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Journal of the History of Philosophy, Volume 53, Number 3, July 2015,  
pp. 461-484 (Article)

Published by Johns Hopkins University Press  
DOI: 10.1353/hph.2015.0039



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# No Other Use than in Judgment? Kant on Concepts and Sensible Synthesis

THOMAS LAND\*

**ABSTRACT** According to the Judgmentalist Reading of Kant (JR), he holds that every act of using a concept is an act of judging. Against this it has been argued that, on the contrary, Kant thinks that concepts are also employed in the perceptual apprehension of objects. However, advocates of this Non-Judgmentalist Reading face the problem that the evidence for JR (primarily in the Metaphysical Deduction) appears to be very strong. The aim of this paper is to address this problem and thus to strengthen the case for the Non-Judgmentalist Reading. I provide an interpretation of the Metaphysical Deduction that shows that in fact the evidence does not support JR over its competitor. According to this interpretation, Kant holds that the *capacity* to use concepts depends on the *capacity* to employ them in judgment. But this does not entail that every *exercise* of the first capacity is an act of judgment. So Kant can consistently hold that concepts are employed outside judgment.

**KEYWORDS** Kant, judgment, concept, synthesis, perception

IT IS SOMETIMES SAID THAT ONE OF Kant's decisive advances over his predecessors was to have anticipated Frege's functional theory of concepts, along with its corollary that a concept has significance only in the context of the whole proposition.<sup>1</sup> Kant is said to break with a tradition that held that there is a self-standing species of concept-use—called *apprehensio simplex*, or the conceiving of an idea—in which one represents objects by having a concept before one's mind, independently of connecting it with other concepts in judgment.<sup>2</sup> Since Kant's

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<sup>1</sup>See e.g. Brandom, "Norms, Selves, and Concepts," 29–34; Rosenberg, *Accessing Kant*, 91–94; Schulthess, *Relation und Funktion*, 7–8, 261–76. For critical discussion see Heis, "The Priority Principle from Kant to Frege."

<sup>2</sup>A classic statement of this view can be found in the Port-Royal Logic; see Arnauld and Nicole, *Logic*, 23. *Apprehensio simplex* is the first of the four traditional *operationes mentis*, the other three of which are, in this order, judgment, inference, and ordering (method).

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use of 'judgment' covers what Frege calls judging as well as what he calls grasping a thought, the idea is that according to Kant the only way for a thinker to use a concept is to apply it in a judgment. Kant is thus said to be committed to what I will call Judgmentalism:

Judgmentalism: Every act of using a concept is an act of making a judgment.

Among Kant commentators, the view that Kant subscribed to Judgmentalism is widely held.<sup>3</sup> I will call any reading of Kant that incorporates this view a Judgmentalist Reading (JR).<sup>4</sup> Frequently, the correctness of JR is regarded as being established by a number of passages from the so-called Metaphysical Deduction, such as the following:

Concepts are . . . grounded on the spontaneity of thinking, just as sensible intuitions are grounded on the receptivity of impressions. Now the understanding can make no other use of these concepts than to judge by means of them. (A68/B93)

In addition, JR is taken to be supported by the fact that Judgmentalism forms a coherent package with a number of other doctrines Kant seems to hold.

However, there are aspects of Kant's overall position that call into question his commitment to Judgmentalism. In particular, Kant's argument for the objective validity of the categories (the pure concepts of the understanding), which he presents in the Transcendental Deduction, appears to involve claims that are inconsistent with Judgmentalism. For Kant appears to argue that these concepts can be applied not only in judgments about objects, but also in the perceptual apprehension of objects in empirical intuition. As Hannah Ginsborg puts the point,

[The] central line of thought . . . is that the objective validity of the categories depends on their having a role to play, not just in explicit judgment, but also in our perceptual apprehension of the objects about which we judge.<sup>5</sup>

Since Kant insists that there is a sharp distinction between the predicative structure of judgment, on the one hand, and the spatio-temporal structure of the

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<sup>3</sup>Here is a sample of quotations from the literature, which is by no means exhaustive:

[T]o use a concept is to make a judgment of a certain kind. (Bennett, *Kant's Analytic*, 77)

Although we can abstract particular concepts from the judgments in which they figure, they can still be understood *only* as the contents of possible judgments. Concepts are *essentially* related to the judgments and judgment forms in which they materially figure, and Kant's definition of a concept as a 'possible predicate' underlines that point. (Bird, *The Revolutionary Kant*, 263–64; my emphasis)

Kant . . . establishes the priority of judgment over concepts by claiming that the only function of the understanding is to judge, and by analyzing concepts as predicates of possible judgments. (Buroker, *Introduction*, 82)

Was immer gedacht wird, wird durch Begriffe gedacht. Dies ist aber nur möglich, wenn Begriffe in einem Urteil verwendet werden (A68/B94), so daß der Verstand auch als ein 'Vermögen zu urtheilen' bestimmt wird (A69/B94; A81/B106). (Carl, *Kommentar*, 26)

<sup>4</sup>For the sake of simplicity I will treat JR as if it was a single view. In truth JR comprises a family of views, for the thesis of JR can be developed in different ways. Since these differences are irrelevant to my argument, it is not affected by this simplification.

<sup>5</sup>Ginsborg, "Was Kant a Nonconceptualist?" 70.

perceptual representation of objects in intuition, on the other, he seems to be committed to accepting that at least some concepts have a use outside the context of judgment. Kant's position in the Transcendental Deduction thus seems to be in tension with the view expressed in the passage from the Metaphysical Deduction.

Some commentators have responded to this tension by offering an alternative to JR, according to which Kant accepts that there is a kind of concept-employment that does not consist in judging.<sup>6</sup> This is the use of concepts as rules guiding the act of sensible synthesis, which is involved in the perceptual apprehension of objects. But these Non-Judgmentalist interpretations have on the whole failed to find favor among commentators. A more common approach to the passages prompting Ginsborg's observation is to read them in the light of an antecedent commitment to JR. On this approach, the tension generated by these passages is either not so much as noticed,<sup>7</sup> or, when it *is* noticed, attempts are made to explain it away in a manner consistent with JR.<sup>8</sup>

My aim in this paper is to argue that this approach is mistaken and to make the case for a Non-Judgmentalist interpretation of Kant. The argument has a negative and a positive phase. The aim of the negative phase is to show that the Judgmentalist approach lacks adequate support. The positive phase articulates the Non-Judgmentalist reading and offers textual support for it.

For the positive phase of the argument I build on the work of other commentators. However, none of these commentators have adequately addressed an important challenge faced by any Non-Judgmentalist reading. The challenge is that, to many, Kant's commitment to Judgmentalism appears to be beyond

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<sup>6</sup>These include Ginsborg, "Was Kant a Nonconceptualist?"; Grüne, *Blinde Anschauung*; Haag *Erfahrung und Gegenstand*; Longuenesse, *Kant and the Capacity to Judge*; Longuenesse, "Kant's Categories"; McDowell, "Sensory Consciousness in Kant and Sellars"; McDowell, "Avoiding the Myth of the Given"; Rosenberg, *Accessing Kant*; Sellars, "Some Remarks on Kant's Theory of Experience"; Sellars, "The Role of Imagination in Kant's Theory of Experience"; and Sellars, "Sensibility and Understanding." It might be questioned whether Sellars's position really is Non-Judgmentalist. I discuss this below in n. 47.

<sup>7</sup>The positions of Paton, Pippin, and Strawson are representative:

[I]f our manifold given intuitions are to constitute *one* complex intuition of an object, they must be synthesised [...], and the synthesis must be brought to concepts. This means that whatever concept or concepts may be required for knowledge of an object, judgement is always required . . . for no object can be an object, unless it is judged. (Paton, *Kant's Metaphysic of Experience*, 285)

[C]onsidered as . . . a manifold, sensations cannot in any sense be considered a mode of knowledge, or determinate representation at all. Relation to an object is something that must always be *established* by the understanding in judgment. (Pippin, *Kant's Theory of Form*, 33)

Now the only modes of synthesis for given intuitions which are possible for an understanding like ours are those represented by the categories; and the combination of representations in accordance with the categories is their combination in judgements. (Strawson, *The Bounds of Sense*, 94)

Note that in more recent work Pippin has rejected JR; see Pippin, "What is 'Conceptual Activity'?" and Pippin, "Reason's Form."

