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UNITY OF APPERCEPTION

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IN expounding his famous proposition that «The *I think* must be able to accompany all my representations», Kant introduces the term «apperception» to characterize the «act of spontaneity» he means to designate by the phrase «I think» (*Ich denke*) (B 131-132).¹ This act, he says, he will call «pure apperception» and «original apperception», and he indicates that it is a type of self-consciousness. Kant's choice of terms here reveals that his topic is one with which he expects his readers to be familiar. As he makes clear later on, he employs the phrase «I think» as the vernacular equivalent of Descartes's *cogito*, and in using the word «apperception» he of course echoes Leibniz, who introduced the expression to characterize the reflective awareness a mind, or rational soul, has of itself and its own internal states.

Kant proceeds to speak of the *unity* of this self-consciousness, remarking that he will call this unity «transcendental» in order to indicate the possibility of a priori knowledge from it (B 132) – a possibility he aims to lay open to view in the course of the transcendental deduction of the understanding's pure concepts, or categories.² And then, in his first step toward achieving this aim, he asserts that what he calls «the analytic unity of apperception» presupposes, as a condition of its possibility, a *synthetic* unity of apperception, which somehow combines all the representations the *I think* must be able to accompany (B 133). The introduction of this analytic unity and the assertion that it presupposes a synthetic unity mark the beginning of the main argument of the transcendental deduction.

My chief concern in this essay is with the synthetic unity of apperception, but I will also consider the analytic unity and the relation Kant sees as holding between them. Kant also speaks of the original synthetic unity of apperception, suggesting thereby a contrast between original and derivative synthetic unity. I am primarily interested in the former. It is this unity – the original synthetic unity of apperception – that lies at the heart of his transcendental deduction and constitutes the principal object of his attention throughout the argument – from its opening in § 15 to its conclusion in § 26.³

The central place the original synthetic unity occupies in the transcendental deduction is one obvious source of the interest readers have taken in it. The focus in

¹ Page references to the *Critique of Pure Reason* use the numbers of the first (A) and second (B) editions; page references to Kant's other writings are given by abbreviated title and by the page numbers of the appropriate volume of AA. Translations are my own.

² I have in mind, of course, the version presented in the second edition of the *Critique*.

³ As his argument proceeds, Kant draws additional distinctions, further characterizing the original synthetic unity and its function. In § 18, for example, it is said to be an objective unity and is contrasted with «subjective unity of self-consciousness», a determination of inner sense. And in § 24 Kant introduces a distinction between intellectual synthesis, which figures in thought and judgment, and figurative synthesis, on which intuition specifically depends, and considers the role of the original synthetic unity of apperception in connection with the latter as well as the former type of synthesis. Since my concern is mainly with the original synthetic unity as Kant is conceiving of it in the opening stages of the deduction, I will be considering it primarily in relation to the first of these two types of synthesis.

what follows, however, will not be on its role in that argument. What I mainly wish to examine is Kant's statement that this original synthetic unity of apperception is nothing other than the understanding itself, or the intellect: «the faculty of cognitions» (B 134n, B 137; cf. A 119). This identification too has an obvious importance for Kant's argument in the deduction.¹ But it should also help clarify what he takes such unity to be and moreover help us better appreciate his conceptions of the understanding and of knowledge² – notions central to his entire philosophy, and from which much can still be learned. Indeed, it is above all for the light it may throw on the topics of understanding and knowledge that I wish to consider the unity of apperception and Kant's identification of it with the understanding.³ Although I will not here undertake to explore it in detail, one momentous development that a focus on this identification brings squarely into view is Kant's radical reconception of the understanding and its primordial act, a reconception in which the traditional thought that the intellect must abstract before it can combine is replaced by, yet also preserved in, the deeper idea that it must combine before it can abstract. This advance is clearly related both to his step, in the metaphysical deduction, from a conception of the understanding as «the capacity to think», or to know «through concepts», to a recognition of it as «the capacity to judge» (A 67-69 B 92-94, A 80-81 B 106), and also to his statements, in the transcendental deduction, that analysis presupposes synthesis (§ 15), and that analytic unity presupposes synthetic (§ 16).

In what follows I will consider certain conditions that Kant recognizes as belonging to the form of knowledge and that he seems clearly to have in mind in the deduction and throughout the *Critique*, conditions that throw light on the synthetic unity of apperception and his identification of it with the understanding, or the faculty

¹ In the metaphysical deduction, Kant hit upon a way of conceiving of the understanding (the capacity to think, or to know through concepts) – namely, as a capacity to judge – that provided the key, he argued, for identifying the complete system of its fundamental concepts. In similar fashion, he introduces the original synthetic unity of apperception in order to have a way of conceiving of the understanding that makes it possible to show the understanding's entitlement to its fundamental concepts by explaining how they can relate a priori to objects. By showing the entire employment of the understanding, or cognitive capacity, to be under the single generic act that constitutes the synthetic unity of apperception, Kant positions himself to recover the categories through the systematic division of this act (as displayed in the tables of the logical functions of thinking and of the categories) and thereby to show them to have the necessary grounding relation to synthetic knowledge that the legitimation of them as a priori concepts of objects requires. Such an argument can succeed, obviously, only if it is possible, by reflecting on the understanding, the cognitive capacity, to recognize it to be precisely the original synthetic unity of apperception.

² I shall use both 'knowledge' and 'cognition' as renderings of Kant's *Erkenntnis*. It is sometimes suggested that 'knowledge' is not a suitable translation, on the ground that knowledge entails truth, whereas Kant occasionally speaks of *Erkenntnisse* that are false, for example at A 58 B 83 (see, e.g., G. PRAUSS, *Zum Wahrheitsproblem bei Kant*, in *Kant: Zur Deutung seiner Theorie von Erkennen und Handeln*, hrsg. von G. Prauss, Köln, Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1973, p. 86, n. 30). There is ample evidence, however, even in the passage just cited, that in Kant's basic usage truth is implied. When he goes on in the very next sentence to say that «a universal criterion of truth would be that which was valid of all *Erkenntnisse*, without distinction among their objects», he is hardly suggesting that such a criterion, were it possible, would be valid even of falsehoods. My concern in this paper is with *Erkenntnis* in the basic sense. This sense is prior to the concept of error, hence prior to the concepts of opinion and belief, and so also prior to all senses of *Erkenntnis* framed in opposition to or in terms of these concepts.

