

KANT ON ANIMAL CONSCIOUSNESS

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CONSIDER TWO DIFFERENT WAYS of characterizing the cognitive requirements necessary for perceptual awareness of an objective physical world.¹ On the one hand, objective perceptual awareness may only require the sensory capacity for awareness of particular physical individuals and their features, perhaps along with the minimal kinds of cognitive processing needed to integrate received sensory information with behavior. On the other hand, objective perceptual awareness may require not only these low-level cognitive capacities but also conceptual capacities, or perhaps even specific concepts.² Call these two lines of thought regarding objective perceptual awareness non-conceptualism and conceptualism respectively.

So long as we interpret the possession of concepts as requiring more than the ability, on the part of the subject, to behaviorally discriminate between individuals or kinds, the possibility arises that at least some of the beings one might pre-theoretically be inclined to credit with an objective perceptual awareness of their environment in fact lack the cognitive capacities for such awareness. This is most apparent in the higher non-human mammals (e.g. dogs, cats, dolphins, whales, etc.)

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1. Quotations from Kant's work are from the *Akademie Ausgabe*, with the first Critique cited by the standard A/B edition pagination, and the other works by volume and page. Translations are my own though I have regularly consulted translations from the Hackett editions by Werner Pluhar and the Cambridge Editions of the Works of Immanuel Kant, general editors Paul Guyer and Allen Wood. Specific texts are abbreviated as follows:

An: *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*

C: *Correspondence*

FS: *The False Subtlety of the Four Syllogistic Figures*

JL: *Jäsche Logic*

CPR: *Critique of Pure Reason*

CPJ: *Critique of the Power of Judgment*

Pr: *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*

LL: *Lectures on Logic*

LM: *Lectures on Metaphysics*

2. Tyler Burge makes a similar distinction, though his emphasis is on conditions for representation rather than awareness. See Burge 2009, 2010.

and in very young human children. Such beings are presumed to lack concepts (though in the case of human infants this is perhaps more controversial) and therefore must, according to the conceptualist, lack the cognitive resources necessary for objective perceptual awareness. For many, the problem of what to say regarding beasts and babes is a major drawback of any view which would pin the capacity for objective perceptual awareness on conceptual abilities.³

A diverse range of interpreters have regarded Kant as articulating a conceptualist theory of objective perceptual awareness, in which the mind plays an active role in constructing the empirical world of which the subject is perceptually aware.⁴ Central to the constructive activity of the mind is its discursive capacity to use concepts. Concepts, it is said, are what allow the chaotic sensory material that forms the basis of all conscious awareness to be organized into a framework that allows a conscious subject an awareness of his environment. Moreover, it is through the analysis of this conceptual framework that a subject can have substantive *a priori* knowledge concerning universal and necessary features of the physical world.⁵

According to this interpretive approach, Kant's view is that a subject is incapable of conscious awareness of the world around him unless he has the capacity to exercise certain basic conceptual abilities. For example, an advocate of Kantian conceptualism might argue that a subject must possess the concept of a mind-independent substance, capable of persisting through time if he is to have objective perceptual awareness of

physical objects.⁶ Objective perceptual consciousness is thus understood as dependent on a discursive capacity for the conceptual articulation of what one perceives. A subject cannot be consciously aware of objects – they cannot be presented to the consciousness of a subject – unless that subject has at least the capacity to deploy concepts.⁷

The central purpose of the current paper is to examine the evidence for thinking that Kant must deny non-discursive beings the capacity for objective perceptual awareness by examining his remarks concerning the cognitive capacities of non-human animals.⁸ I believe there is good evidence that Kant attributed the capacity for objective perceptual awareness to non-human animals, despite their lack of conceptual capacities.⁹ I argue that Kant's claims concerning animal representation and consciousness do not themselves necessitate *against* attributing to animals the capacity for objective perceptual consciousness, and that a non-conceptualist interpretation of Kant's position concerning animals (and non-discursive beings more broadly) can actively *endorse* this attribution. Kant can consistently allow that animals have a point of view on the objective world which possesses a distinctive phenomenal

3. See Bermudez 2003, 2007; Peacocke 2001 for discussion. For a clear instance of how quickly one gets into difficulty regarding this issue see McDowell 1994, ch. 6. For further discussion of these issues with regard to representational capacities in humans and a wide array of other animals see Burge 2010.

4. See, for example, Ginsborg 2006, 2007; Griffith 2010; Longuenesse 1998; McDowell 1994, 1998; Pereboom 1988, 1995; Sellars 1967.

5. Lewis 1929 is a good example of this line of thought.

6. For an excellent recent discussion of philosophical views influenced by this interpretation of Kant see Burge 2009; Burge 2010, ch. 6.

7. Recently, Tyler Burge has argued that such forms of conceptualism conflate the cognitive capacity required for awareness of objects with the cognitive capacity required for the awareness of the conditions of objectivity. See Burge 2009; Burge 2010, ch. 6, for criticism of such conflation. Laudably, Burge does not attribute such a conflation of the two types of cognitive capacity (or theories concerning such capacities) to Kant – just the opposite. See Burge 2010, pp. 154–6. I take the present paper to be broadly complimentary to Burge's line of thought.

8. I follow Kant in using the term “discursive” to encompass the sense of “concept-applying.” Kant uses the notion of discursivity quite broadly, including not only the application of concepts in judgment but also the broader “synthetic” activity of mind in “running through and gathering together” the various elements given in perception so that they may be thought (e.g. A99).

9. Burge makes a similar point concerning Kant's views regarding representation. See Burge 2010, pp. 155–6.

character while denying what seems most important to him – *viz.* that animals have the capacity to take cognitive attitudes towards, and thus self-ascribe, their own representational states.