<sup>8</sup>Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism*, is a good example of this approach; see n. 22 below for more detail.

doubt and can therefore be relied upon in interpreting other aspects of his overall position. To such interpreters Non-Judgmentalist readings will appear obviously implausible and considerations in their favor will be viewed through a Judgmentalist lens. As a consequence, such considerations will be distorted and will not be able to unfold their full potential. The first task for the Non-Judgmentalist therefore is to dislodge the belief that Kant's commitment to Judgmentalism can be taken for granted. This is what the negative phase of the paper sets out to do. Since the primary support for JR comes in the form of seemingly dispositive textual evidence from the Metaphysical Deduction, the goal here is to show that in fact this evidence is not dispositive. To this end, I offer a reading of the Metaphysical Deduction that is compatible with a Non-Judgmentalist interpretation of Kant. The cornerstone of this reading is a distinction between conditions for *possessing* a capacity and conditions for *exercising* it. I argue that, according to Kant, judgment figures among the former, but not among the latter. That is, the *capacity* to use concepts depends on the *capacity* to employ them in judgment. But this does not entail that every *exercise* of the capacity to use concepts is an act of judgment and so does not entail Judgmentalism.

Once it is clear that there is good reason *not* to allow the belief that Kant is a Judgmentalist to control one's overall reading of the *Critique*, the positive evidence in favor of a Non-Judgmentalist reading can come fully into view. I argue that Kant's discussion of what is involved in the perceptual apprehension of objects in empirical intuition strongly supports such a reading.

I proceed as follows: I begin by explaining why the question of Kant's commitment to Judgmentalism is of central importance to interpretations of the *First Critique* as a whole (§1) and go on to present the evidence in favor of JR (§2). I then present both textual and philosophical reasons for doubting the correctness of JR (§3). This leads me to reconsider the evidence in favor of JR. I show why, despite its apparent obviousness, the textual evidence from the Metaphysical Deduction is not conclusive (§4) and present a reading of the relevant passages that shows them to be compatible with a Non-Judgmentalist interpretation (§5). I end by articulating this interpretation and offering some positive support for it (§6).

# I. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF JR

Whether JR is correct as a reading of Kant bears directly on how we should interpret central doctrines of the first *Critique*. To illustrate this point I will briefly discuss two such doctrines, which I call Blindness and Sensible Synthesis respectively.

In a famous passage Kant says that "thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind" (A51/B75). So we can attribute to him a commitment to

Blindness: Intuitions without concepts are blind.

As the context of the passage makes clear, the view to which Blindness gives partial expression is as follows: There are two basic cognitive capacities, sensibility and understanding. Each has a distinct cognitive role, and contributions from both are necessary for cognition to be achieved. So a certain kind of collaboration of the two faculties is required for cognition. If this collaboration fails to occur, two

kinds of cognitive defect result: Thoughts, the products of the understanding, are empty; intuitions, the products of sensibility, are blind. Whatever these defects come to precisely, it is clear that neither empty thoughts nor blind intuitions have cognitive significance; only their non-defective counterparts do.

In Kant's view, both Rationalists and Empiricists failed to see this. Both Rationalists and Empiricists wrongly assimilated the role of one basic capacity to that of the other, though each side did this in its own characteristic way. As a consequence, both Rationalist and Empiricist philosophers were unable to give a convincing account of human cognition. In Kant's view, one way of saying what the problem is with their views is that they lead to a conception of thought on which thought (at best) turns out to be empty; and to a conception of intuition on which intuition (at best) ends up being blind.<sup>9</sup> The claim, then, that human cognition involves a collaboration of sensibility and understanding is a central commitment of Kant's. Since Blindness gives partial expression to this claim, it is equally central to Kant's position.

But how is Blindness to be understood? What, exactly, does it take to satisfy the requirement on the cognitive significance of intuitions expressed by Kant's dictum? These questions serve to bring out why it matters whether JR is correct as a reading of Kant. For JR delimits a range of acceptable answers. According to JR, Kant holds that the only use we can make of concepts is to employ them in judgments. If one holds this, then one will take Blindness to require that intuitions enter into judgment in some way.<sup>10</sup>

Notice, however, that alternatives to this kind of reading are available. Thus, Kant might hold that in addition to their employment in judgment concepts are also capable of being applied directly in intuition, and thus of functioning as "rule[s] of intuition" (A106) without the mediation of judgment. If this is so, then the requirement expressed by Blindness is not that intuitions must enter into judgment to be cognitively significant. Rather, it is the weaker requirement that a subject capable of enjoying intuitions must also be capable of making judgments. Does Kant hold this weaker view or is he committed to the stronger, Judgmentalist interpretation of Blindness?<sup>11</sup>

The question of how to interpret Blindness is closely linked with another core doctrine advanced in the *Critique*. This is the doctrine that the categories are valid of objects of experience. Kant argues that they are so valid in part by arguing that the categories function as rules governing the act of synthesizing (or "unifying") sensible manifolds, which is required for intuitions to be representations of objects. If we label this kind of synthesis 'sensible synthesis,' we can attribute to Kant the following doctrine:

<sup>9</sup>This is, of course, a heavily simplified account. But it is sufficient for present purposes.

<sup>10</sup>Saying just this much leaves open several ways of spelling out what the required relation is. For instance, one might think of a judgment as a complex representation, which has intuitions and concepts as identifiable components (see e.g. Strawson, *The Bounds of Sense*, and Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism*). Or one might think that intuitions serve as input to a cognitive process whose output are judgments (see e.g. Guyer, *Kant and the Claims of Knowledge*, and Kitcher, *Kant's Transcendental Psychology*).

<sup>11</sup>See n. 6 for a list of commentators who defend the weaker interpretation.

Sensible Synthesis: Intuitions depend on category-guided acts of sensible synthesis.<sup>12</sup>

The idea, in brief, is as follows. If the categories are valid of objects of experience and an intuition is a sensible representation of such an object, then what is given in intuition instantiates the categories. Since the categories jointly articulate the concept of an object, this means that intuitions give objects to the mind. But here a problem arises, which is that Kant's own conception of sensibility makes it hard to see how it is so much as possible for an intuition to be the representation of an object. Here is why: Just as such, a sensible representation appears to be what Kant calls a receptive representation, that is, a representation that results from the mind's being affected by something. A merely receptive representation is, in essence, an impression. By contrast, the representation of an object is the representation of something that essentially outstrips the content of an impression, and this fact is itself part of the content of the representation of an object. An object is thus conceived as something that can be the content of an indefinite number of different sensible representations. For instance, an object is something that can be perceived from a variety of different positions in space and time and that is a bearer of properties that can change in certain determinate ways. In Kant's terms, the idea of an object (of experience) is the idea of a shared content of a unified manifold of different possible representations (see e.g. B137). To say that the categories articulate the concept of an object, therefore, is in part to say that the categories articulate the notion of unity that a representational manifold must exhibit if it is to count as the representation of an object. I will call this notion of unity "categorical unity". We can formulate the following principle to capture Kant's thinking here:

Categorical Unity: A representation *r* is a representation of an object only if *r* exhibits categorical unity.

Now we can characterize the problem by saying that if sensibility is a merely receptive capacity, then it cannot account for the categorical unity of a representation. It follows from this that if an intuition is the representation of an object, it cannot be the exclusive product of receptivity.<sup>13</sup> Rather, it must involve a contribution by the understanding, which accounts for the categorical unity that the intuition exhibits. This is the act of sensible synthesis.

The correctness or otherwise of JR bears directly on what we understand the doctrine of Sensible Synthesis to be. If sensible synthesis is a kind of judgment, then intuitions are representations of objects only to the extent that they enter into

<sup>12</sup>While this account of Kant's argument is widely shared among commentators, there are some, such as Allais ("Kant, Non-Conceptual Content, and the Representation of Space") and Hanna ("Kant and Nonconceptual Content") who reject it. These commentators think that Kant does not hold Sensible Synthesis and that the argument for the objective validity of the categories does not depend on considerations pertaining to the character of intuition. Rather, in their view the argument depends exclusively on considerations pertaining to the character of judgments about what is given in intuition. I argue that this reading of Kant's argument is unconvincing in Land, "Nonconceptualist Readings."