³ Here I am thinking not only of theoretical knowledge. A parallel view of practical knowledge can be seen in Kant's intimation that the basic principle of such knowledge (i.e., the «unconditioned practical law» that we know as the moral law) is «merely the self-consciousness of a pure practical reason» (*KpV*, AA v 29).

of knowledge. The resulting illumination should also reflect back on the idea of knowledge itself, bringing it into clearer view. Appreciating that Kant's concern is with *knowledge* and our *cognitive* faculty will also help ensure that we do not become distracted by puzzles that can arise when his treatment of apperception is taken to concern the issue of personal identity that Hume was addressing when he denied he had any idea of himself, beyond that of a mere bundle of perceptions.¹ Before turning to knowledge and its form, however, we need to fix, in a preliminary way, what Kant means in speaking of the analytic and synthetic unities of apperception.

1. ANALYTIC AND SYNTHETIC UNITY

1.1. *An initial account*

As I mentioned, Kant sees analytic and synthetic unity as intimately related. Analytic unity, he says, is possible only under the presupposition of a certain synthetic unity, or the possibility of such unity. But what are these unities? Unity (*Einheit*) is oneness, and it is clear from this terminology that Kant sees analytic and synthetic unity as somehow linked to analysis and synthesis.

One way of conceiving the linkage would be to suppose that the two sorts of unity result from analysis and synthesis: that synthetic unity arises when representations are combined, and analytic unity results when they are broken up. Thus, an act of combining representations would bring about a oneness of representation: where before there were only many, now there is one, insofar as the synthesized representations together make up one representation. In a judgment that the stone is growing warm, representations of the stone and of warmth are united in the representation of the stone's warming, which may in turn be united with a representation of the sun in the further judgment that the sun is warming the stone. And an act of analysis would yield oneness of representation by breaking up representations, discriminating one from others. Breaking up the representations in the perception of a rose, for example, might yield, among other elements, the representation red, which, being thus separated from the *other* representations (shape, smell, etc.), must be distinct from them and hence one that could in principle also be combined with *different* representations and so figure in many different perceptions, such as of a tulip, of blood, or of cinnabar. As this example illustrates, and as Kant points out, analytic unity is characteristic of concepts, or general representations, formed by analysis (B 133n). Thus, the two sorts of unity or oneness might be contrasted by way of a contrast be-

¹ *A Treatise of Human Nature*, I.IV.6. An interpretation along such lines is advanced in P. KITCHER's *Kant's Transcendental Psychology*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1990, chaps. 4-5; her recent *Kant's Thinker*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2011 presents a more nuanced view; cf. p. 133. It is not my aim here to argue against such a reading so much as to sketch the outlines of an alternative. Nor do I mean to deny that Hume can serve as a useful foil in thinking about Kant's argument in § 16. For a recent study critical of approaches that take Kant to be addressing Hume's problem of personal identity in his account of apperception, see P. KELLER, *Kant and the Demands of Self-Consciousness*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998. To appreciate the sort of puzzlement that such approaches can engender, it suffices for present purposes to note that if the *I* of original apperception is a particular subject, or a particular subject's particular understanding, then Kant's statements in § 26 to the effect that the understanding makes time and space and even nature itself possible will seem to imply, if not outright solipsism, then at least a thoroughgoing subjectivism, in which each subject is a sort of cognitive monad, confined, so far as its knowledge is concerned, to its own world.

tween a one that *essentially contains* many (synthetic unity) and a one that is *essentially contained in* many (analytic unity).¹

1.2. Refining the account

This way of understanding the distinction between analytic and synthetic unity is clearly correct to the extent that it links it to the distinction between the acts of analysis and synthesis. It does not seem correct, however, to suppose that analytic and synthetic unities *merely result from these acts*. Consider first the case of synthetic unity. The *original* synthetic unity of apperception is said to be *prior* to any particular act of combination by means of the categories, prior even to the categories themselves: to find this unity, Kant says, «we must seek yet higher, namely in that which contains even the ground of the unity of diverse concepts in judgments» (B 131). Kant states explicitly that the unity in question is *presupposed* in acts of synthesis: the representation of synthetic unity, he says, does not result from combination but is rather presupposed by the concept of combination (B 131), and it is therefore necessarily presupposed in any spontaneous act of combining.² Indeed, unless we suppose that the original synthetic unity is prior to particular acts of combination rather than something resulting from them, we will be unable to understand Kant's statement that this unity is itself the faculty of understanding.

The situation is the same in the case of analytic unity. Analysis does not really introduce any new unity into consciousness; it merely renders *clear* and *explicit* what was formerly *obscure* and *implicit*. Thus generality, which Kant sees as the form of all concepts and as *produced* by the very acts that analysis comprises (comparison, reflection, and abstraction),³ is really at bottom simply the explicit awareness of the oneness of a representation (of red, for instance), an awareness that arises through the representation's being explicitly distinguished from the representations accompanying it and thereby thought as combinable with yet others; generality is accordingly nothing more than the *actualization* of the *potential* awareness of oneness originally in the representation. Another way of bringing out the point is by contrasting analysis with bare division. Analytic unity is different from the sort of unity that results from the division of an intuition: If I divide the representation of a line I have drawn in thought, I arrive at new representations, which, as discrete parts of the representation of the line, are distinct from one another. But here, although the *part* was already contained in the whole, the *division* was not, and hence in this case the oneness of a part of the representation of the line is merely the *result* of the division, not anything the division itself presupposes. (In other words, analysis takes place 'according to the joints'; bare division does not.) So in the case of analytic unity as well

Generality



¹ Though the first *Critique* is concerned with theoretical knowledge, this contrast also pertains to the practical case. Thus, the United States would be an example of the former sort of unity (*e pluribus unum*), and the membership in it that all its states have in common, notwithstanding the differences between their constitutions and laws, would be an example of the latter.

² The reader will notice a shift here from talk of synthetic unity to talk of *representation* of synthetic unity. Kant's point in the passage cited is that the ground of the unity of representations that results from an act of combination is the *representation* of such unity that is *presupposed* in the act of combination in that it is only in accordance with this representation of unity that the combination can take place.

The presupposition of a representation of unity

³ See *Log.* §§ 2, 4n, 5-6.

as that of synthetic unity, it would seem that the oneness must be prior to the act, not merely the result of it.

In sum, analytic unity deserves its name because it makes possible the analysis through which that same unity reaches clarity in consciousness, and synthetic unity is so called because it makes possible the synthesis through which manifold given representations are united in accordance with it. Revising the earlier statement, we should now say that the two sorts of unity or oneness can be contrasted by way of a contrast between a one that essentially *can* contain many (synthetic unity) and a one that essentially *can* be contained in many (analytic unity).