The structure of the paper is as follows. First (§1), I distinguish two different ways in which conceptualism might understand perceptual awareness in non-discursive animals. According to the view I call “sensory solipsism” non-discursive beings have a merely phenomenal awareness that extends no further than their own subjective states. According to the view I call “sensory nihilism” non-discursive beings lack even phenomenal awareness of their own states. I then (§2) argue that Kant attributes representational capacities to animals and examine the different forms of conscious awareness that might come with this attribution. Once several varieties of conscious awareness have been distinguished I resolve a puzzle that arises in Kant’s discussions of animal consciousness and inner sense (§3). Finally (§4), I articulate an interpretation which distinguishes an animal’s capacity for inner sense from its capacity for self-conscious introspection and argue that the latter is not needed for an animal to have inner and outer *sense*, and with those senses, both inner and outer *intuitions*. This, I argue, is sufficient to credit animals with a primitive form of objective perceptual awareness.

1. Two Forms of Conceptualism

The intellectualism inherent in the conceptualist thesis is problematic when we consider two important classes of possibly (and plausibly) sentient non-discursive beings – human infants and the ‘higher’ non-human animals (e.g. whales, dolphins, apes, dogs, cats). There are two options concerning conceptualism’s understanding of non-discursive beings.¹⁰ The first option is that non-discursive beings are conscious

10. The notion of “non-discursive being” is limited here to finite beings. Kant’s conception of God as an intuitive intellect entails that God is not a discursive being. But this obviously does not commit Kant to thinking that God lacks an objective awareness of His creations.

merely of their own sensations, which in the absence of rule-giving conceptual articulation are liable to be experienced, in James’s memorable phrase, as a “blooming, buzzing confusion.”¹¹ On this first option, beings lacking concepts nevertheless possess a form of experiential consciousness. However, this form of consciousness is extremely primitive, lacking any object-directed nature. All such conscious states are thus purely subjective forms of awareness. They cannot be instances of an awareness of physical particulars or their properties.¹² This is relatively easy to conceive of when concerning states such as feeling hungry, tired, pain, pleasure, etc. It is somewhat more difficult perhaps for color, texture, or movement sensations. Nevertheless, on this view, all sensory presentation is limited to the subject’s own states. Hence, on such a form of creature consciousness, there is an answer to the question “what is it like to be that thing?” but such an answer will not take the form of a specification of any object of which that thing is aware. Call this form of conceptualism “sensory solipsism” concerning non-discursive consciousness.¹³

11. With regard to James’s phrase, we need not understand the states of non-discursive awareness as *essentially* confused. They may be perfectly orderly. What they must essentially lack, according to this position, is any genuine disclosure of an objective world.

12. See Strawson 1959/2003, p. 73 for Strawson’s characterization of a “true” solipsist as “one who simply has no use for the distinction between himself and what is not himself.” This is ambiguous between the claim that a true solipsist lacks an awareness of an objective world, and the claim that the solipsist lacks the capacity to articulate the conditions required to distinguish between himself as subject and the world as object. The tendency to slide from the latter to the former is present in much of the Strawson-influenced literature on Kant. It also presumes that the cognitive nature of sensibility is biased towards the subjective. For discussion see Burge 2010, pp. 162–3.

13. McDowell sometimes seems to endorse this position, as when he says, “Creatures without conceptual capacities lack self-consciousness and – this is part of the same package – experience of objective reality. I acknowledged that this restriction raises a question about the perceptual capacities of mere animals. Mere animals do not come within the scope of the Kantian thesis, since they do not have the spontaneity of the understanding. . . It follows that mere animals cannot enjoy ‘outer experience,’ on the concep-

Alternatively, the proponent of conceptualism might take the second option, and entirely deny to non-discursive beings the capacities for both objective perceptual awareness and mere sensory awareness. It is important to note that an proponent of this second position need not deny non-discursive creatures a capacity to respond to their environment. Non-discursive beings can be in states that causally covary with their environments, allowing them to successfully interact in ways conducive to their survival and reproductive success. Phototropic plant life might feasibly count as instancing such causally covarying states of their environment. We might also count insect life and micro-organisms as presented with their environments without any form of consciousness, though, especially in the case of insects, this is controversial. But, according to this second option, such primitive representational capacities are insufficient for even primitive phenomenal awareness of a subject's environment. Call this form of conceptualism "sensory nihilism" concerning non-discursive consciousness.¹⁴

tion of 'outer experience' I have recommended." (McDowell 1994, p. 114). This is further supported by his remark that, "Perceptual sensitivity to the environment [which non-discursive animals possess] need not amount to awareness of the outer world" (*Ibid.*, p. 119.) Hannah Ginsborg appears to endorse a similar position, in that she grants a determinate phenomenology to pre-conceptualized sense impressions, but denies that there is any representational content present in such impressions. See Ginsborg 2006, p. 96, and p. 104, note 43.

14. Some of McDowell's remarks suggest that he actually holds this more extreme position. He says, "the potential embarrassment I have been discussing [that animals lack conceptual capacities] does not stop with the denial that mere animals have 'outer experience.' They cannot have 'inner experience' either, on the conception of 'inner experience' I have recommended. This generates a parallel worry that I am obliterating their sentience." (McDowell 1994, p. 119.). His attempt to avoid this disconcerting conclusion is somewhat perplexing. He says, "nothing in the concepts of pain or fear implies that they can get a grip only where there is understanding, and thus full-fledged subjectivity. There is no reason to suppose that they can be applied in a non-first-person way only to something capable of applying them to itself in a first-person way" (*Ibid.*, pp. 120–1). It is not clear here which of two positions McDowell is making room for. On the first he admits to denying animals the capacity for representational states while arguing that they may

