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**Kant on Subjectivity and Self-Consciousness**

by

Janum Sethi

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the  
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in

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of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Professor Hannah Ginsborg, co-chair

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Abstract

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Doctor of Philosophy in Philosophy

University of California, Berkeley

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With his ambitious argument in the Transcendental Deduction, Kant claims to have established that a certain purely formal self-consciousness — the mere consciousness that my thoughts and judgments are mine — guarantees the objectivity of those thoughts and judgments, that is, their claim to represent the world as it is. But this intended conclusion gives rise to two questions:

(1) If merely being conscious that my thoughts are mine guarantees their objectivity, does Kant mean to deny that I can ever be conscious of thoughts that are subjective?

(2) Does Kant's apparently exclusive focus on formal self-consciousness in the Deduction mean that this is the only way he thinks a cognitive subject can be conscious of herself?

Both questions can be seen as versions of a more general worry about whether a robust account of subjectivity is compatible with Kant's description of cognition in the first *Critique*. It is the project of my dissertation to argue that such an account of subjectivity is not only possible, but *essential* to Kant's analysis of cognition. Much of the existing secondary literature on the topic, I claim, overlooks the fact that the two questions I list above are related, and can be jointly answered.

To motivate such an answer, I argue against the standard interpretive response to (1), according to which a subject can judge in a way that is 'merely subjective' by expressing what is true from her particular spatiotemporal point of view rather than from every point

of view. I argue that this suggestion misunderstands Kant's objective/subjective distinction: merely subjective judgments are not about the world at all, whereas judgments made from a spatiotemporal point of view surely are.

I also challenge the widely accepted response to (2), on which a subject can become conscious of herself by introspectively becoming aware of her representations *as* representations. Whereas this entails that empirical self-consciousness is incidental to — and an interruption of — object-directed cognitive activity, I argue that Kant strongly indicates that empirical self-consciousness is involved in and essential for carrying out such cognitive activity in the first place.

In light of these arguments, I develop an alternative account on which I respond to (1) by arguing that judgments count as 'merely subjective' according to Kant insofar as they express combinations of thoughts that a subject finds herself having as a result of psychological associations that hold in her particular case. Furthermore, I claim, it is consciousness of such combinations that constitutes the empirical self-consciousness discussed in (2). Such consciousness is necessary for cognition, I argue, because it explains how we first come to acquire new concepts.

Kant's claim that a subject's empirical character is as essential to the activity of cognition as her transcendental character finally amounts, on my view, to the familiar Kantian dictum that both receptivity and spontaneity are essential ingredients of cognition.

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I was first introduced to Kant in my junior year at Yale by Jim Kreines, who handed out the most ambitious undergraduate syllabus on the first *Critique* that I have seen since and said, if I recall correctly, something to the effect of “Why don’t we just see if we can make this whole thing make sense?” My thanks to Jim, both for orienting me in that project, and for setting its task.

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To work on any topic in Kant with Daniel is to spend years of dogged engagement with the text to grasp for yourself what it seems he always already knows. Thank you, Daniel, for your clear-minded insight into the broadest principles and smallest details of Kant’s system, and for the patience, encouragement, and emotional support you have shown me over many years.

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

A worry that has been raised for Kant’s ambitious argument in the “Transcendental Deduction” of the *Critique of Pure Reason* is that, if it is successful, it proves too much. In that section, Kant claims to have established that a certain purely formal self-consciousness — the mere consciousness that my thoughts and judgments are mine — guarantees the objectivity of those thoughts and judgments, that is, their claim to represent the world as it is. But this intended conclusion gives rise to two questions:

(1) If merely being conscious that my thoughts are mine guarantees their objectivity, does Kant mean to deny that I can ever be conscious of thoughts that are *subjective*? Can I not be conscious, for example, that the sound of roosters leads me to imagine the smell of hot coffee, without taking that combination of thoughts to represent an objective connection between roosters and coffee? Kant’s conclusion seems to rule out this possibility, and that is the first way in which he can be accused of ‘proving too much’.

(2) Does Kant’s apparently exclusive focus on formal self-consciousness in the Deduction mean that this is the only way he thinks a cognitive subject can be conscious of herself? Surely we are substantively conscious of ourselves as *particular* subjects in a world composed of objects and other subjects distinct from us: if Kant’s conclusion precludes such consciousness, this is another way in which his argument ‘proves too much’.

Both these worries can be seen as versions of the more general ques-

tion of whether a robust account of subjectivity is compatible with Kant's description of cognition in the first *Critique*. It is the project of my dissertation to argue that such an account of subjectivity is not only possible, but *essential* to Kant's analysis of cognition. Much of the existing secondary literature on the topic, I claim, overlooks the fact that the two questions I list above are related, and can be jointly answered.

To motivate such an answer, I argue against the standard interpretive response to (1), according to which a subject can judge in a way that is 'merely subjective' by expressing what is true from her particular spatiotemporal point of view — rather than from every point of view. On such a view, a subject represents the world subjectively when she represents it as it seems to her to be, rather than as it is for all subjects. I argue that this suggestion misunderstands Kant's objective/subjective distinction: merely subjective judgments are not *about the world* at all, whereas judgments made from a particular point of view surely are.

I also challenge the widely accepted response to (2), on which a subject can become conscious of herself by introspectively becoming aware of her representations *as* representations. Whereas this entails that empirical self-consciousness is incidental to — and an interruption of — object-directed cognitive activity, I argue that Kant strongly indicates that empirical self-consciousness is involved in and essential for carrying out such cognitive activity in the first place.

In light of these arguments, I develop an alternative account on which I respond to (1) by arguing that judgments count as 'merely subjective' according to Kant insofar as they express combinations of thoughts that a subject finds herself having as a result of psychological associations that hold in her particular case. Such combinations (e.g., the association between roosters and coffee) are not about the world at all and so, are genuinely subjective. Furthermore, I claim, it is consciousness of such combinations that constitutes the empirical self-consciousness discussed in (2). An account of cognition must make place for such consciousness, I argue, because it explains how we come to acquire new concepts: psychological associations enable us to first collect representations that resemble or succeed one another before we can form the concept through which we intellectually grasp what connects them.

This fits well with the argument of the Deduction because empirical

self-consciousness turns out to be a subject's consciousness of herself as an empirical being passively governed by *natural*, psychological laws of the imagination, in contrast with the formal self-consciousness at issue in the Deduction, through which she is made aware of her active application of *logical* laws of the understanding. Finally, the claim that a subject's empirical character is as essential to the activity of cognition as her transcendental character amounts, on my view, to the familiar Kantian dictum that both receptivity and spontaneity are essential ingredients of cognition.

## 1.1 Overview of Chapters

In the second chapter, I begin the project of understanding Kant's account of self-consciousness by analyzing the notion of 'self-affection': the cognitive act, according to Kant, by which I come to be conscious of myself through inner sense. I first argue against the standard reading of this notion — exemplified by Henry Allison's interpretation in *Kant's Transcendental Idealism*, but echoed in much of the secondary literature on the issue — on which the term 'self-affection' refers to an introspective act by which I attend to my mental representations through inner sense. I argue — through a close reading of the text and an analysis of Kant's broader commitments — that rather than requiring a special act of introspection, Kant's view is that the self affects itself in *every* instance of synthesis of the manifold of intuition. This counts as an affection of inner sense, I argue, because the manifold of intuition that is synthesized by the understanding is said by Kant to always be taken up through inner sense.

I suggest, then, that for Kant, a subject's transcendental character consists in her capacity for spontaneous synthesis; her empirical character consists in her capacity to be receptive to sensible objects. This explains why synthesis should count as *self*-affection: by synthesizing the sensible manifold, the subject affects the contents of her own mind and determines how she takes the world to be.

In the last section of the second chapter, I extend the defense of my view by considering three possible interpretations of the role of inner sense (and relatedly, of self-affection) discussed by Karl Ameriks in *Kant's Theory of Mind*. I claim that neither of the three options

Ameriks considers — including the one he ultimately settles for — is satisfactory. Though the version of the introspection view that Ameriks ends up defending is more sophisticated than Allison's, it still cannot account for Kant's claim that self-affection occurs in every act of synthesis.

The third chapter acts as a bridge between the second and the last two chapters of the dissertation. In it, I argue that the question of what empirical self-consciousness consists in is essentially connected to the question of how we are to understand Kant's notion of a 'subjective unity' of representations. While I later attempt to motivate this connection on philosophical grounds in chapter 4, my argument in chapter 3 proceeds on textual grounds: I call attention to the striking and hitherto overlooked similarities between Kant's discussion of empirical self-consciousness in the Paralogisms and his discussion of a 'subjective unity' of consciousness in §18 of the Deduction. Establishing the connection between empirical self-consciousness and consciousness of subjective unity extends my argument against the introspection view: instead of understanding the former to consist in consciousness of already synthesized *objective* representations, I conclude that it is properly understood as consciousness of *subjective* combinations of representations.

Of a piece with this, I argue that consciousness of the empirical self should be understood as what is expressed by a Kantian 'judgment of perception,' when the latter notion is properly understood. To flesh this out, I try to isolate the sense of the notion of a 'judgment of perception' that is relevant for my view by arguing against 1) the common claim that Kant no longer believes that judgments of perception are possible by the time he writes the B-Deduction; 2) Beatrice Longuenesse's suggestion in *Kant and the Capacity to Judge* that the difference between a judgment of perception and the contrasting notion of a judgment of experience is a difference that admits of degrees. I conclude that even if Kant wishes to reserve the term 'judgment' for objective judgments by the time he writes the B-deduction, there is no indication that he wants to rule out the possibility of making the kinds of claims about one's own perceptions that he calls judgments of perception in the *Prolegomena*. Moreover, the distinction between such judgments and objective judgments is a difference in kind: the former do not have the form of objective validity that is constitutive of the latter.

Having drawn the connection between empirical self-consciousness and consciousness of 'merely subjective' unity in the third chapter, I go

on in the third to determine how a representation, or set of representations, can fail to be objective and thus count as ‘merely subjective’ in the sense at issue. I begin by rejecting the view, defended most recently by Pierre Keller in *Kant and the Demands of Self-Consciousness*, that judgments count as ‘merely subjective’ when they express what is the case from the particular spatiotemporal point of view of the judging subject, rather than from any point of view. I argue that this proposal misunderstands Kant’s objective/subjective distinction, since ‘merely subjective’ judgments are not about the world at all, whereas judgments expressed from particular spatiotemporal locations surely are.

I then argue that for Kant a truly subjective judgment is one that expresses a connection between representations that is a result of imaginative associations that happen to hold for a particular subject, rather than a connection that is brought about by a universally valid act of judgement. Judgments that express associations are not about the world at all (unlike judgments expressed from a spatiotemporal point of view) but rather about the mental states a subject happens to be in because of her individual psychological circumstances. It is consciousness of such states that is the empirical self-consciousness we have been seeking an account of.

In the fifth and final chapter, I utilize the account of ‘merely subjective’ judgments that I have developed in chapter 4 to make fully determinate my claim that empirical self-consciousness is necessary for cognition. On my view, this amounts to the claim that the associative combinations of the imagination discussed in chapter 4 are a necessary component of objective cognition or synthesis, in virtue of the role they play in the acquisition of empirical concepts. I argue that current views of the relation between the imagination and the understanding in Kant’s account of cognition either over-intellectualize the former or under-intellectualize the latter. The former worry arises for accounts — such as the one defended by Michael Young in “Kant’s View of the Imagination” — that view the reproductive synthesis of the imagination as enabling a kind of awareness of objects, prior to the exercise of the understanding. The latter worry, on the other hand, arises for an account such as the one that Hannah Ginsborg defends in “Lawfulness Without a Law,” according to which concepts are formed when imaginative associations are judged to be ‘primitively normative’ rather than when they are subjected to the specific norms of the understanding.

I argue against the former kind of view that the mere exercise of the imagination can only result in awareness of associations; awareness of objects, on the other hand, requires the exercise of conceptual understanding. Against the latter view, I argue that the normative *form* of judgments in which empirical concepts are applied is not primitive but rather is derived from the categories, which serve as rules that specify how associative combinations can be converted into objectively valid or normative judgments. In this way, my account explains why a cognitive subject's empirical character is as necessary as her transcendental character: she must be receptive to sensible material, and naturally sensitive to relations of similarity and contiguity that hold across it, but she must also be able to actively apply the *a priori* rules of the understanding that enable conceptual judgments that are about the objective world and are valid for all subjects.

# Chapter 2

## Self-Affection and Self-Consciousness

### 2.1 Introduction

Kant's view of self-knowledge is commonly held to be one of the most difficult and obscure aspects of his account of the epistemic subject in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. Interpreters trying to spell out what knowledge of the self consists in for Kant are faced with a host of obstacles. A first interpretative problem arises because Kant makes mention of at least three 'selves' (or aspects of the self) at various stages in the *Critique* — the noumenal self, the empirical self and the transcendental self. Getting a grip on what these notions amount to is seriously hindered by the patchy and often seemingly inconsistent remarks that Kant offers on each. In addition, there is the problem of spelling out how Kant construes the relation amongst these three 'selves,' and how they are meant to be reconciled as aspects of one and the same subject, as he claims they ultimately must be.<sup>1</sup> Finally, there is the further question of which — if any — of these three notions tie into a more ordinary understanding of what self-knowledge might consist in.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>A350; B155.

<sup>2</sup>Some examples of questions related to these issues on which there is widespread disagreement in the secondary literature are 1) Is the noumenal self identical with the transcendental self? 2) Does Kant take empirical



Unlike some other instances of terminological confusion in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, resolving these questions about the self is essential to understanding the work as a whole. For, as is well known, the central argument of the Transcendental Deduction claims to establish the legitimacy of the pure concepts by identifying them as necessary conditions of a certain kind of *self-consciousness* that Kant claims is essentially involved in all experience.<sup>3</sup> Understanding what he takes this consciousness to consist in requires understanding what type of *self* it is meant to be consciousness of. And that would seem to require achieving at least some degree of clarity about the kinds of self-consciousness that are possible for Kant, in order to get clear on what is involved in his claim that at least one of those kinds is a necessary condition for experience.<sup>4</sup>

In this chapter, I want to mainly focus my attention on the notion of ‘self-affection’. Kant claims that just as I come to have intuitions of external objects in virtue of their acting on or affecting my *outer* sense, I come to have intuitions of my *self* in virtue of my *inner* sense being affected — by what has come to be known as ‘self-affection’.<sup>5</sup>

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consciousness of the self to be consciousness of the self as embodied? 3) Must empirical self-consciousness include consciousness of the body? I will not address these questions directly in this chapter, but I will return to some of them in later chapters.

<sup>3</sup>After making the claim that the ‘I think’ must be able to accompany all my representations, Kant says, “the manifold representations that are given in a certain intuition would not all together be my representations if they did not all together belong to a self-consciousness...” (B132)

<sup>4</sup>Interpreters usually detach the task of spelling out the argument of the Transcendental Deduction from that of understanding Kant’s views on self-knowledge, because the ‘I’ in the ‘I think’ in §16 of the Deduction is explicitly identified as the transcendental self, of which Kant thinks it is not possible for us to have any genuine knowledge. However, I think evaluating the truth of the claim that the ‘I think’ must be able to accompany all my representations requires understanding which aspects of the self this ‘I’ refers to, and which it doesn’t. Further, the success of the argument may depend on the transcendental self having an intelligible relation to a self of which I *can* have knowledge, so it can be said that the categories have been proved to be conditions on *my* thought, and not merely the thoughts had by an ‘I’ that is unknowable and apparently unrelated to any self that I can know. I will have more to say about this later.

<sup>5</sup>Kant himself does not use the term ‘self-affection’; but it is the term

The question that needs to be answered here is how self-affection is meant to be understood — that is, what the act by which inner sense is affected consists in.

In providing my own answers to this question, I want to argue against the predominant understanding of self-affection, articulated most explicitly by Henry Allison, but echoed in much of the secondary literature on the issue.<sup>6</sup> On Allison's reading, self-affection refers to an *introspective* act by which I reflect on the contents of my mind. I experience the empirical self, on his view, by *attending* to my representations as such, that is, in making my representations themselves the objects of my awareness.

An obvious virtue of Allison's account is that it makes sense of the seemingly obscure notion of self-affection by understanding it in terms of the more commonplace phenomenon of introspection. Nevertheless, I will argue that Allison's reading is mistaken. First, it fails to account for multiple passages in the text where Kant attributes features to self-affection that cannot easily be incorporated into the model of introspection. Second, I will argue that taking the only possible experience of the empirical self to consist in a second-order introspective act makes the problem of spelling out the relation between the empirical and the transcendental self far more intractable.

In section 2.2, I discuss the main features of Allison's view. In section 2.3, I will turn to the passages of text that I take to be incompatible with this view. In section 2.4, I attempt to do better justice to these passages by suggesting an alternative reading of the notion

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that has come to be used in the secondary literature for the act through which I intuit my self. The term is meant to capture the parallel between affection by external objects, and affection by my self.

<sup>6</sup>Henry Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism: An Interpretation and Defense* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2004), 275-285. Versions of this view can be found in Karl Ameriks, *Kant's Theory of Mind: An Analysis of the Paralogisms of Pure Reason* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 252-4; Andrew Brooke, *Kant and the Mind* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 55-7; Paul Guyer, *Kant and the Claims of Knowledge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 378-9; Peter Strawson, *Individuals* (London and New York: Routledge, 1959), 54; T.D. Weldon, *Kant's Critique of Pure Reason* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958), 262; Robert Paul Wolff, *Kant's Theory of Mental Activity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1963), 199.

of self-affection. I argue that rather than treating self-affection as a second-order act that need occur only occasionally and is inessential to the representation of objects, as Allison does, self-affection should be understood as occurring in *every* act of representation. Apart from better reflecting the letter of Kant's text, I will argue in section 2.5 that such a reading allows for a more satisfactory way of spelling out the relation between the empirical and the transcendental self. Finally in section 2.6, I consider Karl Ameriks' more sophisticated version of the introspection view of self-affection and argue that it ultimately does not fare better than Allison's; furthermore, the advantages Ameriks claims for his interpretation are shared by my view as well.

## 2.2 Allison on Inner Sense: Self-Affection through Introspection

In the Transcendental Aesthetic, Kant says that by means of inner sense “the mind intuits itself, or its inner state...”<sup>7</sup> Later, he adds, “If the faculty for becoming conscious of oneself is to seek out (apprehend) that which lies in the mind, it must affect the latter, and it can only produce an intuition of itself in such a way...”<sup>8</sup> These claims are made within the context of a broader discussion where Kant wants to emphasize that inner sense, through which the mind becomes aware of itself, should be treated in a way that is parallel to outer sense, through which the mind becomes aware of external objects. Kant's conclusion in the Aesthetic with regards to outer sense is that since it is necessarily constrained by the *a priori* form of space, we can only come to know external objects through it as they appear, not as they are in themselves. In a similar fashion, since he has argued that inner sense is constrained by the *a priori* form of time, he points out that we must reach a parallel conclusion about the self — since we come to know the self through inner sense, we can know the self only as it appears, and not as it is in itself.

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<sup>7</sup>A22/B37.

<sup>8</sup>B68. For the most part, Kant uses ‘mind’, ‘soul’ and ‘self’ interchangeably in his discussions of inner sense.

The first interpretative task, then, is to determine what phenomenon Kant is referring to when he says in the passages above that we come to be aware of the contents of the mind by *affecting* the mind and thereby producing an intuition of it that is given to inner sense. Allison suggests that the relevant phenomenon here is *introspection*, by which we direct our awareness to our representations themselves, rather than the objects they represent.<sup>9</sup> In so doing, he claims, we come to have the kind of awareness of our own mental states that for Kant constitutes experience of the mind or the empirical self. In Allison's words:

...inner experience involves a kind of reflective reappropriation of the contents of outer experience. Its content consists of the very representations through which we cognize external objects; but rather than cognizing objects *through* these representations by bringing them under the categories, it makes these representations themselves into (subjective) objects, which it cognizes as the contents of mental states.<sup>10</sup>

The only textual evidence for this reading that Allison points to is a footnote in §24 of the B-deduction, where Kant says the following while discussing self-affection:

I do not see how one can find so many difficulties in the fact that inner sense is affected by ourselves. Every act of attention can give us an example of this. In such acts the understanding always determines the inner sense, in accordance with the combination that it thinks, to the inner intuition that corresponds to the manifold in the synthesis of the understanding. How much the mind is commonly affected by this means, everyone will be able to perceive in himself.<sup>11</sup>

Allison takes Kant's mention of *attention* in this fairly dense passage to refer to the act of *attending through introspection* to one's represen-

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<sup>9</sup>Cf: "What the mind is aware of through inner sense, *or equivalently, introspection*, are just its own representations..." (Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism*, 277, my emphasis.)

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., 278-9.

<sup>11</sup>B156-7n.

tations.<sup>12</sup> And he claims that Kant “confuses matters” by suggesting that he is only offering attention as an *example* of the notion of self-affection. Rather, Allison insists, “it is clear that the real significance of attention is...that it indicates the specific kind of self-affection required for the institution of inner experience.”<sup>13</sup> In other words, Allison wants to argue that Kant’s claim that the mind can produce an intuition of itself by affecting itself is properly translated into the claim that the mind can become conscious of its states by attending to them as objects of introspective awareness.

An important feature of introspection that will be relevant to my discussion later — a feature that Allison emphasizes<sup>14</sup> — is that it is a *second-order* act that presupposes a temporally prior *first-order* act by which I represent the external world. Kant attributes that latter act to the ‘I’ of the ‘I think’ in §16 — which he there identifies as the transcendental self. It is the transcendental self, then, that carries out the ‘first-order’ activity of synthesis by which I come to have representations of external objects. On Allison’s view, awareness of the empirical self plays no role in this activity; I could represent external objects just as I do even if I were not capable of introspection.

Now, it is clear that Allison’s account has its virtues. First, as I said above, it makes intelligible the mysterious notion of self-affection by explaining it in terms of introspection — an act that we do seem to be capable of. Second, it may seem like the most natural way to read Kant’s descriptions of what is given to inner sense. For what else could an ‘intuition of the mind’s inner state’ amount to but introspective awareness of the contents of my mental state? I want to argue, however, that despite these advantages, this reading is incompatible with Kant’s broader picture of self-affection, as well as the relation that he takes to

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<sup>12</sup>Note that it is far from clear that Kant means to refer specifically to *introspective* attention in this footnote. He could just as well mean attention to the *objects* represented.