1.3. Original apperception

Let us now turn to the basic cases, discussed in § 16: the analytic and synthetic unities of original apperception. Henry Allison suggests, correctly I believe, that the analytic unity of this self-consciousness is the form of the unity of consciousness common to all concepts: «this identical *I think*,» he says, «just is this analytic unity considered in abstraction from all content. Consequently, the *I think* is itself the thought of what is common to all conceptualization». ¹ Now as is stated in the Jäsche *Logic*, what is common to all concepts and distinguishes them from all other cognitive representations is their generality (*Allgemeinheit*) (*Log*, § 2). Thus, just as comparison of the diverse representations of blood, cinnabar, and so forth, reflection on them to note the representation they have in common, and abstraction from the other representations with which the common representation is in each case combined give rise to the generality of representation constituting the concept red, so further reflection on this concept enables abstraction from the representation of the specific quality and from any higher yet still specific concepts it contains (such as that of color), including even the category of accident, if it is included, ² leaving nothing in place but the generality of representation that all concepts share in common, a generality grounded in the identity, or oneness-in-many, of the primitive act of consciousness itself. ³ It seems, then, that analytic unity of self-consciousness is the basis of the potential generality of consciousness as such. Since analytic unity makes possible the analysis that in turn makes a concept possible, the analytic unity of apperception is the numerical unity of the fundamental act of consciousness itself that lies at the basis of conceptual representation in general, the act whose self-consciousness is expressed through the word 'I'.

The analytic unity of self-consciousness is generality

¹ H. E. ALLISON, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism*, 2nd edn., New Haven, Yale University Press, 2004, p. 172. As Allison notes, this account is similar to the one offered by K. REICH, *Die Vollständigkeit der Kantischen Urteilstafel*, 2nd edn., Berlin, Richard Schoetz, 1948, pp. 33-34.

² As it will be if this concept is not a mere empirical concept but a «concept of experience, which is nothing but a concept of understanding in *concreto*» (A 567 B 595).

³ This act is also simple: Kant describes the subject's «discursive consciousness» of this act, or the «pure apperception of its mental action» as «simple», adding, «[t]he I of reflection contains no manifold in itself and is in all judgments always one and the same, since it is merely this formality [*Förmliche*] of consciousness» (*Anth*, AA VII 141; cf. B 135, B 138). The simplicity of the act is basic to its original synthetic unity, just as its identity is basic to its original analytic unity. The discursivity of this consciousness follows from its simplicity as well as from its identity: just as the identity of the act entails that the consciousness of it constitutes it as a *general* – indeed absolutely universal – act of representation and hence as distinct from all intuition, which is *singular* representation, so the act's simplicity likewise entails its distinctness from all intuition (whether sensible or intellectual), in that containment of a manifold is essential to the latter (B 138-139, B 136n, A 99).

As for synthetic unity of apperception, we need to conceive of it in a way that can accommodate Kant's statement that it is presupposed by the possibility of apperception's analytic unity. We must therefore suppose that the synthetic unity of self-consciousness originally unites all the representations that can belong to the single act of consciousness whose self-awareness is expressed through the 'I' – where this unification is not a combination effected through any particular act of synthesis but rather an original interrelatedness that itself constitutes the common possibility of any and every such particular combining act.

If the foregoing is correct, then it would seem that to understand the analytic and synthetic unities of self-consciousness and in particular the statement that the former is possible only under the presupposition of the latter, it is necessary to comprehend the idea that *the single fundamental act of consciousness in general underlying all analysis and concept formation is a generic act of combination according to an original representation of (synthetic) unity*. With a view to clarifying this idea, I propose now to consider certain notions Kant recognizes to be integral to our conception of knowledge.

2. SYNTHETIC UNITY AND KNOWLEDGE

2.1. Context

I suggested that we can better understand the original synthetic unity by taking seriously Kant's identification of it with the understanding, the faculty of knowledge. Kant advertises the *Critique* itself as an investigation of our cognitive power, asserting that it takes nothing as given except this faculty itself (*Prolegomena*, AA IV 274), and a crucial part of his task in the deduction is to show that the categories have their source in the understanding. Given these objectives, we should expect him to be relying on a conception of our cognitive capacity in the deduction's argument.

The Deduction relies on a particular conception of our cognitive capacity

The phrase «I think» itself suggests this, for as the *cogito*, it expresses the form of the act of the faculty of discursive knowledge. As Kant says later, «the proposition *I think* (taken problematically) contains the form of every judgment of the understanding in general and accompanies all categories as their vehicle» (A 348 B 406). And in a similar passage he says the *I think* is «the vehicle of all concepts in general», serving «to introduce all thinking as belonging to consciousness» (A 341 B 399-400). These statements confirm that in introducing the *I think* in § 16, Kant means to express the general form of the act of our understanding, the faculty of discursive knowledge, or knowledge through concepts, whose exercise, or use, he argues, lies in judgment (A 68-69 B 93-94).

A further textual basis for taking seriously Kant's identification of original synthetic unity with the faculty of knowledge is that Kant indicates at the end of § 15 that this unity is the first of three «logical requirements and criteria of all knowledge of things in general» that he discussed earlier in § 12. According to this requirement, «In every cognition of an object there is unity of concept, which one can call *qualitative unity* so far as thereby only the unity of the comprehension [*Zusammenfassung*] of the manifold of cognitions is thought, as, say, the unity of theme in a play, a speech, or a fable» (B 114). Synthetic unity of apperception is thus identified with what we might call *unity of knowledge*, something to which unity of theme in a composition or artistic production is analogous. Having characterized this unity as a logical requirement

and criterion of knowledge, Kant goes on to speak of it as «formal», reflecting his conception of logic as concerned with the form of thought and of knowledge (A 54 B 78, A 132-133 B 171-172). So he evidently regards this unity as a formal condition of knowledge, constitutive of the cognitive faculty itself. I will return to this idea of unity of knowledge presently.¹

2. 2. Form of knowledge

In what follows, then, I undertake to clarify Kant's identification of the understanding and the synthetic unity of apperception by considering certain formal conditions of knowledge, conditions to which Kant himself draws our attention. Two of them – *synthesis* and *unity* – are the focus of § 15. A third – *self-consciousness* – is introduced in § 16 through the proposition concerning the *I think*. I start with self-consciousness. This will lead us to cognition's unity, which in turn will put us in a position to consider synthesis.²

2. 2. 1. Self-consciousness

Self-consciousness is basic to knowledge in general. It belongs not merely to the form of theoretical knowledge, the species of knowledge under consideration in the *Critique*, but to everything intellectual, including not only the intellectual form of discursive knowledge – which theoretical knowledge shares in common with practical knowledge, knowledge of what ought to be – but also intellectual intuition, the sort of knowledge that would belong to an infinite intellect.³

Moreover, self-consciousness is fundamental to knowledge in a distinctive way, in that it is in cognition's self-consciousness that the original understanding of knowledge, including the understanding of it as self-conscious, is contained. This understanding is thus constitutive of knowledge, not the *result* of inward observation on the part of the cognizing subject. Self-consciousness is not Lockean reflection.⁴ But though self-consciousness is internal to the act of knowledge, in discursive knowledge – the type of knowledge we are considering – it need not always be clear and explicit, as Kant indicates in saying no more than that the *I think* must *be able* to accompany all my representations. To know that a certain thing is (or ought to be) thus and so is to be conscious, at least *implicitly*, that one knows that it is (or ought to be) thus and so.