It seems fairly uncontroversial that Kant believed non-human animals incapable of conceptual capacities, and thus of discursive thought. Hence, any attribution of objective perceptual consciousness to non-human animals (hereafter "animals") will only be possible given the resources of Sensibility [*Sinnlichkeit*] alone. If the conceptualist interpretation of Kant is correct then he too must accept either one of these two positions concerning the nature of animal consciousness.¹⁵ Though opinion is divided as to which of the two views he shares, most commentators agree that Kant's views on animal consciousness must be limited to one of these two options.¹⁶ Here, I hope to show that Kant's views concerning animal consciousness do not entail either of these positions. There is thus space for a Kantian position which recognizes the possibility of objective conscious awareness in non-rational animals that is perceptual without being essentially conceptual in nature.

nevertheless possess qualitative states. On the other position, pains and fears may be attributed to animals, but not qualitatively, and in merely a "non-first person" way. This suggests that they play a merely functional role in explaining the behavior of the animal. I have similar difficulty with Brandom's distinction between sentience and sapience (e.g. Brandom 2002, p. 93). The distinction suggests that animals enjoy a certain kind of cognitive existence that includes sensory consciousness. But Brandom seems altogether suspicious of sensory consciousness, eschewing talk of it in favor of non-inferential observational reports (e.g. Brandom 1994, ch. 4). This may suggest a sensory nihilist position.

15. Land 2006 and Land (Forthcoming) suggest an alternative interpretation, according to which Kant only places conceptual conditions on the objective awareness of *rational* beings (Land has also suggested in conversation that this is McDowell's view). Since rational beings must be able to think about what is perceptually given, there are different conditions for such givenness than there are for non-rational animals, who *ex hypothesi* cannot think. But once it is conceded that animals have objective perceptual awareness despite lacking higher intellectual capacities the generality of Kant's argument in the Transcendental Deduction concerning the role of the categories in experience would seem to be threatened. Hence, I do not see Land's proposal as a genuine alternative between the options of objective awareness, sensory solipsism, and sensory nihilism.

16. See Naragon 1990 and Ginsborg 2006 for discussion of this point.

The question then is whether and to what extent animals can be attributed with a sensory grasp of their environment. This resolves into two parts; first, whether animals can be attributed with representations of their environment; second, whether animals can be attributed with conscious perceptual awareness of their environment. We'll examine the evidence for answering these questions in turn.

2. Representation and Varieties of Consciousness

If Kant is to credit animals with objective awareness then he must attribute to them an even more basic capacity – *viz.* the capacity to represent their environment. He clearly does this in late published work – the 1790 *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. He says,

- (1) Yet from the comparison of the similar mode of operation in animals (the ground for which we cannot immediately perceive) to that of humans (of which we are immediately aware) we can quite properly infer in accordance with the analogy that animals also act in accordance with representations [*Vorstellungen*] (and are not, as Descartes would have it, machines), and that in spite of their specific difference, they are still of the same genus as human beings (as living beings). (*CPJ* 5:464).

This passage asserts Kant's confidence in inferring that animals act in accordance with representations just as humans do. Kant makes similar remarks, across a wide span of years, in his logic, anthropology, and metaphysics lectures.

- (2) We call an animal alive because it has a faculty to alter its own state as a consequence of its own representations. Someone who maintained that in animals the principle of life has no power of representation (*vim repraesentativam*), but rather that they act only according to general laws of matter, was Descartes, and afterwards also Malebranche, but to think of animals as machines is impossible, because then one would deviate from all analogy with nature. . . (*Metaphysik Volckmann* (1784-5) *LM* 28:449; *cf. An* 7:212).

- (3) In regard to the objective content of our cognition in general, we may think the following *degrees*, in accordance with which cognition can, in this respect, be graded:

- The first degree of cognition is: to represent [*vorstellen*] something;
- The second: to represent something with consciousness, or to perceive (*percipere*) [*sich mit Bewußtsein etwas vorstellen oder wahrnehmen*];
- The third: to be acquainted with something (*noscere*), or to represent something in comparison with other things [*etwas kennen oder sich etwas in der Vergleichung mit anderen Dingen vorstellen*], both as to sameness and as to difference;
- The fourth: to be acquainted with something with consciousness, i.e. to cognize it (*cognoscere*) [*mit Bewußtsein etwas kennen, d.h. erkennen*]. **Animals are acquainted with objects too, but they do not cognize them** [*Die Thiere kennen auch Gegenstände, aber sie erkennen sie nicht*] (*JL* (1800) §X, 9:64-5; my emphasis; *cf. Wiener Logic* (1780) *LL* 24:846).

Regardless of how one parses the different degrees of cognition outlined in (3), it is clear that animals possess a degree of cognition higher than that of mere representation. Hence, they must at least be capable of representation. Kant also makes an important claim here that animals are acquainted with *objects* [*Gegenstände*] not, as the solipsist version of conceptualism would have it, merely with their own sensory states. So Kant's position seems not to be that animals are not aware of objects, but rather that their awareness of such objects is importantly less sophisticated than our own discursive awareness.

Kant also attributes conative states to animals, and suggests that it is virtue of the combination of conative and representational states that animals, much like humans, act on the world around them (*An* §80, 7:265-6).

However, in the *Anthropology* Kant talks about the obscurity of representation in humans and animals.

- (4) The field of sensuous intuitions and sensations of which we are not conscious, even though we can undoubtedly conclude that we have them; that is, obscure representations in the human being (and thus also in animals), is immense (*An* 7:135).

Obscure representations are representations attributable to a subject, but of which the subject is not conscious (*JL* 9:33; *An* §5, 7:135–7). Often this happens because there are too many other similar objects or events to be represented (as is the case with hearing the many violins in an orchestra), or when the representations are simply very weak or faint (as is the case when one looks at the stars in the milky way, each of which is individually difficult to point out but the aggregate of which generate the perception of the milky way as a whole). One might be tempted here towards the position that while much of the representation present in humans is obscure, *all* animal representation is obscure, and thus unconscious.