<sup>13</sup>Note that some commentators deny the antecedent of this claim, even though Kant himself seems to affirm it in passages such as A320/B376–77. See e.g. Guyer, *Kant and the Claims of Knowledge*.



judgment; or are “taken up” into judgment, as this is sometimes put.<sup>14</sup> If sensible synthesis is distinct from judgment, then an intuition can be the representation of an object independently of entering into judgment. Our take on a crucial step in the argument of the Transcendental Deduction thus depends directly on the correctness or otherwise of JR. The same holds for the closely related question of how to interpret Blindness, as we have seen. Clearly, then, whether or not Kant holds Judgmentalism makes a difference to the interpretation of key doctrines of the first *Critique*.<sup>15</sup>

## 2. THE EVIDENCE FOR JR

What motivates commentators to ascribe to Kant a commitment to Judgmentalism? It will be useful to distinguish between textual and philosophical evidence. By textual evidence I mean passages (primarily from the so-called metaphysical deduction of the categories) that seem to express directly a commitment to Judgmentalism. I will discuss two such passages and refer to them as the Central Passages. When I speak of philosophical evidence, on the other hand, I have in mind considerations deriving from other doctrines Kant is said to hold and that appear to support JR. Consider first the Central Passages:

Concepts are . . . grounded on the spontaneity of thinking, just as sensible intuitions are grounded on the receptivity of impressions. Now the understanding can make no other use of these concepts than to judge by means of them. (A68/B93)

We can, however, trace all actions of the understanding back to judgments, so that the understanding in general can be represented as a capacity to judge. For . . . it is a capacity for thinking. Thinking is cognition through concepts. Concepts, however, as predicates of possible judgments, are related to some representation of an as yet undetermined object. (A69/B94)

The first passage says that the only way for the understanding to employ concepts is to make judgments. This comes very close to an affirmation of the core thesis of Judgmentalism.<sup>16</sup> The second passage gives expression to a claim we might call the Capacity to Judge Thesis and connects this thesis to the point about concept-use: *Because* the understanding is the capacity for cognition through concepts, the passage says, and concepts are predicates of possible judgments, the understanding can also be characterized as a capacity for judgment. Clearly, the upshot of both passages appears to be that the only exercise of the understanding is in judgment, which in turn seems to entail that concepts can only be used in judgment.

<sup>14</sup>Pippin, “Kant on the Spontaneity of Mind,” 43.

<sup>15</sup>Precisely this issue is central to an ongoing debate over whether Kant is a so-called Conceptualist or Nonconceptualist about perceptual content, key contributions to which include Allais, “Kant, Non-Conceptual Content, and the Representation of Space”; Ginsborg, “Was Kant a Nonconceptualist?”; Hanna, “Kant and Nonconceptual Content”; McDowell, *Mind and World*; and McDowell, “Having the World in View.” For a survey see McLearn, “The Kantian (Non)-Conceptualism Debate.”

<sup>16</sup>It is, however, not equivalent to that thesis, for the passage leaves open the possibility that capacities other than the understanding may employ concepts in a different way. Thanks to an anonymous referee for asking me to clarify this point.



JR tends to be justified by appeal to the Central Passages. In §4 below I will argue that the evidence they provide is not conclusive. For now, what I would like to do is to consider the philosophical evidence favoring JR. It consists in the fact that an endorsement of Judgmentalism on Kant's part would explain why he adopts a number of other important doctrines he appears to hold. This is true, in particular, of the doctrines of Sensible Synthesis and Blindness, which I introduced in the preceding section.

A proponent of JR will take Sensible Synthesis to imply that intuitions depend on acts of judgment.<sup>17</sup> This claim fits nicely into a certain kind of story about how the argument of the Transcendental Deduction works and why the doctrine of Sensible Synthesis has a role in it. And this very fact is regarded as constituting evidence in favor of JR.<sup>18</sup>

The story is roughly as follows: The goal of the Deduction is to show that the categories are objectively valid; that is, that they apply to objects of experience. Achieving this goal requires showing that the categories apply to everything that can be given in intuition.<sup>19</sup> This can be shown, on the Judgmentalist interpretation, if one can demonstrate that intuitions depend on acts of judgment. For the categories bear a close relation to judgment, which is such that the categories seem to apply to everything that is represented as the object of a judgment. Accordingly, showing that intuitions depend on acts of judgment would establish that every object of intuition is one to which the categories apply. According to JR, the doctrine of Sensible Synthesis does just that. We need not worry for now how Kant establishes this doctrine. What matters is simply the fact that the interpretation of this doctrine

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<sup>17</sup>Here are some examples (for additional passages see n. 7 above):

Eine Synthesis von Vorstellungen, die auf einer Funktion beruht, ist ihre Verbindung zu einem Urteil. (Carl, *Kommentar*, 101)

[According to Kant] any combination of representations is nothing other than a judgment which links them. (Guyer, *Kant and the Claims of Knowledge*, 76)

In all cases synthesis is said to be an act of understanding, and this seems to imply that it is an act of judgement. (Paton, *Kant's Metaphysic of Experience*, 504)

Kant will argue in great detail that there *cannot* be a determinate awareness of 'unity' in sensation, that there must be judgment or synthesis in order for such awareness to occur. (Pippin, *Kant's Theory of Form*, 28)

<sup>18</sup>Not all proponents of JR, however, accept Sensible Synthesis. Proponents of a so-called Non-conceptualist reading of Kant, for instance, such as Allais, "Kant, Non-Conceptual Content, and the Representation of Space," and Hanna, "Kant and Nonconceptual Content," deny both Sensible Synthesis and Categorical Unity. While these commentators accept that intuitions depend on synthesis, they hold that this synthesis is wholly independent of any involvement of concepts. I will not argue against this position here (I do so in Land, "Nonconceptualist Readings," and Land, "Intuition, Concepts, and the Representation of Space in Kant"). But it is worth noting that the unquestioned acceptance of JR forms part of the motivation for it. For at least part of the reason why these authors deny that Kant is committed to Sensible Synthesis is that, in their view, accepting this would entail that the synthesis on which intuitions depend is a type of judgment, and this is something that they regard as problematic. However, if JR turned out to be false and the entailment did not hold, it is not clear that the motivation for the Nonconceptualist reading would survive.

<sup>19</sup>The categories must be shown to be valid of "all objects of our senses" (B145).

offered by JR fits well into a Judgmentalist story about the overall argument of the Transcendental Deduction.

This story also provides Kant with a rationale for affirming Blindness. For if one of Kant's main points in the Deduction (as interpreted by advocates of JR) is that intuitions depend for their cognitive significance on acts of judgment, then intuitions without concepts fail to be cognitively significant. So Kant has reason to affirm Blindness.<sup>20</sup>

### 3. DOUBTS ABOUT JR

Having a sense of the exegetical significance of JR as well as the evidence in its favor, we can now begin to consider the case against it. I will present this case in three stages. In this section I will offer two reasons for doubting the correctness of JR. Although by themselves these are not conclusive, they will reinforce the sense that the tension noted at the outset of this paper is real and thus lend urgency to the question whether the seemingly unequivocal textual evidence for JR stands up to scrutiny. In §4 I will argue that it does not, and in §5 I offer a reading of the relevant passages that shows them to be compatible with a Non-Judgmentalist interpretation. This constitutes the second stage of my case against JR. The third stage, to be presented in §6 along with the articulation of a Non-Judgmentalist interpretation, consists in showing that the philosophical considerations in favor of JR do not provide independent support for it and so cannot make up for the failure of the textual evidence.

We have already seen that the doctrine of Sensible Synthesis is central to Kant's project of demonstrating the objective validity of the categories. In the preceding section I claimed that JR offers a rationale for Kant's endorsement of Sensible Synthesis, which is premised on his alleged endorsement of Judgmentalism. However, I now wish to argue that, once we look more closely at a number of passages in which Kant discusses Sensible Synthesis, we can see that there are reasons for resisting a Judgmentalist interpretation of this doctrine.