¹ Kant's indication that synthetic unity of apperception is *qualitative* unity should be placed alongside his characterization of analytic unity of apperception as *numerical* unity (or identity) (see A 107, A 108, B 134). Self-consciousness is one in both senses. Kant thus seems to be conceiving of the distinction between the two types of unity not only through a distinction between synthesis and analysis, but also through a distinction between quality and quantity: *qualitative* unity is *simplicity*, and *quantitative* (or *numerical*) unity is *identity* (cf. p. 37, note 3 above; A 344 B 402 and A 404).

² That Kant sees self-consciousness and unity as more fundamental than synthesis will become clear from the points to follow, but it is reflected in the fact that he introduces the topic of synthesis with a view to investigating its *possibility* (as the title of § 15 indicates: *Of the Possibility of a Combination in General*), and it is when he advances to this deeper level that the ideas of unity and self-consciousness enter the discussion.

³ These types of knowledge are not on a par with one another and so fall under a common genus only in a qualified sense. The idea of intellectual intuition, for instance, is, in a certain sense, basic; Kant suggests that this type is the archetype (cf. A 695 B 723; KU, AA v 408).

⁴ *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, II.1.4. The *I think* «is of course no experience» (A 354).

Qualitative and
quantitative (numerical)
unity

2.2.2. Unity

Appreciating that self-consciousness belongs to the form of knowledge enables us to see that knowledge is intrinsically *united*. In what follows, I outline in stepwise fashion what this unity of knowledge involves. I will be supposing throughout that it is precisely what Kant had in view when he spoke of *qualitative unity* as a logical requirement and criterion of knowledge and likened it to the unity of theme in a play, a speech, or a fable.

First, the self-consciousness of knowledge excludes the possibility that knowledge might be a mere plurality or bare manifold of diverse elements, whatever they might be, and regardless of whether they coexist, as in an aggregate, or occur successively, as in a series. No bare plurality could be conscious of itself *as a plurality*. Consciousness of plurality depends on consciousness of distinct items. And since self-consciousness, precisely because it is *self-consciousness*, cannot be anything separate from what it is consciousness of, the self-consciousness of one item would have to be distinct from the self-consciousness of another, since these items are themselves distinct. But a plurality of individually self-conscious elements does not amount to a consciousness of a plurality. As self-conscious, therefore, knowledge cannot be a bare plurality.

Let me pause to compare this argument with a few other claims or arguments it may call to mind. First, it should not be confused with the point Kant makes when he says the *I think* must be able to accompany all my representations. The proposition about the *I think* directs our attention to apperception's *analytic* unity, but we are now concerned with its *synthetic* unity, which the possibility of analytic unity is said to presuppose. Nor is this argument to be identified with the rational psychologist's attempt in the «Achilles» argument of the Second Paralogism to infer the *simplicity of the soul* from the unity implied by self-consciousness (A 351-352). That is an inference Kant criticizes, though he clearly holds that self-consciousness implies the unity of *knowledge*, and I take it that he also holds that it therefore implies the unity of our *cognitive faculty* as well (cf., e.g., A 67 B 89-90, *Prol*, AA IV 263). The argument just outlined is, however, similar to a point Kant makes in discussing the 'Achilles' argument, when he says, «representations that are distributed among different beings (for instance, the individual words of a verse) never constitute a whole thought (a verse)» (A 352). In an often-cited passage, William James provides a vivid articulation of the idea: «Take a sentence of a dozen words, and take twelve men and tell to each one word. Then stand the men in a row or jam them in a bunch, and let each think of his word as intently as he will; nowhere will there be a consciousness of the whole sentence». ¹ As these passages indicate, and as I will be emphasizing in the remarks to follow, the condition at stake here is requisite not only for judgment and knowledge, but generally for all thought and understanding.

Williams James's
example of unity

¹ W. JAMES, *The Principles of Psychology*, New York, Henry Holt & Co., 1890, vol. 1, p. 160. Cited in N. KEMP SMITH, *A Commentary to Kant's 'Critique of Pure Reason'*, 2nd edn., London, Macmillan, 1923, p. 459, note. James does not mention Kant, but he indicates that essentially the same point was made by Franz Brentano. It can also be found in student records of Kant's lectures on rational psychology: cf. AA XXVIII 266-267 (from the 1770s), and AA XXVIII 754 and AA XXIX 1025-1026 (from the 1790s).

So far, the characterization of the unity of knowledge has been merely negative. The preceding argument simply registers what this unity precludes, implying that knowledge cannot be a mere plurality, a mere aggregate or series, and hence that the representations knowledge comprises can no more be separate and «as it were isolated» (A 97) from one another in actuality than they can be incompatible, or separate as a matter of necessity. We can reach a positive characterization, however, or rather the first moment of a positive characterization, by noting that the identity of self-consciousness with the consciousness of which it is a consciousness entails, through its exclusion of the possibility that this consciousness is a plurality, that self-consciousness is unity itself, unity of consciousness lying in consciousness of that very unity. Self-consciousness is inherently unitary, originally simple. Whatever diverse components it may contain are originally related through belonging from their start to a single whole. For reasons that will presently come into clearer view, I will call this purely intellectual unity, so far as it does not already constitute the *full* unity of knowledge, the *unity of thought*.

The unity of thought

It follows that the possibility of a self-conscious whole in which diverse components are contained – for example, a thinking of some thought, containing both the thinking of a subject and the thinking of a predicate – requires that these diverse components not only be themselves self-conscious, but also contain within themselves the same self-consciousness. There must be a single self-same consciousness in each of the diverse components, through which the latter are related to one another. The consciousness of the whole must accordingly precede the specific consciousness of the components, as the consciousness of the form of relation in which the latter stand to one another in the whole; and this consciousness of the form of relation, or form of the whole, must be in each of the conscious thinkings that make up the components, as what enables the latter to be conscious of themselves as components of the whole and indeed as components of the same whole. In Kant's terminology, this self-conscious form of relation is a logical function of thinking in judgments. In particular, it is the function constituting the subject-predicate relation in a categorical judgment, which Kant displays along with the other functions in his table of the logical functions of thinking in judgments (A 70 B 95).