The difficulty with the interpretive position just described is that it appears to conflict with Kant's attribution of conscious representation to animals in the *Jäsche Logic* (quote (3) above). If obscure representations are unconscious representations then taking Kant's remark in (4) as suggesting that all animal representation is obscure directly conflicts with his remark that animal representation includes perception – i.e. the second grade of cognition, that of representation with consciousness (*cf.* A320/B376–7).

One might attempt to avoid the problem by denying that the gradations of consciousness that Kant discusses in quote (3) apply to both animals and humans. After all, Kant does say he's talking about "our" cognition. So perhaps it is possible for an animal to have the first and third degrees without the second (i.e. representation without consciousness) even if it is not possible for humans. But this is unmotivated, for Kant often speaks of sensibility as part of our "animal" nature (*cf.* A546/B574, A802/B830; *An* 7:196). Further, Kant explicitly distinguishes animals from humans only in the fourth "degree" (i.e. cognition), and seems to do so specifically because the fourth degree builds on the

content of the third (i.e. acquaintance). This would be unnecessary if the cognitive capacities of animals already departed at the second degree from those of humans.

Fortunately, there are other ways around this apparent difficulty. First, Kant's discussion in the *Anthropology* does not clearly indicate that animal representation is inherently obscure or unconscious, only that the majority of representation in animals is obscure.

Second, Kant is clear that obscurity comes in *degrees* (*JL* 9:64; *An* 7:138–9). Hence it is compatible with an animal's representational awareness of objects being obscure that they are not *totally* obscure, and thus not totally unconscious.

Third, and perhaps most importantly, it is not at all obvious what sense of consciousness Kant denies to obscure representational awareness. There are several different notion of consciousness in play in current philosophical literature and it is not clear which one (or more) of these senses Kant intends by his use of "consciousness" [*Bewusstsein*].

It does not appear plausible that Kant both attributes representations to animals and denies that they have what has been called in contemporary philosophical discussion "access consciousness." Access consciousness requires that a psychological state be available to interact with other states and, more generally, be available for use by the organism.¹⁷ Kant's attribution of representational capacities to animals in the various passages above seems in clear accord with this idea. Representations help an animal navigate its world and they couldn't do so if they were not consciously accessible in this sense. Both the sensory solipsist and the sensory nihilist could grant this form of consciousness to animals.

But there are three further notions of consciousness that Kant might deny animals. The first is Nagel's notion of "what it's like" to be in a particular conscious state.¹⁸ Call this "phenomenal" consciousness.

17. See Block 1995.

18. Nagel 1974.

This need not be considered a form of objective awareness. The sensory solipsist, but not the sensory nihilist, can accept that animals have this form of consciousness.

Second, animals may be conscious in the sense of having a point of view on the world. Call this “POV” consciousness.¹⁹ Attributing POV consciousness to animals seems to be incompatible with the sensory nihilist’s position, for according to the sensory nihilist, non-discursive representation is simply a matter of causal co-variance and interaction between an animal’s internal states and its environment. Such co-variance is insufficient for the possession of a point of view.

It is less clear whether POV consciousness is incompatible with the sensory solipsist position. Since the solipsist at least makes room for the notion that there is something it is like to be an animal, this may be suggestive of the animal’s also having a point of view. However, the solipsist will deny that this is a point of view on an objective physical world. Hence, to the extent that the sensory solipsist allows for a point of view in non-discursive beings, it will only accommodate a merely phenomenal or “what it is like” point of view.

Third, Kant might deny that animals are conscious in the sense of having *self-consciousness* – viz. being able to self-ascribe their own mental states. Denial of this form of consciousness seems *prima facie* compatible with the attribution of POV or phenomenal consciousness to animals. In contrast, being self-conscious entails having a point of view, for it seems to require the capacity to represent one’s self as distinct from other things, and of other things as relating to one’s self. Hence, sensory nihilism is incompatible with the ascription of self-consciousness to animals. It is less clear that self-consciousness entails phenomenal consciousness since the occurrence and self-ascription of representational

states need not entail any accompanying phenomenology. However, the sensory solipsist must deny self-consciousness for the simple reason that it violates the solipsistic viewpoint. If a subject can self-ascribe, then there are things distinct from it which it attributes to itself. This is a straightforward denial of solipsism.

In what follows I will presume that Kant grants that animals possess access consciousness. The question will be whether animals have anything like phenomenal, POV, or self-consciousness. How we answer this question will decide whether Kant subscribes to the sensory solipsist or the sensory nihilist position.

3. Consciousness and Introspection

There are a variety of pre-critical texts where Kant appears to deny to animals the capacity for consciousness of one kind or another. For example, in a note to his 1762 essay on syllogistic forms he says,

- (5) It is, indeed, of the greatest importance, when considering the nature of animals, to take account of this. In observing them, we only notice external actions; the differences between those actions are indicative of the differing determinations of their appetites. It by no means follows from this that there occurs within them that action of the faculty of cognition in which they have an awareness of the agreement or conflict between what is in one sensation and what is in another, and hence that they judge in accordance with that awareness (*FS* 2:60).

This text suggests that while animals have an awareness of sensation, and thus presumably possess phenomenal consciousness, they lack any awareness beyond this, and so lack a conscious point of view on the objective world. Kant appears to express a similar view in the mid-1770’s lecture notes that constitute *Metaphysik* L₁. He says,

19. Note that this is compatible with denying that there is a persisting *subject* which has this point of view. Animal subjectivity may be wholly fragmentary, consisting of temporally discrete points of view that are loosely held together by associative mechanisms. Hence the notion of a point of view is not meant to disbar the possibility of a Humean account of subjectivity.