Let me begin by providing a bit of context. Sensible synthesis comes in two flavors, which need to be distinguished. On the one hand, there is the transcendental synthesis of the imagination and, on the other, the synthesis of apprehension.<sup>21</sup> This distinction is closely related to the distinction between

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<sup>20</sup>Some commentators offer independent philosophical reasons for the truth of Judgmentalism and argue that Kant shares these. A particularly clear instance of this is Robert Brandom, who credits Kant with the insight that a theory of cognition (indeed, of intentionality more generally) must center on the notion of truth-evaluability, in the sense that what is basic for understanding cognition is the ability to make claims that can be true or false. Other cognitive capacities must be explained in terms of their relation to this ability. This holds, in particular, for conceptual capacities. According to Brandom, "Kant takes the whole judgment to be the conceptually and explanatorily basic unit at once of meaning, cognition, awareness, and experience. Concepts and their contents are to be understood only in terms of the contribution they make to judgments: concepts are predicates of judgment" ("Norms, Selves, and Concepts," 33).

<sup>21</sup>There are some slight shifts in Kant's terminology concerning the doctrine of synthesis. The transcendental synthesis of imagination, which in the B-edition is also called figurative synthesis (*synthesis speciosa*) (see B151), is interchangeably referred to as the "pure transcendental synthesis of imagination" (A101), the "pure synthesis of imagination" (A116), the "productive synthesis of imagination" (A118), and the "transcendental synthesis of imagination" (A119) in the A-edition.

pure intuition and empirical intuition, since the transcendental synthesis of the imagination pertains to pure intuition, while the synthesis of apprehension pertains to empirical intuition. Just as pure intuition constitutes the form of empirical intuition, so the transcendental synthesis of imagination constitutes the form of the synthesis of apprehension, where this must mean, at a minimum, that the latter shares essential features of the former.

In what follows, I will consider two passages in which Kant discusses the transcendental synthesis of the imagination and the synthesis of apprehension, respectively. Each of these provides reasons for thinking that neither type of sensible synthesis consists in judging. Judgment for Kant is essentially predicative. In the basic case, it has the form ‘*S is P*,’ where the schematic letters stand for concept-expressions.<sup>22</sup> My claim will be, then, that it is hard to see how either type of sensible synthesis can be fitted into the mold of a representation exhibiting predicative structure.

Consider first an example Kant gives to illustrate the synthesis of apprehension:

Thus, if I turn, for example, the empirical intuition of a house into a perception through the apprehension of the manifold of this intuition, the necessary unity of space and of outer sensible intuition in general functions as the basis, and *I as it were draw the outline of the house* in accordance with this synthetic unity of the manifold in space. (B162; my emphasis)

What is remarkable here is Kant’s talk of “drawing.” Although he indicates that we are not to take this kind of talk literally, the point of using it seems to be to highlight the image-like character of the representation. A certain spatial configuration is represented in a way that is relevantly like the activity of drawing a figure. If this is right, then the passage gives us a *prima facie* reason for thinking that the synthesis of apprehension is not an act of judgment. Kant seems to be saying, not that some object is judged to be a house (or some shape judged to be the shape of a house), but rather that an image-like representation of a certain shape is being entertained. And this representation, which does not have the form of a predication, is distinct in structure from a judgment.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>22</sup>For discussion see my “Intuition and Judgment.”

<sup>23</sup>Some commentators interpret the passage differently, suggesting that what Kant says here is that the representation of an object in space and time, such as a house, is achieved by means of a certain kind of judgment, viz. a judgment to the effect that this house occupies a determinate quantity of space; see e.g. Guyer, “The Deduction of the Categories,” 147. Since it is clear that that is not what the passage expressly says, I do not need to rebut this reading here in order to treat the passage as giving us a *prima facie* reason for questioning Kant’s commitment to Judgmentalism. I offer a rebuttal in Land, “Intuition, Concepts, and the Representation of Space in Kant.”

Allison (*Kant’s Transcendental Idealism*) offers a third alternative, arguing that the synthesis at issue here is what he calls proto-conceptual: “The basic point is that the imagination has the task of unifying the sensible data in a way that *makes possible* its subsequent conceptualization, without itself *being* a mode of conceptualization” (188). Since according to Allison the categories can be employed in a “proto-conceptual” way, this allows him to hold on to JR while simultaneously affirming a Non-Judgmentalist reading of Sensible Synthesis. The problem with this view is that Allison does not say enough about the relation between the capacity for concepts and the capacity for proto-conceptual synthesis. If sensible synthesis is proto-conceptual because it draws on capacities belonging to the understanding, but employs these in a less than full-fledged way, then Allison’s position is not an instance of JR, and so is grist for my mill. If, on the other hand, the capacity for sensible synthesis is self-standing, it is not clear what entitles one to call it “proto-conceptual.”

Next, consider a passage in which Kant describes the transcendental synthesis of the imagination and which bears some similarity to the passage from B162 just quoted. Again Kant gives an example of the type of synthesis he has been discussing and again this act takes the form of drawing a figure:

We cannot think a line without *drawing* it in thought, cannot think a circle without *describing* it. (B154)

Just as in the case of drawing the outline of the house, it is difficult to see how an act of drawing a line could be an act of making a judgment.<sup>24</sup> What is at issue seems to be something like the generating of a mental image rather than the classifying of an object as, for example, a line. Again, then, there is evidence here that Kant recognizes a way of exercising the understanding that does not consist in making a judgment.

Proponents of JR might object that this example is meant to illustrate a synthesis of the imagination and that the imagination is distinct from the understanding, so the example does not bear on Kant's conception of the understanding.<sup>25</sup> To address this objection, I need to distinguish two different versions of JR. One of these construes sensible synthesis as an act of judgment. This has been by far the more dominant version among commentators. The other version, which has only recently received more attention and which we might call the Nonconceptualist version, denies that sensible synthesis involves the application of concepts.<sup>26</sup> Obviously, the latter is the source of this objection. My focus in this paper is on the first version, so for the purposes of this paper I will assume that sensible synthesis is, or involves, an exercise of the understanding, the capacity for conceptual representation. Showing that the Nonconceptualist version of JR is equally problematic would require a separate discussion.<sup>27</sup> But it might be helpful nonetheless to indicate briefly why I think the objection fails.

Proponents of the Nonconceptualist version of JR argue that Kant holds neither Sensible Synthesis nor Categorical Unity. In their view, sensibility on its own furnishes representations of objects, in a thin sense of 'object,' which does not conform to Categorical Unity. This allows them to interpret passages in which Kant talks about sensible synthesis as being concerned with a kind of synthesis that is

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<sup>24</sup>At best, it could be, or involve, a certain kind of practical judgment, as Kant seems to be suggesting in the following passage (in which he explains the notion of a postulate): "Now what is called a postulate in mathematics is the practical proposition, which contains nothing but the synthesis by means of which we first give ourselves an object and generate its concept; for instance, to describe a circle with a given line, from a given point in the plane. A proposition of this kind cannot be proved for the reason that the procedure it demands is precisely that by means of which we first generate the concept of such a figure" (A234/B287). Even if this is right, however, it would still force us to recognize a kind of concept-employment that is distinct in kind from the type of judgment I have been discussing, viz. theoretical judgment. For as the passage makes clear, what is distinctive of the practical employment of concepts in a mathematical postulate is, first, that it serves to bring about an action, and second, that the object in question is first given to the mind by means of this action.

<sup>25</sup>This objection could easily be extended to encompass the synthesis of apprehension as well.

<sup>26</sup>This is the version advocated by Allais, "Kant, Non-Conceptual Content, and the Representation of Space," and Hanna, "Kant and Nonconceptual Content," among others.

