

The Transcendental Deduction – The Second Step

PHIL 871

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1 Overview

- The first step:
 - §§15-20
 - Argues for the general claim that if we have cognition the categories are necessary for cognition
 - * Problem of combination (§15): what explains the possibility of complex representation, necessary both for representing oneself and for representing objects?
 - * Argument from above (§16): the unity necessary to represent oneself as the subject of different self-attributions of mental states depends on the categories
 - * Argument from below (§§17-20): the unity necessary to represent an object as a complex of properties whose existence and nature is independent of the subject depends on the categories
- The second step
 - §§21-26
 - Argues for:
 - i. the truth of the antecedent of the above conditional—viz. that we have cognition via the categories
 - ii. the denial that we cognize ourselves as we are in ourselves
 - iii. the denial that the categories may provide cognition of anything independently of intuition

2 The Second Step (§§21-26)

- Kant moves from abstract conditions for the application of the categories, to those conditions specifically with reference to our spatial and temporal intuition
- Is the step redundant?¹

¹ Therefore all manifold, insofar as it is given in one empirical intuition, is **determined** in regard to one of the logical functions for judgment, by means of which, namely, it is brought to a consciousness in general. But now the **categories** are nothing other than these very functions for judging, insofar as the manifold of a given intuition is determined with regard to them (§13). Thus the manifold in a given intuition also necessarily stands under categories. (B143)

2.1 §21 - *The Categories and Givenness*

- The deduction is not yet complete, we need to account for how empirical intuition, rather than intuition in general, is subsumed under the categories²
- The categories are necessary for cognition only for subjects with *discursive* rather than *intuitive* understanding³
 - An intuitive intellect does not cognize by means of the categories
 - If God creates the world (reality in itself) by virtue of intellectually intuiting it, then reality in itself is not categorically structured⁴
 - What does it mean to think of reality as containing, at best, *analogues* of substances, causes, etc.?

2.2 §§22-3 - *Restricting the Categories*

- Thinking is not *cognizing*⁵
 - Thinking concerns what is *logically* possible (i.e. not contradictory)
 - Cognizing concerns what is *really* possible
 - * metaphysical notion
 - * based on the coherence or combinability of predicates/properties, understood as ‘positive determinations’ or ‘realities’, in a single subject⁶
 - predicate canceling
 - subject canceling

KANT’S VERIFICATIONISM?:

Kant claims that all of our concepts, including the categories, have ‘sense and significance’ [*Sinn und Bedeutung*] (B149) only insofar as they are applicable to objects of experience.⁷

- Is Kant’s principle of sense an epistemological or a semantic thesis?
 - Not obviously a semantic thesis since Kant seems to allow for regimented discussion of transcendent subject matter (e.g. rational theology, ‘mag-netic matter’ (A226/B273))
 - Given the thinking/cognizing distinction, Kant may be linking the meaning of ‘sense and significance’ to his notion of ‘real possibility’

² In the above...the beginning of a **deduction** of the pure concepts of the understanding has been made...In the sequel (§ 26) it will be shown from the way in which the empirical intuition is given in sensibility that its unity can be none other than the one the category prescribes to the manifold of a given intuition in general (B144-5)

³ In the above proof, however, I still could not abstract from one point, namely, from the fact that the manifold for intuition must already be **given** prior to the synthesis of understanding and independently from it; how, however, is here left undetermined. For if I wanted to think of an understanding that itself intuited (as, say, a divine understanding, which would not represent given objects, but through whose representation the objects would themselves at the same time be given, or produced), then the categories would have no significance at all with regard to such a cognition. (B145)

⁴ if our understanding were intuitive, it would have no objects except what is actual...Thus the distinction of possible from actual things is one that is merely subjectively valid for the human understanding (CJ 5:401-2)

⁵ To **cognize** an object, it is required that I be able to prove its possibility (whether by the testimony of experience from its actuality or a priori through reason). But I can **think** whatever I like, as long as I do not contradict myself, i.e., as long as my concept is a possible thought, even if I cannot give any assurance whether or not there is a corresponding object somewhere within the sum total of all possibilities. But in order to ascribe objective validity to such a concept (real possibility, for the first sort of possibility was merely logical) something more is required. This “more,” however, need not be sought in theoretical sources of cognition; it may also lie in practical ones.

⁶ [N]ot every concept in which there is no contradiction is a possible synthesis — that is, real relations are not seen through the principle of contradiction (*Notes on Metaphysics* R4004 (1769), 17:382).

⁷ The pure concepts of the understanding, consequently, even if they are applied to a priori intuitions (as in mathematics), provide cognition only insofar as these a priori intuitions, and by means of them also the concepts of the understanding, can be applied to empirical intuitions. Consequently the categories do not afford us cognition of things by means of intuition except through their possible application to **empirical intuition**, i.e., they serve only for the possibility of **empirical cognition**. This, however, is called **experience**. The categories consequently have no other use for the cognition of things except insofar as these are taken as objects of possible experience. (B147-8)

2.3 §§24-5 - *Figurative Synthesis & Self-Knowledge*

- Distinction between the kind of (intellectual) synthesis necessary to generate propositional judgment and the concepts which constitute it, and (figurative) synthesis necessary to generate unitary (complex?) sensible intuitions⁸