- (6) we ascribe to these beings a faculty of sensation, reproductive imagination, etc., but all only sensible as a lower faculty, and not connected with consciousness (LM 28:277).

But in a late set of lectures – the *Dohna* lectures of 1792/3 – Kant appears to reverse himself a bit concerning animal consciousness. He says,

- (7) Consciousness is entirely lacking in animals, their actions happen according to laws of the power of imagination, which nature placed in them (LM 28:689–90).

The important phrase here is “entirely lacking.” The view expressed here would seem to conflict with the attribution to animals, in passages (5) and (6), of phenomenal consciousness. There are two *prima facie* readings of (7). On the one hand, this text suggests that animals have only access consciousness, and that this is necessary to explain their actions. On the other hand, the appeal to a power of imagination suggests that the animals have phenomenal consciousness as well, since imaginings seem characteristically phenomenal in nature. It is not clear to me that there is a decisive reason, within the text itself, for favoring one interpretation or the other. For the sake of consistency with the quotes (5) and (6) we may prefer the second reading. Certainly, none of the texts are compatible with the attribution to animals of *self*-consciousness since Kant tends to associate self-consciousness with apperception and apperception with the understanding (e.g. B154), and the presence of both apperception and self-consciousness in animals is ruled out by (6) and perhaps (7) as well.

The broader question is whether we can square the position suggested by (5) – (7) with the *Vienna* and *Jäsche* logics (see (3) above), where Kant seems to indicate that animals are indeed conscious beings. Fortunately, there are other texts that may yet shed light on which sense of “consciousness” is at issue. For example, Kant attributes (at least the possibility of) consciousness to animals, a few years earlier, in a 1789 letter to Marcus Herz.

- (8) [representations] could still (I consider myself as an animal) carry on their play in an orderly fashion, as connected according to empirical laws of association, and thus they could even have influence on my feeling and desire, without my being aware of my own existence [*meines Daseins unbewußt*] (assuming that I am even conscious of each individual presentation, but not of their relation to the unity of presentation of their object, by means of the synthetic unity of their apperception) [*gesetzt das ich auch jeder einzelnen Vorstellung bewusst wäre, aber nicht der Beziehung derselben auf die Einheit der Vorstellung ihres Objects, vermittelt der synthetischen Einheit ihrer Apperception*]. This might be so without my cognizing the slightest thing thereby, not even what my own condition [*Zustand*] is (BW 11:52, May 26, 1789).

Kant seems to be suggesting here that we can attribute a consciousness of individual representations (or of their objects – the representeds) to animals. What animals lack, according to the letter, is the ability to attribute those representations – qua representations – to a *unified subject*. This is supported by a remark he makes earlier in the same letter that,

- (9) In other words I ascribe to the understanding the synthetic unity of apperception, through which alone the manifold of intuition (of whose every element I may nevertheless be particularly conscious [*deren jedes ich mir besonders immerhin bewusst sein mag*]) in a unified consciousness, is brought to the representation of an object in general (whose concept is then determined by means of that manifold) (C 11:50).

What I suggest is that Kant here allows for an awareness of individual representations (or of their content) but does not allow awareness of this awareness. In quote (9) we see Kant’s drawing of a distinction between consciousness of a relation between oneself and one’s representations (i.e. self-consciousness) and consciousness of the elements of one’s intuitive representation (whether construed as an act of representation or as a represented object). In fact, this is suggested even in some of

the earlier texts. For example, in the *Pölitz* lectures from the mid-1770's Kant says,

- (10) Animals are accordingly different from human souls not in degree but rather in species; for however much animal souls increase in their sensible faculties, consciousness of their self, inner sense, still cannot be attained thereby. Even though they have better phenomena in sensibility than we do, they still lack inner sense. . . Now we can think problematically that such beings exist which have no inner sense, for it is no contradiction to suppose such. How many phenomena can be explained, without assuming an inner sense, from the faculty of outer sensibility in such beings that have no inner sense? The consciousness of one's self, the concept of the I, does not occur with such beings that have no inner sense; accordingly no non-rational animal can think: I am. . . (LM 28:276).

Again we see the compatibility (if not outright agreement – given that animals have “better phenomena in sensibility” than we do) of what Kant says with the possession of phenomenal and POV consciousness in animals, but the incompatibility of animal self-consciousness. The problem is that Kant is not denying just consciousness to animals here – he's denying them inner sense.

The denial of inner sense raises a problem. If animals are without inner sense then they cannot be aware of anything as being in time since Kant believes that the temporal properties of all things (including mere sensory states) are derived from the fact that time is the form and ground of inner sense, and all things of which the mind is aware must ultimately be represented in inner sense (A34/B50–51).²⁰ It seems scarcely credible to attribute conscious awareness of any sort to animals when that awareness is not temporally structured.

A possible explanation for the denial of inner sense to animals is that Kant has not yet, in the 1770's, explicitly distinguished the notion of

inner sense from that of apperception. However, if we do so distinguish these two ideas, then Kant's denial that animals have inner sense is better understood as the denial of an animal's ability to apperceive (i.e. have consciousness of one's self conceptualized as 'I') than it is a denial of their lack of consciousness of their representational states in time. This explanation is attractive because it safeguards what is most important to Kant – *viz.* the denial that animals have any awareness of a self-as-'I'. This is a theme he would return to later, in his *Anthropology*. There Kant distinguishes humans from other animals in virtue of the human capacity to represent an “I” (*An* 7:127).

Thus, Kant's denial of consciousness to animals in (10), I argue, extends only to the denial of self-consciousness (i.e. the representation of an 'I') rather than the denial of POV or phenomenal consciousness. Indeed, depending on what Kant means by saying animals have “better phenomena in sensibility than we do” we might also attribute to him an endorsement of POV consciousness in animals.