<sup>27</sup>For which see Land, "Nonconceptualist Readings," and "Intuition, Concepts, and the Representation of Space in Kant."

merely sensible and so does not involve the understanding. Kant recognizes, they say, a kind of sensible spontaneity, where this means that sensibility is not a purely receptive capacity, but rather a capacity the actualization of which involves certain kinds of mental processing. Talk of synthesis in connection with intuitions is then construed by these commentators as referring to this type of mental processing.<sup>28</sup>

This kind of view can appeal for support to passages in which Kant attributes sensible synthesis to the imagination and characterizes this capacity as a “blind . . . function of the soul” (A78/B103)—which may well mean that this function is merely sensible. However, this move faces the objection that Kant draws a distinction between productive and reproductive imagination. While the reproductive imagination is indeed a merely sensible capacity, the productive imagination is not. It depends on the involvement of the understanding, for its act is a “synthesis in accordance with concepts” (A78/B104; cf. A112). The context of the passages about “drawing” quoted above makes it clear that both the transcendental synthesis of the imagination and the synthesis of apprehension are acts of the productive imagination rather than the reproductive imagination.<sup>29</sup>

Returning now to the discussion of the dominant version of JR, according to which sensible synthesis is an act of judgment, we can add to the evidence furnished by the passages about “drawing” the following consideration, which also gives us reason to doubt the correctness of JR: I said above that the doctrine of Sensible Synthesis plays an important role in Kant’s argument to the effect that the categories are valid of all objects of our senses. A premise in this argument is the claim that intuitions exhibit categorial unity, and Kant puts forth the doctrine of Sensible Synthesis in order to entitle himself to this premise.<sup>30</sup> But since Kant insists that the representations of understanding and sensibility are different in

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<sup>28</sup>However, only Hanna actually uses the term ‘spontaneity’ in connection with sensibility; see Hanna, “Kant and Nonconceptual Content,” 3.

<sup>29</sup>See the following two passages:

That which determines inner sense *is the understanding*. . . . Thus, it [i.e. the understanding, T.L.], under the designation of a transcendental synthesis of imagination, executes that action . . . of which we legitimately say that inner sense is affected by it. (B153–54; my emphasis)

In this manner it is proved: that the synthesis of apprehension . . . must necessarily conform to the synthesis of apperception. . . . It is one and the same spontaneity, which in the one case, under the title of imagination, and in the other case, under the title of understanding, brings combination into the manifold of intuition. (B162n)

Hanna (“Kant and Nonconceptual Content,” 3) asserts that passages such as these support his view, but leaves it mysterious how this could be so. Allais (“Kant, Non-Conceptual Content, and the Representation of Space”) is more circumspect; her discussion at 403–4 suggests the following response: Kant’s talk of ‘drawing’ and the doctrine of the productive imagination concern only the kind of spatial representation of relevance in geometry, but not that involved in empirical intuition. But as I argue in Land, “Intuition, Concepts, and the Representation of Space in Kant,” this response rests on a mistaken view of Kant’s theory of spatial representation.

<sup>30</sup>Proponents of the Nonconceptualist approach just considered deny that this is a premise in Kant’s argument. I argue that the alternative reading of this argument that they offer faces serious problems in Land, “Nonconceptualist Readings.”

kind, sensible synthesis must confer categorial unity on intuitions in a way that preserves this difference. Arguably, this requirement would not be met if sensible synthesis were a kind of judgment. For in that case intuitions would exhibit the kind of logical structure characteristic of judgments and their components, that is, the structure characteristic of representations of the understanding.<sup>31</sup>

Both the doctrine of the transcendental synthesis of imagination and the doctrine of the synthesis of apprehension, then, give us reason to doubt Kant's commitment to Judgmentalism.<sup>32</sup> This has led some commentators to propose Non-Judgmentalist readings of Kant.<sup>33</sup> Key to such readings is the idea that the kind of exercise of the understanding responsible for these two types of synthesis does not take the form of making a judgment. Of course, if one takes the Central Passages to be dispositive for Kant's commitment to Judgmentalism, one will seek to give interpretations of these doctrines on which they come out consistent with JR.<sup>34</sup> But this fact alone should not undermine their status as *prima facie* evidence against JR. For they certainly appear to pose a serious challenge for JR. In the absence of independent reasons for the correctness of JR, this should be sufficient for taking a skeptical attitude toward the claim that these doctrines support JR. I will now argue that the evidence for JR we considered earlier does not provide such independent reasons.

#### 4. THE TEXTUAL EVIDENCE FOR JR RECONSIDERED

I first wish to revisit the textual evidence for JR, which I presented in §2, and argue that it is not dispositive. This will become clear if we pay attention to the dialectical function this evidence has in the context in which it occurs. The Central Passages are both found in a chapter of the *Critique* entitled "Clue to the Discovery of All Pure Concepts of the Understanding," often referred to as the Metaphysical Deduction. More specifically, they are from the first sub-section of the Clue, entitled "On the Logical Use of the Understanding in General." This title is significant. Kant is here invoking a distinction he had introduced in his inaugural dissertation, namely, the

<sup>31</sup>This argument obviously depends on the assumption that the heterogeneity of understanding and sensibility should be understood in terms of the logical structure of their representations. I cannot defend this assumption here, but see Land, "Spatial Representation," as well as Allais, "Kant, Non-Conceptual Content, and the Representation of Space."

<sup>32</sup>Kant's theory of error provides an additional reason; see A293/B350–A295/B351.

<sup>33</sup>See n. 6 above. I discuss one such reading below in §6.

<sup>34</sup>Sometimes such interpretations are justified by direct appeal to Kant's alleged acceptance of Judgmentalism. In a dialectical context in which that acceptance is what is at issue, this would clearly be question-begging. For an example see the following passage from Buroker: "In their real use the pure concepts enable us to think of the pure manifold of space and time in terms of measurable locations and regions that can be occupied by objects of experience. *Since this is a conceptual act, and the only use of concepts is to judge, it is thereby an act of judging.* Hence pure concepts function both syntactically—to combine first-order concepts (or other representations) in judgment—and semantically—to *synthesize the pure manifold of spatial-temporal data given in the forms of intuition*" (Buroker, *Introduction*, 95; my emphases). Note that the second italicized phrase picks out the transcendental synthesis of imagination.

Allison's view is another interesting case in point. Allison realizes that the synthesis of imagination is supposed to confer categorial unity on intuitions and finds himself forced to speak of a "proto-conceptual" synthesis in order to preserve his commitment to JR, while also doing justice to the heterogeneity of intuitions (see n. 23 above).



distinction between the logical use and the real use of the understanding.<sup>35</sup> I will say more about this distinction in the next section; for now I wish to point out that it plays a crucial role in Kant's derivation of the categories from the logical forms of judgment. The logical forms of judgment are the forms of the logical use of the understanding. By contrast, the categories are the forms of the real use of the understanding. Kant's argumentative strategy is to identify the forms of the real use by tabulating the forms of the logical use. The idea is that the latter provide a "clue" to finding the former. This, indeed, is the core idea of the "Clue to the Discovery of All Pure Concepts of the Understanding" and the reason for its title.

Unfortunately, in the Transcendental Analytic Kant is not as explicit about this as one might hope. But he provides an account of the strategy at the opening of the Transcendental Dialectic, in a section that is constructed in precise analogy to the Clue-chapter of the Analytic (and that can be regarded as the metaphysical deduction of the Ideas of Reason), as is apparent from the following passage:

Reason, like understanding, can be employed in a merely formal, that is, logical manner, where it abstracts from all content of cognition. But it is also capable of a real use, where it contains within itself the source of certain concepts and principles, which it does not borrow either from the senses or from the understanding. The former capacity has long since been defined by logicians as the capacity of making mediate inferences (in distinction from immediate inferences, *consequentiiis immediatis*); but the nature of the other capacity, which itself gives rise to concepts, is not to be understood from this definition. Now since we are here presented with a division of reason into a logical and a transcendental capacity, we must seek for a higher concept of this source of cognition which includes both concepts as subordinate to itself. Following the analogy with the concepts of the understanding, we may expect that the logical concept will provide the key to the transcendental, and that the table of the functions of the former will at once give us the genealogical tree of the concepts of reason. (A299/B355–56)

There are two points that interest me in this passage. The first is this: Kant says that the nature of the real use of reason cannot be understood from the definition of the logical use of reason. The second is the claim made in the following sentence: "Now since we are here presented with a division of reason into a logical and a transcendental capacity, we must seek for a higher concept of this source of cognition which includes both concepts as subordinate to itself." Kant's point is that considering the genus of which both the logical and the real use of reason are species *will* put him in a position to identify the forms of its real use.