<sup>13</sup>Allison, *Kant’s Transcendental Idealism*, 284.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, 284: “The point is that in attending to its representations, the mind makes them into objects represented...As a second-order, reflective act, this presupposes a prior outer experience...Whereas the initial conceptualization is the act whereby the given representations are referred to an object, the second is the act whereby these representations themselves become objects.”

hold between the empirical and transcendental selves. I will now turn to the text to demonstrate this.

### 2.3 Textual Evidence Against the Introspection View

Kant discusses the self in most detail in the section entitled “The Paralogisms of Pure Reason”, and it is there that his conception of the relation between the empirical and transcendental self emerges most clearly. In the A-edition Paralogisms, for example, he says, “the determining Self (the thinking) is different from the determinable Self (the thinking subject) as cognition is different from its object.”<sup>15</sup> The first ‘self’ mentioned in this quote is clearly the transcendental self, which Kant here refers to by the activity it carries out — that is, the activity of thinking. As for the second ‘self’, Kant has previously identified “the thinking subject” with “the object of inner sense”<sup>16</sup> — that is, the empirical self as it is given to inner sense. So he can be read here as claiming that the difference between the transcendental self and the empirical self is that whereas the former is ‘determining,’ the latter is ‘determinable’.

The same characterization is repeated and further spelled out in the B-edition Paralogisms, where after claiming that consciousness of the activity of thinking alone does not “present myself as an object to be cognized,” Kant says:

It is not the consciousness of the determining self, but only that of the determinable self, i.e., of my inner intuition (insofar as its manifold can be combined in accord with the universal condition of the unity of apperception in thinking) that is the object.<sup>17</sup>

Again, in the same paragraph, Kant adds:

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<sup>15</sup>A402.

<sup>16</sup>Cf. A371: “the representation of my Self, as the *thinking subject*, is related merely to inner sense...” (my emphasis). See also A357.

<sup>17</sup>B407. Kant repeats this claim at various points in the Paralogisms, for example, at B420 and B429, as well as in the B-preface at Bxln.

I cognize myself not by being conscious of myself as thinking, but only if I am conscious to myself of the intuition of myself as determined in regard to the function of thought.<sup>18</sup>

Now, a lot more needs to be said to make Kant's meaning in these passages fully transparent. For now, however, I want to emphasize that the self that is presented to inner sense — that is, the empirical self — is repeatedly said by Kant to be *determinable*, in contrast with the transcendental self, to which Kant ascribes the *determining* activity of thinking.

I want to now read this vocabulary back into Kant's remarks on the self in the Transcendental Deduction. There, Kant says:

The *I think* expresses the act of determining my existence. The existence is thereby already given, but the way in which I am to determine it, i.e. the manifold that I am to posit in myself as belonging to it, is not yet thereby given. For that *self-intuition is required*...which is sensible and belongs to *the receptivity of the determinable*.<sup>19</sup>

Note first that, in this passage, the 'I think' — which can be attached to *all* thoughts that I am conscious of actively synthesizing — is also said here to express an act by which I determine *my* existence. Taking the cue from the Paralogisms, this suggests that it is consciousness of the act of *synthesis* by which I determine my thoughts that counts as consciousness of my 'determining' — or transcendental — self. And in being conscious of performing this act of synthesis, Kant indicates, I am also conscious of determining *myself*.

In addition, Kant makes a further point here. He adds that the determining synthesis performed by the transcendental self requires what he calls *self-intuition*; it is through the latter, he suggests, that I receive the manifold that I am to synthesize. Such self-intuition, he continues, is "sensible" and "belongs to the receptivity of the determinable." Now we know, once again, from our discussion of the Paralogisms that it is

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<sup>18</sup>B406.

<sup>19</sup>B157n., my emphasis.

the *empirical* self that Kant characterizes as ‘determinable’. The passage from the Deduction informs us, then, that having a ‘self-intuition’ is having an intuition of the empirical self, and that this amounts to being presented with the sensible manifold that is to be synthesized. If that is the case, however, then self-intuition must be necessary for *every* act of synthesis, since every synthesis requires that a manifold be taken up for synthesis.

Now, one may object at this point that the passage from the Deduction only contains the claim that self-intuition is required to determine *my* existence, not that it is required to synthesize representations in general (including representations of external objects). If Kant’s claim is meant to be restricted in this way, it could be interpreted as merely applying a familiar Kantian principle to the self — just as cognition of external objects requires intuition, cognition of the self requires an intuition of the self. But note that the claim in the first line is *not* restricted to cases where the ‘I think’ is attached to cognitions of the self. Rather, Kant says that the ‘I think’ *as such* determines my existence.<sup>20</sup> The ‘I think’ has been previously said to express the act by which I come to have representations of objects. The claim here, then, must be that this very act also determines my existence, and that it requires self-intuition.

To recapitulate, I want to argue that Kant should be read as claiming that:

**A1.** In representing external objects, I also determine *my* existence;

**A2.** Self-intuition is required for *all* representation, including the representation of external objects.

Of course, there are plenty of details to be worked out here. In

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<sup>20</sup>This is repeated in different words in the Reflexion “Is it an Experience that we Think?” There, Kant says, “The consciousness *when I institute an experience* is the representation of *my existence* insofar as it is empirically determined...(my emphasis)” Note that Kant again speaks of instituting experience *as such*, rather than restricting his claim to experiences of the self. (R5661, 18:318-319, translated in *Notes and Fragments*, 289.)



particular, I have not said enough to make Kant's characterization of the empirical self as 'determinable' fully intelligible. But what I hope is already clear from these remarks is that Kant's description of the relation between the activity carried out by the transcendental self and self-intuition does not fit easily into the model of introspection offered by Allison's interpretation. Recall that on Allison's view, self-intuition is the result of an act of introspection: I intuit my empirical self, according to him, by introspecting my representations. And introspection, as I said before, is a second-order act that presupposes that a first-order act of synthesizing representations has already been carried out. On Allison's view, then:

**B1.** The (first-order) activity of synthesis undertaken by the transcendental self *only* determines representations of external objects. My own existence is determined just on those occasions when I introspect my representations.<sup>21</sup>

**B2.** Self-intuition could not be involved in representing external objects (since my already being in possession of such representations is necessary for the act of introspection that produces intuitions of the self).

Both these claims conflict with my analysis of the text above.

The same tension can be brought out in terms of *self-affection*; indeed, it is our understanding of this notion that I take to be the most significant difference between Allison's view and my own. In §24, Kant says, "The understanding therefore does not find some sort of combination of the manifold already in inner sense, but *produces* it, by *affecting* inner sense."<sup>22</sup> Note that, in this passage, the understanding (the faculty of thinking) is said to *affect* inner sense when it *produces combination* (that is, when it synthesizes representations). Similarly,

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<sup>21</sup>Allison's commitment to this latter claim is made especially clear in his fuller discussion of introspective attention in the 1st edition of *Kant's Transcendental Idealism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), for example at 272: "...consciousness of this succession [of representations] requires a reflective act (attention), whereby these representations are made into "subjective objects" and, as it were, "injected" into the phenomenal world."

<sup>22</sup>B155, Kant's emphases.

in the Transcendental Aesthetic, Kant claims that “the mind is *affected* by its own activity, namely [by] this *positing of its representation...*”<sup>23</sup> Once again, it is by *positing* (that is, synthesizing) representations that the mind is said to affect itself. But this is incompatible with Allison’s reading of self-affection, on which the mind affects itself only by introspecting representations that have *previously* been synthesized or combined.

I think the force of this textual evidence is sufficient to call for an alternative reading of the notion of self-affection. In the next section, I will attempt to sketch an account that better reflects the features I have drawn attention to. In section 2.5, I will argue that this account allows for an understanding of the empirical self that has systematic advantages over Allison’s.

## 2.4 Self-affection through Synthesis

As I have already suggested above, I believe that the act by which we affect ourselves for Kant just is the act of synthesizing the manifold. Kant understands synthesis as an activity by which we determine the manifold given to intuition in accordance with the categories. Even if the manifold is given to us through external objects affecting outer sense, it is ‘contained in’ our minds, so to speak, and is therefore always accessed through inner sense. Kant makes this clear in his discussion in the A-deduction of the synthesis of apprehension, by which the manifold is prepared for synthesis in accordance with concepts:

Wherever our representations may arise, whether through the influence of external things or as the effect of inner causes, whether they have originated *a priori* or empirically as appearances — *as modifications of the mind they nevertheless belong to inner sense*, and as such all of our cognitions are in the end subjected to the formal condition of inner sense, namely time, as that in which they must all be ordered, connected and brought into relations.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>B67-68, my emphases.

<sup>24</sup>A98-99, my emphasis.

When Kant talks of the understanding determining inner sense, then, I think he can straightforwardly be understood to mean that in synthesizing representations, the understanding gives determinate form to (i.e. conceptualizes) the manifold that is accessed through inner sense.<sup>25</sup>

This can now be tied to Kant’s characterizations of the transcendental and empirical self in the Paralogisms. Since the synthesizing activity of the understanding is carried out by the transcendental self, it is clear why Kant would call this self the ‘determining’ self: it is the self that carries out the activity of determining the manifold. And since the empirical self is tied to inner sense, we can now begin to understand why Kant refers to it as the ‘determinable’ self: the manifold that is ‘contained in’ inner sense is such that it can be taken up by the determining act of synthesis.

This interpretation matches Kant’s description of the empirical self that I first cited in section 2.3. I want to reproduce it here, since we are now in a better position to understand it. Kant says that consciousness of “the determinable self” is consciousness “of my inner intuition (insofar as its manifold can be combined in accord with the universal condition of the unity of apperception in thinking).”<sup>26</sup> This lines up with my proposal: the self associated with inner sense is said to be ‘determinable’ in virtue of the fact that the manifold of inner sense can be synthesized in accordance with the conditions of thought (i.e., the categories).

If every act of synthesizing representations determines inner sense, it is clear why Kant should be committed to the claim A1 — which I called attention to in criticizing Allison’s view above — the claim that *every* act of representation determines my own existence. What I take Kant to mean by this is that every act of synthesis determines *how* I exist; more specifically, every such act results in the determinate

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<sup>25</sup>See Kant’s handwritten note in his copy of the first edition, included in the Guyer-Wood translation of the Schematism chapter: “The synthesis of the understanding is called thus if it determines the inner sense in accordance with the unity of apperception.” (A137/B176, translator’s note b)

<sup>26</sup>B407. Note that ‘combined’ is equivalent to ‘synthesized’, and the ‘universal condition on thinking’ is the synthetic unity of apperception, achieved by the application of the categories. I will have much more to say about what consciousness of the empirical self amounts to in later chapters.

representations that make up the contents of my mind.

The account also allows a satisfactory explanation of claim A2 — the claim that self-intuition is required for every act of synthesis of representations. This claim can be read as saying simply that every act of synthesis requires a manifold of intuition to be taken up through inner sense.<sup>27</sup>

Now, Kant’s talk of the understanding determining inner sense has not gone unnoticed in the secondary literature. Usually, however, it is taken to refer to the transcendental synthesis of the imagination, through which the conditions of the understanding determine the *form* of inner sense — that is, time. Part of Kant’s argument in the Transcendental Deduction is that the *a priori* intuitions of space and time are themselves generated by a pure synthesis that takes place in accordance with the categories. And since time is the *a priori* form of inner sense, the understanding determines inner sense by determining the temporal character of the relations that hold among its representations.

However, it is clear that this *a priori* determination of inner sense cannot give content to the determining activity that Kant discusses in connection with self-consciousness in the passages we looked at from the Paralogisms. For we almost certainly cannot be said to be conscious of the transcendental synthesis of the imagination by which space and time are generated, and the prospects for understanding consciousness of the *self* in terms of it seem hopeless.

On my view, the determination of inner sense by understanding is not limited to the *a priori* constitution of its form. Allison himself notices that the transcendental synthesis of the imagination is characterized by Kant as the “first application” of the understanding to sensibility, and “at the same time the ground of all others.”<sup>28</sup> However, as we have seen, these ‘other applications’ for Allison consist in acts of introspection that are particular to inner experience.<sup>29</sup> I have argued

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<sup>27</sup>It may sound like I am proposing a view of synthesis on which in addition to intuiting external objects, I need a further ‘self-intuition’ of the contents of my mind. That is not the right picture, however — rather, in taking up intuitions of external objects for synthesis, I just am taking up intuitions ‘contained in’ my mind, i.e., self-intuitions. Why these should be called ‘self-intuitions’ will become clearer in later chapters.

<sup>28</sup>B152.

<sup>29</sup>Allison, *Kant’s Transcendental Idealism*, 284.

here that they should instead be seen as consisting in the acts of synthesis that are required for *all* experience. In this way, as I have tried to show, Kant can be read as referring to the *same* determining activity in both the Deduction and the Paralogisms, and the account of self-consciousness sketched in the latter section can be fruitfully developed on the basis of his comments in the former.

Another advantage of my reading is that it allows us to tie the claim that there are two selves, or two aspects of the self — the transcendental and the empirical — to the familiar Kantian dictum that as a discursive subject, I am necessarily both spontaneous and receptive. The transcendental self is that aspect of my self that is capable of spontaneous synthesis; the empirical self, on the other hand, can be seen as the aspect of my self through which my mind is receptive — that is, capable of being modified by the effects of objects acting upon me. Kant's claim that I affect myself, on my view, is no more or less obscure than his broader conclusion in the Critique that *qua* spontaneous, I determine representations by conceptualizing the manifold of intuition given to me *qua* receptive. It is this connection between the aspects of the self and the dual sources of cognition that I take Kant to be expressing when he says in the Paralogisms:

But the proposition 'I think,' insofar as it says as much as that *I exist thinking*, is not a merely logical function, but rather determines the subject (which is then at the same time an object) in regard to existence, and this cannot take place without inner sense...Thus in this proposition there is already no longer merely spontaneity of thinking, but also receptivity of intuition, i.e. the capacity for thinking that belongs to my self applied to the empirical intuition of the very same subject.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>30</sup>B429-430, Kant's emphasis. I have made some modifications to the Guyer-Wood translation of this passage. In the first sentence, Guyer and Wood translate the German "*so fern er so viel sagt*" as "insofar as it says only," which is misleading, because 'I exist thinking' says *more* than the merely logical statement of the 'I think'. The better translation, I believe, is "insofar as it says as much as" (or alternatively, as Kemp Smith translates it, "insofar as it *amounts* to."). Additionally, in the last sentence, the translators' phrase "the thinking of my self" is ambiguous between "the thought of

An important issue I have not addressed here is what it takes to be conscious of the empirical self. For if empirical self-consciousness is simply consciousness of the sensible manifold, why should it be thought of as a kind of *self*-consciousness, rather than consciousness of the (primarily external) objects that generate the manifold? The next two chapters of this dissertation are devoted to answering this question — that is, to spelling out what I take to be the crucial distinction between consciousness of external objects and consciousness of my empirical self.

For now, I want to turn in section 2.5 to a discussion of a broader problem for Allison’s view and suggest that my reading (when fully developed) will be able to avoid this problem.

## 2.5 Another Problem for the Introspection View

I said earlier that I thought Allison’s view commits him to an account of the relation between the empirical and transcendental selves that is less than satisfactory, given Kant’s broader commitments in the *Critique*. I now want to discuss why I take this to be the case.

A first way to bring out the worry is as follows. On Allison’s view, Kant’s claim that we have an inner sense is equivalent to the claim that we are capable of introspection. But as I emphasized above, introspection plays no role in the cognition of objects. This implies that for Allison, I could represent objects just as I do even if I had no inner sense. When Kant claims that I do have an inner sense, then, Allison cannot take him to be identifying a faculty that is *necessary* for discursive cognition; instead, he must interpret this claim as reporting a merely contingent fact about me — that is, that I happen to be capable of introspection.

I think this is a problematic implication of the introspection view of inner sense, because it is undeniable that Kant takes inner sense to be a *necessary* component of discursive cognition. Far from treating inner sense as inessential to representation, he asserts that “there is only one totality in which all of our representations are contained, namely inner

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my self” and “the capacity for thinking that belongs to my self”. According to me, the German “*das Denken meiner selbst*” is better translated as the latter (and this fits the reading I am defending here).

sense and its *a priori* form, time.”<sup>31</sup> And as the passages I have cited above demonstrate, he is committed to the claim that specifically *inner* intuition is required for *every* act of synthesizing representations.

Relatedly, on Allison’s view, it is only a contingent fact about me as a discursive cognizer that I am capable of self-knowledge; in other words, I could have cognition of objects just as I do even if I were not capable of empirical self-consciousness. Again, I think this is a conclusion that ought to be avoided — and not merely on textual grounds. In the Transcendental Deduction, Kant is concerned with arguing that the categories are *a priori* conditions on cognition, which is to say that they are conditions on the synthetic act required for cognition of objects. That act is attributed by Kant to the ‘I’ of the ‘I think,’ or the transcendental self. However, the transcendental self is not an aspect of my self of which I can have genuine knowledge. Kant argues that the transcendental self is the self considered as the necessary *subject* of cognitions of objects, and thus, it cannot itself be an object that is cognized.<sup>32</sup> Considered by itself, he says, it is merely the *logical* correlate

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<sup>31</sup>B194/A155. Now, Allison might respond here that Kant’s usage of the term ‘inner sense’ is ambiguous between two meanings. He may argue that when Kant claims that our representations are ‘contained in inner sense’, he means merely that they are contained in our minds. To say that inner sense is necessary, on this first meaning, is just to say that having a mind is necessary for being a discursive cognizer. However, he may continue, there is a second meaning of the term ‘inner sense,’ which Kant employs when he wants to emphasize that it is a *sense*, that is, when he wants to pick out the mind’s capacity to be receptive to specifically inner intuitions: this, for Allison, is its capacity for introspection. As such, it would only be an implication of Allison’s view that having this *further* capacity is not necessary for cognition of objects, that is, that inner sense in its second meaning is not necessary for cognition. But this would not be incompatible with the passage I cite here, where Allison could claim that inner sense is used in its first meaning.

I do not think that this response is ultimately satisfactory, for I do not think that we can isolate a meaning of inner sense for Kant that does not involve the claim that it is a *sense*. It is only because the manifold is taken up for synthesis in the first place through a sense that Kant argues that it is necessarily subject to a pure form of sensibility, that is, time. As such, I think the claim in this passage that all representations are contained in inner sense is of a piece with the claim that inner intuition is necessary for cognition.

<sup>32</sup>Cf. A 402: “Now it is indeed very illuminating that I cannot cognize as an object itself that which I must presuppose in order to cognize an object

of thoughts and is empty of cognitive content. As I have said above, the only self of which I can have knowledge, according to Kant, is the *empirical* self.

Applying this to Allison's view, it turns out that the activity Kant spends the better part of the Critique identifying necessary conditions for is carried out by a self that, besides being unknowable, is at best only indirectly related to any self of which I can have knowledge. The transcendental self is 'empty', presumably outside of space and time (since it generates them through the transcendental synthesis of the imagination), and yet is wholly responsible for the activity that is central to the cognition of objects. As for the empirical self, it only comes on the scene, so to speak, on the occasions when I happen to introspect the contents of my mind, but yet it is the only self of which I can have knowledge.

I think this picture seriously undermines the interest, and perhaps even the success of the argument of the Transcendental Deduction. For surely, Kant's purposes in the Deduction are only fully achieved if he can establish that the categories are conditions on *my* cognitive activity — which seems to require, at the very least, that they are conditions on the activity of an aspect of my self that I can know to be directly related to the self of which I can be conscious. And it is not clear how Allison's view can allow for this.<sup>33</sup>

Now, Allison indicates that he takes such concerns to be a weakness of Kant's own view of the self, and he is not alone in thinking that the problems that arise as a result of the proliferation of selves in the *Critique* are unavoidable and irreconcilable.<sup>34</sup> What I have tried to

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at all; and that the determining Self (the thinking) is different from the determinable self (the thinking subject) as cognition is different from its object.”

<sup>33</sup>This is a version of a worry that I will return to in chapter 4 — that the categories must express conditions on a subject that can at least indirectly be said to be located within the spatiotemporal causal order of the world. See pp. 65- 66.

<sup>34</sup>For example, in *The Bounds of Sense*, Strawson complains that “in the dictum regarding knowledge of oneself (empirical self-consciousness) the identity which has to be explained — the identity of the empirically self-conscious subject and the real or supersensible subject — is simply assumed without being made a whit more intelligible.” A few lines later, he objects that in Kant's talk of the self appearing to itself, “the limits of intelligibility



sketch here is the beginnings of a position on which the empirical self plays a direct role in cognition. Part of what remains to be spelled out is what consciousness, and ultimately, knowledge of the empirical self consists in on this alternative position, and that is the question I will turn to in the next two chapters.

Before I do so, however, I want to consider a different version of the introspection view of inner sense, spelled out by Karl Ameriks in his book *Kant's Theory of Mind*. I will argue that, despite being more sophisticated, Ameriks' account of inner sense is subject to the same kind of worries that I have identified for Allison's view.

## 2.6 Ameriks' 'Weak Reflection Theory' of Inner Sense

In his discussion of inner sense in *Kant's Theory of Mind*, Ameriks endorses what he calls a "weak reflection theory" of inner sense.<sup>35</sup> This theory is a more cautious version of Allison's account, but shares with it the core commitment that I have been arguing against in this chapter — the claim that the act through which inner sense is affected is introspective reflection.

Before stating his own interpretation, Ameriks distinguishes three possible ways in which Kant's notion of inner sense can be understood and remarks that these alternatives "have never been systematically compared," although as he notes, "the importance of determining exactly what Kant meant by 'inner sense' is surely obvious for any attempt to understand and evaluate Kant's mature theory of self-knowledge."<sup>36</sup> In this section, I will consider the three possible interpretations suggested by Ameriks, before discussing his own view of inner sense and self-affection. I will conclude that the view I have proposed in this chapter shares the advantages that Ameriks sees for his own view and is not susceptible to the worries I raise for it.

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are...traversed." ([London and New York: Routledge, 1966], 248-9)

<sup>35</sup>Ameriks, *Kant's Theory of Mind*, "Three Theories of Inner Sense," 241-55.

<sup>36</sup>*Ibid.*, 243.

### 2.6.1 The Independent Stream Theory

The first alternative interpretation suggested by Ameriks is the ‘independent stream’ theory of inner sense. According to this theory, consciousness through inner sense is exclusively consciousness of items that are *non-spatial*. As such, outer sense and inner sense are thought to provide material for two ‘independent streams’ of consciousness respectively: the former exclusively spatial and the latter exclusively non-spatial.