As so far described, this unity is characteristic not just of knowledge, but of all thought, even bare thought, which also includes self-consciousness as a formal condition. By 'bare thought' I mean the exercise of the understanding insofar as it lies, not in knowing, but in mere arbitrary thinking, or what Kant has in mind when he says «I can *think* whatever I want [*will*], provided only that I do not contradict myself» (B xxviii). If I know that every alteration has a cause, I am still 'free', if I want, to think the opposite, that some alterations do not have a cause; and this thought, though not knowledge but merely an arbitrary combination of concepts, is still no mere aggregate or series of representations.

"bare" thought

Describing bare thought in the way I did just now, as an arbitrary exercise of the understanding, might seem to involve an equivocation on 'understanding', a use of this term in a sense different from the one of interest to us here, fixed by Kant's statement that the understanding is «the faculty of cognitions» (B 137). But though bare thought is distinct from knowledge (even from mere problematic judgment), it does not follow that there is any such thing as a *capacity* for such thought distinct

from the capacity for knowledge. Discursive knowledge lies in synthetic judgment, and such judgment, being self-conscious, must include consciousness of itself as synthetic, not analytic. This consciousness, however, depends on the capacity to think the bare thought that stands opposite to the synthetic judgment as its contradictory; for it is through the possibility of this thought that synthetic judgment distinguishes itself from analytic, a form of judgment to which nothing, no thought whatsoever, is opposed. The 'capacity' for bare thought is thus in truth nothing but the discursivity of the form of understanding shared by subjects who know by thinking.

2.2.3. Unity of knowledge

To find the element in the unity of knowledge that is proper to knowledge, we must proceed to the second moment in the positive characterization of this unity. Knowledge distinguishes itself from bare thought in being conscious of itself as in positive agreement with itself and hence as determinate and self-sustaining. This distinctive character of knowledge can be brought into view by noting how the act of judgment, or assertion, in which discursive knowledge consists, differs from bare thought. Judgment and bare thought are alike to the extent that, each having the unity of thought, neither contains anything internal to it that prevents it from being sustained; but they differ in that judgment positively sustains itself. Someone who is ignorant of the size of the sun can *think* of the magnitude of its volume as having any of many possible values, but while each of these possible thoughts excludes all the others in the sense that it is incompatible with them, so that they can be actually thought or entertained in the understanding only severally, never together, none of them *holds itself* in the understanding, excluding the subsequent thought of the others. When on the other hand one *judges* the sun to be of a certain determinate magnitude, the act sustains itself, not allowing itself to be replaced by any other judgment regarding the sun's magnitude that is incompatible with it (though as I noted it does not prevent the subsequent actual entertainment of *thoughts* that are incompatible with it). In judgment, then, the act of thinking has a certain determinacy, through which it excludes opposing judgments, thereby distinguishing itself from bare thought. And since this determinacy belongs to judgment's own self-conscious act, judgment constitutes itself as determinate and so is *self-determining*.

The determinacy and self-sustaining character of judgment rest in its distinctive positive unity, namely its *self-agreement*. As an act of thought, judgment lies in a joint use of distinct concepts, in which the uses of the concepts involved reciprocally depend on one other; but so far as this joint use constitutes a judgment, it is sustained by the very concepts it contains. Thus, in the example just considered, the concept of the sun lying at the judgment's basis determines itself through a predication in which a determinate magnitude is assigned to the sun, and conversely the predicate leads to the thought of the sun, as one of the things to which it applies.

Before continuing, I should pause to note that the conception of judgment just delineated differs significantly from a familiar way in which judgment is frequently represented in philosophical discussion. So far as a judgment is self-sustaining, it cannot be a 'mental event', such as a deciding what to think, a making up of one's mind, or

The difference between
judgment & bare thought

Self-agreement of
judgment

Judgment is not a mental
event or process



a putting together of representations. Kant does characterize judgment as an act, and as a combination of representations. But he does not suppose, as some philosophers do, that to be an act at all is to be a certain type of process or event. So these characterizations do not imply that he has in mind what, say, Frege does when he describes judging as «a psychical process».¹ Indeed, it already follows from our earlier consideration of self-consciousness that thinking in general, and hence judging, as a type of thinking, cannot be conceived in that way: though on account of its self-consciousness judgment in Kant's sense must be an act, for the very same reason it cannot be any type of process or occurrence in the mind, though of course all our judgments, as exercises of our discursive cognitive power, come to be in time (B 1). Judgment is an act in the sense that it is an actuality. It is an actualization of the understanding, but not in a sense that implies that it is a transition or a coming-to-be: the act of combination in which a judgment consists is not a putting together of representations, but a holding of them together. So we might say that to judge in this sense is to hold. We do describe ourselves as 'making' judgments and as 'reaching' them, and such makings and reachings can be counted as mental events or psychical processes; but the making or reaching of a judgment in the sense of interest here is no more the same as the judgment itself than is the making or reaching of anything else – events aside – the same as the thing made or reached.

Let us return to our path. The foregoing characterization of the unity of knowledge pertains to judgments collectively as well as distributively. Besides sustaining themselves individually through the agreement among the related representations they contain, cognition's judgments sustain themselves jointly through their agreement with one another.² Since they all belong to a single self-consciousness, they can sustain themselves individually only so far as they can also do so collectively. Thus, it is part of the very idea of knowledge that no two bits of knowledge, however much they may differ in content, can ever in any way conflict with one another. Any appearance of conflict in a given case must be due to error or illusion. No such requirement governs bare thought. Indeed, bare thought *always* has a contradictory opposing thought, whereas knowledge *never* contradicts knowledge. But the unity of knowledge also implies that the various bits of knowledge stand in relations of positive agreement, in that they are capable of confirming and reinforcing one another, and so stand together as members of a single body of knowledge. This idea of positive agreement among cognitions is reflected in the familiar recognition that coherence among judgments is an indication of their truth. Noticing such coherence would never heighten conviction did we not already recognize that knowledge agrees with knowledge and hence that coherence is a mark of truth.

