

# **PHIL 971 – Kantian Conceptualism**

## **Handout 5 – Transcendental Deduction (I)**

**9.26.13**

### **1 The Derivation of the Categories**

#### **1.1 The Forms of Judgment (§9)**

There are twelve forms of judgment:<sup>1</sup>

1. Quantity
    - universal
    - particular
    - singular
  2. Quality
    - affirmative
    - negative
    - infinite
  3. Relation
    - categorical
    - hypothetical
    - disjunctive
  4. Modality
    - problematic
    - assertoric
    - apodeictic
- Every judgment yields a “unity” (i.e. a propositional form) corresponding to the moments of the four types of judgment
    - Every judgment takes one moment from each group
      - \* universal, affirmative, categorical and assertoric (‘all crows are black’)
      - \* singular, negative, disjunctive and problematic (‘that bird might be neither a crow nor a raven’)
  - Kant thinks that the 12 forms constitute all logically coherent cognitive acts which the understanding might engage in
  - Kant also assumes that the only possible employment of concepts is in judgment<sup>2</sup>
    - this is how the forms of judgment provide a ‘clue’ to nature of the categories

<sup>1</sup> The metaphysical deduction is based on the supposition that the function of judgement provides a ‘clue’ to the pure concepts of the understanding. The rationale for this is simply that judgement is what the employment of concepts consists in. Kant accordingly starts with what he considers to be the basic forms of judgement, and then claims that a specific concept corresponds to each of them. The attempted move is thus from formal logic to concepts with content. (Gardner (1999), 85)

<sup>2</sup> “the understanding can make no other use of...concepts than that of judging by means of them. (A68/B93).

- they only provide a 'clue' however, because the forms of judgment are **formal** and thus lack any precise content – they thus cannot by themselves determine the content of the categories

## 1.2 The Categories as Forms of Thought (§10)

- The categories provide a dual role – they organize both intuition and concepts<sup>3</sup>
  - the dual role of the categories plus their connection to the forms of judgment yields (according to Kant) a determinate content–viz. the precise list of categories Kant provides

### 1. Quantity

- unity
- plurality
- totality

### 2. Quality

- reality
- negation
- limitation

### 3. Relation

- inherence/subsistence
- causality/dependence
- community

### 4. Modality

- possibility/impossibility
- existence/non-existence
- necessity/contingency

## 1.3 Synthesis (§10)

- All cognition demands a synthesis of representation<sup>4</sup>
- Synthesis is carried out by the unitary subject of representation on representations that are either given to it in sensibility (i.e. intuition) or produced by it in thought (e.g. stipulative conceptual definition)
  - What Kant will attempt to show in the Deduction is that “Experience” (in some sense of that term) depends on synthesis via application of the categories

<sup>3</sup> The same function that gives unity to the different representations in a judgment also gives unity to the mere synthesis of different representations in an intuition, which, expressed generally, is called the pure concept of understanding. The same understanding, therefore, and indeed by means of the very same actions through which it brings the logical form of a judgment into concepts by means of the analytical unity, also brings a transcendental content into its representations by means of the synthetic unity of the manifold in intuition in general, on account of which they are called pure concepts of the understanding that pertain to objects a priori; this can never be accomplished by universal logic. (A79/B105).

<sup>4</sup> By synthesis in the most general sense, however, I understand the action of putting different representations together with each other and comprehending their manifoldness in one cognition. Such a synthesis is pure if the manifold is given not empirically but a priori (as is that in space and time)...The synthesis of a manifold, however, (whether it be given empirically or a priori) first brings forth a cognition, which to be sure may initially still be raw and confused, and thus in need of analysis; yet the synthesis alone is that which properly collects the elements for cognitions and unifies them into a certain content; it is therefore the first thing to which we have to attend if we wish to judge about the first origin of our cognition. (A77-8/B103).

## 2 The Task of the Deduction

- Demonstrate the legitimacy of the categories<sup>5</sup>
  - legitimacy understood in terms of concepts which have their source in the mind (i.e. the categories) but which are correctly and justifiably applied to features present in experience
  - the “transcendental” nature of the argument is characterized as an argument which begins from obvious or uncontroversial premises and argues to some conclusion understood as a necessary condition for the possibility of the truth of those premises
  - Kant’s use of ‘**Deduktion**’ redeploys German legal vocabulary; in Holy Roman Empire Law, ‘Deduktion’ signifies an argument intended to yield a historical justification for the legitimacy of a property claim
    - \* In Kant’s usage a deduction is an argument that aims to justify the use of a concept, one that demonstrates that the concept correctly applies to objects
  - the demonstration of their legitimacy proceeds by appealing to the necessary role of the categories in coming to have empirical **cognition** [**Erkenntnis**] of any sort
    - \* confusingly, Kant often elides this notion of empirical cognition with the notion of “Experience” [**Erfahrung**]