On this reading, according to Ameriks, consciousness through inner sense would include reflective consciousness of one’s mental states, “consciousness of abstract items,”<sup>37</sup> as well as consciousness of ‘inner’ feelings, desires etc. Ameriks notes that support for such a reading comes primarily from Kant’s pre-critical remarks — for example, his claims that 1) spiritual beings would exist only with an inner sense; and 2) if we had direct consciousness of God or of spiritual beings, it would be through inner sense.<sup>38</sup> The point, presumably, is that Kant should be seen as invoking inner sense in these contexts because 1) spiritual beings would not be located in space and hence lack spatial consciousness; and 2) consciousness *of* spiritual beings, if it were possible, would be consciousness of entities that do not bear spatial properties or relations. This would then suggest that what distinguishes consciousness through inner sense for Kant is the non-spatiality of its objects.

Now, there is evidence even in the *Critique* that Kant attributes non-spatial consciousness to inner sense.<sup>39</sup> In a passage from the Paralogisms, for example, Kant says that thinking beings cannot be objects of outer sense, and explains this by noting that “we cannot intuit their thoughts, their consciousness, their desires, etc. externally; for all this belongs before inner sense.”<sup>40</sup> A few lines later he adds that outer sense cannot transmit to us “thoughts, feelings, inclinations or decisions,” for

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<sup>37</sup>Ibid., 249.

<sup>38</sup>Ameriks cites 28:276-7 and 28:112-3 in this regard. (Ibid., 249)

<sup>39</sup>Commentators like Allison and Wolff thus overstate the issue, I think, when they claim that inner sense has no manifold of its own and that it is exclusively representations of the spatial manifold given to outer sense that can be reflected on through inner sense. (Allison, *Kant’s Transcendental Idealism*, 265-6; Wolff, *Kant’s Theory of Mental Activity*, 193)

<sup>40</sup>A357.

“we receive no intuition of representations, volitions, etc. in the way we are affected through outer sense, but rather receive merely intuitions of space and its determinations.”<sup>41</sup> The implication here is that we are conscious of such non-spatial items through *inner sense* instead.

Of course, it does not follow from the fact that Kant attributes non-spatial consciousness to inner sense that *only* representations that do not have spatial content belong to inner sense. In fact, as I have emphasized above, Kant explicitly states that *all* representations, “wherever [they] may arise...nevertheless belong to inner sense”.<sup>42</sup> The ‘independent stream’ view of inner sense is in direct conflict with this claim.<sup>43</sup>

Ameriks’ main criticism of the independent stream theory is that it “reveals no positive common bond characterizing the inner as such.”<sup>44</sup> As a result, he contends, it cannot clearly explain why inner sense is tied to *self*-consciousness by Kant. While I agree that such an explanation is needed, I do not think that the independent stream theory in principle fares worse in this regard than the interpretation that Ameriks himself endorses, as I will discuss below. For as seen above, Kant does indeed attribute consciousness of fairly disparate items such as inclinations and decisions to inner sense, and the independent stream theory should be seen as merely following him in this respect. Where it goes wrong, in my view, is in its restriction of inner sense to such non-spatial objects alone.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>41</sup>A358.

<sup>42</sup>A98/99.

<sup>43</sup>Perhaps the independent stream theory only intends to claim that inner sense does not afford us *direct* consciousness of spatial items. That is, the theory could allow that through inner sense, we can become conscious of representations of outer sense *qua* representations. These representations are not themselves spatial items, though they represent spatial properties and relations. If this is what is intended by the independent stream theory, however, I think it collapses into what Ameriks calls the “Reflection Theory” and is subject to the same criticisms that I will raise for that interpretation.

<sup>44</sup>Ameriks, *Kant’s Theory of Mind*, 249.

<sup>45</sup>Ameriks notes this worry as well when summarizing the problems for the theories he rejects. The independent stream theory, he says, “can in no way do justice to Kant’s doctrine that all representations belong to inner sense.” (Ibid., 250)

## 2.6.2 The Act Theory

The other interpretation that Ameriks rejects is the ‘Act Theory’ of inner sense. According to the Act Theory, in Ameriks’ words, “something is said to belong to inner sense whenever it is spoken of as a representing as opposed to a represented. Inner sense is thus conceived of not as a separate set of occurrences of consciousness but as a constant aspect of it.”<sup>46</sup> On this view, then, when Kant talks about a representation’s belonging to inner sense, he means to identify the cognitive act of *representing* by which one becomes conscious of it. Here, the ‘inner’ aspect of inner sense is not thought of as characterizing what it gives us consciousness *of*. Rather, “a representation’s being inner has to do simply with its (possibly) belonging to someone’s psychic history or stream of consciousness.”<sup>47</sup> Having an outer sense is having the capacity to be affected by outer objects; having an inner sense, in contrast, is having the capacity to *represent* objects.

Ameriks sees a number of advantages of having such an account of inner sense. First, it avoids the problem discussed above for the independent stream theory, since it can clearly account for Kant’s claim that all representations belong to inner sense (*qua* representings). Second, Ameriks claims that the act theory can give a unified explanation of the connection between inner sense and self-consciousness in a way that the independent stream theory could not. In his words:

On the act theory all that is ascribed to inner sense has a relation to self-consciousness in that it is always the case that, no matter what the content of one’s representings, these representings, *qua* representing, do belong to one’s self. Inner sense can be said to involve self-consciousness without its necessarily involving awareness of a self as a distinct item.<sup>48</sup>

The point here, I take it, is that since representing necessarily involves being conscious of representations, any representing must in fact

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<sup>46</sup>Ibid., 250.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., 251.

‘belong to’ a consciousness — that is, a self. This explicit relation to consciousness, according to Ameriks, would explain Kant’s insistence on the tie between inner sense and self-consciousness.<sup>49</sup>

The problem for the Act Theory, as I see it, is quite straightforward. For Kant, inner sense is a *sense* and in this respect, it is *passive* rather than active. *Acts* of representing, then, are not properly attributed to inner sense; but rather to the understanding.<sup>50</sup> In contrast, inner sense must be parallel to outer sense in consisting of a capacity to be passively affected. The question that I have been discussing in this chapter, and that the Act Theory cannot satisfactorily address, is what it is a capacity to be affected *by*.

Ameriks alludes to the above difficulty as well in his discussion. He says that the act theory “does not explain...Kant’s frequent mature remarks about inner sense being what is disclosed upon reflective affection of the mind.”<sup>51</sup> He concludes that this is a point in favor of his own ‘Reflection Theory’ of inner sense. Accordingly, it is to that interpretation that I now turn.

### 2.6.3 Reflection Theories of Inner Sense

Ameriks distinguishes two possible versions of the Reflection View of inner sense: the ‘extreme reflection theory,’ and the ‘weak reflection theory’ that he himself endorses. The former, which Ameriks notes is “supported by probably most interpreters,”<sup>52</sup> is first described by him as committed to the claim that “inner sense consists in nothing other than reflections on our past acts of consciousness...”<sup>53</sup> He then goes on to suggest a modification which equates inner sense, not with the *acts* of such introspective reflection themselves, but rather with “what is

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<sup>49</sup>Though this does not yet explain exactly what one is conscious *of* through inner sense. Kant’s claim that we can have substantive knowledge of the empirical self through inner sense is not adequately explained by the act theorist’s insistence that all representations in fact belong to inner sense *qua* representings.

<sup>50</sup>In his remarks on inner sense, Kant associates it with intuitions “which, as representation[s]...precede any act of thinking”. (B67)

<sup>51</sup>Ameriks, *Kant’s Theory of Mind*, 251-252.

<sup>52</sup>*Ibid.*, 243. Ameriks cites Kemp Smith, Weldon, and Paton in this regard.

<sup>53</sup>*Ibid.*, 243.

directly revealed when reflection is carried out.”<sup>54</sup> Understanding inner sense in this way, he claims, respects Kant’s distinction between inner sense and apperception; the former provides the material for reflective self-consciousness and the latter actively reflects on or judges the self.<sup>55</sup>

With the latter modification in place, the Extreme Reflection Theory echoes Allison’s view of inner sense. Ameriks’ main criticism of this version of the theory identifies a worry that I have already discussed at length — the worry that construing inner sense in this way makes it inessential to the representation of objects. In Ameriks’ words, this version of the Extreme Reflection Theory entails that “man has an inner sense only when he reflects upon himself.” As he says, however, “this is in tension with Kant’s basic doctrine that all representations belong to inner sense.”<sup>56</sup>

In order to account for this claim, Ameriks finally suggests the version of the Reflection view that he himself endorses. On this view, which he calls the Weak Reflection Theory, inner sense is identified “not with only what is actually reflected on but instead with whatever can be (directly) reflected upon...”<sup>57</sup> Since all representations *can* be reflected upon, this is compatible with Kant’s claim that all representations belong to inner sense.

However, this modification<sup>58</sup> does not yet do justice to claim A2<sup>59</sup> that I highlighted in criticizing Allison’s version of what Ameriks has been calling the Reflection theory. I have argued that there is textual evidence that ‘inner’ intuition is a necessary component of *all* representation, and that Kant’s claim that all representations belong to inner sense must be understood as meaning that all intuitions are taken up for synthesis through inner sense. In other words, I think a stronger reading of the role of inner sense is the demanded by the text, one which Ameriks’ interpretation cannot do justice to. On the view that I have defended here, Kant should be seen as arguing that it is through inner

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<sup>54</sup>Ibid., 248.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid., 247. Ameriks cites B154 in this regard.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid., 248.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., 248.

<sup>58</sup>I discuss such a modification on Allison’s behalf at 22n31

<sup>59</sup>The claim, as on page 15, that self-intuition is required for *all* representation, including the representation of external objects.

sense that the manifold is taken up for synthesis by the understanding, and it is in this way that inner sense is a constant and necessary aspect of representation. Even though all representations can be said to *belong* to inner sense on Ameriks' view (by virtue of being possible objects of reflection), he cannot make sense of the role that I think Kant indicates inner sense must play in all cognition.

This criticism can be brought out in a different way. Ameriks' definition of inner sense as consisting of whatever can be reflected upon is connected to his understanding of self-affection as consisting in acts of reflection.<sup>60</sup> According to him, it is "reflection [that] provokes one of our

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<sup>60</sup>Strictly speaking, Ameriks claims self-affection consists in a "complex of activities." The first, which Ameriks takes to be central, is "reflective affection" which "generates (or spotlights) an intuition (of the self's state)" but "does not thereby synthesize [it] to bring [it] under a concept." (Ibid., p. 254) The second aspect of self-affection for Ameriks is "apperceptive affection," which he describes as the power of determining one's thoughts. While the latter activity may seem to correspond to my reading of self-affection, what little Ameriks says about it makes it relatively clear that he only means to pick out acts in which I determine or make judgments about what is given to me through reflective affection — that is, about my representations *qua* representations. This for him is a "special act of synthesis" by which we come to know ourselves, which is presumably to be distinguished from the syntheses by which we come to know objects.

Ameriks' distinction between these two types of affection seems to be motivated by his desire to allow that we can come to be conscious of states of the self that cannot be synthesized. At 245 he says, "surely there could be a consciousness of self which precisely by being immediate would not be cognitive (e.g. religious feeling), and so it would yield no knowledge in conflict with the doctrine of transcendental idealism." However, there is very little evidence that Kant wants to allow for such 'immediate consciousness' of the self. It is not clear to me what such non-conceptual 'spotlighting' amounts to and I do not think it is necessary to account for the possibility of becoming conscious of feelings, desires and the like through inner sense. That is, I think one can allow (as in the discussion of the Independent Stream theory above) that some inner intuitions do not arise as a result of affection by outer objects, without claiming that we can only be conscious of them as unsynthesized. I do not think Kant means to disallow that we can come to have knowledge of our desires or feelings when he says that the representations of outer sense make up the "proper material" of what we can come to know through inner sense (B67). Rather, I take this claim to mean merely judgments (of perception) about the latter form the bulk of self-knowledge. I will have more to say about this in chapter 3.

representings into consciousness so that we become self-conscious...” Thus, on his view, we have the “power of directing oneself to one’s thoughts” and when we so direct our attention, “the mind...suffers the activity of affection of reflection.”<sup>61</sup> As such, while Ameriks can account for Kant’s claim that all representations belong to inner sense to his satisfaction, his view is on the same footing as Allison’s when it comes to self-affection. The latter still occurs only accidentally on his picture, on those occasions when something or other ‘provokes’ consciousness of representations *qua* representations. However, as I argued above, Kant’s emphasis on the role of inner sense in cognition is of a piece with his claim that self-affection is involved in *every* act of representation. Inner sense is said to be affected when the understanding *produces* combination,<sup>62</sup> and this act is explicitly tied to the possibility of self-knowledge when Kant says that the act of determination expressed by the ‘I think’ also determines *my* existence.<sup>63</sup> Ameriks’ ‘Weak Reflection Theory’ does no better than the other versions he rejects in making sense of these claims about self-affection.

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<sup>61</sup>Ameriks, *Kant’s Theory of Mind*, 254.

<sup>62</sup>B155.

<sup>63</sup>B157n.



## Chapter 3

# Empirical Self-Consciousness and Subjectivity

### 3.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I argued that self-affection should be understood as occurring in every instance of synthesis of the manifold of intuition by the understanding. In claiming this, I disagreed with the standard view on which self-affection is taken to be an independent act of introspectively attending to already synthesized representations.

After discussing the textual evidence that I believe supports my interpretation, I argued that it was appropriate to describe synthesis as an act by which the *self* is affected, in virtue of the fact that it is an act by which the subject *qua* spontaneous — that is, through the exercise of her understanding — affects herself *qua* receptive — that is, synthesizes the manifold of intuition that constitutes the contents of her inner sense. Kant's well-known claim that a discursive subject must have both a spontaneous and a receptive capacity, then, turns out to be equivalent to the claim that such a subject must have both a transcendental and an empirical character.

Furthermore, I concluded in chapter 2 that consciousness of the transcendental self — or of one's transcendental character — amounts to consciousness of the act by which one synthesizes representations. It makes sense to think of this as a form of *self*-consciousness because in being aware of performing the act of synthesis, I come to be aware of

what I judge to be the case.<sup>1</sup>

The important question I did not address in the previous chapter is what the parallel notion of *empirical* self-consciousness is meant to consist in. This is the question I want to begin to address in this chapter: what can I be said to be conscious of, on the account I am proposing, in empirical self-consciousness? What could it mean, in other words, to be conscious of the self *qua* receptive?

In section 3.2, I will suggest that the answer to the question of empirical self-consciousness is to be found in Kant's discussion of the notion of a 'subjective unity of consciousness'. If I am right, empirical self-consciousness will turn out to consist in consciousness of those connections between representations that are 'merely subjective,' rather than objective. After presenting the textual evidence that supports my reading, I will discuss an important advantage it has over the introspection view. Next, in section 3.3, I will turn my attention to what Kant calls a 'judgment of perception' — a judgment that, according to him, expresses the kind of subjective connections between one's representations that I discuss in section 3.2. I will argue against two common misconceptions regarding such judgments, thus extracting an understanding of Kant's notion of a judgment of perception that will be useful for my argument in later chapters.

### 3.2 Empirical Self-Consciousness and Subjective Unity

In chapter 2, I called attention to Kant's characterization of the empirical self as 'determinable' with respect to the 'determining' activity of thinking. In the relevant passage from the B-Paralogisms, Kant says that the self is presented "as an object to be cognized" not through

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<sup>1</sup>In this way, Kant's understanding of transcendental self-consciousness lines up with contemporary discussions of what is called the *transparency* of belief, which note that in order to determine what I believe (a fact about myself), I need only determine what is the case in the world, rather than turn my attention to myself; facts about one's beliefs, then, are 'transparent' to the world.

“consciousness of the *determining* self, but only [through consciousness] of the *determinable* self, i.e., of my inner intuition (insofar as its manifold can be combined in accord with the universal condition of the unity of apperception in thinking)...”<sup>2</sup> Kant’s parenthetical remark in this sentence, as I read it, is intended to explain his characterization of the empirical self as ‘determinable’. It is properly thought of as ‘determinable,’ then, because “its manifold” can be combined — or ‘determined’ — by the activity of thinking. It follows that consciousness of the empirical self, which is what Kant is describing here, must be consciousness of the self insofar as it is so ‘determinable’ — which is to say, insofar as it is given a manifold that is independent of and can be combined by the activity of thinking.

Kant describes consciousness of the empirical self in much the same way in his discussion of inner sense in §8 of the *Transcendental Aesthetic*. He says there that for a subject with a discursive intellect:

...consciousness of itself...requires inner perception of the manifold that is antecedently given in the subject, and the manner in which this is given in the mind without spontaneity must be called sensibility on account of this difference.<sup>3</sup>

And again in the *Deduction*, he says, “...for the cognition of myself I also need in addition to the consciousness, or in addition to that which I think myself, an intuition of the manifold in me, through which I determine this thought...”<sup>4</sup>

In each of the three passages above, Kant claims that consciousness of the empirical self requires an intuition of the given manifold.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>B407. See also B406: “I cognize myself not by being conscious of myself as thinking, but only if I am conscious to myself of the intuition of myself as determined in regard to the function of thought.”

<sup>3</sup>B68.

<sup>4</sup>B158.

<sup>5</sup>In chapter 2, I argued that when Kant refers to an ‘inner intuition’ of the manifold as he does in the passages I discuss here he should not be read as restricting his attention to a specifically *inner* manifold. Rather, I claimed that the intuition is characterized as ‘inner’ merely because any manifold, even if it is given as a result of affection by outer objects, is ‘contained in’ and cognitively accessed through inner sense. See p. 17.

Moreover, he notes in every case that the manifold in question is given to sensibility independently of the spontaneous exercise of the understanding. Now, on the face of it, it is not clear why Kant should want to emphasize this latter claim in discussing consciousness of the empirical self. For it does not seem to be a point that is particular to cognition of the *self*: the term ‘manifold’ as Kant uses it in general just picks out what is given to sensibility independently of the understanding.

I want to argue, however, that the point *does* have special significance for consciousness of the empirical self, and this is why Kant calls attention to it every time he discusses what such consciousness involves. The givenness of the manifold is significant, I believe, because consciousness of the empirical subject for Kant just *amounts* to consciousness of the manifold as it is given to the particular subject, independently of and antecedent to the exercise of the understanding.<sup>6</sup>

But what does consciousness of the manifold before it is combined by the understanding consist in? An important clue, I think, is to be found in §18 of the Transcendental Deduction. Kant’s concern there is ostensibly a different one: he seeks to distinguish, in his words, between relations that hold among a subject’s representations ‘merely subjectively’ and relations between representations that are ‘objective’. He characterizes that distinction as follows:

The *transcendental unity* of apperception is that unity through which all of the manifold given in an intuition is united in a concept of the object. It is called *objective* on that account, and must be distinguished from the *subjective unity* of consciousness, which is a *determination of inner sense*, through which

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<sup>6</sup>Of course, Kant’s insistence on this point is partially explained by the fact that he wants to argue that consciousness of the empirical self is not *immediate* consciousness of thinking, but rather essentially involves a manifold given to sensibility. This is significant for Kant, because since time has been shown to be the *a priori* form of inner sense, it follows that cognition of the self, just like cognition of outer objects, is cognition of the self as it appears and not as it is in itself. However, I think this is not the only point that Kant is trying to make here. In each of the three passages, Kant is attempting to provide a positive characterization of what consciousness of the empirical self consists in, and this goal would not be achieved merely by noting that it is consciousness of representations that are in time.

that manifold of intuition is empirically given for such a combination...[The former] unity alone is objectively valid; the empirical unity of apperception...has merely subjective validity.<sup>7</sup>

What I want to call attention to here is that the brief description of ‘merely subjective’ unity that is offered in §18 is strikingly similar to the passages having to do with consciousness of the empirical self that I have focused on from the Paralogisms. Recall that Kant said there that consciousness of the empirical self is consciousness “of my *inner intuition* (insofar as its *manifold can be combined* in accord with the universal condition of the *unity of apperception* in thinking)...” (my emphases) Compare this with the passage above in which Kant says that subjective unity is a “determination of *inner sense*, through which [the] *manifold of intuition* is empirically given for such a combination [i.e. for combination in the *transcendental unity of apperception*].” (my emphases) If consciousness of the empirical self is consciousness of the manifold as it is given to inner sense for combination, and the term ‘subjective unity’ as Kant uses it picks out the particular kind of unity that pertains to the manifold before it is given for combination, then this strongly suggests that consciousness of the empirical self is (or at least includes) consciousness of subjective unity.

Similarly, in the *Prolegomena*, Kant says:

...judging can be of two types: first, when I merely compare the perceptions and conjoin them in a *consciousness of my state*, or second, when I conjoin them in a *consciousness in general*. The first judgment is merely a judgment of perception and has thus far only subjective validity; it is merely a connection of perceptions within my mental state, without reference to the object.<sup>8</sup>

Recall from chapter 2 that Kant characterizes inner sense — through which I am conscious of the empirical self — as a sense “by means of which the mind intuits itself, or its inner state.”<sup>9</sup> The introspection

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<sup>7</sup>B139-140, Kant’s emphases.

<sup>8</sup>*Prolegomena*, 4:300, my emphases.

<sup>9</sup>A22/B37.

view — which I argued against in the previous chapter — took ‘intuiting one’s mental state’ to mean introspecting previously synthesized objective representations, and identified such introspective awareness with consciousness of the empirical self. Note, however, that in the passage above, Kant claims that it is a *judgment of perception* that expresses a “consciousness of my state.” What I thereby express, he continues, is “merely a connection of perceptions within my mental state” that does not have “reference to the object.”

Now, to say that representations are connected in a way that does not have reference to an object is just to say that the connection between them is *subjective* rather than objective. And this suggests that — as I argued above, and unlike on the introspection view — ‘intuiting one’s mental state’ should be understood as intuiting the *subjective* relations between one’s representations. What Kant’s discussion in the *Prolegomena* adds is that consciousness of such subjective relations between representations can be expressed by a judgment of perception.

