***Kant on the Givenness of Space and Time***

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Abstract: Famously, Kant describes space and time as infinite “given” magnitudes. An influential interpretative tradition reads this as a claim about phenomenological presence to the mind: in claiming that space and time are *given*, this reading holds, Kant means to claim that we have phenomenological access to space and time in our original intuitions of them. In this paper, I argue that we should instead understand givenness as a metaphysical notion. For Kant, space and time are ‘given’ in virtue of three related facts: (i) they are necessary grounds of the existence of all other spatial and temporal possibilities; (ii) in virtue of being such grounds, they are metaphysically linked to all other represented spatiotemporal things; and (iii) as representations, space and time issue from the nature of our faculty of sensibility rather than from an arbitrary act of choice. Understanding givenness in this non-epistemological way helps us recover what is plausible in both ‘intellectualist’ and ‘anti-intellectualist’ readings of the Transcendental Aesthetic. Anti-intellectualists are correct that space and time are givenin mere sensibility, but intellectualists are correct that we depend on the understanding for consciousness of space and time.

***Introduction***[[1]](#endnote-1)

In the *Critique of Pure Reason*,Kant famously describes space and time as magnitudes that are both *infinite* and *given*. In the Transcendental Aesthetic, in the fourth argument of the Metaphysical Exposition, he writes that “space is represented as an infinite **given** magnitude,” from which it follows that “the original representation of space” must be “an ***a priori* intuition,** not **a concept**” (A25/B39-40). And in the parallel argument for time, he reasons in a similar way:

The infinitude of time signifies nothing more than that every determinate magnitude of time is only possible through limitations of a single time grounding it. The original representation **time** must therefore be given as unlimited. But where the parts themselves and every magnitude of an object can be determinately represented only through limitation, there the entire representation cannot be given through concepts, […] but immediate intuition must ground them. (A32/B47-8)

That is, like space, time is a magnitude that is *given* as infinite, and according to Kant, this establishes that it must originally be represented in intuition rather than via concepts.

Kant scholars are well aware that these remarks leave room for interpretive disagreement. A particularly difficult question concerns whether Kant means to say (a) that the intuitions of space and time require *only* the faculty of sensibility or (b) that the intuitions of space and time are in fact partial products of the understanding. Proponents of the latter view have come to be known as ‘conceptualists’ or ‘intellectualists’ (since the faculty of the understanding is our intellectual faculty), while proponents of the former view have come to be known as ‘non-conceptualists’ or ‘anti-intellectualists’.[[2]](#endnote-2) According to anti-intellectualists, the intuitions of space and time treated in the Aesthetic depend only on the faculty of sensibility. According to intellectualists, they depend not only on sensibility but also on the understanding.

My goal in this paper is to bring to light an underexplored issue in the debate between intellectualists and anti-intellectualists and then to defend a claim that will help carry the debate forward. The underexplored issue concerns the meaning of Kant’s claim that space and time are *given* magnitudes. How should we understand the *givenness* of space and time? And the claim I defend is the following. Whereas intellectualists and anti-intellectualists commonly assume that givenness implies phenomenological presence to consciousness, we can recover what is plausible in both intellectualist and anti-intellectualist positions by revising this assumption.[[3]](#endnote-3) For Kant, *givenness* is a metaphysical notion rather than a broadly epistemic one, and givenness does not entail presence to consciousness. So whereas anti-intellectualists are right that Kant believes space and time are *given* independently of the understanding, intellectualists are right that *awareness* of space and time requires the active procedures of the intellect. Because givenness is a metaphysical notion in the context of Kant’s discussion of space and time, these two claims are compatible.

The paper is divided into 5 sections. In section 1, I explain why many scholars have endorsed the view that space and time are ‘given’ in the sense that they are phenomenologically present to consciousness. In section 2, I review textual evidence showing that space and time cannot, in fact, be present to consciousness in mere sensibility. In particular, according to Kant, we cannot consciously represent space or time without synthesis, and neither the infinity nor the singularity of space and time can be objects of awareness independently of the understanding. While one might be tempted to take this as a full vindication of intellectualism, I argue in section 3 that we should remain anti-intellectualists about the givenness of space and time. That is, we should remain committed to the view that space and time are *given* in sensibility alone despite not being *consciously* represented in mere sensibility.