### 2.1 Grades of ‘Experience’

- Kant’s usage of ‘experience’ [**Erfahrung**] is ambiguous throughout his work<sup>6,7</sup>
  - (e1) having sensations
  - (e2) having sensations and being conscious of them
  - (e3) having intuitions
  - (e4) having intuitions and conceptualizing them (bringing them under concepts)
  - (e5) having intuitions and conceptualizing them by means of physical-object concepts
  - (e6) having intuitions and conceptualizing them as mine
  - (e7) having intuitions and making judgments about them
  - (e8) having intuitions and knowing propositions about them

## 3 The Structure of the Deduction

- Introduction (§§13-4)
- The problem of combination (§15)
- The first step (§§16-20)
- The second step (§§21-26)

<sup>5</sup> In the case of the concepts of space and time, we were able above to make comprehensible with little effort how these, as a priori cognitions, must nevertheless necessarily relate to objects, and made possible a synthetic cognition of them independent of all experience. For since an object can appear to us only by means of such pure forms of sensibility, i.e., be an object of empirical intuition, space and time are thus pure intuitions that contain a priori the conditions of the possibility of objects as appearances, and the synthesis in them has objective validity. The categories of the understanding, on the contrary, do not represent to us the conditions under which objects are given in intuition at all, hence objects can indeed appear to us without necessarily having to be related to functions of the understanding, and therefore without the understanding containing their a priori conditions. Thus a difficulty is revealed here that we did not encounter in the field of sensibility, namely how **subjective conditions of thinking** should have **objective validity**, i.e., yield conditions of the possibility of all cognition of objects; for appearances can certainly be given in intuition without functions of the understanding. (A89-90/B121-2)

<sup>6</sup> In the first paragraph of the introduction to the work, Kant uses ‘experience’ in two different senses without calling the reader’s attention to the fact. The experience with which all our knowledge is said to begin is “the raw material of the sensible impressions”; experience in this sense is then said to be worked up by the understanding into “that knowledge of objects which is entitled experience” (B1). The same ambiguity runs throughout the work. (Van Cleve (1999), 73).

<sup>7</sup> Empirical cognition, however, is experience (B166). Experience is an empirical cognition, i.e., a cognition that determines an object through perceptions (A176/B218). Therefore experience itself – i.e., empirical cognition of appearances – is possible only inasmuch as we subject the succession of appearances, and hence all change, to the law of causality (A189/B234).

### 3.1 Introduction

- §13 On The Principles Of A Transcendental Deduction As Such
  - Discussion of a need for a transcendental as opposed to a merely empirical deduction.
  - This is based on the fact that an empirical deduction is unavailable due to two reasons – viz.
    - (i) the a priori nature of the categories
    - (ii) their semantic content includes notions of necessity and universality (A91-2/B124)
- §14 Transition To The Transcendental Deduction Of The Categories
  - Discussion of the nature of empirical cognition as a complex of intuition and concept (A92-3/B125)
  - The categories are a necessary condition for the empirical cognition of objects – i.e. are necessary conditions for occurrence of thought about objects (of experience) (A93/B125-6)
  - Presents so called ‘Objective’ Deduction:<sup>8</sup>

#### The ‘Objective’ Deduction

1. The experience of an object has both an intuitional and a conceptual component.<sup>9,10</sup>
  2. The conceptual component can occur only if the categories apply to the object.
  3. ∴ The categories apply to all objects of experience.
- Premise (2) is based on the assumption of the soundness of Kant’s argument in the Metaphysical Deduction—viz. that the categories are necessary for any judgment whatsoever
    - i. Concepts are applied only in judgment
    - ii. The categories are necessary for the application of any concept in judgment
    - iii. ∴ The categories are necessary for any conceptually structured mental state

#### The ‘Subjective’ Deduction

- The ‘Subjective’ Deduction is some or all of the Transcendental Deduction proper (§§15-26)
  - sets up a problem (the problem of combination)
  - shows how the categories are necessary for the resolution of that problem

<sup>8</sup> This inquiry, which goes rather deep, has two sides. One side refers to the objects of the pure understanding, and is supposed to demonstrate and make comprehensible the objective validity of its concepts a priori; thus it belongs essentially to my ends. The other side deals with the pure understanding itself, concerning its possibility and the powers of cognition on which it itself rests; thus it considers it in a subjective relation (Axvi-xvii).

<sup>9</sup> There are two conditions under which alone the cognition of an object is possible: first, intuition, through which it is given...secondly, concept, through which an object is thought corresponding to this intuition. (A92-93/B125)

Now all experience does indeed contain, in addition to the intuition of the senses through which something is given, a concept of an object as being thereby given. (A93/B126)

<sup>10</sup> For a representation to be a cognition (though here I mean always a theoretical one), we need to have concept and intuition of an object combined in the same representation, so that the former is represented as containing the latter under itself. (*Progress*, 20:273-4).