While I will develop the details of this suggestion in what follows, I want to discuss here a preliminary advantage of identifying empirical self-consciousness with consciousness of merely subjectively connected representations. On the introspection view, as I have said, empirical self-consciousness consists in an act of introspection through which objective representations are attended to as representations. There is an obvious question that arises for this picture: why does consciousness of representations of objects — even when this consciousness consists in introspectively attending to their status *as* representations — count as consciousness of the *self*, that is, of the *subject* to which those representations belong? It is not clear how the subject herself is represented in any way by the objective representations attended to in introspective awareness, since their representational content pertains to the *objects* cognized. Allison himself points out this worry when developing his interpretation of the relevant passages on self-consciousness. In questioning how to characterize what is cognized when we cognize the self as it appears, he says:

...even granting that through outer sense we cognize objects only as they appear, it does not follow that inner sense yields a representation of the *self* only as it appears. Nor is anything changed by the introduction of the premise that the materials of inner sense are all derived from outer sense. This is because, as we

have already seen, outer intuitions, by definition, are not representations of the self. In fact, if this argument establishes anything, it is that we cannot cognize ourselves at all, at least not through sensible intuition...<sup>10</sup>

In response to this worry, Allison suggests that representation of the self must be understood on a different model than representation of objects. It is not that the representations attended to in introspection actually *represent* the self in virtue of their content, he concludes, but rather, through introspection, these representations are *ascribed* to the self as *belonging to* it in virtue of the fact that they constitute the contents of the subject's mind. Of course, this does not amount to *cognizing* the self, and Allison concedes as much:

...the I cannot cognize itself through the empirical predicates (representations) which it refers to itself in judgments of inner experience...the I...is not itself an object of inner experience or inner sense. These objects are rather the representations that it attributes to itself as 'subjective objects'."<sup>11</sup>

Allison concludes, however, that this asymmetry between cognition of outer objects and cognition of the self as the object of inner sense is a feature of Kant's account of self-knowledge, rather than a worry about his own interpretation (even though Kant explicitly claims that the self *can* be cognized as an object through inner sense).

I think there is an even more serious problem for Allison's view than the asymmetry it posits between self-cognition and the cognition of objects. For the kind of 'judgment of inner experience' that Allison seems to have in mind is a judgment through which I self-ascribe

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<sup>10</sup>Henry Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism: An Interpretation and Defense* (New Haven and London: Oxford University Press, 2004), 281-2. Part of Allison's concern here follows from the fact that he thinks that the representations attended to in introspection must exclusively be representations of outer sense, because "inner sense has no manifold of its own." (277) Even if this is not an accurate reading of Kant, [See pp. 25-26; 25n39] however, representations of outer objects will at least *primarily* be what is attended to through inner sense on the standard introspection view.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, 279-80.

a representation or judgment — for example, “I think the house is brown,” or equivalently, “I judge that the house is brown.” But remember that, according to Kant, ascribing an objective representation to the self — which is to say, attaching the ‘I think’ to a representation — does *not* express knowledge, or even cognition, of the empirical self. The ‘I’ of the ‘I think’ — the ‘I’ to which objective representations are self-ascribed — is the *transcendental* self, that is, the spontaneous or judging subject that Kant insists I cannot have knowledge of as an object.<sup>12</sup> It is the *empirical* self, according to Kant, that can be an object of inner experience; Allison’s account cannot explain how this is possible, partly because the introspection view he proposes cannot identify judgments that are different in kind from the self-ascriptions that are made possible by transcendental self-consciousness.

In contrast, on the account I am proposing here, the content of empirical self-consciousness is in principle different from the content of transcendental self-consciousness. Whereas the latter consists in awareness of the objective connections between representations that I bring about, the former, on my view, consists only in consciousness of *subjectively* combined representations — combinations that do not represent the world at all, and to which the ‘I think’ cannot be attached.

Now, on the face of it, drawing a connection between empirical self-consciousness and consciousness of subjective unity may not seem to be very helpful. For the difficulties that have plagued interpretations of the latter notion are, if anything, more worrisome than those that have attended analyses of the former.<sup>13</sup> It will be a central claim of this

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<sup>12</sup>Allison might argue that the form of judgment he has in mind is rather “This representation of a brown house belongs to me.” But this would not really help his case, since Kant’s claim in §16 of the Transcendental Deduction is that a subject’s awareness that a representation belongs to her is equivalent to her attaching the ‘I think’ to it, and the possibility of doing this is to be explained by the consciousness of synthesis that I have argued makes for transcendental self-consciousness.

<sup>13</sup>Allison, for example, devotes an entire section of *Kant’s Transcendental Idealism* to what he calls “The Problem of Subjective Unity,” in which he discusses the various difficulties involved in understanding Kant’s notion of a subjective unity of consciousness as well as reconciling it with his broader discussion in the Transcendental Deduction. Briefly, the main worry has to do with accounting for how it is possible to be conscious of subjectively



dissertation, however, that the twin problems having to do with spelling out Kant's notions of empirical self-consciousness and subjective unity are essentially related, and can be jointly solved. Consciousness of the empirical self, I believe, just is consciousness of the subjective relations among one's representations; coming to understand what counts as a 'merely subjective' relation between representations, then, will inform us about what Kant takes consciousness of the empirical self to consist in.

I will develop and defend my account of subjective unity — and so, of empirical self-consciousness — in the next chapter. In the remainder of this chapter, I want to turn my attention to the *Prolegomena's* distinction between judgments of perception and judgments of experience. The notion of a judgment of perception will be important for my view in later chapters, because it is through such a judgment that I believe consciousness of subjective unity can be expressed. In the remainder of this chapter, I want to defend the understanding of a judgment of perception that I will then take for granted in what follows.

### 3.3 Judgments of Perception

#### 3.3.1 Judgments of Perception are possible

The first claim I want to argue against here is that Kant's discussion of the distinction between judgments of perception and judgments of experience in the *Prolegomena* reflects an outdated view that is omitted in the B-deduction. On such a reading, by the time he writes the B-edition of the *Critique*, Kant no longer believes that judgments of perception are possible, arguing instead that *all* judgments are subject to the Categories, and as a result, cannot fail to be objective.

Kant admittedly suggests as much in §19 of the Deduction, in which he treats the notion of a judgment in general: "If, however, I investigate more closely the relation of given cognitions in every judgment...I find

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unified representations, since Kant seems to argue in the deduction that the mere consciousness that a set of representations belongs to me guarantees that I have connected them objectively. (Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism*, 178-85)

that a judgment is nothing other than the way to bring given cognitions to the objective unity of apperception.”<sup>14</sup> Despite this emphatic assertion, however, he goes on a few lines later to give an example of a claim that fails to be objective — “If I carry a body, I feel a pressure of weight”<sup>15</sup> — and gives no indication that he takes it to be impossible to make such a judgment.

Moreover, in the very section preceding this one — as I have discussed above — Kant takes pains to distinguish between objective and subjective unities of representations, making clear that, on his view, one can be conscious of both types of unity. To grant this but deny that a judgment of perception is possible would be to claim that a subject can be conscious of a subjective connection between her representations, but remain mysteriously incapable of expressing what she is conscious of. And this type of denial seems to me to be unmotivated.

In fact, Kant’s example is not ultimately incompatible with his broader discussion: his earlier characterization of judgment that I quoted above is best understood, I believe, as describing what is the case for *objective* judgments — that is, what the *Prolegomena* refers to as ‘judgments of experience’. (And Kant’s exclusive focus on such judgments in §19 is easily explained, since his primary goal in the *Critique* is to give an account of the possibility of objective experience and knowledge.) In contrast, the claim “If I carry a body, I feel a pressure of weight” expresses a subject’s awareness of a sequence in her own mental states — an awareness that it is perfectly possible for her to have and to express, even though it is not a claim about external objects. To insist that this no longer counts as a *judgment* for Kant is to belabor what is ultimately a merely semantic point — even if Kant has opted to reserve the term ‘judgment’ for *objective* judgments by the time he writes the B-deduction, it is clear that he still believes that a subject can express claims of the sort that are identified as judgments of perception in the *Prolegomena*. As such, I will assume in what follows that the term ‘judgment of perception’ can be consistently and fruitfully applied to Kant’s discussion in the *Critique*.

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<sup>14</sup>B141.

<sup>15</sup>B142.

### 3.3.2 The distinction between Judgments of Experience and Judgments of Perception does not admit of degrees

The other interpretation of the distinction between judgments of perception and judgments of experience that I want to consider and reject is one that views that distinction as admitting of *degrees*. This is the reading defended by Béatrice Longuenesse in her book *Kant and the Capacity to Judge*. According to Longuenesse, the difference between judgments of perception and judgments of experience is not a difference in kind: rather than taking objective validity to be a feature only of judgments of experience, she argues, it should be thought of as the ‘norm’ that *all* judging tends towards. Being governed by this norm in judging entails that one is normatively directed away from expressing merely subjective combinations in our judgments and towards expressing relations that hold for all judging subjects — that is to say, away from making judgments of perception towards making judgments of experience.

Longuenesse further claims that though all judgments are governed by the norm of objective validity, any particular judgment may remain “subjective to a greater or lesser degree”<sup>16</sup> depending on the extent to which it “rel[ies] uncritically”<sup>17</sup> on combinations that hold only for the particular subject. In her words:

The issue in section 19 is the form of judgment as the form of the objective unity of apperception in general. This form is present in all judgments, whether they are judgments of perception, however (empirically) subjective they may be, or judgments of experience, which alone are (empirically) objective. In fact, our capacity to judge carries within its very forms...the norms that drive us to progress from judgments of perception to judgments of experience. The search for rules, which generates the “merely logical combination” of our perceptions in judgments, also eventually generates discursive connections “valid for all, always” —

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<sup>16</sup>Béatrice Longuenesse, *Kant and the Capacity to Judge* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 83.

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*, 90.

that is, empirically objective connections, judgments of experience.<sup>18</sup>

On Longuenesse's view, then, it is the "search for rules" that enables one to progress towards making a 'fully objective' judgment. The 'rules' in question appear to be laws of nature: on her view, it turns out, one must have adequate knowledge of natural laws in order merely to claim that others should agree with one's judgments — that is, in order to make judgments of experience. As she puts it, "only a metaphysics of nature can fully justify the move from a judgment of perception to a judgment of experience."<sup>19</sup> For example, making the judgment of experience, "The sun warms the stone" on the basis of the judgment of perception, "If the sun shines on the stone, it grows warm" — one of Kant's examples in the *Prolegomena* — involves, in Longuenesse's words:

...confronting the [experienced] correlations already obtained with many more, while perhaps also using the resources of mathematical construction to anticipate and test further possible empirical correlations.<sup>20</sup>

"Only after such a method has been systematically applied," she concludes, "can a causal connection be asserted."<sup>21</sup>

Now, I think in viewing the matter this way, Longuenesse conflates the kind of evidence I may need to fully *justify* a judgment of experience with the conditions on being able to *make* such a judgment in the first place. The result is an account of judgment that I think inaccurately represents Kant's claims in the *Critique* and is implausible in its own right. For it seems to me undeniable that I can *assert* the causal judgment "The sun warms the stone" and in doing so, demand that everyone judge the same way, *without* having performed the relevant experiments or acquiring the relevant metaphysical knowledge that may

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<sup>18</sup>Ibid., 186.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., 175.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., 179.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid.

be necessary to fully *justify* my demand on others' agreement. In fact, Kant's point in §19 of the Critique seems to be that I cannot *but* demand such agreement in virtue of making a judgment about objects — such a demand is carried in the very *form* of an objective judgment (whether or not I am warranted in so judging).

Whereas for Longuenesse, objectively valid judgments represent the scientific ideal relative to which most ordinary judgments must remain judgments of perception to a greater or lesser degree, for Kant, it is a judgment of perception that is “really not possible,” except “through the fact that I express my representation as perception”<sup>22</sup> — that is, except when I explicitly judge about my *perceptions*, rather than about the objects they are of. In claiming that my judgments about *objects* can remain subjective to a greater or lesser degree, Longuenesse misses the crucial point that, for Kant, subjective judgments fail to have any “reference to the object” at all — that is, they do not even *represent* objects. Conversely, it is only insofar as I take myself to be judging in a manner that is objectively valid that I succeed in representing objects in the first place. Longuenesse's ‘subjective objective’ judgments, then, are not really possible.

Paradoxically, her insistence that the form of objective validity is “present in all judgments,” coupled with her desire to make place for Kant's notion of judgments of perception, leads Longuenesse to the undesirable conclusion that most judgments, for Kant, are merely subjectively valid. I think the former commitment ought to be dropped: the form of objective validity is *not* present in judgments of perception — but neither is it the case that such judgments are pervasive. In fact, most of our judgments are about objects and as such, have the form that, for Kant, guarantees their objective validity. The difference between judgments of perception and judgments of experience — that is, between subjective and objective judgments — is a difference not of degree, but of kind. All judgments that make a claim about external objects are judgments of experience, and have the form of objective validity that Kant takes to be constitutive of such judgments. In contrast, judgments of perception are not about objects at all, but rather about the subjective relations between the subject's own representations that hold only for her; as such, they are neither objectively valid, nor do

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<sup>22</sup>*Jäsche Logic*, §40, 9:114 (translated in *Lectures on Logic*, 608).

they tend towards objective validity, as on Longuenesse's view. I will have a lot more to say about this in the next chapter.

## Chapter 4

# Empirical Self-Consciousness and Psychological Association

### 4.1 Introduction

Kant is widely credited with being the first to distinguish between two ways in which a thinking subject can be conscious of herself. The first is when – engaged in experience or thought about the world – she becomes aware of herself *qua* subject of that experience or thought. I have been referring to this as *transcendental self-consciousness*, or *TSC* for short. The second is when she is aware of herself as the *object* of her own thought or experience – that is, when she has thought or experience of *herself*, rather than the world. I have called the latter *empirical self-consciousness*, or *ESC*.<sup>1</sup>

While there is some degree of convergence among interpreters on the main features of *TSC*, treatments of *ESC* have met with far less success. The secondary literature falls broadly into two main camps. The first expresses skepticism that *ESC* is really possible, on the grounds that

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<sup>1</sup>The secondary literature on the topic refers to the distinction in this way following Strawson's discussion of self-consciousness in *The Bounds of Sense* ([London and New York: Routledge, 1966], e.g. at 111). Kant himself interchangeably refers to the transcendental/objective/original unity of apperception/consciousness and the empirical unity of apperception/consciousness (e.g. at B139-40).

Kant's characterization of the transcendental subject does not leave room for a notion of empirical self-consciousness that is genuinely distinct from *TSC*.<sup>2</sup> In contrast, the second grants that a distinct notion of *ESC* is possible, but floats somewhat freely of the text to suggest how Kant *should* have characterized it. This latter strategy, which is inspired by Strawson's discussion of self-consciousness in *The Bounds of Sense*, typically criticizes Kant for ignoring the fact that human subjects are spatiotemporally embodied, and suggests that *ESC* must consist in some form or other of a subject's consciousness of her own body.<sup>3</sup>

I believe that neither of these two interpretative options is satisfactory. Against the latter, I will argue in sections 4.2-4.4 that correctly

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<sup>2</sup>Henry Allison, for example, worries that Kant's commitments seem to entail that "we cannot cognize ourselves at all, at least not through sensible intuition..." (*Kant's Transcendental Idealism: An Interpretation and Defense* [New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2004], 282) Allison later concludes that *ESC* is achieved through *introspecting* the very same representations to which *TSC* is originally attached; I argue against this conclusion in chapter 2. Paul Guyer goes even further than Allison, claiming that on the correct way of drawing the distinction between *TSC* and *ESC*, it "would not be a distinction between two numerically distinct forms of self-consciousness, but rather the difference between an abstract characterization of the unity of self-consciousness and its concrete realization." ("The Deduction of the Categories: The Metaphysical and Transcendental Deductions," in *The Cambridge Companion to Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*, ed. by Paul Guyer [New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010], 149.) Similarly, Béatrice Longuenesse claims that at least one way of understanding *ESC* is just as "transcendental self-consciousness made 'clear'." ("Self-Consciousness and Consciousness of One's Own Body: Variations on a Kantian Theme," *Philosophical Topics* 34 (2006): 283-309, 305.

<sup>3</sup>Strawson says: "...we must remark now that it is one of the weaknesses of Kant's exposition that he barely alludes to the fact that our ordinary concept of *personal* identity does carry with it empirically applicable criteria for the numerical identity through time of a subject of experiences (a man or human being) and that these criteria...involve an essential reference to the human body." (*The Bounds of Sense*, 164) This criticism is taken up most notably by Gareth Evans in "Things Without the Mind" (*Collected Papers* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1985], 249-290) and Quassim Cassam in *Self and World* (New York: Oxford University Press), 1997. In this chapter, I will argue against Pierre Keller's version of this interpretive strategy, articulated in his *Kant and the Demands of Self-Consciousness* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).



understanding Kant's distinction between *TSC* and *ESC* reveals that he has good reason not to identify *ESC* with consciousness of one's body. But this does not entail that we must return to the kind of skepticism about *ESC* expressed by the former group of interpreters: instead, as I will argue in section 4.5, a robust account of *ESC* is possible that is supported by Kant's remarks on it as well as by his other commitments.

## 4.2 The Distinction between Transcendental and Empirical Self-Consciousness

I want to begin by setting up what I take to be the correct understanding of the distinction that Kant draws between *TSC* and *ESC*. In order to fully grasp the distinction, and thereby get a clear sense of how Kant understands *ESC*, I believe it is necessary to pay close attention to how he characterizes the contrasting notion of *TSC* in his account of objective experience and judgment.

Kant famously begins his argument in the Transcendental Deduction with the claim that the 'I think' must be able to accompany any objective representation of which I, as subject, am conscious. As I have discussed in previous chapters, what I express, in so attaching the 'I think' to a representation, is my *transcendental* self-consciousness or *TSC* – that is, my awareness of myself *qua* subject of that representation. This consists, for Kant, in my being aware of myself as spontaneously synthesizing the manifold of intuition. Importantly, in being aware of this act of synthesis, I attend to my exercise of a capacity that I share with all possible cognitive subjects – that is, a capacity that Kant has argued any subject capable of knowledge must have.

Now, Kant's point is that it is precisely because I only draw on such intersubjectively shared features of myself in the act of synthesis that I am entitled to claim that the outcome of that act – the combination of representations to which I attach the 'I think' – is valid for all subjects. Since I am not aware of drawing on any subjective features that pertain only to me, instead exercising my capacity for synthesis in accordance with the general rules that govern it, I can claim that any cognitive subject who shares that capacity ought to synthesize as I do. In the words of the *Prolegomena*, I take myself to combine representations as

they ought to be combined in a “consciousness in general,”<sup>4</sup> not merely mine.

The point can be restated in terms of judgment. For Kant, it is my awareness that I am governed only by the norms that apply to all subjects capable of judgment that allows me to claim that a particular judgment I make has intersubjective validity – that is, that all subjects ought to judge as I do. And this claim to intersubjective validity, according to him, is equivalent to the claim that the unity that I bring about in my representations through synthesis is an *objective* unity or, simply, that my judgment is objective.

In *TSC*, then, I am not aware of any determinate features of myself that differentiate me from other possible subjects. It is for this reason, I believe, that Kant says that the ‘I’ of the ‘I think’ is a “wholly empty representation” that picks out only the “I, or He, or It (the thing), which thinks.”<sup>5</sup>

In contrast, *empirical* self-consciousness is meant to be consciousness of myself as a *particular* subject. In *ESC*, then, I must be able to become aware of features of myself that are not entailed merely by my being a cognitive subject, and are thus not shared with all possible subjects. These, presumably, are features that I have contingently,<sup>6</sup> or states of mind that I happen to be in as a result of being determined by something other than the rules of synthesis alone. Accordingly, such states of mind do not have any normative status with respect to other subjects. In this case, unlike above, I do not have the grounds to claim that all subjects ought to combine representations in the manner that they happen to be combined for me. This is what Kant means when he says of such a combination of representations that it has “merely subjective validity.”<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>*Prolegomena*, 4:300.

<sup>5</sup>*Critique of Pure Reason*, tr. Paul Guyer and Allen Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), A346/B404.

<sup>6</sup>That is, contingent relative to my status as a cognitive subject. In other words, these features count as contingent insofar as my being a cognitive subject does not necessitate that I have them, though other facts about me (for example, that I am a human being) may well do so.

<sup>7</sup>B140. Relatedly, in the passage from the *Prolegomena* I have quoted above, Kant contrasts being aware of myself as a “consciousness in general” with merely subjective consciousness in which “I merely compare [my] per-

Now, since Kant's purposes in the first *Critique* have primarily to do with isolating the transcendental subject and specifying the conditions on its activity, he does not fully spell out *which* contingent features of myself I am aware of in *ESC*, nor does he clearly explain what makes it the case that I come to be in such 'merely subjective' states of mind. However, it is obvious that he thinks such subjective combinations of representations are possible, and relatedly, that I can be conscious of myself as a particular, empirical thinking subject.<sup>8</sup>

The task for a successful interpretation of *ESC*, as I see it, then, is to identify features or mental states that are 'merely subjective' and can serve to distinguish different cognitive subjects, considered as such, from each other. Before I present my own account of what this consists in for Kant, I want to consider an alternative proposal defended by Pierre Keller in *Kant and the Demands of Self-Consciousness*, on which mental states turn out to be subjective insofar as they represent the world from a particular spatiotemporal point of view.

Keller's view falls into the second category of Strawsonian views I mentioned above, since he takes awareness of one's own spatiotemporal location to be central to *ESC*. I choose to focus on his account here for two reasons. First, Keller is more committed than many commentators who adopt this strategy to providing an interpretation of the distinction between *TSC* and *ESC* as Kant himself sought to draw it. Second, in speaking of spatiotemporal 'points of view', Keller's account is only minimally revisionary, since experience from a point of view does not logically require that the subject be (or be conscious of being) *bodily* located at that point.<sup>9</sup> By arguing that Keller's view is incompatible with Kant's distinction despite its modesty, then, I hope to show that

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ceptions and conjoin them in a consciousness of my state." (*Prolegomena*, 4:300).

<sup>8</sup>For the former claim, see §18 of the Transcendental Deduction (B139-40). For the latter, see his statement at B407 in the Paralogisms that I can "cognize myself [as]...object" through inner sense.

<sup>9</sup>All it requires is that the subject be aware of its spatiotemporal position relative to the objects it experiences. But this can be achieved, logically speaking, even by a subject conceived of as a mere geometrical point that can occupy and perceive from different positions in space and time. (Longuenesse makes this point in her discussion of Cassam's *Self and World* in "Self-Consciousness and Consciousness of One's Body," pp. 290-1.)

any interpretation of *ESC* that draws on a subject's spatiotemporal properties is, in principle, misguided.

### 4.3 The Empirical Subject as a Particular Point of View

It may seem obvious that the relevant factor that differentiates us as cognitive subjects is that we perceive the world from different spatiotemporal locations. Being so located makes it the case that an individual subject's experience is from a particular point of view. When a subject  $S_1$  judges something to be the case from her particular location  $L_1$  (for example, that a tower in the distance looks circular), this judgment does not claim to be true for all subjects regardless of their location (for example, the tower may not look circular from a location  $L_2$  that is directly in front of it). In this sense,  $S_1$ 's judgment "The tower looks circular" may be thought to have merely subjective validity, since though it is true from  $S_1$ 's point of view,  $S_1$  does not claim, in making the judgment, that all subjects, regardless of their location, ought to find it true.