Hence, in denying animals the capacity for self-consciousness Kant may only be denying the much more cognitively sophisticated ability to unify disparate states of mind in the ascription to one subject (the 'I') whose states they are.

There remains a worry concerning Kant's expressed views regarding consciousness, apperception and inner sense. We might grant that Kant allows that animals possess a variety of forms of consciousness, so long as these are distinguished from apperceptive self-consciousness, but this would seem to require granting animals the capacity for inner sense. Granting animals an inner sense means granting them inner intuitions. But does Kant really allow animals *intuitive* awareness? Intuition suggests a cognitive relation to an object (A19/B33; A20/B34; A108–9; A320/B376–7). We've seen reasons for thinking that he must allow them inner intuitions – *viz.* temporally ordered representational states. But if animals have inner intuitions then aren't they aware of themselves, and so self-conscious? Moreover, if animals have inner intuitions might they not also have outer? In the next section I argue that attributing to animals the capacity for both forms of inner and

20. Kant held that time was ideal and the form of inner sense even before *CPR*, in the *Inaugural Dissertation* of 1770.

outer intuition, and thus genuine spatio-temporal conscious awareness, does not require attributing to animals self-consciousness.

4. Animal Consciousness, Intuition, and Objective Perception

I have suggested that Kant, in his pre-critical work, does not seem to have clearly distinguished between inner sense and apperception.²¹ For example, in the previously cited *Four Syllogisms* essay of 1762 Kant speculates that the difference between animals and humans depends on the presence in humans of inner sense.

- (11) This consideration may induce us to think more carefully about the essential difference between animals endowed with reason and those not so endowed. If one succeeds in understanding what the mysterious power is which makes judging possible, one will have solved the problem. My present opinion tends to the view that this power or capacity is nothing other than the faculty of inner sense, that is to say, the faculty of making one's own representations the objects of one's thought. This faculty cannot be derived from some other faculty. It is, in the strict sense of the term, a fundamental faculty which, in my opinion, can only belong to rational beings. But it is upon this faculty that the entire higher faculty of cognition is based (*FS* 2:60; my emphasis).

Here inner sense is explicitly tied to the capacity to take one's own representations as the objects of thought.²² But this is ambiguous between (at least) the capacity to self-ascribe representations, and the capacity to be aware of one's own modifications. The former seems a much more cognitively sophisticated capacity than the latter, and in fact seems to presuppose it. Moreover, the capacity for self-ascription seems to fit neatly with the notion of apperception, while the capacity

for awareness of one's own modifications seems better suited to inner sense. This is borne out, at least to some degree by Kant's distinction, in the first *Critique*, between inner sense and apperception. Kant clearly indicates that apperception is the source of all combination present in a manifold of intuition while inner sense is merely a form of intuition and contains no combination or (conceptually) determinate intuition within itself (B154). But this distinction between intuition as determined by apperception and the form of an intuition does not mean that apperception is the origin of inner sense as temporal form.²³ If it did, the argument of the Transcendental Aesthetic concerning the intuitive, as opposed to conceptual, nature of time would be otiose. Kant considers time the form of inner sense and, qua intuition, time must be that which "precedes all thought" (B132). So a temporal order to one's representations must be able to precede a conceptual determination of those same representations.²⁴

If we attribute inner sense to animals, which includes attributing a temporal order to the animal's representations, and thus what seems the minimal capacity required for a subject to become aware of its own modifications, this need not run afoul of Kant's concerns as expressed in his pre-critical writings.²⁵ The attribution to animals of temporally

23. Note though that Kant does say that the concept of magnitude is involved in the "generation [*Erzeugung*] of time itself." (A145/B184). However, I take it that this remark is compatible with thinking that inner sense, as temporal form, precedes any conceptual determination. So the idea is that, pre-categorically, consciousness is still temporally structured, but there is no consciousness of any content as having determinate temporal structure without the concept of magnitude. Thanks to Thomas Land for discussion of this point.

24. See Ameriks 1982/2000b, p. 253 for a similar argument.

25. Note, once again, that the attribution to animals of inner sense does not require an attribution of a substantial mental subject, or even of a persisting subject. Inner sense, as a cognitive capacity, requires at minimum the capacity to represent one's representations in a temporally ordered way. But it does not entail that the representations need be united or associated in anything more than Hume's "bundle" sense.

21. For a discussion of the details of Kant's progress towards the distinction between inner sense and apperception see Ameriks 1982/2000b, ch. 7.

22. Compare Kant's remark that "Consciousness is really a representation that another representation is in me" (*JL* 9:33).

ordered representational states, some of which are phenomenally conscious, does not in any way entail that the animal is cognizant of one state *as* preceding or succeeding another. It merely means that in the flux of the animal's representations, the states *do* precede and succeed one another, and animals are sensitive to objects being presented in succession. In slogan form: a temporal order of consciousness does not entail cognition of a presented temporal order. Thus animals can have inner intuitions (i.e. temporally ordered representations) without the unification of those inner intuitions by a subject of experience which represents them as being so ordered.