### 3.2 The Problem of Combination (§15)

- §15 On the possibility of a combination as such
  - i. what does Kant mean by 'combination' [*Verbindung*]<sup>11</sup>
  - ii. why can't combination be given in intuition?<sup>12</sup>
  - iii. what is the connection of the categories with combination?<sup>13</sup>

### 3.3 The First Step (§§16-20)

- The primary goal of the first step is to demonstrate the truth of a conditional claim—viz. if there are unified cognitions then the categories must play a role in their generation
  - §16 On the original synthetic unity of apperception
  - §17 The principle of the synthetic unity of apperception is the supreme principle for all use of the understanding
  - §18 What objective unity of self-consciousness is
  - §19 The logical form of all judgments consists in the objective unity of apperception of the concepts contained in them
  - §20 All sensible intuitions are subject to the categories, which are conditions under which alone their manifold can come together in one consciousness

### 3.4 The Second Step (§§21-26)

- The second step has two aims:
  - i. articulate the limited application of the categories in *cognition*—viz. they may be used only within the bounds of sensible experience
  - ii. demonstrate the actuality of unified cognitions in which the categories are applied (i.e. the antecedent of the conditional proven in the first step)
- The second step has six sections:
  - §21 Comment
  - §22 A category cannot be used for cognizing things except when it is applied to objects of experience
  - §23 [A commentary on §22]
  - §24 On applying the categories to objects of the senses as such
  - §25 [Commentary on §24, specifically intuition of the self]
  - §26 Transcendental deduction of the universally possible use in experience of the pure concepts of understanding

<sup>11</sup> All combination (*conjunctio*) is either composition (*compositio*) or connection (*nexus*). The former is the synthesis of a manifold of what does not necessarily belong to each other...The second combination (nexus) is the synthesis of that which is manifold insofar as they necessarily belong to one another (B201-2).

<sup>12</sup> The combination (*conjunctio*) of a manifold in general can never come to us through the senses, and therefore cannot already be contained in the pure form of sensible intuition; for it is an act of the spontaneity of the power of representation, and, since one must call the latter understanding, in distinction from sensibility, all combination, whether we are conscious of it or not, whether it is a combination of the manifold of intuition or of several concepts, and in the first case either of sensible or non-sensible intuition, is an action of the understanding, which we would designate with the general title **synthesis** in order at the same time to draw attention to the fact that we can represent nothing as combined in the object without having previously combined it ourselves, and that among all representations **combination** is the only one that is not given through objects but can be executed only by the subject itself, since it is an act of its self-activity. (B129-30).

<sup>13</sup> Now the representation of a composite, as such, is not a mere intuition, but requires the concept of a compounding, so far as it is applied to the intuition in space and time. So this concept (along with that of its opposite, the simple) is one that is not abstracted from intuitions, as a part-representation contained in them, but is a basic concept, and a priori at that – in the end the sole basic concept a priori, which is the original foundation in the understanding for all concepts of sensible objects. There will thus be as many a priori concepts resident in the understanding, to which objects given to the senses must be subordinated, as there are types of compounding (*synthesis*) with consciousness, i.e., as there are types of synthetic unity of apperception of the manifold given in intuition. (*Progress*, 20:271).

## 4 The First Step

- The first step contains two arguments–viz. the “argument from above” and the “argument from below”<sup>14</sup>
  - Both arguments aim to demonstrate the need for psychological processing above and beyond that which is accounted for by associationist theories
  - Assuming the correctness of Kant’s derivation of the categories from the logical structure of judgment (cf. §10), the success of the first step would demonstrate the necessity of categorial synthesis, as opposed to association, in cognition

<sup>14</sup> Now we will set the necessary connection of the understanding with the appearances by means of the categories before our eyes by beginning from beneath, namely with what is empirical. The first thing that is given to us is appearance, which, if it is combined with consciousness, is called perception (A 119).

### 4.1 The Argument from Above (§16)

- What resources are necessary to explain the fact that we have a non-empirical awareness of our self-identity – association or synthesis?<sup>15</sup>

**(PNUA):** It must be the case that each of my representations is such that I can attribute it to my self, a subject which is the same for all of my self-attributions, which is distinct from its representations, and which is or can be conscious of its representations (A116, B131-2, B134-5)

1. It must be possible for the ‘I think’ to accompany all my representations–i.e. PNUA is true
2. Empirical self-consciousness is ‘dispersed’–representations succeed one another but lack a common relation to one another<sup>16</sup>
3. ∴ There is a subject distinct from its representations, which combines those representations in one consciousness–i.e. ‘synthesizes’ them–and attributes those representations to the self

<sup>15</sup> The I think must be able to accompany all my representations; for otherwise something would be represented in me that could not be thought at all, which is as much as to say that the representation would either be impossible or else at least would be nothing for me. (B131-2).