This is the strategy that Keller adopts in spelling out what *ESC* might consist in for Kant. Keller first points out that "objects in space and time are representable in a manner that depends on the spatiotemporal standpoint of the observing consciousness."<sup>10</sup> Representing objects in this way, he continues, does not amount to representing them objectively, since "objectivity...consists in the way things must be represented in space and time so that they are the same for all observers at all spatiotemporal locations."<sup>11</sup> Instead, he concludes, it is the particularity of my point of view that makes it the case that I can represent in this 'merely subjective' way:

...the spatiotemporal location and hence standpoint-dependence of my self-consciousness accounts for the discrepancy between the merely subjective validity of what is given to self-consciousness

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<sup>10</sup>Keller, *Kant and the Demands of Self-Consciousness*, 87.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid.

empirically and the intersubjectivity possible on the basis of an impersonal [i.e. transcendental] self-consciousness.<sup>12</sup>

Keller further claims that subject  $S_1$ 's recognition that she has a point of view that is not shared by other subjects is what allows her to recognize her identity as a particular "finite" subject:

The particular experience which distinguishes one individual self from another may be referred to as what is inner to that self. What is inner is juxtaposed to what is outer in experience. What is outer in experience just is what is outside the self as representer while what is inner makes the representer's point of view what it is...unless a finite rational being can draw a distinction between the inner and outer, it will not be able to distinguish the way things appear to it from its own point of view from the way they might appear to some other possible point of view...but then there is no reason to think that one is a (finite) rational being at all.<sup>13</sup>

Finally, Keller claims that it is this identification of oneself through *ESC* that makes it possible to ascribe experiences to oneself. He says, "Creatures that have a sense of self that they can articulate have the

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid., 99.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., 96. The point as Keller makes it here may seem to be about  $S_1$  having and being able to apply the conceptual resources necessary to think of herself as a particular subject. While much of Keller's discussion suggests that this is what he has in mind, there is also a sense in which a perceptual experience is *phenomenologically* presented as being from a particular spatiotemporal point of view. Though he does not clearly distinguish the two points, Keller does appear to rely on the latter to claim that Kant has such experiential consciousness of one's point of view in mind when he talks about the subject being empirically conscious of itself (i.e., having *ESC*). I take it that this is the point Keller intends to make when he says, "Empirical apperception [i.e. self-consciousness] must express a particular point of view with respect to experience from *within experience*...such self-presentation from a particular point of view *within experience* is what makes my representations mine, as opposed to yours." (105, my emphases)

ability to attribute experiences to themselves and thereby to distinguish themselves from other objects and other selves.”<sup>14</sup> He later adds:

...in self-ascription to my [particular] consciousness, reference to the fact that I am thinking the proposition in question is an essential part of the statement. In such self-ascription of states, I claim that this is the way representations are connected in my consciousness, as opposed to someone else’s consciousness.<sup>15</sup>

In other words, it is in virtue of the fact that I can pick myself out as a distinctive point of view that it is possible for me to give empirical content to the ‘I’ that is ‘attached’ to my representations or judgments, so that they are ascribed to my particular self, in contradistinction to other subjects.<sup>16</sup>

To sum up Keller’s view, what distinguishes individual subjects is the particular spatiotemporal point of view they have in experience.

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<sup>14</sup>Ibid., 95.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., 106.

<sup>16</sup>Part of Keller’s discussion that I have not gone into here may serve to address possible worries about what it means for a subject to identify herself in this way. For example, can a ‘point of view’ be individuated in the robust manner necessary to constitute the identity of a particular subject? Relatedly, aren’t points of view in principle shareable by different subjects? According to Keller, the self becomes a possible object of knowledge only when the point of view that is presented in *ESC* is tied to a particular body. In Keller’s words, “we are able to think of ourselves as a distinct individual, with a distinctive point of view, by identifying the point of view of the self in general with the history of a particular body. It is this body and its states that are then the appropriate objects of self-knowledge.” (Ibid., 99) Linking the existence of a subjective point of view with a body and its spatiotemporal history certainly helps to flesh out Keller’s view. However, I think identifying the object that can be known through *ESC* with the body and its states conflicts with Kant’s explicit claims that the object of self-knowledge is not in space and is given only to inner sense. Cf., for example, the following passage from the A-Paralogisms: “...we can rightfully say that our thinking subject is not corporeal, meaning that since it is represented as an object of our inner sense, insofar as it thinks it could not be an object of outer sense, i.e., it could not be an appearance in space. Now this is to say as much as that thinking beings, as such, can never come before us among outer appearances...” (A357)

*ESC* just is consciousness of this point of view within experience, and in identifying oneself with this point of view, a subject is capable of distinguishing herself from others and self-ascribing representations that she has as a particular subject.

An account like Keller's has its virtues. As I said above, it emphasizes perhaps the most obvious way in which the experiences of particular subjects differ as they navigate the same spatiotemporal world. As thinkers, they are each subject to the same constraints; however, as embodied perceivers, their standpoint on the world and their trajectory through it come apart. Moreover, there is a clear sense in which when  $S_1$  asserts "The tower looks circular" at her location  $L_1$ , she thereby signals that her judgment is not 'fully objective', since it is limited to a claim about how the tower appears, not how it actually is. It is not too much of a stretch, then, for Keller to claim that in making such a judgment,  $S_1$  comes to know a fact about *herself* and her relation to an object in the world. And perhaps such 'subjective' facts really might be thought to exhaust the kind of self-knowledge Kant thinks a cognitive subject can come to have, since together they comprise what is true of such a subject's epistemological path through the world.<sup>17</sup>

Furthermore, while Keller does not provide very much in the way of textual evidence for his interpretation,<sup>18</sup> some of Kant's remarks on *ESC* might seem to support it. In the Transcendental Aesthetic, Kant says that in human beings, consciousness of the self "requires inner perception of the manifold that is antecedently given."<sup>19</sup> Relatedly, in §18 of the Deduction, he describes a "subjective unity of consciousness" as that "through which [the] manifold of intuition is empirically given for...combination," and indicates that how this occurs depends on "the circumstances or empirical conditions."<sup>20</sup> In both these passages, Kant seems to relate *ESC*, as well as the 'merely subjective' unity of representations it makes one conscious of, to the way in which the manifold

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<sup>17</sup>This may seem to be further supported by Kant's claim that in *ESC*, the subject is conscious of itself only as it appears to itself, not as it is. (Cf., for example, B152-153)

<sup>18</sup>This is perhaps because he takes himself to be fleshing out an account suggested but not elaborated on by Kant.

<sup>19</sup>B68.

<sup>20</sup>B139.

of intuition is *given* to a particular subject, before she “combines” or synthesizes that manifold into an objective representation. In other words, Kant’s remarks here may seem to suggest that a combination or sequence of representations had by subject  $S_1$  is ‘merely subjective’ if the representations happen to be given to her in that manner (in a particular order, for example) because of the “circumstances or empirical conditions” in which she is affected by the objects the representations are of. The relevant empirical circumstances here, one could conjecture with Keller, must be the spatiotemporal facts about  $S_1$ ’s location or trajectory with respect to those objects.

Such a proposal would also seem to be in line with Kant’s discussion of the contrast between the “subjective sequence of apprehension” and the “objective sequence of appearances” in the Second Analogy. Kant is concerned there to distinguish the objective experience of an event – his example is of the ordered sequence of perceptions caused by a ship moving downstream – from a merely subjective sequence of representations that occurs due to a contingent order in perception that does not correspond to an objective change in the world. Kant’s example of the latter is the sequence of perceptions generated because of the order in which I happen to scan the façade of a house. He says:

In the...example of a house my perceptions could have begun at its rooftop and ended at the ground, but could also have begun below and ended above; likewise I could have apprehended the manifold of empirical intuition from the right or from the left. In the series of these perceptions there was therefore no determinate order that made it necessary when I had to begin in the apprehension in order to combine the manifold empirically.<sup>21</sup>

Kant’s point here is that even though the parts of the house are given sequentially, as are the successive positions of the ship moving downstream, in the former case the order of perceptions is ‘merely subjective’. Accordingly, while the order of perceptions in the case of the ship is taken to correspond to objective changes in the ship’s position, the house is not represented as objectively changing as the

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<sup>21</sup>A192/B237-A193/B238.



subject gathers perceptions of it. Now, it is clear that what determines the order in which the perceptions of the house happen to be given to a subject  $S_1$  as she scans its façade are the spatiotemporal facts about her perceptual circumstances – her position and the direction in which she moves her eyes, say (to make this more obvious, the example could be extended to include the spatiotemporal path  $S_1$  chooses to take around the house in order to perceive all four sides of it). If the Second Analogy is read as fleshing out the kind of factors that render a combination of representations subjective in general, Kant’s examples could be read as providing good grounds for Keller’s thesis that it is a subject’s contingent spatiotemporal point of view that causes her to be in what Kant calls ‘merely subjective’ representational states.

#### 4.4 Problems for Keller’s View

The textual evidence I have provided on Keller’s behalf is far from decisive. And as I will now argue, the rest of Kant’s discussion of subjective unity in §18 and many of his remarks on *ESC* – both in the *Critique* and elsewhere – seem to pull in a different direction from the one Keller’s proposal takes. I will discuss these passages in detail in section 4.5, but I want to offer a few examples here. First, in the sentence that follows the one from §18 that I quoted above, Kant states that subjective unity among representations arises “through association.”<sup>22</sup> Now, association, on Kant’s picture, is attributed to the faculty of imagination. He first defines it in the following passage from the A-deduction:

Since, however, if representations reproduced one another without distinction, just as they fell together, there would in turn be no determinate connection but merely unruly heaps of them, and no cognition at all would arise, their reproduction must thus

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<sup>22</sup>The passage reads: “Whether I can become empirically conscious of the manifold as simultaneous or successive depends on the circumstances, or empirical conditions. Hence the empirical unity of consciousness, *through association of the representations*, itself concerns an appearance, and is entirely contingent. (my emphasis, B140)

have a rule in accordance with which a representation enters into combination in the imagination with one representation rather than with any others. This subjective and empirical ground of reproduction in accordance with rules is called the association of representations.<sup>23</sup>

While I will return to this passage below, I want to point out here that according to Kant, for two representations, say  $R_1$  and  $R_2$ , to count as associated, it is not sufficient that they merely “fell together” – that is, were given to the subject – in the order  $R_1$ - $R_2$ . Rather, Kant thinks there are subjective grounds (as I will discuss later, what he has in mind are the psychological laws that govern the reproductive imagination) that make it the case that  $R_2$  is “reproduced” when  $R_1$  is present to consciousness – this is what makes it the case that there is an *association* between  $R_1$  and  $R_2$ . The details of this picture do not matter at this stage; what I want to draw attention to here is that in relating the subjective unity of representations in §18 to their association, Kant seems to have in mind something different than the order in which representations happen to be perceptually presented.<sup>24</sup> This is also apparent in the example of subjective unity that he goes on to discuss in §18:

The empirical unity of apperception [i.e. consciousness of subjective unity]...has merely subjective validity. One person combines the representation of a certain word with one thing, another with something else; and the unity of consciousness in that which is empirical is not, with regard to that which is given, necessarily and universally valid.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>A121.

<sup>24</sup>This is not to deny that if representations are repeatedly perceptually presented in the same order, they generally become associated with each other. But this point can be granted while still maintaining that for Kant, their being perceptually presented in a certain order alone does not constitute the subjective unity of a set of representations. The repeatedly presented pair of representations is subjectively unified only when the imagination is so determined by its past experiences that it calls  $R_2$  up when it intuits (or conceives) of  $R_1$  – that is, when  $R_1$  and  $R_2$  are psychologically associated with each other.

<sup>25</sup>B140.

I think it is significant that the one example Kant provides of a connection of representations that is ‘merely subjective’ and differs across subjects – in the very section where he is defining the notion of a subjective unity – can in no way be explained by making reference to the spatiotemporal points of view of the different subjects involved. While the example is far from fully perspicuous, it is at least clear that the existence of a connection between a word and a representation (such as a concept) for a subject is not usually explained by her current spatiotemporal location. Neither is it the case that a subject’s awareness of a connection between a word and another representation counts as her being aware of her particular spatiotemporal point of view on the world. Rather, as suggested by the passage on association above, Kant’s point here is that what is subjective in this case is the fact that a word happens to be *associated* with different representations for each of the two subjects.

That Kant conceives of the empirical subject in terms of psychological associations, rather than identifying it with a spatiotemporal point of view, is also strongly suggested by remarks he makes elsewhere. For example, in the *Anthropology*, Kant claims that the empirical subject that is known through *ESC* is the proper object of *psychology*. In a lengthy footnote on self-consciousness, he says that consciousness of the self “can be divided into that of reflection and that of apprehension” (I have been referring to these as *TSC* and *ESC*, respectively). “The first,” he continues, “is a consciousness of understanding, pure apperception, the second a consciousness of inner sense, empirical apperception...In psychology, we investigate ourselves according to our ideas of inner sense; in logic, according to what intellectual consciousness suggests.”<sup>26</sup> In this passage, Kant confirms that an inquiry into what determines the transcendental self falls into the domain of *logic*, since, as explained above, the transcendental self is the subject considered insofar as it is capable of thought and, therefore, as determined only by the (logical) constraints on thinking. His remark about *ESC*, however, adds something substantive – he claims that it is *psychology* that can conduct an inquiry into what determines the empirical self. In §24 of the *Anthropology*, he continues in the same vein: “Inner sense [i.e.*ESC*] is not pure apperception, a consciousness of what the human

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<sup>26</sup> *Anthropology*, §4, 7:134nb.

being *does*, since this belongs to the faculty of thinking. Rather, it is a consciousness of what he *undergoes*, in so far as he is affected by the play of his own thoughts.”<sup>27</sup>(Kant’s emphases)

Note that these remarks do not sit well with Keller’s proposal that consciousness of the empirical self amounts to consciousness of one’s spatiotemporal point of view.<sup>28</sup> Psychology does not concern itself with describing how objects are presented from particular spatiotemporal points of view; though this needs more spelling out, I think it is clear from the outset that it is far more appropriate to think of the associative tendencies I mentioned above as well as the factors that govern the formation of such associations as falling into the domain of psychological investigation.

That Kant wants to identify subjective connections between representations with associations that are set up through the faculty of imagination is clear in the following *Reflexion* from his *Logic* lectures:

The representation of the way in which different concepts (as such) belong to one consciousness (in general (not merely mine)) is the judgment. *They belong to one consciousness partly in accordance with laws of the imagination, thus subjectively*, or of the understanding, i.e. objectively valid for every being that has understanding. The subjective connection pertains to the *particular situation of the subject* in experience.<sup>29</sup>(my emphases)

Here, Kant explicitly connects the “particular situation of the subject” with laws that govern her imagination in such a way that in her case, there exists a “subjective connection” (or association) between a set of representations. I think this strongly suggests that Kant has the same thing in mind when he mentions the “circumstances or empirical conditions” that determine subjective unity in the passage from §18

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<sup>27</sup>*Anthropology*, §24, 7:161.

<sup>28</sup>Nor does it fit with his fuller account of self-knowledge (which I briefly discussed in footnote 16) that the object of empirical self-knowledge is the body and its states, since for Kant, the body is given to outer sense, whereas the object of empirical self-knowledge appears only to inner sense.

<sup>29</sup>R3051, 16:633 from *Notes and Fragments*, ed. Paul Guyer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 60.

I discussed above. If so, Keller would be wrong to interpret Kant's talk of "empirical conditions" in that passage as referring to a subject's particular spatiotemporal location or trajectory.<sup>30</sup>

In addition to its lack of fit with the text, I think Keller's view can also be criticized on philosophical grounds. First, while the proposal is initially promising, I do not think that Keller actually succeeds in identifying judgments that are 'merely subjective' in the correct sense. While it is certainly the case that particular embodied perceivers occupy different spatiotemporal locations through the course of their experience, I do not think that this fact deprives the judgments they make from those locations of their intersubjective validity. When  $S_1$  judges that there is a tower 10 feet away from her, for example, her judgment *does* carry with it a claim to others' agreement: she claims that any subject *located as she is* ought to make the same judgment. While the judgment as she expresses it mentions her particular standpoint, it is a standpoint that could in principle be occupied by any subject, and as such, its normative demand extends to other subjects. In fact, most judgments about how the world is *are* made from particular spatiotemporal points of view, and this fact does not render them defective or 'merely subjective'. In making 'points of view' central to his account, then, I think Keller does not isolate a feature that uniquely picks out a particular subject; spatiotemporal locations could in principle be occupied by any perceiving subject, and it is for this reason that judgments made from those locations can be intersubjectively valid, or equivalently, objective.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup>Keller does not himself claim to interpret the passage in this way, nor does he explicitly rely on it in putting forward his view. However, he does not himself provide much textual evidence, and moreover, I think it is natural to first read this sentence in §18 in a way that lines up with his proposal.

<sup>31</sup>Of course, a subject's particular spatiotemporal trajectory can *explain* the associations she finds herself with. For example, it was often the case that my grandmother prepared her morning coffee as a rooster crowed outside. Say that, as a result, I have come to associate the sound of a rooster's crow with the smell of coffee. Now, an explanation of why I have this particular association *would* refer to the facts about my spatiotemporal location with respect to the rooster and the coffee: that I spent many summer vacations at my grandparents' house, say, and that the farmer next door then owned a rooster. But it is not *because* I was so spatiotemporally located that my

The point can be made in a different way. A subject's spatiotemporal 'point of view' is still a point of view on the *world*; having that point of view enables her to discover what is objectively the case. For Kant, a set of representations had by a subject achieves what he calls 'relation to an object' – that is, succeeds in representing the world as being a certain way – precisely through her awareness that she has combined those representations as she ought to (and so, as all other subjects ought to, as well). In contrast, 'merely subjective' combinations of representations do not carry such a normative commitment, and this, for Kant, is equivalent to saying that they do not succeed even in *representing* the world as being a certain way. Kant expresses this point clearly when discussing judgments of perception (which express a 'merely subjective' unity of representations) in the *Prolegomena*. "A judgment of perception," he says, "is merely a connection of perceptions within my mental state, *without reference to the object*."<sup>32</sup> As such, Keller cannot claim to be interpreting Kant when he talks about *objects* being represented in a standpoint-dependent and thus 'merely subjective' way.<sup>33</sup>

To sum up, I think Keller fails to give an adequate account of what makes representations 'merely subjective' for Kant, and so, of what *ESC* consists in. His view conflicts with multiple passages in which Kant indicates that representations are subjectively related to each other when they are imaginatively associated. Furthermore, the feature that

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judgment, "When I hear a rooster's crow, I think of the smell of coffee," turns out to be 'merely subjective'. Rather, it is because it does not express an *objective* connection that I judge to hold between roosters and coffee at all. Instead, in making this judgment, I merely report that these two representations are psychologically connected for me, without claiming either that they are rightly so connected, or that they ought to be so connected for any other subject. Contrast this with judgments I could make from the very same spatiotemporal standpoint that *would* claim intersubjective validity, such as "The rooster next door crowed at the same time as the coffee was being prepared." Despite its dependence on my particular spatiotemporal standpoint, this judgment *does* carry the claim that I am right to connect up my representation of the rooster crowing with the smell of coffee being made insofar as these two objective events *in fact* occurred simultaneously at my spatiotemporal location. I discuss such associations further in section 4.5 of this chapter.

<sup>32</sup>*Prolegomena*, 4:300 (my emphasis).

<sup>33</sup>As he does, for example, in the passage I quote above from Keller, *Demands of Self-Consciousness*, 87.

is central to his view – the fact that subjects represent from particular spatiotemporal locations – does not render their representations ‘merely subjective’. We still need an account, then, of what Kant thinks *ESC* makes a subject aware of.

#### 4.5 The Empirical Subject as Object of Psychology

In the passages I quoted above, Kant indicates that representations are said to be related ‘merely subjectively’ rather than objectively when they are merely *associated* with each other through imagination, rather than *synthesized* by an act of the understanding. In the former case, it is in virtue of the subject’s mental state being determined by psychological laws of association that her representations come to be combined in this way; in the latter, the combination of representations is the result of her mental state being determined by her application of the laws of thought.

Not surprisingly, Kant does not take it upon himself to identify the relevant ‘laws of association’. This is presumably because he thinks it is the task of psychology, rather than of transcendental philosophy, to investigate and specify these laws. He does, however, describe the kind of law he has in mind in his discussion of the imagination in the A-deduction:

It is...a merely empirical law in accordance with which representations that have often followed or accompanied one another are finally associated with each other and thereby placed in a connection in accordance with which, even without the presence of the object, one of these representations brings about a transition of the mind to the other in accordance with a constant rule.<sup>34</sup>

Similarly, in the *Anthropology*, he says: “The law of association is this: empirical ideas that have frequently followed one another produce

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<sup>34</sup>A100.

a habit in the mind such that when one idea is produced, the other also comes into being.”<sup>35</sup>

This description of a situation in which representations are connected by “habit” rather than by an act of judgment is clearly in play in Kant’s discussion of objective judgment in §19. It is imperative, he claims there, to distinguish “the relation of given cognitions in every *judgment*” – which “belong[s] to the understanding” – from “a relation in accordance with the *laws of the reproductive imagination*,” that “has only subjective validity (my emphases).”<sup>36</sup> He goes on to illustrate this by distinguishing the objective judgment “Bodies are heavy” from “the relation of these same representations in which there would be only subjective validity, e.g., in accordance with laws of association”:

In accordance with the latter 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).<sup>37</sup>

In the ‘merely subjective’ case, then, all I can claim is that for me, the representation of lifting a body is “found together” – or associated – with the sensation of heaviness.<sup>38</sup> Kant’s point here, I take it, is that the existence of an associative relation between these sensations is merely a psychological fact about me – in his words, it expresses merely “the condition of the subject.” It is not yet a fact about external (corporeal) objects – the kind of fact that is expressed, in his example, by the claim “Bodies are heavy.” The former claim is merely subjectively valid because coming to be aware that these representations are psychologically associated in my case does not give me the grounds to

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<sup>35</sup> *Anthropology*, §31B, 7:176.

<sup>36</sup> B141.

<sup>37</sup> B142.

<sup>38</sup> Given that Kant claims that this relation accords with the laws of association, I think that the two representations being “found together” here is properly interpreted as their being associated with each other, rather than one merely following the other on a particular occasion.



demand that others connect their representations in the same way. In other words, since the mental state in which these two sensations are connected up is one I am in merely because of factors having to do with my psychology and past experience, I have no grounds to claim that others ought to be in such a mental state as well. That normative demand enters the picture only when I claim that there is an *objective* connection between the two representations – that is, that ‘being a body’ and ‘being heavy’ are “combined in the object.” In this latter case, I *bring* these representations into combination through a spontaneous activity governed by the laws of thought, and for that reason, I am justified in demanding intersubjective agreement.