Thus, when Kant denies inner sense or consciousness to animals, it seems plausible to understand him as speaking very narrowly. He is not denying that they have representations ordered according to the form of inner intuition – time. Hence, in describing what it might be like to be a bat, Kant's position could coherently take different conscious states of the bat as preceding or succeeding one another, and thus as compatible with the bat's being phenomenally conscious. Indeed, on this interpretation it is completely plausible that the bat (or, more generally, any animal) has POV consciousness. What animals lack, according to Kant, is a higher-order cognitive capacity both to reflect on features of their representations (qua representational acts or vehicles) and to unify disparate representational states in an act of self-ascription. They, in contrast to discursive beings, have only the fragmented, fluctuating consciousness characteristic of, for example, Humean bundles, while discursive beings have the power to unite the elements of these bundles in a less fragmented, more logically coherent fashion. But their subjective existence as Humean bundles need not entail that they lack phenomenal consciousness or a point of view on the physical world.²⁶ Their points of view may be fragmentary, but they

26. Note that it *need* not entail such a view, at least *prima facie*. Depending on how one interprets Kant's argument in the Transcendental Analytic, particularly in the Deduction, there may be reason to foreclose this possibility. Here I am most concerned with whether any of Kant's specific remarks concerning

are still viewpoints on the world. So we might distinguish two senses of "inner sense" – a narrow and a broad. The narrow sense corresponds to the higher-order cognitive capacity of apperception which allows for consciousness of temporal order, while the broad sense corresponds merely to the capacity for temporally-ordered consciousness.

One can also see why Kant might often have failed, even in the later critical works, to make explicit the distinction between the broad and narrow notions of inner sense. For, in denying to animals the capacity to reflect on features of their representations or unify representations in acts of self-ascription, he is essentially denying them capacities associated with introspection, and Kant associates introspection closely with inner sense.²⁷ Kant sees animal consciousness as virtually bereft of introspective character, and thus limited to awareness of the world external to the animal.²⁸

Kant's denial of introspective capacities to animals is nevertheless compatible with an animal's being capable of acting in accord with its inner states (e.g. pain, hunger, thirst, etc.).²⁹ On this interpretation, there is no reason why Kant would need to deny that animals are phenomenally conscious of their inner states. What animals clearly lack is the capacity for self-consciousness – *viz.* the capacity for both higher-order representational states, and the capacity for self-ascriptive acts utilizing those states.³⁰

animals commit him to a conceptualist position.

27. For discussion see Ameriks 1982/2000b, ch. 7; Powell 1990, especially ch. 6.

28. In the metaphysics lectures Kant speaks of animals as merely possessing outer sense to the exclusion of inner sense. See, e.g. *Metaphysik L1*, LM 28:276.

29. This seems supported by Kant remarks in the *Anthropology* where he distinguishes awareness of pleasure and displeasure from inner sense. He calls the former "interior sense" (*sensus interior*). See *An* §15, 7:153.

30. So, *pace* McDowell, animals may be consciously aware of their pains, etc., while lacking the ability to self-ascribe such states (e.g. As in "I am in pain"). This has important ramifications for understanding the relation between self-ascription and behavior, for animals clearly manifest pain-

If one does not properly distinguish self-consciousness from other forms of consciousness one can see how a denial of self-consciousness may lead to denials of other forms as well. Because of the link between self-consciousness and introspection, denying self-consciousness to animals may lead to the denial of any inner awareness at all. On any model that privileges inner awareness over outer awareness (not necessarily Kant's model), the denial of inner awareness amounts to a denial that there is any conscious awareness whatsoever. Unfortunately, it is easy to slide from the denial of introspective capacities on the part of a conscious subject to examine their own states, to the denial that the subject has any conscious states whatsoever. While I don't believe Kant was guilty of such a slide, at least by the time of his critical period, his writings can seem to suggest it, and subsequent interpreters have reinforced the tendency.³¹

There remains the question whether animals have POV consciousness, either of the "inner" or of the "outer" physical world. One might concede that Kant thought animals have the capacity for access and phenomenal consciousness, and even that they have inner intuitions in the "broad" sense that allows for temporally ordered representations. But why should we think that Kant conceded to animals consciousness of anything beyond their sensory states? That is, why attribute to animals

avoiding behavior, which suggests that self ascription is not necessary for the behavioral efficacy of such mental states. Nevertheless, this conclusion is compatible with thinking that self-ascription plays an important role in shaping a variety of other kinds of behavior.

31. This tendency is present in Kitcher 1984, 1990, though Kitcher understands the notion of apperception to be one concerning personal identity rather than a form of self-consciousness. For criticism of this slide see Allison 1996, ch. 4. Ameriks 1982/2000b is a notable exception to this tendency. Brook 1994 makes a similar distinction between consciousness and self-consciousness as I do here. However, Brook's otherwise laudable discussion suggests a tendency to make a different but equally problematic slide between awareness of the vehicle of representation and awareness of the content of that vehicle – e.g. see his definition of a representational state at p. 52. Brook's discussion emphasizes the awareness of representational vehicles whereas Kant, I have argued, emphasizes the awareness of representational contents.

a consciousness of their environment rather than a consciousness of their sensations that permits successful navigation of their environment without actually perceiving that environment? Recall the two options the conceptualist has for explaining animal awareness. On the first option, sensory solipsism, the animal is conscious merely of its own sensory states, but lacking concepts, cannot be aware of anything distinct from those states. Effectively, the animal has a point of view, but only on its own states. On the second option, sensory nihilism, the animal lacks phenomenal consciousness and thus even the consciousness required for a minimal point of view. According to this second option there is no phenomenal consciousness, but rather merely access consciousness – i.e. states which interact with one another to account for the animals' skillful navigation of its environment.

The objection we are now considering is, in essence, that I have only shown that Kant does not take the second of the two options regarding animal consciousness. Kant thus allows that animals have phenomenal consciousness. But this merely demonstrates that Kant is a sensory solipsist rather than a sensory nihilist concerning animal consciousness. Animals are aware merely of their own states, their own sensations. They are phenomenally but not objectively aware.