<sup>16</sup> The empirical consciousness, which accompanies different representations, is dispersed and without relation to the identity of the subject (B 133).

### 4.2 The Argument from Below (§§17-20)

- What resources are necessary to explain the possibility of objectively valid representation–viz. representation of entities whose existence and nature is independent of their being represented?
  - specifically, how do we account for our apparent representation of characteristics of objects and events (or their relations) that are universal and/or necessary when all of our awareness seems local and contingent?

#### §17–Objects as Unities

1. All unification of representations demands a unity of consciousness in their synthesis
2. An object is a complex unity of representations

3. ∴ A unity of consciousness is necessary for the relation of representations to an object

### §18–Necessity & Universality

1. Experience contains representation of objective simultaneity and succession
2. Representation of objective simultaneity and succession requires representation of universality and necessity
3. The empirical unity of consciousness generated by association cannot explain the possibility of such representation
4. ∴ Associationism is false

### Judgment & Synthesis

1. We distinguish between mere subjective association of concepts and objective judgment
2. Objective judgment involves a relation between two concepts that transcends particular contingent facts concerning their relation by a particular subject
3. This distinction cannot be accounted for by a merely associationist account of the mind
4. ∴ Only synthesis explain the objective status of judgment<sup>17</sup>

<sup>17</sup> A judgment is nothing other than the way to bring given cognitions to the objective unity of apperception (B141).

### Intuition & Synthesis

1. Intuition of an object requires a unified 'manifold'
2. The unity of a manifold is brought about by the unity of apperception
3. The unity of apperception brings about the unity of a manifold via an act of judgment in accordance with one of the logical forms
4. The categories are the rules of combination by which each of the logical functions of judgment is carried out
5. ∴ Any intuition of an object must conform to the categories

## 5 *Deriving Intentionality*

**Sensationism:** The foundation of empirical knowledge is constituted by non-intentional, conscious, sensory states out of which are constructed mental states that refer to objects<sup>18</sup>

<sup>18</sup> This, then, is the central thesis of sensationism: that there are non-intentional mental states in which no object, other than the state itself, is present to the mind, and that they are the foundations of empirical knowledge. (George (1981), 230).

### 5.1 Kant's Sensationism

- Non-synthesized mental states are not intentional/referential
- Referential states are constructions from non-referential sensations and mental acts of judgment<sup>19</sup>
- Spatial representation is a construction from non-spatial sensation<sup>20</sup>
  - Outer intuition is concept-dependent<sup>21</sup>
- Suggests that *Erkenntnis* is best interpreted as "referential thought" rather than "knowledge"

### 6 Further Reading

1. Allison, Henry E. 2004. *Kant's Transcendental Idealism: Revised and Enlarged*. 2nd ed.. New Haven: Yale University Press.
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5. Guyer, Paul. 1987. *Kant and the Claims of Knowledge*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
6. ——. 2010a. "The Deduction of the Categories: The Metaphysical and Transcendental Deductions." In *The Cambridge Companion to Kant's Critique of Pure Reason The Cambridge Companion to Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*, 118-150. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
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9. Longuenesse, Béatrice. 1998. *Kant and the Capacity to Judge*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
10. Pereboom, Derk. 1988. "Kant on intentionality." *Synthese* 77 (3): 321-352. <http://www.springerlink.com/index/kr437h361qr881q1.pdf>.
11. ——. 1995. "Self-Understanding in Kant's Transcendental Deduction." *Synthese* 103 (1): 1-42.
12. Strawson, Peter F. 1966. *Bounds of Sense*. 2002nd ed.. Routledge. doi:0-415-29100-7.
13. Van Cleve, James. 1999. *Problems from Kant*. Oxford University Press.

<sup>19</sup> Initially only the succession of sensation is present, and we may speak of a generation of the spatial features of objects by putting the sensations in relation to each other, setting them "outside and alongside each other, and referring them to something outside me" as Kant puts it at the beginning of the Transcendental Aesthetic. The aggregation and coordination of sensory impressions produce objects, reference... (George (1981), 240).

<sup>20</sup> It is evident that Kant took the spatial and extended nature of objects to be the result of an interpretation placed upon certain sequences of sensations, which are themselves without extension. (George (1981), 240).

<sup>21</sup> Intuitions do not refer to objects, indeed they are not properly speaking intuitions, if they are not combined with concepts, and this can occur only in the context of a judgment: "Only if they (the understanding and the senses, i.e. intuitions and concepts) are united can reference result." (George (1981), 243).