At this point, one might raise the following natural objection to Kant’s example and my discussion of it. Isn’t the kind of criticism I made of Keller in the previous section equally applicable to the judgment “When I carry a body, I feel a pressure of weight”? If this judgment expresses something true, am I not entitled to demand that all subjects agree with it? If so, in what sense does the judgment lack ‘intersubjective validity’?<sup>39</sup>

To respond to this worry and identify the salient difference between the kinds of judgment I have in mind and Keller’s ‘standpoint-dependent’ judgments, I think it is necessary to get a clearer sense of what Kant means by ‘intersubjective validity’. While it is certainly the case that I can succeed in saying something true about my mental state in making the judgment “When I carry a body, I feel a pressure of weight,” I do not think this confers ‘intersubjective validity’ on my *mental state* itself. In other words, I think Kant could grant that if other subjects have no reason to disbelieve me, they ought to assent to my description of my mental state. However, this does not translate into a normative requirement that they themselves be in the *same* mental state that I am in. This brings out, I think, the kind of agreement that is involved in Kant’s notion of ‘intersubjective validity’: when I

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<sup>39</sup>This point is made by Lewis White Beck in his essay “Did the Sage of Königsberg Have No Dreams?” (In *Essays on Kant and Hume* [New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1978], 50-53). Beck concludes that judgments like the one above are “not mere associations of ideas without objective validity” because “they exact credence from every knowing subject.” I disagree with Beck’s reasoning here, as will become clear in what follows.

am in an ‘intersubjectively valid’ mental state – the kind of state I come to be in as a result of judging – I am entitled to claim that any subject that shares my cognitive circumstances ought to *be in the same mental state* (with respect to the object of my judgment). In Kant’s words, I can claim that all subjects ought to combine the given representations just as I do. On the other hand, in the case where I express a relation between my representations that holds only due to contingent psychological associations, I do not have the grounds to claim that the relevant representations ought to be connected up in the same way for any subject. It is for that reason that my mental state is ‘merely subjective’.

Note that the same thing cannot be said of the kinds of standpoint-dependent judgments Keller was interested in. I claimed above, *pace* Keller, that when  $S_1$  judges that there is a tower 10 feet away from her spatiotemporal location, her judgment *does* have intersubjective validity. I can now be more specific about what this translates to: the demand that  $S_1$  makes of other subjects is not limited to a requirement that they assent to her judgment. Rather, she claims that any subject located as she is ought to make the same judgment *in their own case*. It is that latter feature of the claim to intersubjective validity that is missing when  $S_1$  states a ‘merely’ psychological – and so, subjective – fact about herself.

I want to argue, then, that for Kant, *ESC* consists in consciousness of ‘merely subjective’ psychological associations that hold for a particular subject. In such consciousness, I come to be aware of myself as an empirical being that is determined by merely psychological laws. *TSC*, on the other hand, makes me aware of myself as a rational being, governed by the laws of thought that apply to all rational beings, considered merely as such.

## 4.6 Further Advantages of the Psychological Reading

In conclusion, I want to briefly discuss two further virtues of my view. First, I believe that reading *ESC* in the way I do helps to clarify Kant’s response to Hume’s description of the mind. On the standard construal of their relationship, Kant is thought to attribute the skepticism

entailed by Hume's account to his attempt to describe the mind in naturalistic terms — that is, his claim that the mind is governed by psychological laws of association. And it is often suggested that Kant's response is to deny that the mind can be described in this way, arguing instead that it must be described in purely normative, even *a priori* terms. Many commentators, for example John McDowell,<sup>40</sup> have found this unacceptable: in insisting that the mind can only be described in normative terms, Kant seems to have stripped the mind — and subjects who have minds — of their place in nature.

On my view, this is an inaccurate reading of Kant. If I am right about how Kant views the distinction between *TSC* and *ESC*, he does not seek to *replace* Hume's natural laws of psychology, with the normative laws of rationality. Instead, he wants to argue that the mind is subject to *both* natural and normative laws.

In fact, the claim I have defended in this chapter — that *ESC* amounts to consciousness of one's associations — actually captures, I think, Kant's transcendental argument against Hume. If all I were aware of were such associatively connected representations, Kant argues, I would only be aware of *myself* — more specifically, of a sequence in my mental states that could not even *represent* the world. When I hear a rooster and find myself imagining the smell of coffee, I do not even *seem* to myself to be representing an objective connection in the world. And Hume does not mean his skepticism to go so far, Kant points out, as to deny that the world *seems* to be a certain way to us — we do *seem* to see billiard balls moving, and the sun rising on

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<sup>40</sup>In *Mind and World*, McDowell complains: "... the subjective continuity [Kant] appeals to, as part of what it is for experience to bear on objective reality, cannot be equated with the continuing life of a perceiving animal. It shrinks...to the continuity of a mere point of view: something that need not have anything to do with a body, so far as the claim of interdependence is concerned. This is quite unsatisfying. If we begin with a free-standing notion of an experiential route through objective reality, a temporally extended point of view that might be bodiless so far as the connection between subjectivity and objectivity goes, there seems to be no prospect of building up from there to the notion of a substantial presence in the world. If something starts out conceiving itself as a merely formal referent for "I" (which is already a peculiar notion), how could it come to appropriate a body, so that it might identify itself with a particular living thing?" (John McDowell, *Mind and World* [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994], 102-3.)

Hume's picture. Kant's point against Hume is that this relation to the world is only achieved when our representations are connected up by a normatively governed, rational activity that we ourselves perform as subjects.

A second virtue of my view is that it reflects the deep and often overlooked parallel that I believe exists between Kant's characterizations of the subject in his theoretical and his practical philosophy. In both cases, the Kantian insight into the nature of human subjectivity is the same: as knowers and as agents, human beings are on the one hand empirical entities subject to natural laws; on the other hand, they are "rais[ed]...infinitely above all other living beings on earth"<sup>41</sup> by their capacity to judge and act spontaneously and for reasons, rather than through natural compulsion. In the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*,<sup>42</sup> Kant describes human agents as having one foot in the 'world of sense' and one foot in the 'world of understanding': our sensible character makes it the case that we find ourselves with naturally governed desires and inclinations, while our intellectual character entails our freedom to legislate among these psychological states and act for objective reasons. Similarly, on the picture of the cognitive subject I am proposing here, our understanding is capable of discriminating among the psychological states we find ourselves in as a result of natural laws of association and endorse, through an act of rational spontaneity, those that we take to correspond to objective states of affairs in the world.

While many commentators note that Kant's human subjects must be empirical entities that have a place in the natural world, they usually conclude that this requirement is met by the fact that human beings are embodied and so *physically* located in the world of spatiotemporal

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<sup>41</sup> "The fact that the human being can have the 'I' in his representations raises him infinitely above all other living beings on earth. Because of this he is a *person*...an entirely different being from *things*, such as irrational animals..." (*Anthropology*, 7:127).

<sup>42</sup>In Section III of the *Groundwork*, Kant says: "...a rational being...has two standpoints from which he can regard himself and cognize laws for the use of his powers and consequently for all his actions: *first*, insofar as he belongs to the world of sense, under laws of nature (heteronomy); *second*, as belonging to the intelligible world, under laws which, being independent of nature, are not empirical but grounded merely in reason." (*Groundwork*, 4:452).

objects. My emphasis here has been different: I think it is important for Kant that we are also *cognitively* subject to both natural and normative constraints: this, after all, is why he characterizes us as finite *intellects*. The primarily relevant natural laws are, I believe, psychological – laws that govern desire and inclination in the ethical case, and association and recollection in the case of cognition.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, it will turn out that for Kant, our empirical character is as essential to our capacity for knowledge as our transcendental character. The psychological tendencies to habitually associate representations that I have been discussing here play a central role, I believe, in Kant's account of how we acquire and apply *empirical concepts*. A full defense of this claim will follow in chapter 5.

# Chapter 5

## Associations and Empirical Concepts

### 5.1 Introduction

So far, I have argued that, for Kant, being conscious of oneself empirically is being conscious of the merely subjective connections between one's representations. I further claimed that merely subjective connections are *associative* in character: representations are said to be merely subjectively connected when they are associated together by the imagination rather than combined by an act of judgment.

In chapter 4, I emphasized the merely subjective character of associations in order to make my case that it is such imaginative connections that Kant has in mind when he talks about representations having a 'merely subjective' unity. Accordingly, many of the instances of association that I have discussed so far — such as my imagining the smell of coffee when I hear a rooster crow — are examples of representations being connected up in a way that is *not* taken to mirror objective connections in the world — my remembering the smell of coffee when I hear a rooster crow, for example, does not lead me to judge that there is an objective connection between roosters and coffee.

This emphasis on the subjective character of associations may give the impression that, on my view, imaginative associations — which I take to be the content of empirical self-consciousness — have little to do with the content of objective cognition. On such an interpretation of the position I am arguing for, it would be a merely contingent and

cognitively irrelevant fact about us that we have a faculty of imagination that can be determined to call up a representation when presented with another that has been repeatedly conjoined with it in the past. This conclusion, however, would conflict with Kant's insistence in the Transcendental Deduction that the activity of the imagination plays an essential role in objective cognition.<sup>1</sup> I want to turn in this chapter to reconciling these two features of Kant's discussion: that is, to explaining why the associative activity of the imagination may be thought to be necessary for the cognition of objects, despite the merely subjective nature of the connections between representations that it produces.

In fact, Kant's assertion that associative connections are 'merely subjective' — combined with his emphatic claim that he is the first to recognize the necessary role of imagination in experience<sup>2</sup> — has led many interpreters to the conclusion that he must conceive of the faculty as essentially having some other, non-associative, function. Michael Young, for example, concedes that Kant's discussion of imaginative reproduction governed by laws of association "suggest[s] Hume's basic view of imagination," but points out that if such agreement were actually in place, "it would...be quite unclear why Kant insists that his view represents a major departure from the thought of his predecessors." Instead, he concludes, Kant's view "does differ in a major way from his predecessors, most notably Hume..."<sup>3</sup> On Young's view, imagination plays a central role in cognition for Kant not via its capacity to form associations, but rather in "construing" or "interpreting" sensible intuition as presenting something of a particular kind.

In ascribing this function to the imagination, I believe that Young

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<sup>1</sup>For example, at A115: "The possibility of an experience in general and cognition of its objects rest on three subjective sources of cognition: sense, imagination, and apperception...sense represents the appearances empirically in perception, the imagination in association (and reproduction), and apperception in the empirical consciousness of the identity of these reproductive representations with the appearances through which they were given, hence in recognition." See also A120n, where Kant emphasizes his commitment to what "no psychologist has yet thought": viz. "that the imagination is a necessary ingredient of perception itself."

<sup>2</sup>At A120n.

<sup>3</sup>J. Michael Young, "Kant's View of Imagination," *Kant-Studien* 79 (1-4): 140-164 (1988), 145.

over-intellectualizes its activity. In section 5.2, I will argue that Young's account is untenable: the activity of interpretation or construal that Young describes requires concepts and could only be carried out by the understanding. Instead, I think Kant does take the capacity to associate representations to be essential for cognition: the psychological tendencies to associate representations that are often presented together play an essential role in the acquisition of empirical concepts. Claiming this does not erase the distance between Kant and Hume, however. On this issue, as on so many others, Kant's response to Hume is a nuanced one: he does not seek to reject Hume's description of empirical imagination out of hand, but rather to argue that imagination must work side-by-side with the understanding and its *a priori* concepts if experience and knowledge are to be possible.

## 5.2 Over-intellectualizing the Imagination

At B151, Kant defines the faculty of imagination as “the faculty for representing an object even without its presence in intuition.” Young takes this characterization as the basis of his account: according to him, the faculty of imagination enables us to, as he puts it, “[see] more than meets the eye,”<sup>4</sup> — that is, to “construe” or “interpret” what is immediately given through sensible affection as “the awareness of something that might also appear in other ways, and on other occasions.”<sup>5</sup>

The phenomenon Young has in mind is presumably the following: when I perceive a house in front of me, for example, the immediate sensible data I receive is only of the surface directly facing me. That I take what I am perceiving to be a house rather than merely a house façade entails that I am able to interpret my sensible awareness as awareness of an object that could appear differently under other conditions — that it has walls that I cannot currently see, say, but that would become visible to me if I were to walk around it. In so interpreting the object of my awareness as a three-dimensional house, I take it to have features that are not currently present to me in intuition. And this, for

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 141.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 145.



Young, is the contribution of imagination that Kant takes himself to be the first to recognize.<sup>6</sup> In Young's words, "imagining involves two moments: immediate sensory awareness, or empirical intuition, and the taking or construing of that awareness as the awareness of something other, or something more, than what immediately appears."<sup>7</sup>

Now, it is tempting to read Young as claiming that in the example above, I interpret what is sensibly given to me as a house rather than merely a house facade because my imagination is governed by the *concept* of a house — a concept of a three-dimensional structure that has front, back and side walls. Understood in this way, his general claim would not be a controversial one: Kant famously asserts that intuitions without concepts are 'blind,' that is, that experience requires not merely the having of sensible intuitions but also their interpretation under a concept.

Young seems to confirm that this is what he has in mind when he characterizes the act of 'construal' or 'interpretation' as one by which we "combine various appearances or traits in a rule, taking them as jointly characteristic of a type."<sup>8</sup> For Kant, of course, it is *concepts* that serve as rules for combination. At A141/B180, for example, he says, "the concept of a dog signifies a rule in accordance with which my imagination can specify the shape of a four-footed animal in general, without being restricted to any single particular shape that experience offers me..." Reading this back into Young's account, we may conclude that the imagination can go beyond the "single particular shape" that is presented to sensibility in one experience, in virtue of the fact that it is governed by the concept of an object that can appear differently under different conditions and on various occasions.

However, Young makes clear that the interpretive activity he has in mind is carried out independently of concepts. He says,

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<sup>6</sup>This way of understanding the role of the imagination in Kant goes back to Strawson's seminal paper "Imagination and Perception' (In *Experience and Theory*, ed. Laurence Foster and J. W. Swanson (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1970), 3154.) Young takes himself to be making explicit what Strawson described metaphorically. (146n9)

<sup>7</sup>Young, "Kant's View of Imagination," 142.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, 155.

It is one thing merely to be able to construe or interpret something sensibly present as an *F*, and to discriminate it from things of other types, which is a function of imagination. It is quite another thing to have the discursive representation of a thing of kind *F*, the *concept* of such a thing, and to be able to judge that what is sensibly present is an *F*, both of which are functions of the understanding.<sup>9</sup>

He adds, moreover, that a being could fully possess the capacity for the kind of imaginative interpretation he has in mind while lacking the faculty of understanding. It “seems obvious,” Young claims, that this is the situation with animals; according to him, it “makes good sense” to say of his cat that it interprets the sensible state it is in when it hears a fluttering in the bushes “as the awareness of a bird.”<sup>10</sup> “What the cat has,” he continues, “is the capacity to interpret his sensible states in accordance with certain rules and to discriminate sensible things of one sort from those of other sorts.”<sup>11</sup>

Now, what does seem obvious is that when a cat hears the sound of fluttering in the bushes, it can be disposed to respond to it in the way that it typically responds to birds: to move towards the sound, say, or to stalk the bushes. But these dispositions could be fully explained in terms of Humean associations: given its previous encounters with birds in bushes, we might say, the cat has developed an association between the sound of leaves fluttering and the presence of a bird; hearing such a sound causes it to expect a bird in the bushes, an expectation that it is disposed to respond to by approaching and attempting to stalk it.

However, this dispositionalist description does not fit well with the act of imaginative interpretation that Young wishes to ascribe to his cat. For one, it is too passive: it posits that the cat merely finds itself with the association between the sound of fluttering leaves and the presence of a bird after having had enough relevant experiences. For Young, however, interpretation is not something that merely “happens to us” but “something we do”<sup>12</sup> (and so, presumably, something the

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 149.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., 150.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., 152.

cat must be able to do as well if it is to count as being fully capable of it, as Young claims.) This is of a piece with his broader claim that Kant's account of imaginative activity is fundamentally non-Humean:

To interpret...is to link or unite one's current sensible state with other such states, i.e. with other ways — past or merely possible — in which the thing might appear. This linking or uniting is not a merely external connection among sensible states, however, as it would be on the Humean view. It does not consist, that is to say, merely in the joint occurrence of various sensible states, nor merely in our being disposed to pass from one such state to another. It is instead an internal connection, for to construe one's current sensible state as the awareness of something is to bring it under a rule that links it with other such states, a rule that unites various sensible appearances as characteristic of a thing of the kind in question.<sup>13</sup>

According to Young, then, for representations to be connected 'internally' rather than merely 'externally,' it is not enough that they be

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid., 145-6. See also at 154-5: "By borrowing the term 'association' from his empiricist predecessors, Kant gives them recognition for having drawn attention to the importance of the empirical or reproductive function of imagination. He does not mean to imply, however, that they understood that function properly...on the contrary, as I have argued, he holds that they were wrong in thinking of imagination as merely a receptive [i.e. passive] capacity..." What Young fails to mention here is that Kant not only uses the same term as his empiricist predecessors, he also *defines* association in the same way they do. At A100, for example, he says: "It is...a merely empirical law in accordance with which representations that have often followed or accompanied one another are finally associated with each other and thereby placed in a connection in accordance with which, even without the presence of the object, one of these representations brings about a transition of the mind to the other..." Compare Hume here: "When ev'ry individual of any species is found by experience to be constantly united with an individual of another species, the appearance of any new individual of either species naturally conveys the thought to its usual attendant." (David Hume, *Treatise of Human Nature*, Book I, iii, vi, 93. Page reference is to the Selby-Bigge edition [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978].) Note that Kant claims the transition between representations is "brought about" in the mind while Hume says that thought is "naturally conveyed" from one representation to the other — both descriptions seem equally passive to me.

passively associated with each other — that is, for the subject to be “disposed to pass” from one to the other. Rather, they must be *actively* brought under a rule that connects them up as features of a particular kind of thing.

But does it make sense to say that Young’s cat actively connects up its representations according to a rule? Young concedes that the cat cannot articulate or revise the rules in question. Nor can it choose them: in his words, “the rules in accordance with which the cat interprets his sensible awareness may change, but...the cat cannot himself change those rules.”<sup>14</sup> But this just entails, I think, that to the extent that the cat’s representations can be thought of as connected by rules, those rules must be in play independently of anything the cat can be said to *do* — which is to say they must be *external* in precisely the way Young wants to deny. And since the cat cannot be said to bring its representations under these external rules, this means that the connections that hold between its representations can only be external as well.

In fact, Kant explicitly denies that animals can be conscious of anything like an ‘internal connection’ between representations. In a well-known letter to Marcus Herz, he says that for animals, sense-data “carry on their play in an orderly fashion, as representations connected according to empirical laws of association...” In this manner, he continues, representations can “have an influence on...feeling and desire,” but without the animal being aware of the connections between representations: it may be “conscious of each individual representation,” he claims, “but not of their relation to the unity of representation of their object...”<sup>15</sup> In other words, Kant denies that animals are in any way conscious of the relations that individual representations must bear to each other if they are to be taken as together representing an object of a certain kind. Instead, he explicitly characterizes the connections between representations as *associative*, and as influencing animal behavior in a manner that suggests the dispositionalist account I outlined above.

The point generalizes to the human imagination. Kant makes clear that for humans as well, it is only the conscious application of *concepts*

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<sup>14</sup>Young, “Kant’s View of Imagination,” 150n15.

<sup>15</sup>Kant, letter to Marcus Herz, 11:52 (in *Correspondence*, 314).

that “unifies the manifold that has been successively intuited, and then also [imaginatively] reproduced, into one representation.”<sup>16</sup> A subject actively connects up a set of representations, in other words, in virtue of bringing them under a concept — a concept of an object (or an event) to which the various features represented belong. It is only in doing so that the subject can be said to interpret what is sensibly given as an *F*, an achievement that Young mistakenly attributes to the preconceptual imagination.<sup>17</sup>

In sum, I think that Young does not succeed in isolating an act that we can be said to imaginatively perform without any contribution by the understanding. For either the capacity to discriminate *F*s from non-*F*s that he ascribes to the imagination consists merely in a disposition to respond differentially to *F*s, or it requires fully conscious awareness that what is given is an *F*. In the former case, the connections between representations are ‘external’ and not a result of anything the subject herself *does*; in the latter, an ‘internal’ connection is only achieved through the conscious and active application of a concept by the understanding.

Young himself claims that while the imagination interprets sensible awareness according to a rule, the understanding can reflect on the correctness or incorrectness of the rules followed by the imagination, thereby framing concepts.<sup>18</sup> In putting the matter this way, however, he commits an error similar to the one I identified in Keller’s account in chapter 4. Representing an object — or, in Young’s words, interpreting what is sensibly present as a thing of a certain type — *requires* that the subject take her representations to be connected correctly or as they ought to be. In other words, a subject cannot interpret what is sensibly given to her as an object of a certain kind while leaving open the question of whether the rule she follows in so interpreting it is the correct one to be following in her epistemic circumstances. For it is *in virtue*

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<sup>16</sup>A103.

<sup>17</sup>In support of his view, Young cites a passage in which Kant claims that the activity of the imagination is an “indispensable function of the soul without which we would have no cognition...” (A78/B103) The full phrase, however, is “blind though indispensable” — Young omits any mention of ‘blindness’ and understandably so, for a blind construal does not seem to make much sense.

<sup>18</sup>Young, “Kant’s View of Imagination,” 153; 155.

of taking the rule by which she combines her representations to be the correct one that she can claim that the features she represents are combined in the object. Without such a commitment, her representations would not achieve what Kant calls ‘relation to an object,’ that is, they would not present an object to her at all. But this is just to say that the preliminary act that Young describes by which one interprets one’s sensible states as the awareness of a kind of *object* without reflecting on the correctness of that interpretation could not take place.

The failure of Young’s account raises again the question of why Kant claims that the imagination is necessary for empirical cognition. An important aspect of answering this question, as my discussion of Young has shown, is clarifying the relationship between the activity of the imagination and the understanding. Hannah Ginsborg has explored this relationship in multiple papers dealing with both the *Critique of Pure Reason* and the *Critique of Judgment*. I will focus mostly on her analysis of the former here, setting aside for now the interpretative issues having to do with the *Critique of Judgment*. Ginsborg disagrees with Young’s claim that Kant means to ascribe to the imagination an essentially non-Humean function. Instead, she claims that it is precisely in its associative capacity, as that is traditionally understood, that the imagination makes a necessary contribution to cognition: the natural capacity to form associations over the course of experience plays a fundamental role, on her view, in the acquisition of empirical concepts.