2.4 §26 - *Completing the Deduction*

- Kant argues that our representations of space and time themselves “contain a manifold” and thus require a synthesis if they are to be represented as objects
- Since space and time themselves are synthesized by the categories all possible appearances and space and time will likewise be conditioned or “determined” by the categories
 - the crux of ‘conceptualist’ readings of the Deduction depend on an interpretation of the B160-161 footnote according to which it argues that the representation of space and time as pure intuitions depends on a ‘figurative’ synthesis guided by the categories⁹

3 *The Conceptualist Argument According to Griffith*

3.1 *Some Key Assumptions*

- There is no intentionality without synthesis¹⁰
- Intuitions are to be identified with perceptions in roughly our contemporary sense—viz. sensory presentations of objects in space—but this claim about perception is not obviously tracking Kant’s use of the term ‘perception’ [*perceptio/wahrnehmung*]
 - so one reply to the conceptualist argument as Griffith presents it is that it simply misses any claim concerning intuition, and only is successful, if at all, against the higher-order consciousness of particular representations rather than the occurrence of the representations themselves

3.2 *The Arguments*

THE ARGUMENT FROM A THREEFOLD SYNTHESIS

1. Objective perception requires the generation of a ‘perceptual image’¹¹
2. Perceptual images are generated via a threefold empirical synthesis
3. The empirical synthesis of sensation depends on the ‘affinity of the manifold’
4. The affinity of the manifold depends on a transcendental synthesis of pure intuition by the categories
5. ∴ All objective perception depends on the categories¹²

⁸ 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. (A79/B105)

⁹ these same properties that, in the Transcendental Aesthetic, are arguments in favor of the *intuitive* rather than *discursive* nature of our representations of space and time, become, in section 26, reasons to assert that these intuitions are made possible by acts of a priori synthesis. And the a priori synthesis that generates space and time as a priori intuitions, also generates the conformity of the manifold of empirical intuitions to the *categories* (Longuenesse (1998), 215; cf. Guyer (2010), 146).

¹⁰ synthesis and intentionality are not logically distinct: only a synthesized intuition is an intentional intuition. (Griffith (2012), 201)

¹¹ Mere sensibility, it seems, can only supply us with impressions that are ‘dispersed and separate in the mind’, but it cannot, as [Kant] says, ‘bring the manifold of intuition into an image’ (A120). Thus, if there is no synthesis to combine a dispersed manifold into an image, then there is no empirical intuition (perception), hence no possible vehicle for nonconceptual content (in the sense we are discussing). (Griffith (2012), 201)

¹² empirical intuition requires a rule-guided synthesis of its manifold, which depends on the affinity of the manifold, which presupposes a figurative synthesis of the pure manifold, which in turn is related to the transcendental unity of apperception, the source of the rules for this pure synthesis: the categories. (Griffith (2012), 206)

Problems:

- no discussion of the transcendental unity of apperception (i.e. where did Kant's emphasis on consciousness go?)
- against premise (1) — Kant seems to deny both that:
 - i. we think in terms of images¹³
 - ii. we infer from the existence and character of images to the existence and character of their causes¹⁴

THE ARGUMENT FROM THE UNITY OF PURE INTUITION

1. There is no synthesis of apprehension without the unity of pure intuition
2. The unity of pure intuition depends on the categories—viz. the categories of quantity
3. ∴ the synthesis of apprehension depends on the categories [1, 2]
4. Perception depends on the synthesis of apprehension
5. ∴ Perception depends on the categories [3, 4]

Problems:

- We cannot make sense of Kant's arguments concerning pure intuition in the Transcendental Aesthetic if pure intuitions of space and time depend on synthesis according to the categories of quantity¹⁵
 - Synthesis is an iterative form of construction of wholes in terms of parts, but the mereological structure of pure intuition defines the parts in terms of the whole
 - Kant consistently characterizes the nature of the understanding's activity as limited to grasping wholes in terms of their parts, which is in contrast to the intuitive intellectual grasp of wholes prior to their parts characteristic of God¹⁶

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¹³ In fact it is not images of objects but schemata that ground our pure sensible concepts. No image of a triangle would ever be adequate to the concept of it. For it would not attain the generality of the concept, which makes this valid for all triangles, right or acute, etc., but would always be limited to one part of this sphere. (A140-1/B180)

¹⁴ Thus the transcendental idealist is an empirical realist, and grants to matter, as appearance, a reality which need not be inferred, but is immediately perceived. (A371)

¹⁵ First, one can only represent a single space; and when one speaks of many spaces, one means by that only parts of one and the same unique space. Nor, second, can these parts precede the one all-encompassing space, as its constituents, as it were (from which it can be assembled); rather, they can be thought only as in it. Space is essentially one; the manifold in it, and hence also the universal concept of spaces as such, rests solely on limitations (A24-5/B39)

¹⁶ we can also conceive of an understanding which, since it is not discursive like ours but is intuitive, goes from the synthetically universal (of the intuition of a whole as such) to the particular; i.e., from the whole to the parts, in which, therefore, and in whose representation of the whole, there is no contingency in the combination of the parts, in order to make possible a determinate form of the whole, which is needed by our understanding, which must progress from the parts, as universally conceived grounds, to the different possible forms, as consequences, that can be subsumed under it. (CJ 5:407)

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