While this intermediate step—moving from the logical use first to the genus (reason in general) and only then to the real use—does not seem to be present in the parallel section of the Transcendental Analytic, we should be able to identify the kind of genus-species structure that Kant here attributes to reason in the case of the understanding as well. That is, the fact that there is a "division of [the understanding] into a logical and a transcendental capacity" entails that there exists "a higher concept of this source of cognition which includes both concepts as subordinate to itself."<sup>36</sup>

<sup>35</sup>See §23 of *De Mundi* (AA 2:410–11).

<sup>36</sup>Kant is not explicit about what the genus is, but I believe the doctrine of apperception can be regarded as giving an account of it. Although I cannot argue for this here, it is worth noting what Kant says about the synthetic unity of apperception: "this capacity is the understanding itself" (B134n).



If the logical use and the real use of the understanding are indeed related as two species of a common genus, then it follows that there is no direct inference from the nature of one of these species to the nature of the other species. In particular, we must not assume without additional premises that what is true of the logical use of the understanding is also true of its real use.

Both the characterization of the understanding as a capacity to judge and the claim that the understanding can use concepts only in judgment are put forth in a section that, according to its title, discusses the understanding in its logical use. If what I have just said is right, it follows that we cannot, without additional premises, take these claims to apply to the real use of the understanding as well. More precisely, we cannot infer directly from

Logical Use Judgmentalism: As regards the *logical* use of the understanding, every act of concept-use is an act of judgment.

to

Real Use Judgmentalism: As regards the *real* use of the understanding, every act of concept-use is an act of judgment.

It follows that the textual evidence for JR is not dispositive. It does not establish Kant's commitment to Judgmentalism, where that, recall, is the thesis that *every* act of concept-use is an act of judgment.

The argument just given does *not* establish that Kant does not hold Judgmentalism. It only establishes that JR cannot be defended in the way it typically is, namely, by appeal to the Central Passages. But this is precisely the point that I was concerned to make here. It concludes the negative phase of my case in favor of a Non-Judgmentalist reading, whose aim was to address a major challenge faced by any such reading. For as long as the Central Passages are regarded as settling the issue of Kant's commitment to Judgmentalism, the Non-Judgmentalist is fighting an uphill battle. Any evidence she might give in favor of her own position, such as the passages on sensible synthesis considered in the preceding section, is bound to be viewed through a Judgmentalist lens. And when seen through this lens, it will fail to carry the conviction the Non-Judgmentalist takes it to have. However, once the burden of proof has been shifted and the question of Kant's commitment to Judgmentalism is open, this evidence can appear in a new light.

This is not to say that the Non-Judgmentalist is home free. The positive case for a Non-Judgmentalist reading still has to be made, and this will be the task for the remainder of this paper. In the next section I will offer a Non-Judgmentalist reading of the Central Passages, and in §6 I will outline a Non-Judgmentalist interpretation of the doctrine of Sensible Synthesis, building on an account developed by Béatrice Longuenesse.

##### 5. AN ALTERNATIVE READING OF THE CENTRAL PASSAGES

If there is reason to think that the Central Passages should not be read along Judgmentalist lines, we need to look for an alternative. I will present such an alternative in three steps. First, I will say more about the distinction between the logical and real uses of the understanding, on which my argument in §4 relied. Second, I will argue that consideration of the wider context in which the Central

Passages occur supports a Non-Judgmentalist reading. Finally, I will argue that, while it is true that sensible synthesis depends on judgment, this dependence does not take the form envisaged by proponents of JR.

Consider first, then, the distinction between logical use and real use.<sup>37</sup> To explain this distinction, we need another distinction, namely, that between the origin of a concept with regard to its form and the origin of a concept with regard to its matter.<sup>38</sup> The logical form of a concept for Kant is its generality, and this form always has its origin in the understanding. But the matter of a concept—roughly, its content—can have its origin either in sensibility or in the understanding. The former is the case for empirical concepts, where the idea is that the concept derives in some way from actual sensible representations of its instances. The latter is the case for the pure concepts of the understanding, whose content does not depend on actual sensible representations of their instances.<sup>39</sup>

The merely *logical* use of the understanding comprises that which is involved in acquiring and employing representations that have the form of a concept. As Kant puts it at one point, in its logical use the understanding “gives a certain form to given cognitions, which is called logical” (A305/B362). Kant’s claim in the Central Passages is that the notion of judgment must occupy a central place in an account of the logical use. By contrast, the understanding in its *real* use employs concepts that originate in the understanding with regard to their matter (i.e. pure concepts of the understanding), and it employs them for the purpose of cognizing objects. Accordingly, the project of demonstrating the objective validity of the categories can also be characterized as the project of showing that the understanding has a real use.

Now, Kant’s claim in the Metaphysical Deduction is that there is a close connection between these two uses of the understanding, inasmuch as the categories derive from what we can regard as the forms of the understanding in its logical use, namely, the logical forms of judgment. But the relation is not one of identity. And this leaves room for the following contention, which I claim captures Kant’s view: although, as far as the *logical use* is concerned, concepts must be understood in terms of their use in judgment, the understanding has a *real use* only if concepts can also be used in a context other than judgment. More precisely, the understanding has a real use only if the categories can be used in acts of sensible synthesis, which are not acts of judgment.

This contention can be justified by considering the task of the Metaphysical Deduction as a whole.<sup>40</sup> Kant’s goal in the Metaphysical Deduction is to identify a set of pure concepts of the understanding. These are concepts that a thinker possesses simply in virtue of possessing the faculty of understanding, independently of having had particular sensory experiences. Kant’s strategy in seeking to identify

<sup>37</sup>In the *Critique*, Kant gives an account of the distinction at A305/B362–A309/B366. For helpful discussion see Longuenesse, *Kant and the Capacity to Judge*, 26–29.

<sup>38</sup>See *JL* §§5–6 (AA 9:93–95).

<sup>39</sup>This is compatible with saying, as Kant does, that these concepts serve to cognize objects only in their schematized version, that is, insofar as they are related to sensible representations.

<sup>40</sup>The following account draws on Wolff, *Vollständigkeit*.

these concepts is to look for an account of what the basic cognitive act of the understanding is. The idea is that, since the pure concepts are coeval with the faculty of understanding itself, they must in some way be involved in the basic act of this faculty. Having an account of this act, therefore, should put one in a position to say more about these concepts.

In implementing this strategy Kant argues that the basic act of the understanding is the act of judging. This is what I called the Capacity to Judge Thesis in §2. He elaborates that the act of judging is an act of unifying representations and concludes that there will be as many pure concepts of the understanding as there are distinct ways of unifying representations in judgment. This conclusion in turn motivates the project of tabulating the elementary logical forms of judgment in the so-called Table of Judgments, from which a corresponding table of pure concepts of the understanding is then derived.

The Central Passages occur at the point at which Kant seeks to establish that the basic act of the understanding is the act of judging. He starts from the premise that the understanding is a capacity for cognition through concepts and argues that concepts serve to cognize objects only by being applied in judgments. It follows that the understanding is fundamentally a capacity for judgment.<sup>41</sup>

Having this context in view allows us to put the Central Passages in perspective. The crucial point is that, if my account is right, Kant's claim is that concepts serve to *cognize* objects only by being applied in judgment. But this claim is fully compatible with saying that concepts can also be applied in a distinct act of sensible synthesis. The reason is that by applying a concept in sensible synthesis one does not (in the relevant sense) cognize an object. Sensible synthesis is required for having a sensible representation of an object, that is, an intuition. But the mere having of an intuition does not by itself amount to cognition in the sense at issue here. Cognition in this sense requires at least that one judge (perhaps merely problematically) the intuited object to be such-and-such; that is, it requires the application of concepts in judgment.<sup>42</sup>

The Central Passages, then, leave room for the possibility of applying concepts in contexts other than judgment. However, the application of concepts in sensible synthesis is not simply *additional* to the application of concepts in judgment and unconnected to it. On the contrary, Kant recognizes a dependence of sensible synthesis on judgment, and this dependence is crucial to his overall argument. But *pace* JR, this dependence lies at the level of the *capacities*, not at the level of their *acts* or *exercises*. What I mean is this: contrary to what JR holds, an act of sensible synthesis is not an act of judgment. But the *capacity* to apply concepts in sensible synthesis depends on the *capacity* to apply concepts in judgment. One cannot possess the former without the latter.