I agree with much of Ginsborg’s characterization of the problem of accounting for our possession of empirical concepts on Kant’s view, as well as her criticisms of existing responses to it. However, I disagree with her solution to the problem, which relies heavily on the third *Critique* and does not, I think, adequately capture the necessary role of the understanding that Kant takes pains to emphasize in the first *Critique*. Whereas Young over-intellectualizes the imagination’s contribution to cognition, Ginsborg, I believe, under-intellectualizes the understanding. To show this, I turn in the next section to a discussion of her view and my objections to it, before presenting my own account of the relation between the two faculties as they cooperate in securing empirical cognition.

### 5.3 Under-intellectualizing the Understanding

According to Ginsborg, the associative capacity of the imagination solves what would otherwise be an intractable problem in Kant's account of cognition: the problem of accounting for how we acquire empirical concepts.

The worry is as follows. Kant's most explicit characterization of the process by which we acquire a new empirical concept occurs in the *Logic*:

I see e.g., a spruce, a willow and a linden. By first comparing these objects with one another I note that they are different from one another in regard to the trunk, the branches, the leaves, etc.; but next I reflect on that which they have in common among themselves, trunk, branches, and leaves themselves; and I abstract from the quantity, the figure etc. of these; thus I acquire a concept of a tree.<sup>19</sup>

In Kant's example, we come to have the concept of a tree by comparing representations of different trees, reflecting on what they have in common (that they all have a trunk, branches and leaves) and abstracting away from their differences (how their leaves, branches and trunk differ from each other). The concept 'tree' that is thereby acquired contains what is common to these (and other possible) representations, in virtue of which they are the same type of thing despite their variations — that is, trees.

The problem, however, is that Kant's account leaves unexplained why it is precisely these representations that enter into the activity of comparison, reflection and abstraction in the first place. In the process that is meant to culminate with my acquisition of the concept 'tree', why do I only gather together for comparison representations of what I will eventually take to be trees, rather than beginning with a haphazard collection of, say, a spruce, a house and a sparrow? Kant does not give the impression that the representations I begin with are accidental; rather, the fact that the spruce, willow and linden are suitable for

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<sup>19</sup>Kant, §6, note I, 9:94-5 (In *Lectures on Logic*, 592).

subsumption under a common concept given their similarities appears to play a role in my comparing these representations in preference to others. The representations of a spruce, a linden and a willow are in some way already connected, that is to say, *before* I consciously reflect on their similarities and combine them under the concept ‘tree’.

But what is it that connects them? It cannot be the concept ‘tree,’ of course, for I do not possess that concept until after I perform the relevant comparison. Nor does it help to say that it is because I subsume all three representations under other concepts that apply to all of them — ‘leaf,’ ‘branch,’ ‘trunk,’ for example. For this just raises the question of how we first acquired those concepts, and a regress threatens.

The same worry arises for the suggestion made by Béatrice Longuenesse in *Kant and the Capacity to Judge* that the representations in question are connected up by *schemata*.<sup>20</sup> For Kant, a schema of the imagination is a rule that specifies “a general procedure of the imagination for providing a concept with its image.”<sup>21</sup> He illustrates this with the following example:

The concept of a dog signifies a rule [i.e. a schema] in accordance with which my imagination can trace the shape of a four-footed animal in general, without being restricted to any single particular shape that experience offers me or any possible image that I can exhibit *in concreto*.<sup>22</sup>

Through schemata, the discursive concepts of the understanding are translated into perceptual rules by which the features contained in a concept can be identified in a given perception, or reproduced in an image. Having the schema of a tree enables me to identify a trunk, branches and leaves when I see them (to know what such things look like, so to speak) and to reproduce parts or aspects of the tree that are not currently visually present to me; it also enables me to call to mind a general image of a tree even when I am not presented with one.

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<sup>20</sup>Béatrice Longuenesse, *Kant and the Capacity to Judge* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 116-8.

<sup>21</sup>A140/B179.

<sup>22</sup>A141/B180.



But the question that arose for concepts above arises equally for schemata — how can we be said to acquire the imaginative rules that constitute them? Even if it is possible to acquire the schema of a tree before we acquire the discursive concept, surely it could only be through a comparison of representations of trees? But what makes it the case that we happen to collect representations of trees for comparison in the first place?

It seems clear that if we are to make sense of Kant's account, the initial connections between representations that are together taken up for comparison have to be independent of and prior to the rules specified by the empirical concept that we acquire through that comparison. It is at this point that the associative capacity of the imagination enters in. For if it is the case that we have psychological tendencies to be affected by the similarities between representations, so that seeing a spruce, for example, naturally calls to mind other representations that resemble it, viz. previous representations of a willow and a linden, then these representations could be jointly presented to the understanding as material for comparison without requiring that it already possess the concept that unites them.

Such an account requires drawing a distinction between two kinds of rules — the conceptual rules of the understanding, and rules of the imagination. The latter arise due to laws of association, and consist in ways that the imagination has been determined through the course of a subject's experience to call up or reproduce a set of representations when presented with one relevantly related to it. Such a distinction between two kinds of rule would be in line with the text, however. At A121, for example, Kant says:

...if representations reproduced one another without distinction, just as they fell together, there would be in turn no determinate connection but merely unruly heaps of them, and no cognition at all would arise, their reproduction must thus have a rule in accordance with which a representation enters into combination in the imagination with one representation rather than with any others. This subjective and empirical ground of reproduction in accordance with rules is called the association of representa-

tions.<sup>23</sup>

In this passage, Kant raises a concern very similar to one we were worried about before in discussing his example from the *Logic*. Put in the words he uses here, that worry was the following: why is it the case that what we have to work with at the outset of the process of comparison, reflection and abstraction is not just an ‘unruly heap’ of representations that merely ‘fall together’ (e.g. of a spruce, a house and a sparrow) from which no cognition could arise? The answer, Kant makes clear, has to do with the fact that imagination has its own rules that make it the case that a given representation calls up a specific set of representations that it is *associated* with as a result of past experiences.

While Kant is often thought to be referring to conceptual rules in the passage above, it is important to note that he characterizes the rules in question as *subjective*. This makes clear that the rules in question are not the rules that comprise concepts, for the latter are essentially *objective*. In contrast, it makes sense to characterize rules of association as subjective, since which associations a subject finds herself — and, therefore, what psychological rules her representations are subject to — depends on her particular experiential history.

Further evidence that Kant appeals to imaginative rules that proceed according to laws of association can be found in *Reflexion* 2880. In that *Reflexion*, Kant speaks of ‘rules of apprehension’ and makes clear that he means associative rules by this: “We compare only what is universal in the rule of our apprehension. For example, one sees a sapling, so one has a representation of a tree; an elongated rectangle makes one think of a square.”<sup>24</sup> Kant’s wording strongly suggests that we *find* ourselves thinking of the second representation in each of the two pairs — that is to say, that the transition is a passive one brought about by associations. Associations connect up representations by “what is

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<sup>23</sup>A121.

<sup>24</sup>R2880 (1776-8?), 16:557, translated by Longuenesse in *Kant and the Capacity to Judge*, 116. Unlike Longuenesse, I interpret this passage as making reference to associative connections. A similar claim is made by Ulrich Schlösser in his paper “Concept Formation, Synthesis and Judgment: Kant’s Theory of the Logical and Cognitive Activities of the Mind.” (In *Self, World, and Aesthetics: Metaphysical Topics in Kant and Hegel*, ed. Dina Emundts [Berlin/New York: Walter De Gruyter, 2013], 191-2n26.)

universal” in them: that is, as I interpret him here, what is common to, or otherwise connects, the two representations — in the first case, that representations of saplings and representations of trees have been repeatedly temporally conjoined, in the second, that an elongated rectangle resembles a square.

If we grant that representations can be combined by associative rules prior to our possession of the empirical concept that unites them, the next question concerns the relation between such associations and the relevant concept that we are trying to explain the acquisition of. One possibility, which bears some similarity to Young’s view,<sup>25</sup> is that one succeeds in representing a spruce as a tree just in case what comes to mind when one sees a spruce is other trees. The concept ‘tree’ on such an account does not actually contribute anything to the combination of representations; instead, it merely expresses the external condition that *if* what I represent is to count as a tree, *then* it must be the case that the representations I imaginatively reproduce are representations of trees rather than any other representations.

In “Lawfulness without a Law,” Ginsborg criticizes this type of account along the same lines as my criticism of Young above. It will not do for the rules that govern representations to be outside the subject’s purview: the subject cannot yet be said to represent a tree if she merely finds herself thinking of other trees when presented with a spruce, without herself grasping a reason why it is trees — rather than houses or birds, say — that come to mind in her current perceptual circumstances. If she does not herself recognize that her present representation (of the spruce) belongs with and ought to be informed by representations of other trees, then her awareness of the reproduced representations of the willow and linden can only seem to her to be an arbitrary sequence of representations in her own thoughts, rather than related to the object external to her. As Ginsborg puts it, “it is only because I think of the reproduction of my representations as necessitated or governed by rules that I can refer them to objects. For

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<sup>25</sup>Young does not think that combination by the imagination proceeds through association, at least not in the passive, Humean sense under discussion here. But he does claim that combination by the imagination is sufficient for representing what is sensibly given as a particular kind of thing, and that the imagination brings representations under rules that are available prior to their reflective articulation in a concept.

to think of my perceptual image as objective is just to think of myself as required or necessitated to form the image in the way that I do...”<sup>26</sup>

The next possibility that Ginsborg considers, which she calls the ‘hybrid view,’<sup>27</sup> relies on Kant’s claim that it is the categories that refer a set of representations to an object. The subject’s prior possession of the categories is not subject to the same regress worries as the other concepts we considered above, since they are meant to be *a priori* in origin and applicable to all objects. The ‘hybrid view’ claims, then, that the subject is aware of some rules — the rules contained in the categories — which can determine the combination of representations she finds herself with, and confer on them the required relation to an object. In the example of the spruce above, the subject thinks of a willow and a linden as a result of her associations, but she is said to be consciously guided in combining these representations together by the categories. Given this conscious guidance, she is entitled to claim that her combination is rule-governed and so, appropriate to her perceptual circumstances; she can thus take the sequence of representations she finds herself with to be non-arbitrary and, therefore, objective.

This proposal does not stand up well to scrutiny, however. Precisely because the categories apply equally to all objects, they cannot rationalize or make necessary the connection between the representation of a spruce and in particular, the representations of a willow and a linden, rather than any other representations. Let us say that the category of substance guides the initial synthesis of my representation of the spruce. As a result of my associations, I find myself thinking of a willow and a linden. But how can the category of substance make it necessary that I call those two representations in particular to mind? For houses and sparrows are substances as well, and their appropriateness to my present circumstances, or lack thereof, cannot be gleaned from the general concept of a substance. What is necessary is that the particular connection between the spruce, willow and linden be recog-

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<sup>26</sup>Hannah Ginsborg, “Lawfulness without a Law,” in *The Normativity of Nature: Essays on Kant’s Critique of Judgement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 71.

<sup>27</sup>*Ibid.*, 72-74. The view is a ‘hybrid’ one because it relies on combination according to conceptual rules that the subject already possesses, while appealing to associations to explain the particular connections that are set up between representations.

nized by the subject as appropriate, but the categories do not have the specificity of content to ground this recognition. The ‘hybrid view’ does no better, then, in explaining how I can be conscious of a rule that makes the particular representations I find myself thinking of the correct ones for my perceptual circumstances; in this case, I would only be aware of having in mind a seemingly arbitrary sequence of *substances*, rather than representing an object external to me.

The failure of the proposals we have considered so far leaves us in a difficult situation. If I am to acquire the concept ‘tree’ and thereby represent the spruce in front of me as a tree, it seems that I must grasp a rule that makes it right to associate it with a willow and a linden, rather than a house and a sparrow. However, it is unclear what rule I can be said to appeal to — that is, what entitles me to claim that it is the same kind of thing as the willow and linden — if I do not yet possess the concept ‘tree’. Ginsborg finally presents her own solution to this problem: she suggests that a subject can be thought of as entitled to take the required normative attitude to her set of associated representations, without having to specify which rule it is that she satisfies in virtue of combining them as she does. The normativity in question is, in her words, ‘primitive’: the subject can take it that her imagination has combined representations as they ought to be combined without antecedently being aware *why* they ought to be combined in that way. What entitles her to do so on any given occasion, according to Ginsborg, is a general principle that we are entitled to take our imaginative synthesis as itself setting the standard for how it ought to be.<sup>28</sup> In her words:

Imagination proceeds blindly in its response to sensory simulation by objects...imagination’s activity in perception is a natural process, performed without the guidance of rules. But we may nonetheless take it to have a normative dimension in so far as it exemplifies rules for the perception of the objects which affect

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<sup>28</sup>Ginsborg cedes that this principle is not mentioned anywhere in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, but suggests that there is evidence of it in the *Critique of Judgment*, where Kant devotes more attention to the acquisition of empirical concepts. (Ibid., 82-3)

us. That is, I may take the actual features of my imaginative activity in the perception of a given object to serve as rules or standards governing how my, or indeed anyone else's, imaginative activity ought to be in the perception of that object. In this way, I can regard my synthesis in a given case of perception as governed by a rule or concept, and hence as meeting the conditions for objective cognition, even though I do not grasp the rules prior to performing the synthesis.<sup>29</sup>

Now, Ginsborg's account successfully avoids the difficulties we have discussed so far. The normative attitude she posits is not external to the subject's grasp, as on the first of the two views above. Moreover, what the subject takes to be normatively appropriate is the particular combination of representations that she finds herself with as a result of her associations, unlike on the second 'hybrid view'. As such, she can treat her representation of the spruce as rightly belonging together with the willow and linden, which, Ginsborg claims, is just what is required for her to acquire the concept 'tree'.

Ginsborg finds evidence that Kant makes place for a normative attitude that is 'primitive' in the *Critique of Judgment*. In that work, Kant claims that a judgment of beauty is primitively normative in just this way: when I feel pleasure in a beautiful object, I am entitled to claim that that pleasure is appropriate and that everyone else ought to feel it as well, even though I cannot specify any criteria the object satisfies in virtue of which it is beautiful.

Importantly, however, a judgment of beauty is still *subjective* for Kant in the sense that it is *about* the subject — what is claimed to be appropriate is the mental state that the subject is in, that is, the pleasure that she feels when confronted with beauty. What a judgment of beauty lacks is precisely 'relation to an object': in claiming the appropriateness of her feeling, the subject does *not* ascribe any property to the object that elicits it. She does not categorize it, that is to say, as belonging to a class of objects with which it has properties in common, because she cannot say which properties it has that result in her feeling of pleasure.

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<sup>29</sup>Ibid., 83.

But that just means that a judgment of beauty is fundamentally different from a judgment by which I acquire a concept. For the latter is essentially *not* a claim about my mental states; instead, it has the ‘relation to an object’ that is absent in the case of a judgment of beauty. In acquiring the concept ‘tree,’ I do not merely claim that the combination of representations of a spruce, willow, and linden that I find myself with is primitively appropriate. Rather, I make a claim about *objects*: I claim that the spruce, linden and willow are the same type of thing in virtue of the features they objectively share (i.e. leaves, branches and a trunk).

To make the same point in different words: the normative attitude that Ginsborg appeals to is only a kind of primitive approval attached to the consciousness of a sequence of mental states that a subject happens to find herself in. The content of this primitive approval is exhausted by the expression: “I like the mental states I am having (and anyone else who had these mental states in my circumstances ought to like them as well).”<sup>30</sup> And while this may indeed be all that we can express when making a judgment of beauty, it is by no means equivalent to the judgment “There is a tree in front of me.”

As was already mentioned in discussing the ‘hybrid view’ above, Kant claims that it is through the application of the categories that representations are related to objects. By omitting any mention of the categories in her account of the acquisition of empirical concepts, I think Ginsborg fails to recognize the central role that these *a priori* concepts are meant to play in *converting*, so to speak, judgments about one’s mental states into judgments about objects. In this way, I believe she under-intellectualizes the activity of the understanding in objective

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<sup>30</sup>Or at most, in the case of the spruce, “I like that I am thinking of these leafy things with a trunk and branches (and anyone else who thinks of such things in my circumstances ought to like it as well).” In the *Critique of Judgment*, Kant sometimes uses the word ‘liking’ (*wohlgefallen*) to describe the feeling I have for the beautiful, and I think it is appropriate to use the same word to give expression to the attitude of primitive normativity that Ginsborg wants to appeal to here. By doing so, I hope to emphasize that, on her account, the subject is only properly characterized as having a certain indeterminate feeling of approval towards her associated representations, rather than as discovering that they conform to a determinate rule; the latter is surely necessary, however, for her to count as acquiring the empirical concept that unites her representations.

cognition.

In the next section, I will develop an alternative account, according to which forming an empirical concept from a set of associated representations requires the active application of the categories. Rather than viewing the categories as antecedently guiding imaginative combination as on the ‘hybrid view,’ however, I will argue that the categories are better understood as being applied to a set of *already associated* representations so as to extract from this combination a representation that has the *a priori* form of an objective concept.

## 5.4 Applying the Categories to Imaginative Associations

The distinction between the awareness of one’s own mental states and the awareness of objects — which I have discussed at length in previous chapters — is a distinction that I take to be central to Kant’s argument in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. It is one that he emphasizes in various passages, many of which I have already mentioned. I want to return to one of these passages here, because I think it supports my criticism of Ginsborg’s account and points the way to the alternative I wish to defend.

In §19 of the Transcendental Deduction, Kant says that he wishes to “investigate more closely” the relation between representations in an objective judgment and distinguish that relation “as something belonging to the understanding,” from a relation “in accordance with laws of the reproductive imagination” that “has only subjective validity.” In order to bring out this difference, Kant contrasts the judgment “Bodies are heavy” — which he offers as an example of an objective judgment made by the understanding — and the judgment “If I carry a body, I feel a pressure of weight.” The latter, he says, expresses a relation of representations that is merely subjective, because it is formed only “in accordance with laws of association.” The judgment ‘Bodies are heavy,’ on the other hand, “say[s] 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 of-



ten as that might be repeated).”<sup>31</sup> The implication here, of course, is that the judgment ‘If I carry a body, I feel a pressure of weight’ merely expresses that the representation of a body is “found together in perception” (i.e. associated) with the representation of weight. As such, it does not ascribe a property (heaviness) to an object (the body) at all; rather it merely expresses “the condition of the subject” who finds herself with these representations.

In the terms I have been using so far, the judgment ‘If I carry a body, I feel a pressure of weight’ is a judgment about a sequence of representations — the representation of a body followed by a representation of weight — that a subject finds herself having. In contrast, the judgment ‘Bodies are heavy’ has the ‘relation to an object’ that makes it an instance of objective cognition — it asserts that ‘being a body’ and ‘being heavy’ are “combined in the object.” Now, Kant is explicit about what he takes to be distinctive about the latter judgment such that its referent is an object rather than the subject’s own mental states: the representations that comprise the objective judgment are related “in accordance with principles of the objective determination of all representations insofar as cognition can come from them...” But these principles, of course, are the categories. The distinction between the two judgments Kant cites, in other words, is that in the former, the representations ‘body’ and ‘weight’ are related only associatively, whereas in the latter, that relation has been subjected to the categories.<sup>32</sup>

In the *Prolegomena*, Kant discusses another pair of judgments, and describes how a subjective “judgment of perception” is converted to an objective “judgment of experience”. (As I argued in chapter 3, the distinction between judgments of perception and judgments of experience maps onto the distinction we are focusing on here between judgments that express the subjective connections between one’s mental states and judgments about objects.) Kant says:

To have a more easily understood example, consider the follow-

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<sup>31</sup>B141-2.

<sup>32</sup>It is widely thought that Kant means to rule out that a merely subjective judgment like ‘If I carry a body, I feel a pressure of weight’ is possible. I have argued against this conclusion in chapters 3 and 4.

ing: If the sun shines on the stone, it becomes warm. This judgment is a mere judgment of perception and contains no necessity, however often I and others also have perceived this; the perceptions are only usually found so conjoined. But if I say: the sun warms the stone, then beyond the perception is added the understanding's concept of cause, which connects necessarily the concept of sunshine with that of heat, and the synthetic judgment becomes necessarily universally valid, hence objective, and changes from a perception into experience.<sup>33</sup>

In this passage from the *Prolegomena*, Kant makes many of the same points we discussed from §19 above. However, he is much more explicit about, and includes an illustration of, the role of the categories in *converting* a judgment that merely expresses the subjective connections between one's mental states into a judgment that refers to an object (or, in this case, an objective state of affairs).<sup>34</sup> In the judgment, "The sun warms the stone," the relation between representations has been subjected to the categories: more specifically, it has been brought under the category of cause-and-effect, such that the sun's heat is now taken to be necessarily connected to the stone's warmth as cause to effect. In making a judgment with this categorial form, what is achieved is the 'relation to an object' that was missing in the judgment of perception. In the words of §19, the sun's shining and the heat's warmth are judged to be "combined in the object."

Returning to the example from §19, and following the example in the *Prolegomena*, we can flesh out what is involved in making the objec-

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<sup>33</sup>*Prolegomena*, §20, 4:301n\*

<sup>34</sup>It might be more difficult in this case to hear the subjective judgment "If the sun shines on the stone, it becomes warm" as being a judgment about one's own mental states. However, I think Kant does mean it to be understood in this way, since he offers it as an example of a judgment of perception, which he says expresses "merely a connection of perceptions within my mental state, without reference to the object." (*Prolegomena*, 4:300) The idea presumably is that what I am aware of is a pattern amongst my representations such that representations of the sun shining on stones are followed by (and ultimately associated with) representations of the stone being warm. The example is ambiguous, however, and it is no doubt for this reason that Kant offers a different, more effective one in §19 of the B-deduction.

tive judgment “Bodies are heavy.” I begin by finding, after a course of experience, that the representation of body is associated with the representation of weight for me, such that when I represent myself lifting a body, I find myself representing (or anticipating) a feeling of heaviness; I can express this through the judgment “When I carry a body, I feel a pressure of weight.” Now, however, I subsume the relation between the representations ‘body’ and ‘heaviness’ under the category of substance, such that the body is taken to be connected with heaviness as a subject to its predicate. In so doing, I claim that ‘being a body’ and ‘being heavy’ are “combined in the object”.

