4), suggest that the kind of representation in question is a form of 'empirical consciousness' or 'perception'. I take these to suggest that acts of synthesis still result in something perceptual, even if they don't result in intuitions, as on the intermediate view.

<sup>37</sup> See Gomes (2010) for a reading of the Deduction in this vein, and Gomes (2014) for an argument that defenders of the weak claim fail to make sense of the Deduction's anti-Humean aims. Kant's criticism of 'preformation-system of pure reason' views (B168) shows that the mere psychological necessity of applying the categories is not enough to justify our use of the categories.

alternative would be to show that the intermediate claim can suffice for showing that the categories really must apply.

This final option would require showing how there can be necessary dependence of the representational element of perceptual consciousness on the nature of the objects of perceptual consciousness without the understanding playing a constitutive role in intuition itself. Some passages might be thought to point in this direction. Tolley (2013, pp. 123-6) points out that Kant draws a distinction between intuition [*Anschauung*] and perception [*Wahrnehmung*], where the latter involves the subject being conscious of what is given in intuition *as a unity* (A119-20, B160). And some of Kant's phrasing suggests that he thinks his solution in the Deduction requires only that the understanding be necessarily involved in *perception*, not that it be constitutive of intuition (e.g., 'Consequently all synthesis, through which even *perception* itself becomes possible, stands under the categories...' (B161, emphasis added)). But there are other passages which seem to show otherwise – e.g., the footnote at B160 – and, regardless of the textual issue, we still require an explanation of how the Humean problem of justification can be answered without the understanding being constitutive of intuition.<sup>38</sup>

I won't pursue these issues here. They turn on wider issues about the structure of the Transcendental Deduction and I take them to

<sup>38</sup> What options are available? Proponents of the strong view often assume that it is only if acts of the understanding are constitutive of perceptual consciousness that whatever is given to us in perceptual consciousness will be such as to fall under the categories. The natural way to cash this out is in terms of existential dependence: if the objects of perceptual consciousness are existentially dependent on our faculty for cognising them, then the constitutive involvement of the understanding in perceptual consciousness will determine the necessary applicability of the categories to the objects of perceptual consciousness. But it is important to note that we don't need the existential dependence of the *objects* of perceptual consciousness in order to secure the anti-Humean conclusion: the existential dependence of the *categorial properties* would suffice. If it were the case that an object's instantiation of a categorial property depended on our faculty for cognizing that property, then this alone would show that the categories must apply to the objects of perceptual consciousness – even if the objects of perceptual consciousness didn't so depend. And although Kant sometimes suggests that the objects of perceptual consciousness existentially depend on our faculty for cognizing them (e.g., at A126-8), there are other passages where he emphasises that it is not the existence of the objects of perceptual consciousness which depends on our faculties for cognising them but only that which we know of them a priori (Bxviii; *Prol.* 4:293). This points towards a way in which the intermediate view can respond to Humean scepticism. For if it can be shown that an object's possessing categorial properties is constituted in part by subjects necessarily perceptually representing objects as having those properties, then the necessary involvement of the understanding in perceptual consciousness would go some way to showing the falsity of Humean scepticism. McDowell's (1985) account of colours and values is one model for such a procedure. Thanks to a referee for pushing me to say more.



indicate that an onus remains on defenders of the intermediate approach to show how such views are compatible with Kant's aims in the Transcendental Deduction – at least to the extent that those intermediate approaches are intended to be Kant's own. But my aim was only to offer an account of visual experience which was *Kantian*. And are there grounds for thinking that the account I have offered is at least that?

I noted at the start of this paper that it is common in contemporary ethics to distinguish between *Kant's* ethics and *Kantian* ethics (O'Neill 1989, Part III; Wood 2008, ch. 1.1). Kant's ethics is 'the theory that Kant himself put forward' whilst Kantian ethics is 'an ethical theory formulated in the basic spirit of Kant, drawing on and acknowledging a debt to what the author of the theory takes to be his insights in moral philosophy' (Wood 2008, p. 1). If the account of visual experience motivated in this paper is to constitute a Kantian approach to the philosophy of perception, it should similarly be formulated in the basic spirit of the first *Critique*, drawing on and acknowledging a debt to the insights of Kant's theoretical philosophy. Let me conclude by suggesting two ways in which the account I have offered does this.<sup>39</sup>

The first concerns the distinction between sensibility and the understanding. This distinction lies at the heart of the first *Critique*: it forms the basis for Kant's account of cognition and is central to his explanation of the source and limits of metaphysical knowledge. Kant took his predecessors to have misconstrued this distinction – he mentions Locke and Leibniz by name (A271/B327) – either by intellectualising appearances or by sensualizing the concepts of the understanding. In both cases, a difference of kind is misconstrued as a difference of degree. Kant's insight is that the two faculties cannot exchange their functions and that both are drawn upon in our cognizing the world. This forms the bedrock to Kant's theoretical philosophy.