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<sup>41</sup>See A67/B92–A68/B94.

<sup>42</sup>Certain kinds of cognition, in particular so-called rational cognition, require considerably more than that. Compare Kant's discussion of the regulative use of the ideas of reason at A642/B670–A668/B696.

This dependence can be explained as follows: sensible synthesis proceeds “in accordance with the categories” (B161). Because of this, sensible synthesis confers categorial unity on sensible manifolds, which thereby acquire the unity required for them to count as representations of objects. But the notion of categorial unity cannot be understood in isolation from the notion of judgment. In a nutshell, a category for Kant is a concept that characterizes an object falling under it with regard to the logical form of the judgments through which this object may be represented.<sup>43</sup> For instance, to say that an object instantiates the category “substance-accident” is to characterize it as the kind of thing that is represented in judgments exhibiting the logical form Kant calls “categorical.” But the logical form of a judgment is itself a mode of unity, since, as we saw above, judgment for Kant is fundamentally an act of unifying representations. So to say that an intuition exhibits categorial unity is to say that it exhibits a kind of unity that is a correlate of the unity of judgment. Thus, to say that an intuition exhibits the unity of “substance-accident” is to say that its unity is the sensible correlate of the unity of a judgment of categorial form.<sup>44</sup> That is to say, the intuition is thereby regarded as the *sensible* representation of an object that would be represented *discursively* in a judgment of categorial form.

The notion of categorial unity, then, must be understood in relation to the unity of judgment. It follows that the representation of unity for which the act of sensible synthesis is responsible cannot be understood in isolation from the notion of judgment.<sup>45</sup> So the notion of sensible synthesis depends conceptually on the notion of judgment. And this in turn supplies a strong reason for believing that one cannot possess the capacity for sensible synthesis in the absence of the capacity for judgment. Again, however, saying that there is a dependence at the level of the capacities does not entail that the dependence exists also at the level of their exercises. In other words, it is consistent to hold the conjunction of the following two claims: (i) an act of sensible synthesis is not identical to an act of judgment; (ii) the capacity for sensible synthesis depends on the capacity for judgment. Kant, I think, makes just this point in a famous passage from the Metaphysical Deduction, in which he says that “the same function” of the mind is responsible for both the unity of judgment and the unity of sensible synthesis (A79/B104).<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>43</sup>The categories are defined as “concepts of an object in general, by means of which the intuition of an object is regarded as determined with regard to the logical functions for judgments” (B128). The logical functions for judgments are the functions tabulated in the Table of Judgments, which is a table of both logical forms and logical functions of judgment. For this last point see Wolff, *Vollständigkeit*; for the characterization of the categories given in the text see Rödl, *Kategorien des Zeitlichen*.

<sup>44</sup>Specifying what it is for an intuition to exhibit the unity of “substance-accident” would require reference to the relevant schema and Pure Principle. But for present purposes we can abstract from this.

<sup>45</sup>I say more about this in Land, “Kant’s Spontaneity Thesis.”

<sup>46</sup>Throughout I have framed the issue in terms of whether concepts can be applied in acts other than judgment. It is worth pointing out, however, that there are alternative ways of framing it. At the fundamental level, the issue is whether the spontaneous stem of the mind can be exercised only in judgment or also in acts distinct from judgment. For the purposes of this paper I have identified spontaneity with the understanding and understanding with the capacity to use concepts. But one might instead decide to speak of concepts and of the understanding only in connection with judgment and refer to the other kind of exercise of spontaneity as the act of the imagination, which on this construal is distinct from the understanding and does not employ concepts. I have no objection

## 6. SENSIBLE SYNTHESIS

I have argued that JR misrepresents the way in which the use of concepts in sensible synthesis depends on the use of concepts in judgment. Rather than the former being an instance of the latter, the dependence lies only at the level of the capacities. If this is right, the logical space for a Non-Judgmentalist reading has now been carved out. Although this is in itself a significant result, a crucial element of such a reading is still missing. For we still need to know what it is to apply concepts in sensible synthesis. This means that we need to know, first, how sensible synthesis differs from judgment and, second, on account of what it is appropriate to say that sensible synthesis involves the use of concepts.

Meeting these demands will at the same time serve to show that what in §2 I called the philosophical evidence in favor of JR does not provide independent support for it and so cannot make up for the failure of the textual evidence from the Central Passages. The philosophical evidence was that proponents of JR can offer a plausible account of why Kant holds the doctrines of Sensible Synthesis and Blindness. This evidence provides independent support for JR only if this account is clearly superior to its competitors. But as we will see, the Non-Judgmentalist reading I have begun to sketch provides an account that is at least equally plausible.

Let me proceed, then, to filling out the sketch. To meet the first demand—of explaining how sensible synthesis differs from judgment—we can draw on the discussion in §3. There, I argued that Kant's remarks about the transcendental synthesis of the imagination strongly suggest that this synthesis proceeds in a way that does not consist in making judgments. In characterizing it Kant speaks of such things as 'drawing a line in thought' or 'drawing the outline' of a figure—locutions suggesting that he is concerned with imagistic (or perhaps diagrammatical) representation rather than judgment. This suggests that sensible synthesis differs from judgment in its basic structure—what Kant might call its form. While judgment for Kant is essentially predicative in structure, sensible synthesis is not. Rather, sensible synthesis has the spatio-temporal structure Kant takes to be characteristic of sensible representations. Kant's talk of 'drawing' in the passages considered in §3 is intended to mark this structural difference.<sup>47</sup>

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to this, as long as it is clear that the underlying challenge remains the same: we need an account of spontaneity that makes it intelligible that this capacity can be exercised in two distinct kinds of ways, one of which exhibits distinctly sensible characteristics; or, to put it differently, how "the same function" can be responsible both for the "unity [of] different representations in a judgment" and for the "unity [of] the mere synthesis of different representations in an intuition" (A79/B104–5). Addressing this challenge is the crucial issue; it remains the same whether one characterizes it as the problem of how understanding and imagination can both be functions of spontaneity or in the way I do in the text.

<sup>47</sup>I say more about this in Land, "Intuition, Concepts, and the Representation of Space in Kant." It might be objected that the account of sensible synthesis developed by Wilfrid Sellars shows that there is no such structural difference; that, rather, there is a kind of concept-use in judgment that accounts for the spatio-temporal structure of what Kant calls "drawing." Sellars holds that sensible synthesis involves two components. One is what he calls an image-model. This is a spatial representation. The other is a conceptual element that should be understood on analogy with a complex demonstrative referring expression (of the form 'this- $\Phi$ ,' where ' $\Phi$ ' stands for a sortal term). Moreover, he holds that the sortal term occurring in the referring expression stands for a concept, which functions as a rule in the construction of the image-model. But, so the objection goes, just as a referring expression occurs in a whole sentence, so the concept expressed by it is part of a judgment. My response

To meet the second demand—of specifying which features of sensible synthesis make it appropriate to say that this act involves the use of concepts—I wish to draw on the account given by Béatrice Longuenesse.<sup>48</sup> Longuenesse holds that the doctrine of sensible synthesis is modeled on Kant's theory of mathematical concepts; in particular, on Kant's claim that mathematical concepts can be constructed in pure intuition. Central to this notion of construction, as interpreted by Longuenesse, is the idea that the concept in question is employed to generate an intuition of an instance of the concept.<sup>49</sup> This type of concept-employment does not take the form of making a judgment. The concept is not predicated of anything. Rather, the concept functions as "the consciousness of an act, and more precisely of an act of combining and grasping together"; it is "the (clear or obscure) consciousness of the unity of an act of synthesis, and moreover, of the synthesis of a *whole*."<sup>50</sup>

To illustrate what Longuenesse has in mind here, consider one of the geometrical examples Kant mentions, namely, the act of "describing a circle": in drawing a circle, to apprehend what is before my mind as the representation of a single object, I must conceive of my act of drawing as a single act, in the sense that all the phases of this act belong to the generation of a single representation. I must not, for instance, forget that this is what I am doing as I move, for example, from the top right quadrant of the circle to the bottom right quadrant. More generally, during each phase of my activity I must think of this phase as being part of a more encompassing process: the process, namely, of generating the representation of a circle, a process with as many phases as are needed to accomplish *that*. This is done by means of employing the concept of a circle. This concept guides my activity, in the sense that the activity is oriented toward the goal of generating a sensible representation of a circle. This concept thus functions as "the consciousness of the unity of an act of synthesis."