We can now return to the original problem of empirical concepts. As we have seen, a successful account must explain two stages (or aspects) of the process by which we acquire, for example, the concept ‘tree.’ First, it must explain why we take up for comparison a combination of representations of trees in particular, even before we possess the concept ‘tree.’ Second, it must explain how we come to be aware that these representations have something in common — that is, that they are all representations of the same kind of *object*, which we go on to conceptualize as a tree. On the first of these two questions, as I have indicated, I agree with Ginsborg’s account. The connections that hold between my representations of a spruce willow, and linden *before* I possess the concept ‘tree’ must be the result of association: when I encounter a spruce, my imagination proceeds only in accordance with laws of association in calling up previous representations of a willow and a linden simply because these representations resemble each other.

On the second question, however, I have claimed that Ginsborg’s account is less than satisfactory. For, according to her, all that must be added to my consciousness of the associated representations of the spruce, willow and linden for me to count as acquiring the concept ‘tree’ is a primitive attitude through which I take this particular combination of representations to be appropriate. I argued that such a primitively normative attitude cannot account for the relation to external objects that the empirical concept ‘tree’ has; it amounts merely to a feeling of approval whose object is my own mental states.

In fact, the passages from §19 and the *Prolegomena* that I have discussed point the way to an alternative account that incorporates the categories but does not suffer from the worries we identified for the ‘hybrid view’ above. I could not — and do not need to — be guided by the categories in calling up a set of associated representations, as

on the ‘hybrid view.’ Instead, the categories enter the scene, I want to argue, *after* a set of representations has already been reproduced through imaginative association, in order to extract from them an empirical concept of a particular kind of *object*.

To see how this would work, let us return to the example of the spruce. Upon encountering a spruce when I do not possess the concept of a tree, my imagination responds to my sensible intuition without direction by the understanding, and reproduces previous representations of a willow and a linden. As a result of an association formed according to natural laws alone, then, I find myself with the three representations mentioned at the beginning of Kant’s example in the *Logic*. Next, I consciously perform the activities of reflection, comparison and abstraction that Kant points to in that passage. It is at this point that the categories enter in, I suggest. In reflecting on what the representations have in common (i.e., trunk, leaves, branches) and abstracting from their differences, I am guided by the category of substance in the following way: the concept I am to acquire that will express what the representations have in common is subsumed under the category of substance, so that it is assigned the role of subject in a categorical (i.e. subject-predicate) judgment. In this way, I first acquire the concept of an object that *has* the properties of having a trunk, leaves and branches, and I can now judge that the connected representations I am aware of are all representations of objects that instantiate that concept — that is, trees. By applying the category of substance to my representation, then, I form a concept that is suitable for employment in a judgment whose form carries the necessary reference to objects that we are trying to account for.

The view I am proposing here is most explicitly suggested by another example that Kant discusses in the *Prolegomena*. In describing what is involved in making the objective judgment, “Air is elastic,” he says:

...a pure *a priori* concept of the understanding...does nothing but simply determine for an intuition the mode in general in which it can serve for judging. The concept of cause being such a concept, it therefore determines the intuition which is subsumed under it, e.g., that of air, with respect to judging in general — namely, so that the concept of air serves, with respect to expansion, in the relation of the antecedent to the consequent

in a hypothetical judgment.<sup>35</sup>

Now, Kant focuses on intuitions in this passage because he is concerned with characterizing judgments in general, not merely judgments by which we acquire new concepts.<sup>36</sup> Note however, that the *concept* of air is said to be determined by the application of the category of cause, and that this determination consists in fixing its role as the antecedent in an objective hypothetical judgment. What this achieves, Kant goes on to say is that

the expansion is represented not as belonging merely to my perception of the air in my state of perception or in several of my states or in the state of others, but as necessarily belonging to it, and the judgment: the air is elastic, becomes universally valid and thereby for the first time a judgment of experience, because certain judgments occur beforehand which subsume the intuition of the air under the concept of cause and effect, and thereby determine the perceptions not merely with respect to each other in my subject, but with respect to the form of judging in general (here, the hypothetical), and in this way make the empirical judgment universally valid.

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<sup>35</sup>*Prolegomena*, 4:300. Each of Kant's Categories have their corresponding form of judgment — the form of judgment that corresponds to the category of substance is the categorical judgment, whereas the category of cause is linked with the hypothetical judgment.

<sup>36</sup>At 4:298 in the *Prolegomena*, Kant says, "All of our judgments are at first mere judgments of perception; they hold only for us, i.e., for our subject, and only afterwards do we give them a new relation, namely to an object, and intend that the judgment should also be valid at all times for us and for everyone else..." Kant's claim that we always first judge subjectively, and then convert our initial judgments to objective ones has puzzled commentators. For surely once we possess an empirical concept we can apply it directly in an objective judgment without first making a judgment about our own sensible states? I suggest that we can make sense of Kant's claim here if we understand him to be describing the process by which we acquire and apply a new empirical concept. In the latter case, it is true that I must first become conscious of a connection between representations that holds only for me, i.e., associatively, and only then am I able, through comparison, reflection and abstraction governed by the Categories, to acquire a concept that unites them in a manner that is objective and universally valid.

In this example, as in the one above, subsuming the concept of air under the category of cause first enables me to give it objective reference. By assigning the concept of air the place of the antecedent in an objective hypothetical judgment, I judge — not that the representation of air ‘belongs with’ (or happens to be connected to) the representation of expansion merely in “the state of my perception” — but rather that these representations are necessarily (i.e., non-arbitrarily) connected together, that is, that it is *objectively* the case that if air is placed in empty space, it will expand to fill it.

Now, my discussion here should not be taken to mean that particular concepts belong under one category in preference to others: if this were the case, the question of how we possess the rules by which to select the appropriate category would again arise. My claim is only that a concept must be subsumed under *some category or other*, and that this fixes the kind of objective judgment that it can then figure in. I can equally subsume the concept ‘air’ under the category of substance, if I assign it the role of subject in a categorical judgment — for example: ‘Air is colorless’. Likewise, I can subsume the concept ‘tree’ under the category of cause and effect, and assign it the role of consequent, say, in a hypothetical judgment — for example: ‘If a sapling is watered, it becomes a tree.’

The general proposal, then, is as follows: in encountering a representation, the reproductive imagination calls up other representations that are associated with it. In order to acquire a new empirical concept that objectively unites these associated representations, I must reflect on what connects them in a way that is informed by the role that the concept I am searching for is to play in an objective judgment. In other words, I must bring the concept under the category corresponding to the form of judgment in which I employ it.<sup>37</sup> For it is only in this way that I can successfully acquire the concept of a certain kind of *object*.

In conclusion, I think Ginsborg is absolutely right to argue that, given their generality and universal applicability, the categories could not *antecedently* guide the selection of representations that, upon com-

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<sup>37</sup>The possible forms of objective judgment are catalogued in the table of judgments in the Metaphysical Deduction; the table of Categories provides the corresponding type of objective concept that must figure in each of these judgmental forms.

parison, give rise to a new empirical concept. This observation, however, leads her to incorrectly conclude that the categories make no significant contribution at all to the acquisition of empirical concepts. What I have tried to argue here is that is precisely their generality and universal applicability that enables the categories to impart to all empirical concepts the *a priori* form that is necessary if they are to figure in judgments about objects. If my account here is correct, it effectively undercuts Ginsborg's motivations for taking the normativity of our empirical judgments to be 'primitive': recognizing the categories as the determinate source — or form — of normativity has the advantage of according with Kant's text as well as the philosophical motivations that underpin it.

## 5.5 Conclusion

In clarifying the role that associations play in the formation of empirical concepts in this chapter, I hope to have situated my account of empirical self-consciousness within Kant's broader critical project. The merely subjective, associative connections between representations that I have argued form the content of empirical self-consciousness turn out to play a necessary role in our acquisition of empirical concepts. But this means that, for Kant, a subject's empirical character is as essential to her cognitive activity as her transcendental character. The former consists in her sensitivity to the patterns in her sensible states by which she can be receptive to the world; the latter gives her the ability to recognize that these patterns correspond to objective states of affairs, and thereby first to judge in a manner that is binding on all subjects.

# Chapter 6

## Concluding Remarks

### 6.1 Summary of Main Themes

In this dissertation, I have been concerned with two pairs of distinctions — the distinction between transcendental and empirical self-consciousness, and the distinction between objective and ‘merely subjective’ judgments. I have argued that (1) these distinctions overlap; and (2) each distinction picks out what, for Kant, is fundamentally a difference in kind.

More specifically, (1) consists in the novel interpretative suggestion that Kant’s claim that a subject can be conscious of herself both transcendently and empirically is equivalent to his claim that she can be conscious of both objective and subjective combinations of representations, respectively. Identifying these two distinctions — both of which have proved troubling for interpreters — helps shed light on each. For a discursive subject, consciousness of her transcendental self just is consciousness of her activity of synthesizing representations according to objective rules; in contrast, consciousness of her empirical self is consciousness of representations she finds oneself having as a result of the subjective associations that are particular to her psychology. As Kant puts it in the *Anthropology*, transcendental self-consciousness is “consciousness of what the human being does,” whereas empirical self-consciousness is “consciousness of what he undergoes, in so far as he is affected by the play of his own thoughts.”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>*Anthropology*, §24, 7:161.



As for (2), it consists in the insistence that on Kant's view, there is an absolute and crucial distinction between judging in a manner that merely reports what is the case for one's own subject and judging in a manner that is objectively valid and demands agreement from all subjects. That it is possible for us to judge in both ways is not in dispute for Kant, but accounting for this possibility demands, according to him, the equally absolute and crucial distinction between a subject's empirical character — her status as a psychological animal governed by the natural laws of the mind; and her transcendental character — her capacity for the spontaneous rational activity that is distinctive of human experience and judgment. It is the latter that, for Kant, makes human beings “entirely different...from *things*, such as irrational animals...”<sup>2</sup>As he says in the *Groundwork*:

...a rational being...has two standpoints from which he can regard himself and cognize laws for the use of his powers...first, insofar as he belongs to the world of sense, under laws of nature...second, as belonging to the intelligible world, under laws which, being independent of nature, are not empirical but grounded merely in reason.”<sup>3</sup>

Many of the objections to existing interpretations of both distinctions that I raise in this dissertation have centered around their failure to appreciate (2). I want to summarize the main instances of this here; considering them jointly will help drive home, I believe, the crucial Kantian thesis they all overlook.

### 6.1.1 Reference to an Object

In the *Prolegomena*, Kant says of a judgment of perception — that is, a ‘merely subjective’ judgment — that it expresses “merely a connection of perceptions within my mental state, *without reference to the*

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<sup>2</sup>*Anthropology*, 7:127.

<sup>3</sup>*Groundwork*, 4:452

*object.*”<sup>4</sup> For this reason, as I have emphasized, it is different in kind from a judgment of experience — that is, an objective judgment, which *does* refer to objects. Kant describes how our cognitions succeed in referring to objects — that is, succeed in being *about* objects — in the section titled “On the Synthesis of Recognition in the Concept” in the A-deduction. There, he raises the following question:

What does one mean...if one speaks of an object corresponding to and therefore also distinct from the cognition? It is easy to see that this object must be thought of only as something in general = *X*, since outside of our cognition we have nothing that we could set over against this cognition as corresponding to it.<sup>5</sup>

Kant’s question in this passage is as follows: what is it about a cognition that makes it the case that in having it, we take ourselves to be aware of something that is distinct from and external to it — that is, of the *object* that the cognition is of? Since it is through having the cognition that we come to be aware of the world in the first place, Kant points out, we cannot ‘step outside’ the cognition so as to compare it to the world and confirm that it correctly represents what is the case. In other words, it could not be an independent evaluation of the ‘truth’ of our cognitions that marks them as objective. But what is it, then, that differentiates objective representations from ‘merely subjective’ ones? Kant’s solution follows immediately:

We find, however, that our thought of *the relation of all cognition to its object* carries something of *necessity* with it, since namely the latter is regarded as that which is opposed to our cognitions being determined *at pleasure or arbitrarily* rather than being determined *a priori*.<sup>6</sup>

Kant’s answer, then, is that a cognition, or judgment, is *objective*, insofar as the subject takes it that the representations that comprise it

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<sup>4</sup>*Prolegomena*, 4:300 (my emphasis).

<sup>5</sup>A104.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, my emphases.

are combined *correctly* — that is, as is normatively necessary given the epistemic circumstances — rather than merely *arbitrarily*, or in a manner that is not normatively required by the epistemic circumstances. The concept of the *object* of a representation, for Kant, just is the concept of that which requires that one's representations be combined in one way rather than any other — that is, which makes it the case that a particular way of combining one's representations is the correct one.

Finally, a subject expresses her judgment that her representations are combined correctly in virtue of bringing them under objective concepts formed in accordance with the Categories. When she judges that the sun warms the stone, for example, she thereby claims that her representation of the sun shining on a stone is not *arbitrarily* connected with her representation of the stone growing warm; rather, it is *correctly* so connected, because the sun's shining on the stone objectively *causes* it to grow warm.

Now, in contrast with such objective judgments, a 'judgment of perception' does not carry any commitment to the correctness of the combination of representations a subject finds herself with. Instead, according to Kant, it merely expresses her particular state of mind — that is, it merely reports that, for her, one representation happens arbitrarily to be followed by another. But this means that the combination of representations that is reported fails to have any relation to an object at all: the subject does not even *claim* to be representing the world in expressing such a judgment.

This is a crucial point for Kant, because it is the core of his response to empiricists like Locke and Hume. While both take for granted that our cognitions *seem* to be about external objects, he argues, they cannot explain how that is so within the confines of empiricism. For judging that our cognitions are objective requires converting mere judgments of perception to judgments about objects, and what must be added to a combination of representations in order to so convert them cannot come from the representations themselves; rather, it must be *a priori*.

In one way or another, the interpretations I discuss in chapters 3, 4 and 5 run afoul of this central insight. This is most obvious in Pierre Keller's suggestion — versions of which are widespread in the literature, and which I argue against in chapter 4 — that a 'merely subjective' judgment (i.e. a judgment of perception) expresses what is the case from a subject's particular *point of view*. As I argue, however, what I am aware of from my point of view is still the *world*; consequently,

judgments made from a point of view are still objective rather than subjective — they carry the claim that I have combined my representations *correctly* given the way the world appears from my point of view.

The mistake is no less obvious in Beatrice Longuenesse’s view — which I discuss in Chapter 3 — according to which, our judgments about objects can be “subjective to a greater or lesser degree”<sup>7</sup> I argue, once again, that Kant’s central point against his predecessors is that such ‘subjective objective’ judgments are impossible. While we can certainly make *careless* objective judgments — judgments based on inadequate and even subjective grounds — even a careless objective judgment claims the relation to its object that makes it absolutely different in kind from a judgment of perception.

Finally, the same error crops up in Young’s suggestion — discussed in chapter 5 — that I can imaginatively determine that my cognitions are of a certain type of object, while remaining neutral about whether my determination is correct or incorrect. As should be clear by now, however, I think Kant explicitly denies that I can succeed in representing objects while remaining neutral about the normative correctness of my representations.

On my view, a judgment of perception is a judgment about a combination of representations that a subject finds herself having as a result of contingent associations that that she has psychologically acquired through the course of her experience. Such a combination of representations — for example, imagining the smell of coffee when she hears a rooster — is taken to be *arbitrary* in precisely the way that precludes its having a relation to objects: in expressing that she imagines coffee when she hears a rooster crow, the subject does not claim that there is anything *correct* about having this sequence of representations, nor does she demand that others have the same association. And that just means that she does not judge that the connection between roosters and coffee is an objective one; rather, her judgment expresses a subjective connection in her mental states that does not bear a relation to objects in just the way required by a Kantian judgment of perception.

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<sup>7</sup>Beatrice Longuenesse, *Kant and the Capacity to Judge* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 83.

### 6.1.2 The Self as Subject vs. Object

Corresponding to the in-principle distinction between objective and subjective judgments is the distinction between the transcendental and empirical selves. Once again, I believe, Kant intends this distinction to be absolute: the capacities that make up a subject's transcendental character are necessarily different in kind, on his view, from the capacities that make up her empirical character (even though both capacities are possessed by one and the same subject.)

A subject's transcendental character consists in her capacity for spontaneity; consciousness of this capacity, for Kant, could not be consciousness of an object that is *subject* to the categories, since it is itself the *source* of the necessary categorial determination of objects. In his words:

...of the thinking I...one can say not so much that it cognizes itself through the categories, but that it cognizes the categories, and through them all objects...Now it is indeed very illuminating that I cannot cognize as an object itself that which I must presuppose in order to cognize an object at all..."<sup>8</sup>

In being conscious of exercising my spontaneity, I am conscious of performing a rational activity that is subject to the categories and governed by *reasons*, rather than determined by causes. For if I were *causally* determined to judge in a particular way, according to Kant, I would no longer be warranted in demanding that others agree with my judgments — the very feature that, for him, constitutes their objectivity. I could only claim, in his words, “that I am so constituted that I cannot think of this representation otherwise than as so connected...”<sup>9</sup> — that is to say, that I cannot help the way I think — which is “precisely what the skeptic wishes most,” since it leaves me without any warrant to claim that my thinking *correctly* represents the world.

Empirical knowledge of myself, on the other hand, is meant to be knowledge of myself as a categorially determined object — an object

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<sup>8</sup>A401-2.

<sup>9</sup>B168.

that, like all objects, is governed by causal laws. I cannot grasp my transcendental self in this way, for the reasons above; instead, the transcendental self is as different from the empirical self, Kant says, as the activity of cognition is different from the object cognized.<sup>10</sup>

Interpreters like Guyer, Longuenesse and Keller fail to appreciate this, however, since they all suggest versions of a view on which empirical self-consciousness can consist in consciousness of the exercise of one's spontaneous — that is, transcendental — capacities. As I have discussed in Chapter 4, for Guyer, the distinction between transcendental and empirical self-consciousness is “not be a distinction between two numerically distinct forms of self-consciousness, but rather the difference between an abstract characterization of the unity of self-consciousness and its concrete realization.”<sup>11</sup> Similarly, for Longuenesse, at least one way of understanding empirical self-consciousness is just as “transcendental self-consciousness made ‘clear’.”<sup>12</sup> Finally, for Keller, empirical self-consciousness consists in consciousness of the exercise of spontaneity from the subject's particular point of view. Each of these suggestions fails to grasp, then, that to be empirically conscious of oneself, for Kant, is to be conscious of oneself as an *object*, that is to say, to be conscious of oneself as causally determined. But causal determination is essentially incompatible with the exercise of spontaneity.

On my view, a subject's empirical character consists in her capacity to be governed by causal, psychological laws — the kinds of laws that make it the case that she finds herself with associations between representations that have been frequently combined in her experience. I say more about this in section 6.2.2 below: for now, I merely want to point out that my account successfully accords with Kant's insistence that to cognize the self as an object is to cognize it in a capacity that is fundamentally different from its role as the subject of experience and knowledge. For the psychological self is a causally determined object that has a place in the causal temporal order, among other objects.

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<sup>10</sup>A402.

<sup>11</sup>“The Deduction of the Categories: The Metaphysical and Transcendental Deductions,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*, ed. by Paul Guyer (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 149.

<sup>12</sup>“Self-Consciousness and Consciousness of One's Own Body: Variations on a Kantian Theme,” *Philosophical Topics* 34 (2006): 283-309, 305.

## 6.2 Looking Forward

There are two extensions of my project that it has been impossible to include in the dissertation. I want to briefly summarize them in these concluding remarks, since they point to the fuller account of which this dissertation is a part, and which I hope to develop in my future research.

### 6.2.1 Self-affection by the Imagination

First, while I focused my attention in Chapter 2 to Kant's suggestion that self-affection occurs through the synthesis of the *understanding*, I think there is evidence that suggests that he also allows for self-affection through the synthesis of the *imagination*. In *Reflexion* 6360, for example, he says:

That a person can represent himself from one side as appearance is not more difficult to understand than that this can be the case with outer objects...For he is then in part the object of his sense, in part of his faculty of thinking. In the first case he is conscious of how he affects himself empirically, and he represents those impressions in the form of time. In the second he is conscious how he affects the subject and is to that extent in the act of spontaneity.<sup>13</sup>

Now, it is clear from this passage that Kant means to allow for *two* kinds of self-affection: *empirical*, as well as transcendental. And while I would need to say a lot more to fully defend this claim, I believe we can make good sense of this if we understand self-affection generally as a process by which the mind acts on — or determines — its own contents. Empirical self-affection, on my view, would then amount to the contents of the mind being determined by empirical psychological laws: a subject's being led to think of coffee when she hears a rooster,

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<sup>13</sup>R6360, 1797, 18:689. In *Notes and Fragments*, 395.

for example, because her past experiences have led her to naturally associate the two. Transcendental self-affection, on the other hand, would be the kind of affection by spontaneity that I have discussed at length in Chapter 2 — that is, a subject’s active determination of the contents of her mind through synthesis or judgment, governed not by empirical, psychological laws but by transcendental, logical laws.

### 6.2.2 Empirical Self-Knowledge

In this dissertation, I have focused on developing an account of how a subject can be conscious of her empirical self — a kind of self-consciousness that I have argued is essential to her capacity for cognition. Given the merely subjective nature of empirical self-consciousness and the judgments that I claim express it, however, a further question arises about how it can contribute to empirical self-*knowledge*, since the latter must surely consist in a subject’s knowledge of fully *objective* facts about herself.

I believe, however, that my account can serve as the foundation for an explanation of how a subject can come to learn precisely such facts about herself. For the subjective judgments of perception that express empirical self-consciousness can serve as data for fully objective *causal* judgments — judgments which treat a subject’s mental states as *events* caused by her other mental states. The awareness that I express through the judgment of perception, ‘When I hear a rooster, I imagine the smell of coffee,’ for example, can form the basis of an objective claim about my own psychology: ‘The sound of a rooster *causes* me to imagine the smell of coffee.’

When systematized and generalized across subjects,<sup>14</sup> such causal knowledge would enable a scientific psychology — a necessary component of a universal natural science as Kant characterizes the latter in

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<sup>14</sup>Such general psychological laws may have the form of the “principles of association” discussed by Hume and gestured towards by Kant: the principles of resemblance, contiguity and cause-and-effect. (David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, §3 [Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1977], 14.)



## Concluding Remarks

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§15 of the *Prolegomena*, since it brings the empirical character of the mind under the same general laws that govern outer objects:

Now we are...actually in possession of a pure natural science, which...propounds laws to which nature is subject. But...it refers only to the objects of the outer senses, and therefore does not provide an example of a universal natural science in the strict sense; for that would have to bring nature in general — whether pertaining to an object of the outer senses or of the inner sense (the object of physics as well as psychology) — under universal laws.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>*Prolegomena*, §15, 4:295.

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