In the *Critique*, the collective unity of knowledge does not become a primary focus of consideration until the Transcendental Dialectic, where attention shifts from

¹ G. FREGE, *Negation*, in *Logical Investigations*, ed. by P. T. Geach, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1977, p. 44; cf. p. 42, note: «If a judgment is a deed [*Tat*], it happens at a certain time and thereafter belongs to the past» (cf. P. GEACH, *Mental Acts*, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1957, p. 9).

² Since judgments can be reached through reason as well as through perception in experience, they may in some cases be sustained *entirely* through the rational connections they have with other judgments. The judgment of the man who, having undermined the foundation of his house, knows a priori that it will fall, would be an example (B 2; cf. A 225-226 B 272-274).

the «unity of understanding» to the «unity of reason».¹ But since collective unity stands under the original unity of knowledge, in that it is just what cognition's self-conscious self-agreement amounts to so far as it bears, not on the relations within judgments, but on the relations between them, it is implicated in the original synthetic unity of apperception under consideration in the *Transcendental Analytic* and in the *Transcendental Deduction* in particular. Thus, if we return to Kant's exposition in § 12 of the «logical requirements and criteria of all *knowledge of things* in general», we find that, in addition to the basic requirement of unity, which we considered earlier (§ 2.1), two further requirements are set out, which together register the condition of collective unity. Along with *unity*, Kant says, every cognition of an object has *truth*, in that it is the ground of a plurality of consequences, all of which are in agreement with one another and with experience, and *perfection*, in that from the totality of those consequences the original cognition can itself be inferred, a *posteriori*, as their common ground (B 114-115; cf. A 646-647 B 674-675; *Log*, AA IX 51-52). As is readily apparent, these three criteria entail that there is a self-sustaining relation of agreement between any cognition and its consequences as well as among those consequences themselves. So not only the first by itself but all three taken together are, as Kant says, «universal logical rules of the agreement of knowledge with itself» (B 116). The second and third are themselves consequences of the first, serving to bring the requirement of self-agreement originally thought in the first to bear on a plurality of cognitions, constituting them as a totality, or a whole. The criteria thus articulate and even exemplify the *systematic* character of knowledge, «its coherence according to a principle», and thereby express the rational idea of «the form of a whole of knowledge, which precedes the determinate knowledge of the parts and contains the conditions for determining a priori for each part its position and relation to the others» (A 645 B 673).

According to its positive characterization, then, the unity of knowledge lies in the self-agreement in which thought constitutes itself as self-sustaining and self-determining. In § 17 Kant identifies such unity as constitutive of theoretical knowledge, the uniting of given representations in such thought as is *determinate* and thereby – on the Copernican way of thinking – valid and determining in respect of its object (B 137; cf. A 104-105). By pointing out this constitutive relation in which this unity stands to knowledge and its object, Kant positions himself to vindicate the categories as in themselves valid of objects of knowledge in general, as he does in § 20. For the categories are just the logical functions of thinking themselves, the self-conscious relations constituting the unity of thought, but in the self-sustaining, self-determining use wherein thought constitutes itself as knowledge (judgment) rather than bare thought (cf. B 128-129).

¹ See A 302 B 359, A 307 B 363. In contrast to the unity of understanding, which is a formal (constitutive) condition of the possibility of knowledge, the unity of reason is «the unity of system», the perfection of knowledge (in which the former unity, a unity under concepts, is brought to a unity under principles) and so an aim to be pursued (A 680 B 708; cf. A 643-645 B 671-673); but while the *achievement* of such unity is not a condition of the possibility of individual cognitions, relation to a *possible* unity of reason is such a condition: «reason regards all cognitions as belonging to a possible system» (A 474 B 502). Later, Kant speaks of a law of reason to seek systematic unity among cognitions, saying it is necessary since otherwise we would have no coherent employment of the understanding and so no sufficient criterion of empirical truth (A 651 B 679; cf. A 647 B 675).

Now as Kant emphasizes, this self-determining use of the logical functions is possible only under a certain condition external to it, namely that «the material for knowledge» be given to the understanding from elsewhere, in sensible intuition (B 145). That is to say, the capacity for theoretical knowledge can be exercised in a self-determining act – an act of knowing rather than bare thinking – only in application to given materials and so only where such materials, such requisites for its *cognitive* function, are available. And Kant argues further that theoretical cognition's dependence on this material condition entails that its objects are sensible and therefore, in respect of their sensible form, relative to the formal constitution of the sensibility of the cognizing subject. But Kant is equally concerned to show that, notwithstanding this dependence, the determinate *unity* of knowledge is purely intellectual and so has no share in and in no way contributes to such relativity (B 144). He is accordingly also concerned to show that the material conditions of knowledge can in no way contribute to this unity.

That these external conditions cannot be the source of cognition's unity is already apparent from the points just considered. The self-consciously self-sustaining character of its unity entails that knowledge must understand itself as self-determining and so as self-active (*selbsttätig*) and spontaneous, or self-productive. Hence cognition's unity cannot be understood to arise through affection from without, or in the way impressions of receptivity, such as the sensation of red figuring in the perception of an apple, come to be (A 19-20 B 34). As knowledge that comes to be, discursive knowledge does depend on affection (cf. B 1), but its coming-to-be cannot consist in affection.¹

2.3. Synthesis

If the source of theoretical cognition's unity must thus be distinguished from its external conditions, we need to consider how these factors are related in such knowledge. Doing so brings us to the *synthetic* character of this unity. In contrast to unity itself, which belongs to the form of knowledge in general, synthesis is peculiar to discursive knowledge (B 138-139) and reflects its reliance on an external condition. To bring this reliance into sharper focus, it will be useful to recall the contrast Kant draws between finite, discursive understanding and infinite, intuitive understanding.

When we attempt to conceive of an infinite understanding, one whose cognitive power is unlimited, or such as to exclude all possibility of ignorance (and *a fortiori* of error), the notion of affection must fall away, since a subject that needs to be affected by an object to know some truth about it will be ignorant of this truth unless affected and so will not possess a cognitive power that of itself excludes the possibility of ignorance. An infinite understanding is thus free of receptivity and is the uncondi-

¹ Cf. A 51 B 75. I discuss Kant's distinction between spontaneity and receptivity in more detail in *Understanding and Sensibility*, «Inquiry», XLIX, 2006, pp. 2-25. The spontaneity of theoretical knowledge is broadly parallel to that of practical. Just as my knowledge that I should pull this person out of the way of a falling tree 'comes from' knowledge I already have that others in need should be helped, so my knowledge that the warming of this stone was caused by the sun shining on it 'comes from' knowledge I already have that alterations of substances are produced by other substances acting on them. In both cases, knowledge originates in certain fundamental judgments (and the concepts they involve) in respect of its *form*, even if, on account of its *material*, it can also be said to be 'derived from experience'.

tionally sufficient source of its knowledge. Yet since knowledge in the primary sense is of objects that *exist*, this unconditioned sufficiency implies that such an understanding's knowledge is in turn the sufficient cause of the objects' existence. So infinite understanding is the absolute source of its knowledge and thereby also of the existence of the objects known.