The employment of a geometrical concept in the generation of a figure provides a model for sensible synthesis. What is thereby modeled will not share every feature of the model. Determining precisely which features need to be modified, and in what ways, when we project the model onto other types of concepts, is a matter

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to this is as follows: Sellars is explicit that sensible synthesis involves the application of concepts in a way that would be expressed by a complex referring expression *occurring in isolation*: "Kant thinks of the products of that peculiar blend of the passivity of sense and the spontaneity of the understanding which is 'receptivity' . . . as consisting of representings of the form 'this-Φ' *rather than full-fledged judgments*" (Sellars, "The Role of the Imagination in Kant's Theory of Experience," 638; my emphasis). And while he holds that such an expression *implicitly contains* a predication, it is one thing to actualize the relevant conceptual capacities in the way they occur in the predication and another to actualize them in the way expressed by the referring expression. For the purposes of this discussion, therefore, Sellars counts as a Non-Judgmentalist. Thanks to an anonymous referee for pressing me on this point.

<sup>48</sup>See n. 6 above for a list of commentators who have also offered Non-Judgmentalist readings. It should be noted that these readings diverge substantially from one another on a number of points.

<sup>49</sup>"[Every] intuition is the object of a threefold synthesis, the form of which is provided by the 'pure' spatiotemporal syntheses. Consequently, the presentation in intuition of mathematical concepts provides the model (i.e. the pure form) of the relation of any concept to intuition, insofar as it provides the rule for the generating of the unity of a manifold" (Longuenesse, *Kant and the Capacity to Judge*, 47).

<sup>50</sup>Longuenesse, *Kant and the Capacity to Judge*, 46; emphasis in original.



of some complexity and would take us too far afield now.<sup>51</sup> The important point is that, as illustrated by the geometrical example, sensible synthesis depends on a consciousness of unity. But being a consciousness of unity (in the sense illustrated by that example) is generally a characteristic of concepts and only of concepts, for Kant.<sup>52</sup> Insofar as sensible synthesis depends on a consciousness of unity, therefore, it is appropriate to think of it as involving the use of concepts.

While this is a mere sketch of an account, it is enough for the purpose of outlining the central features of a Non-Judgmentalist reading of Kant.<sup>53</sup> We can now proceed to considering what this reading has to say about the doctrines of Sensible Synthesis and Blindness.

Sensible Synthesis says that intuitions depend on category-guided acts of sensible synthesis, since it is only in virtue of such acts that sensible manifolds come to exhibit the categorial unity that is constitutive of the representation of an object. A proponent of JR takes this doctrine to imply that only judgments represent objects and, consequently, that intuitions count as representations of objects only to the extent that they are taken up into judgment. By contrast, Non-Judgmentalists reject this implication and argue that an intuition is a distinct kind of representation from a judgment—one that a subject can enjoy without thereby making a judgment. Intuitions nonetheless exhibit categorial unity because, according to the Non-Judgmentalist, the act of sensible synthesis on which they depend involves the application of concepts; in particular, of the categories. Indeed, Non-Judgmentalists can argue that it is a point in their favor that their position preserves a more robust distinction than JR between intuitions, on the one hand, and judgments, on the other.

This comes out as well in the Non-Judgmentalist account of Blindness. Blindness says that intuitions without concepts are blind, which means that they lack cognitive significance. On the Judgmentalist reading, an intuition is cognitively significant only if concepts are applied to it in judgment. By contrast, on the Non-Judgmentalist reading, an intuition can be cognitively significant even if it is not taken up into judgment. For as long as the intuition is subject to sensible synthesis, its categorial

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<sup>51</sup>According to Longuenesse, the fundamental exegetical task here is “to explain how the categories, just like geometrical or arithmetical concepts, might be concepts under the guidance of which the very representation of the objects thought under them might be generated” (Longuenesse, “Kant’s Categories,” 96).

<sup>52</sup>See the footnote at B133–34.

<sup>53</sup>It might be useful to compare this reading to the self-consciously Kantian position offered in John McDowell’s widely read book, *Mind and World*. In this work, McDowell draws a distinction between the active employment of conceptual capacities in judgment and the passive actualization of the same capacities in perceptual experience. This may be thought to be exactly the kind of Non-Judgmentalist position I have in mind. But it is not. In *Mind and World* McDowell conceives of the content of perceptual experience as being propositional. This means that, in the Kantian sense of ‘judgment’ I introduced at the outset (though not of course in the Fregean sense employed by McDowell), a perceptual experience is a judgment. So in the terminology employed in this paper the position advocated in *Mind and World* is Judgmentalist. However, in more recent work McDowell has modified this aspect of his position. He no longer conceives of the content of perceptual experience as propositional, but rather as “intuitional”; see “Sensory Consciousness in Kant and Sellars” and “Avoiding the Myth of the Given.” To the extent that the position advocated in these more recent works contains a reading of Kant, therefore, this is a Non-Judgmentalist reading. Thanks to an anonymous referee for raising this issue.



unity, hence its cognitive significance, is secured. But on the Non-Judgmentalist reading, acts of sensible synthesis can occur independently of acts of judgment. At the same time, the connection with the *capacity* for judgment that is suggested by Blindness is preserved because the linchpin of the Non-Judgmentalist position is that the capacity for sensible synthesis depends on the capacity for judgment, even though there is no corresponding dependence at the level of their exercises.

These considerations demonstrate that neither Sensible Synthesis nor Blindness provides independent support for JR. Opponents of JR can offer an interpretation that is at least equally plausible. So the philosophical evidence for JR does as little to establish conclusively this reading as the textual evidence does.

## 7. CONCLUSION

I have argued, first, that the Judgmentalist Reading of Kant, according to which every act of concept-use is an act of judgment, is not as firmly supported by Kant's texts as it is often taken to be. I have argued, second, that for this reason we should take seriously the suggestion that for Kant concepts are involved not just in judging but also in the distinct act of perceptually apprehending objects in empirical intuition. Finally, I have offered a proposal for how to interpret the Metaphysical Deduction that is consistent with this suggestion.

The significance of Judgmentalism for interpretations of the *First Critique* can, I think, hardly be overstated. Whether the Judgmentalist Reading is correct bears directly on what the argument of the Transcendental Deduction of the categories is and thus ultimately on Kant's conception of how understanding relates to sensibility. The doctrines of Blindness and Sensible Synthesis both illustrate this point, and I have sought to make clear how their interpretation is affected by the correctness or otherwise of JR.

However, the question of Judgmentalism is significant also for the further reason that JR is so deeply entrenched among commentators. Because it is so deeply entrenched, it plays a role in shaping the dialectic in discussions of doctrines such as Blindness and Sensible Synthesis. Thus, if one is firmly committed to JR, Non-Judgmentalist interpretations of the latter doctrines will seem extremely implausible. Such interpretations have been offered by a number of commentators. But as long as JR remains firmly entrenched, these interpretations will fail to carry conviction, in spite of the fact that there is significant evidence in their favor.

I believe that one of the chief reasons why JR continues to seem compelling to many commentators is that it is not easy to see how the Central Passages can be read as expressing anything other than a commitment to Judgmentalism. As long as the belief that these passages settle the question of Judgmentalism goes unchallenged, proponents of Non-Judgmentalist positions will continue to fight an uphill battle. It was my aim here to further the Non-Judgmentalist cause by showing that in fact that belief is unfounded.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>54</sup>I gratefully acknowledge the support of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, received during the writing of this paper. For comments and discussion I am grateful to James Conant, Robert Pippen, Timothy Rosenkoetter, Daniel Smyth, and members of the German Philosophy Workshop at the University of Chicago, as well as three anonymous referees for this journal.

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*De Mundi* = *De Mundi Sensibilis atque Intelligibilis Forma et Principiis*

*JL* = *Logik*

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