In section 4, I explain how we can reconcile intellectualism about our consciousness of space and time with anti-intellectualism about their givenness by adopting an alternative account of givenness as a metaphysical rather than a phenomenological or epistemic notion. As I argue, when Kant describes space and time as “given”, we should take him to be pointing to three related facts (one about space and time themselves, one about their relation to our minds, and one about the intuitionsin which they are represented). First, space and time themselves count as *given* because of the way in which they function as *real grounds of possibility*: the possibility of spatiotemporal objects (and even the possibility of spatiotemporal relations) depends on the *actuality* of space and time.[[4]](#endnote-4) Second, space and time count as *given to our minds* and hence as represented in intuition because of the metaphysical relation they bear to other objects that we represent—this reveals a continuity between Kant’s account of space and time and his account of empirical intuition; in both cases, Kant allows that things are *given* in intuition via their metaphysical relation to other represented things, even when they are not consciously represented. Third, and finally, our original *representations* of space and time also count as given because they have their source in the nature of our faculty of sensibility; in virtue of being produced according to the nature of our faculties rather than by an arbitrary act of choice, the representations of space and time are “given” (*gegeben*) rather than “made” (*gemacht*).[[5]](#endnote-5)

Finally, in section 5, I address two potential worries facing the view I advance. First, returning to an issue discussed in section 1, I ask whether we can accommodate Kant’s account of the foundations of geometry if we abandon a phenomenological account of givenness. I argue that we can, for Kant holds that unsynthesized representations of space and time determine the content of geometry by functioning as its grounds, while synthesized representations reveal to us what those grounds are like. Second, I address the worry that we cannot tell a compelling story about *how* synthesized representations give us epistemic access to our synthesis-independent intuitions of space and time. I argue that Kant’s discussion of synthesized representations of space and time as kinematical provides such an explanation and that Kant rejects a resemblance account of the representational relationship between our synthesized representations of space and time and space and time themselves.

***1. Givenness as Phenomenological Presence in Kant Scholarship***

In Kant scholarship, an especially influential tradition holds that givenness should be understood as phenomenological presence to the mind.[[6]](#endnote-6) Pioneered by Charles Parsons (1992), this tradition argues that givenness and Kant’s *immediacy* condition on intuition are linked; when Kant defines intuition as a representation that relates immediately to its object (A19/B33), he means to say that an intuition involves immediate, quasi-perceptual *awareness* of its object.[[7]](#endnote-7) The claim that space and time are “given” to us as infinite and singular is thus to be understood as a claim about how space and time ‘appear’ to us as boundless and all-inclusive. As Parsons puts it, “immediacy for Kant is direct, phenomenological presence to the mind, as in perception,” and Kant’s claims in the Metaphysical Expositions about the infinity and singularity of space and time are justified by our quasi-perceptual acquaintance with them in intuition.[[8]](#endnote-8) Because space and time are given to us *a priori*, they do not involve any actual perception (*Wahrnehmung*) or sensation (*Empfindung*), but the intuitions of space and time nonetheless involve a kind of presence to consciousness that is “analogous to perception.”[[9]](#endnote-9)

According to the proponents of this approach (hereafter, the ‘phenomenological approach’), there are at least three important reasons to support it as an interpretation of what Kant means when he says that space and time are “given”. The first is that Kant must have *some* warrant for making the claims he does about space and time in the Metaphysical Expositions, and the idea that he takes himself to be arguing from quasi-perceptual evidence is a compelling hypothesis. Parsons makes a claim of this sort when he says that “Kant needs, and clearly intends to claim, a form of immediate knowledge of space, otherwise the question would arise whether what he said about the character of the representation of space does not leave open the possibility that there is just no such thing.”[[10]](#endnote-10)