A finite, discursive understanding, in contrast, is sufficient only in a conditioned way. In the case of such an understanding, the attainment of knowledge depends on a certain condition lying outside the knowledge. In fact, two conditions can be distinguished, corresponding to the division of finite knowledge into its two types, theoretical and practical. But in the case of theoretical knowledge, the type of interest to us here, the condition is that the object of knowledge must, in order to be known, be given to the cognizing subject from elsewhere, or from without.¹ In the judgment concerning the size of the sun, for instance, the self-agreement that constitutes the relation of representations as that of judgment or knowledge – the self-agreement, that is, wherein the judgment's concept of the sun and its concept of the determinate magnitude represented in its predicate each lead to the other in accordance with the categorial representation of the substance-accident relation – depends on the condition that the judgment's object be given to the cognizing subject, a condition lying outside the judgment itself. The subject of theoretical knowledge, then, is sufficient to achieve knowledge of objects provided that those objects are given to it from elsewhere. Objects are given to the subject insofar as they affect it, by altering the subject's empirical consciousness in perception, and this alteration is possible insofar as the object is present to the senses and the subject is capable, through being liable to such affection, of receiving sensible representations, or intuitions, «the material for knowledge».

We are now in a position to appreciate the special role of synthesis in theoretical knowledge. Insofar as the objects of such knowledge must be given from elsewhere, the consciousness of the manifold of representations figuring in the knowledge of them is not already contained in the mere consciousness of the form of knowledge in general. In infinite knowledge, Kant says, the manifold of knowledge is given through self-consciousness; but this is not so in the case of discursive knowledge (B 138-139), where self-consciousness is merely a «simple representation», through which «nothing manifold is given» (B 135). Discursive knowledge thus depends for the manifold of its representations on objects' being given to the cognizing subject by affecting it. If, therefore, the unity that such knowledge presupposes – the unity, namely, that it already in its self-awareness at least implicitly understands to constitute the form of all knowledge – is to be retained, a combination of the given manifold of its representations, and in the first instance of its *sensible* representations, is required.

This combination, as Kant emphasizes (§ 15), can never come into us through the senses, through affections of receptivity. Here again, points we have already considered are pertinent. **Every distinguishable affection, just as such, enters consciousness as an impression of something actual, not as a representation of something merely possible or necessary; so consciousness of each is independent** of consciousness of

¹ B 1x-x. Practical knowledge, in contrast, is subject to the condition that it be possible for the cognizing subject to bring the object it knows into existence.

the others. Like Humean events, they are «entirely loose and separate». Affections thus make up a mere plurality, or manifold, of conscious impressions. But as we have seen (§ 2. 2. 2.), a mere manifold cannot amount to even the bare consciousness of that manifold, much less the determinate consciousness of order or relation that would constitute the combination of the manifold requisite for knowledge. So the affections from without on which discursive knowledge depends for its manifold material cannot themselves be the source of the combination of the manifold requisite for knowledge. The unity to be retained through the combination of that material is a self-sustaining unity, so only the spontaneous act of discursive understanding itself can secure the combination.

To retain the unity it presupposes in its own self-awareness, then, discursive knowledge requires «a special act of synthesis» (B 139), through which the manifold material given from elsewhere is combined by the cognitive faculty. Thus, the unity always presupposed in discursive knowledge is also always effected through an act of synthesis, an act that constitutes the dependence of the effected unity, the synthetic unity of the manifold, on the original unity it presupposes. Synthesis is just the specific character that the self-sustaining unity of knowledge takes on in the finite case, where form-constituting unity can sustain itself only through securing itself in given material, beginning with the given material of sensible representations. Even intuition – «representation that can be given prior to all thinking» (B 132) – depends for the combination of the manifold it contains on an act of spontaneity. And since cognition's unity is itself determinate, lying in the self-determining, or categorial, use of the logical functions of thinking in judgment, this act of combination can also determine intuition (B 128) – the very intuition on whose given manifold it itself depends – and thereby constitute cognition's determining relation to its object (B 1X, B 166n).

Intellectualism?

3. ORIGINAL APPERCEPTION

3.1. Synthetic unity

The foregoing consideration of the form of knowledge has revealed that all the representations figuring in discursive knowledge must be related in accordance with the unity of knowledge in general, notwithstanding that, since the manifold material of these representations is given through objects affecting the subject, this unity must be secured through a synthesis of representations. The act in which discursive knowledge consists must accordingly be an act of combination to secure the unity of knowledge – a unity that the act of synthesis not only effects in the combined representations but also presupposes a priori insofar as it is already understood in cognition's self-consciousness and indeed understood as a presupposition of the identity (analytic unity) of that self-consciousness itself, on which all concepts, including the categories, depend. This presupposed unity, I have been arguing, is just the original synthetic unity of apperception.

Therefore the cognitive *faculty* in a discursively cognizing subject must be precisely a capacity to combine given representations according to the original unity of apperception. This is exactly how Kant describes the understanding in § 16. The understanding, he says, is «nothing further than the capacity to combine a priori, and to bring the manifold of given representations under unity of apperception» (B 135).

The faculty of apperception

3. 2. *Analytic unity*

I suggested at the outset that if we see Kant's treatment of apperception as part of an investigation of our cognitive faculty, we can avoid difficulties that would arise were we to regard it as concerned with the issue of personal identity. In conclusion, I will attempt, briefly, to situate these topics in relation to one another.

