

# *The Transcendental Deduction — The First Step*

PHIL 871

September 25, 2014

## 1 Overview

- The first step contains two arguments—viz. the “argument from above” and the “argument from below”<sup>1</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
- The first step attempts to accomplish its aim by showing that the conditions necessary for consciousness of the identity of oneself as the subject of different self-attributions of mental states, are identical with those necessary for grounding the possibility of representing an object distinct from oneself, of which various properties may be predicated.
  - Kant thus denies the possibility of a self-conscious subject, who can conceptualize and self-ascribe her representations, but whose representations could not represent law-governed objects in space, and thus the material world or ‘nature’.
- Argument Structure of the first step:
  - §15: The problem of combination<sup>2</sup>
  - §16: The argument from above
  - §§17-20: The argument from below

## 2 The Problem of Combination (§15)

- What explains the possibility of complex representation, which is required for representing an object?
  - The senses present only properties, never the subject of properties<sup>3,4</sup>
  - The representation of a unitary complex depends on the representation of the unitary act of combination
- The representation of an object as a multiplicity of related properties depends on the unitary consciousness of the subject representing that multiplicity

<sup>1</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)

<sup>2</sup> What is an object? That whose representation is a sum of several predicates belonging to it. The plate is round, warm, made of tin, etc. Warm, round, being made of tin, etc., are not objects, although the warm [thing], the tin [thing], etc., indeed [are]. An object is that in the representation of which various others can be thought as synthetically combined... (R6350, 18:676)

<sup>3</sup> our specific ideas of substances are nothing else but a collection of a certain number of simple ideas, considered as united in one thing. These ideas of substances, though they are commonly simple apprehensions, and the names of them simple terms, yet in effect are complex and compounded. (Locke (1970), I.xxiii.14)

<sup>4</sup> we certainly do not know what is the substance of any thing. We see only the shapes and colors of bodies, we hear only their sounds, we touch only their external surfaces, we smell only their odors, and we taste their flavors. But there is no direct sense and there are no indirect reflected actions by which we know innermost substances (Newton (2004), 91)

### 3 *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?

*Principle of the Necessary Unity of Apperception (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. I am conscious of the identity of myself as the subject of different self-attributions of mental states.<sup>5</sup>
2. I am not directly conscious of the identity of this subject of different self-attributions of mental states.<sup>6</sup>
3. If (1) and (2) are true, then this consciousness of identity is accounted for indirectly by my consciousness of a particular kind of unity of my mental states.
4. ∴ This consciousness of identity is accounted for indirectly by my consciousness of a particular kind of unity of my mental states. (1, 2, 3)
5. If (4) is true, then my mental states indeed have this particular kind of unity.
6. This particular kind of unity of my mental states cannot be accounted for by association. (5)<sup>7</sup>
7. If (6) is true, then this particular kind of unity of my mental states is accounted for by synthesis by a priori concepts.<sup>8,9</sup>
8. ∴ This particular kind of unity of my mental states is accounted for by synthesis by a priori concepts. (6, 7)

### 4 *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?
9. We have representations of objects, i.e., of objectively valid phenomena.
  10. ∴ All of our representations of objects are (in part) of universal and necessary features of experience. (9)
  11. Necessary and universal features of experience cannot be explained by association. (from reflection on the nature of association)<sup>10</sup>

<sup>5</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>6</sup> the empirical consciousness, which accompanies different representations, is dispersed and without relation to the identity of the subject (B 133)

<sup>7</sup> only because I can comprehend their manifold in a consciousness do I call them all together **my** representations; for otherwise I would have as multicolored, diverse a self as I have representations of which I am conscious. (B134)

<sup>8</sup> The **understanding** is, to speak generally, the faculty of **cognitions**. These consist in the determinate relation of given representations to an object. But an **object** is that in the concept of which the manifold of a given intuition is united. (B137)

<sup>9</sup> since every [conceptual] division presupposes a concept that is to be divided, a still higher one must be given, and this is the concept of an object in general (taken problematically, leaving undecided whether it is something or nothing). Since the categories are the only concepts that relate to objects in general, the distinction of whether an object is something or nothing must proceed in accordance with the order and guidance of the categories (A290/B346)

<sup>10</sup> In accordance with the [laws of association] I could only say "If I carry a body, I feel a pressure of weight," but not "It, the body, is heavy," which would be to say that these two representations are combined in the object, i.e., regardless of any difference in the condition of the subject, and are not merely found together in perception (however often as that might be repeated). (B142)

12. If (10) and (11) are true, all of our representations of objects require a faculty for ordering mental states distinct from association.
13. ∴ All of our representations of objects require a faculty for ordering mental states distinct from association. (11, 12)
14. If (13) is true, all of our representations of objects require a faculty for synthesis by a priori concepts.
15. ∴ All of our representations of objects require a faculty for synthesis by a priori concepts, the same faculty required to account for my consciousness of the identity of myself as subject of different self-attributions of mental states. (1-8, 13, 14)

## 5 *Van Cleve's Interpretation*

1. The **Unity** Premise: All representations of which I am conscious have unity of apperception.
  - every representation of which I am conscious (or perhaps more strongly, every representation owned by me) is U-related to some other representation.
2. The **Synthesis** Premise: Representations can have such unity only if they have been synthesized.
3. The **Category** Premise: Synthesis requires the application of Kant's categories.
4. **Conclusion:** The categories apply to all representations of which I am conscious.

### 5.1 *Van Cleve's Criticisms*

- Against Synthesis
  - Kant is faced with a dilemma regarding the need for synthesis<sup>11</sup>
- Against the need for the categories
  - why think that synthesis requires the categories?
    - i. synthesis either involves or is akin to judging
    - ii. judging requires the application of categories<sup>12</sup>
  - why think that the categories are necessary for judgment?
    - \* unity of the proposition problem
  - why think that the necessity of the categories for judgment is sufficient for demonstrating their *objective validity*?

<sup>11</sup> Kant holds that we cannot apprehend the parts of a manifold straight off in one act. Instead, we must apprehend the parts successively, retain memory images of them, and see what they all add up to. But how are we supposed to survey these images? A manifold of images presents the same problem we had to begin with. Either we must perform a threefold synthesis on it, in which case we are off on an infinite regress, or we can take it in all at once, in which case we could have done likewise with the original manifold. (Van Cleve (1999), 86)

<sup>12</sup> The nub of Kant's case for (ii) is that unless it were true, judging could not be distinguished from the mere association of ideas. If I think of redness on an occasion when I am thinking of apples, I do not thereby make any judgment; a judgment comes about only insofar as I bind the associated concepts together; for example, into the judgment 'some apples are red'. Kant thinks that the categories are precisely those concepts that are needed to bind other concepts together into judgments. (Van Cleve (1999), 88)

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