The account of visual experience I have offered respects both parts of Kant's insight: it recognises a fundamental distinction between our sensory capacity for perceptual apprehension and our intellectual capacity for conceptual representation and explains how both are combined in our perceptual engagement with the world. Moreover it does so without sacrificing the distinctness of one or other faculty: the difference between sensible intuition and intellectual representation

<sup>39</sup> A third consideration, which I won't focus on, has it that visual experiences need to have a conceptual element if they are to justify beliefs. This line of thought has been pushed most forcefully by John McDowell (1994, 1998) and he sometimes ascribes it to Kant. The account offered here accords with this consideration.

remains one of kind and not degree. The unification of sensibility and the understanding in perceptual consciousness allows the sensory and intellectual to be combined in perception without assimilating one to the other.

The second point of contact concerns the relation between consciousness and self-consciousness. Kant is often read as endorsing a close connection between these phenomena: for at least some aspects of our mental life, being conscious of something involves being aware that one is so conscious (A98; B131f; A350; A361-7; *An* 7:127-8; *ML*<sub>2</sub> 28:584). The account of visual experience offered here provides one way of making good this thought in the case of perceptual experience: visual perception involves both the relational apprehension of empirical particulars and the intentional representation of oneself apprehending the empirical particular. Consciousness of the world in perception thus involves *self-conscious* awareness of oneself consciously perceiving the world: perceptual consciousness is a form of self-consciousness (Rödl 2007; McDowell 2011).<sup>40</sup>

This illustrates the divergence of this Kantian model from that offered by Price. Price takes the representational element of perception to represent how things are in the world: its content concerns solely the empirical particular and its perceived properties. In contrast, the account I am offering takes the representational element to have a distinctive first-personal content: it seems to the subject as if *she* is intuiting the empirical particular. This first-personal content to visual experience arises whenever discursive subjects stand in intuitive relations to empirical particulars: perceiving an empirical object ipso facto puts one into a state with first-personal content. The result is a

<sup>40</sup> I have said that this way of thinking about visual experience is attractive, but one might object that the implication that perceptual consciousness is a form of self-consciousness is shown to be false by reflection on cases of immersed activity, such as that of the tennis player who reacts instinctively to the movements of his opponent. Cases of this sort have featured in the debate between Hubert Dreyfus and John McDowell over whether perceptual consciousness has an essentially first-personal character (Dreyfus 2013, pp. 28-30; cf. McDowell 2007, p. 346). McDowell defends the claim (2013b, pp. 45-6), arguing that cases of immersed activity involve a subject knowing that *she* is acting in a particular way, and although a subject cannot express such knowledge without disrupting her immersed activity, the knowledge is already present to be expressed as evidenced by her capacity to give a rational explanation of her actions. Dan Zahavi and Uriah Kriegel take a similar line in their recent defence of the claim that all conscious experience involves self-consciousness (Zahavi and Kriegel 2015, §4). If this line of response can be made plausible, then the account of visual experience offered above has resources on which to draw in accounting for cases of immersed activity. See the essays collected in Schear (2013) for further discussion of this issue. Thanks to the Editor for raising this question.

distinctively Kantian spin on visual experience: consciousness of the world in intuition involves self-consciousness of oneself intuiting the world. This provides a second way in which this model of visual experience is formulated in the spirit of the first *Critique*.

Let me conclude. My concern in this essay has been the reconciliation of two claims. First, that visual perception essentially involves a relation to empirical particulars. Second, that the understanding is necessarily involved in perceptual consciousness. English-speaking philosophers of perception at the start of the twentieth century took these claims to be in opposition and correspondingly formulated their naïve realist account of perception in anti-Kantian terms. My aim has been to show that this was a mistake: naïve realism can be situated within a Kantian framework which marks a distinction between sensibility and the understanding and takes both to be involved in perceiving the world. The result is naïve realism in Kantian phrase.<sup>41</sup>

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*An* Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View. In *Anthropology, History and Education*, ed. Loude R.B. and G. Zöller. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

*BL* Blomberg Logic. In *Lectures on Logic*, ed. and trans. Young J. M. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.

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- FS The False Subtlety of the Four Syllogistic Figures. In *Theoretical Philosophy 1775–1770*, ed. and trans. Walford D. and R. Meerbote. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.
- JL Jäsche Logic. In *Lectures on Logic*, ed. and trans. Young J. M. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.
- ML2 Metaphysik L<sub>2</sub>. In *Lectures on Metaphysics*, ed. and trans. Ameriks K. and S. Naragon. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.
- OPA The Only Possible Argument in Support of a Demonstration of the Existence of God. In *Theoretical Philosophy 1775–1770*, ed. and trans. Walford D. and R. Meerbote. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.
- Prol. Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics. In *Theoretical Philosophy after 1781*, ed. Allison H. and P. Heath. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- VL Vienna Logic. In *Lectures on Logic*, ed. and trans. Young J. M. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.

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