Two types of agreement
in judgment

A vantage point from which to appreciate their difference can be found by returning to the positive characterization of the unity of knowledge in its *collective* bearing on judgments (§ 2. 2. 3). I pointed out that, with respect to diverse judgments, this unity excludes conflict and requires, positively, that judgments reinforce one another through agreement. There are, however, two types of agreement, corresponding to two ways in which we speak of judgments as differing from one another. One of them – call it 'objective agreement' – is the familiar coherence we have already considered, which can be found between judgments that differ intrinsically, or in respect of content, in that they concern different things or, if the same thing, assert different though compatible things of it. The other form of agreement – 'subjective agreement' – is grounded in discursive cognition's communicability (the subjective aspect of its self-agreement), and is found between judgments that differ not in content but merely on account of having been made by different subjects or by the same subject on different occasions. In the case of each of these types of agreement, consciousness of agreement strengthens conviction. Now as I have been arguing, *objective* agreement among judgments is grounded in the original *synthetic* unity of apperception. But it is equally true that *subjective* agreement among judgments is grounded in original apperception's *analytic* unity. For as an actualization of cognition's communicability, subjective agreement expresses the identity of the cognitive faculty shared by all discursively cognizing subjects on all occasions of judgment.¹

The 'I' of apperception
is not the particular 'I'

If this is correct, then I cannot identify the *I* of original apperception with myself as an individual person or as one subject distinguished from other possible subjects. This *I* is rather the common ground of the possibility of any particular *I*. Original apperception is prior to them all, though not in a sense that would imply that there could be original apperception were there no particular subjects serving as its bearers.

Kant marks this difference by characterizing the apperception he takes as his starting point in § 16 as pure, not empirical, thereby indicating that *the I in question is not to be identified with any particular I that is conscious of itself and its own existence in its judgment I think*. As he later explains, any such judgment has both a formal and a material aspect, in that it implicates not only thinking but also perception, which enables it to contain the particular judging subject's consciousness of its own exis-

¹ We noted that cognition's objective self-agreement, grounded in apperception's *synthetic* unity, comprises three «logical requirements and criteria of all knowledge of things in general» (§ 2. 2. 3). Cognition's subjective self-agreement, grounded in apperception's *analytic* unity, comprises three corresponding requirements and criteria of all knowledge, not however in respect of cognition's relation to things (or objects) in general, but in respect of its relation to subjects in general: knowledge is identical across the occasions of judgment, *communicable* among cognizing subjects, and the sole ground of subjects' *unanimity* in judgment. These criteria are reflected in logic's «universal rules and conditions of the avoidance of error in general», namely «(1) to think for oneself, (2) to think [i.e., to conceive] oneself in the position of another, and (3) always to think in agreement with oneself» (Log, AA 1x 57; cf. KU, AA v 294-295; KrV, A 820-821 B 848-849).

tence (B 422-423n; cf. *Anth*, AA VII 141). But as Kant emphasizes, the involvement of perception does not prevent me from abstracting from the material aspect of this judgment, to direct attention solely to the formal aspect, «the form of thinking» and «form of knowledge» (B 411n, B 427; cf. A 342-343 B 400-401). When this is done, the *I think* is «taken problematically», and I am in a position to appreciate that it «contains the form of every judgment of the understanding in general» (A 348 B 406) and so can serve, in that respect, as the ground for «an apodeictic and universal judgment, namely that everything that thinks is constituted as the pronouncement of self-consciousness declares with respect to me» (A 346 B 404-405).

The distinction between this formal self-consciousness and my consciousness of myself as one subject among others might still seem to imply that it would be improper for me to regard the formal *I* as in any sense *myself*.¹ But such an implication is merely apparent. It depends on the supposition that my *original* representation of myself must be singular rather than universal in form, resting on an affection of receptivity rather than a function of spontaneity. This supposition, however, is at odds with the very idea of self-consciousness itself and the analytic unity in which we have seen it to rest, a unity that distinguishes self-consciousness in form from all singular representation (§ 1.3). Our first consciousness of ourselves must be from within, and such an awareness must be from the universal, from the form, from the capacity. The formal *I* is «apperception as a capacity» (A 117n) and as such is prior to every actual *I*, being the identical form of discursive knowledge, the common ground that unites all thinking subjects in an *original* community of knowers and makes possible their a priori recognition that thought and knowledge are universally communicable. So while *I*, an individual subject, may be said to 'have' this capacity of discursive understanding, it is not a property of mine, like my capacity to see, whose loss I might survive. It does not in that sense belong to me; on the contrary, I belong to it, as to the inner, spontaneous ground of my own possibility as a subject. Thus, Kant says in § 16 that original apperception «produces» the representation *I think* (B 132), implying thereby that it is prior to the latter. Elsewhere he says that the formal, discursive consciousness of pure apperception «must precede» the material, intuitive consciousness of empirical apperception (*Anth*, AA VII 141). And he speaks explicitly of the transcendental subject, of reason, and of the intellect as our «proper self» (*das eigentliche Selbst*).² If the foregoing considerations are sound, we can see the point in these statements. The formal *I* is the original locus and source of all self-consciousness. Were it not for this original *I*, there could be no particular *I*, no *you*, no *we* – no such thing as a *self* at all.³

¹ Thus, P. F. Strawson asks, «What has the non-history of the transcendental subject to do with us?» (P. F. STRAWSON, *The Bounds of Sense*, London, Methuen, 1966, p. 249).

² See A 492 B 520 and *GMS*, AA IV 457-458, 461; in the two passages from the *Groundwork* Kant is speaking of reason conceived as a *practical* faculty, but as he also observes, «in the end there can be only one and the same reason, which must be differentiated only in the application» (*GMS*, AA IV 391) (cf. p. 38, note 3). Here we may recall the rhetorical question Descartes poses in the Second Meditation when he asks whether it is not «one and the same *I*» that understands, affirms, wills, imagines, etc.

³ This paper was presented, in earlier versions, at the Meetings of the Pacific Division of the American Philosophical Association in Pasadena in 2004 (at a session on unity of consciousness) and in San Francisco in 2007 (at a North American Kant Society session on apperception), at a conference on unity of consciousness at the University of Toronto in 2007, at the University of Miami in 2010, and at a workshop on logic and self-consciousness at the University of Leipzig in 2012. I thank the audiences for stimulating discussion and am especially grateful to Houston Smit, Pierre Keller, and Paul Franks for their comments.

ABSTRACT

This essay chiefly concerns the unity of self-consciousness expounded under the heading «the original synthetic unity of apperception» in Kant's transcendental deduction. It focuses mainly on Kant's identification of this unity with the understanding, the faculty of knowledge, with the aim of throwing light on the understanding and on knowledge as well as on synthetic unity. After an initial examination of the distinction between the analytic and the synthetic unities of apperception, the essay undertakes to clarify the identification of the understanding and the synthetic unity of apperception by considering, in stepwise fashion, certain conditions we can recognize as belonging to the form of knowledge, conditions to which Kant draws our attention: self-consciousness, unity, and synthesis. Consideration of self-consciousness brings into view the essential unity of knowledge, and appreciation of this unity enables in turn an appreciation of the specifically synthetic character it takes on in discursive cognition. In the final section, original apperception's analytic unity is briefly revisited in the light of the conclusions reached regarding its synthetic unity.