As an interpretation of Kant, the first option faces a number of difficulties. First, Kant's discussion of the forms of intuition (i.e. space and time) does not suggest that one form might be had independently of the other, in fact he seems to suggest that they must come as a package.³² For example, Kant argues that time is the "*a priori* condition

32. It is this dependency relation that Kant emphasizes when he says in *Metaphysik K₂* (1790s) that, "I would have no inner sense if I had no outer sense" (LM 28:771). There is also the argument of the Refutation of Idealism to consider. Kant is there concerned to show that the consciousness of one's own existence is "simultaneously the immediate consciousness of the existence [*Daseins*] of other things outside or external [*außer*]" to one (B276). Exactly how Kant argues for this claim is controversial. As an anonymous referee points out, Kant's argument in the Refutation seems to proceed from a claim concerning the role of the category of substance in determination of a subjective temporal order (e.g. B278). While this might suggest the

of all appearance in general" (A34/B50–1). Hence it cannot be the case that animals are aware of outer appearances without those appearances being temporal, and thus modifications of inner sense.³³

Second, in the *Anthropology* Kant explicitly says that our sensory awareness is outward and object-directed, and that we only become aware of our sensations, or their origins in our sense organs, in cases where the intensity of the sensation is particularly extreme.

- (12) These three outer senses [i.e. sight, touch, and hearing] lead the subject through reflection to cognition of the object as a thing outside him. But if the sensation becomes so strong that the consciousness of the movement of the organ becomes stronger than the consciousness of the relation to an external object, then external representations are changed into internal ones. To notice smoothness or roughness in what can be touched is something entirely different from inquiring about the figure of the external body through touching. So too, when the speech of another is so loud that, as we say, the ears hurt from it, or when someone who steps from a dark room into bright sunshine

argument's irrelevance to a discussion of non-discursive beings who cannot employ such categories, it is important to appreciate that, for Kant, the relevant object of consciousness is the *existence* of a thing and this consciousness is *immediate*. These are paradigmatic features of intuitive rather than conceptual awareness (cf. A320/B376–7, A371, A600–1/B628–9; *JL* 9:91). So Kant's point seems to be that intuitive consciousness of oneself is at the same time intuitive consciousness of some distinct existence outside one. This further demonstrates Kant's commitment to a dependence relation between temporal intuition and spatial intuition, or inner and outer sense, even if the argument for this conclusion proceeds by way of an appeal to conceptual capacities. I make no claims here regarding the success of Kant's argument, merely that his intention was to show that inner intuition was not independent of outer intuition.

33. Perhaps a subject could have many inner intuitions but just one outer intuition? Kant seems to suggest that this might be possible as long as the one outer intuition presented sufficient material for the imagination to generate subsequent inner sensory images. Adjudicating this issue is better left to a discussion of skepticism. For our purposes, the important point is that, even in the extreme skeptical case, there must be outer intuition if there is to be any inner intuition.

blinks his eyes. . . both persons are unable to find a concept of the object because of the intensity of the sensations; their attention is fixed merely on the subjective representation, namely the change of the organ (*An* §19, 7:156–7).

One might be doubtful of the applicability of this passage to the question concerning animal consciousness given that Kant is here talking about conceptualizing objects and cognizing them thereby. However, the main point of the passage seems independent of these issues concerning conceptualization and cognition. For Kant seems to be arguing the point that what one is primarily aware of via the three sense modalities discussed here is an *object*, not a *sensation* (or any other representational vehicle). Sensations are thus merely the vehicles for a subject's awareness, they are not, at least in normal cases, the object of such awareness. But if this is the correct way of understanding Kant here, then it becomes difficult to understand why a merely causal intermediary (the sensory vehicle) in the human case is itself the object of awareness in the animal case. This is all the more true given that, as we've seen, Kant thinks that awareness of one's own representational vehicles (i.e. sensations), because it requires introspection, is a more sophisticated cognitive capacity than awareness of the external objects that are the contents of those vehicles.

If what I have said thus far is correct then animal consciousness should be understood to include the capacity for both outer and inner (in the broad sense) intuition. Since Kant defines intuition as the singular and immediate representation of an object, the fact that animals are capable of intuition suggests they are capable of genuine objective awareness of their environment rather than mere subjective awareness of their sensory states. This means that in addition to access and phenomenal forms of consciousness, Kant's account is compatible with the possibility of an animal's having POV consciousness of elements of the physical world. Hence, contra the conceptualist interpretation, Kant's view of animal consciousness does not require denying to animals the capacity for objective perceptual awareness of physical objects.

Hence it is compatible with Kant's views on animal consciousness that objects present themselves to the consciousness of animals as, at the least, colored, bounded regions of space, the presentations of which succeed one another in time. Animals are primarily aware of objects and their features, rather than sensations or other representational vehicles. The relation of an animal's representations to one another follows according to associative regularities governing the animal's faculty of imagination.³⁴

At this point, the possibility of Kant's recognition of objective perceptual consciousness in animals, or more generally, of objective awareness without conceptualization, may still seem dubious to some as a genuine interpretive option. For many interpreters the largest stumbling block must be the argument presented in the Transcendental Deduction of the first *Critique*. It is there that Kant seems most clearly to articulate the conditions for the possibility of objective perceptual awareness as requiring the applicability of pure concepts of the understanding – the categories. If this were indeed Kant's strategy then we would have to regard as hopeless the attribution to Kant of the idea that animals are objectively perceptually aware of the world around them.³⁵ Here, though, I hope to have shown both that Kant's claims concerning animal representation and consciousness do not themselves necessitate *against* attributing to animals the capacity for objective perceptual awareness, and that a consistent interpretation of Kant's position concerning animals (and non-discursive beings more broadly) can actively *endorse* this attribution.³⁶

34. See, e.g., A112, A116, A121, B142, B152; *Metaphysik Dohna*, LM 28:698–90.

35. Though see Allais 2009; Hanna 2005, 2007 for discussion of how a non-conceptualist interpretation might deal with this issue.

36. Thanks to Andrew Chignell, Michelle Kosch, Thomas Land, and Derk Pereboom for discussion of various aspects of this paper.

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