A second reason to support the phenomenological approach is that it promises to explain the sense in which intuitions make an independent contribution to cognition (*Erkenntnis*). Consider *relationalist* interpreters such as Lucy Allais (2015), who argue that the distinctive role of intuition is to *give* objects to the mind, and this givenness is to be analyzed in terms of a relation of immediate acquaintance between the mind and its object. As Allais writes, “Kant says repeatedly that the role intuitions play in cognition is that of ‘*giving’* us objects,” and “intuitions present us with particulars immediately because they involve the presence to consciousness of the things they represent.”[[11]](#endnote-11) Although relationalist interpreters understand this acquaintance relation as having a metaphysical component (in that objects of acquaintance are construed as literal constituents of intuitions), relationalists nonetheless deny that an object could be *given* in intuition *without* being made present consciousness. The job of intuition is to present objects to the mind so that they can be cognized, the argument goes, and this presentation has an essential phenomenological component. Our pure intuitions of space and time are of course different from our *empirical* intuitions in some respects, but according to these interpreters, they nonetheless must fit Kant’s general account of givenness: insofar as we have intuitions of space and time *at all*, these intuitions must make space and time present to consciousness.[[12]](#endnote-12)

A third reason to support the phenomenological approach is that it explains why Kant takes mathematics (especially geometry) to be epistemologically superior to metaphysics. In a series of papers, Emily Carson (1999 and 2004) has argued that Kant regards our quasi-perceptual acquaintance with space as the *reason* for geometry’s special epistemological standing; whereas in the pre-Critical period Kant struggles to fully justify his claim that geometry (as opposed to metaphysics) is a secure science,[[13]](#endnote-13) by the time of the *Inaugural Dissertation* (1770) Kant is finally able to explain that although geometry and metaphysics both claim to start from indemonstrable propositions, only geometry can maintain that “we ‘apprehend [those propositions] concretely’ in space itself.”[[14]](#endnote-14) We know that Euclid’s postulates are justified, for example, because we ‘see’ in our antecedent intuition of space that they are true.[[15]](#endnote-15) In other words, Kant’s considered position is that geometry is founded on our quasi-perceptual insight into the nature of space, and to deny that Kant believes we have such insight is to suggest that even in the Critical period he is unable to substantiate his claim that geometry is epistemologically superior to metaphysics.[[16]](#endnote-16) The phenomenological approach thus provides a way of fleshing out Kant’s claim that geometry has its foundations in sensibility; if Kant’s claim that space and time are “given” in sensibility is the claim that space and time are quasi-perceptually present to the mind therein, then geometry does have epistemological foundations that distinguish it from metaphysics.[[17]](#endnote-17)

***2. Space and Time are not Consciously Represented in Sensibility Alone***

Above, I have reviewed three powerful reasons to endorse the phenomenological approach as an interpretation of the “givenness” of space and time.[[18]](#endnote-18) The phenomenological approach (i) provides an account of Kant’s warrant for making the claims he does about space and time in the Transcendental Aesthetic, (ii) fits with prominent accounts of the contribution intuition makes to cognition, and (iii) promises to explain why Kant thinks mathematics has a secure epistemological foundation, whereas metaphysics does not.

In this section, I argue that the textual evidence undermines the claim that space and time can be present to consciousness *in sensibility alone*. That is, Kant is not an anti-intellectualist about our awareness of space and time. This means that either (a) givenness entails awareness and anti-intellectualism about the givenness of space and time is false or (b) givenness should be understood differently such that it does not imply presence to consciousness, in which case anti-intellectualism about *givenness* may nonetheless be true.

To see that Kant denies that either space or time is accessible to consciousness merely in sensibility, we can start by considering his remarks on the “figurative” representation of time. In numerous passages, Kant suggests that we depend on our synthesized, figurative representation of time (as a line) for awareness of time and its features. Consider the following:

* 1. …just because this inner intuition yields no shape we also attempt to remedy this lack through analogies, and represent the temporal sequence through a line progressing to infinity, in which the manifold constitutes a series that is of only one dimension, and infer from the properties of this line to all the properties of time, with the sole difference that the parts of the former are simultaneous but those of the latter always exist successively. (A33/B50)
  2. …we cannot even represent time without, in **drawing** a straight line (which is to be the external figurative representation of time), attending merely to the action of the synthesis of the manifold through which we successively determine the inner sense, and thereby attending to the succession of this determination in inner sense. (B154)
  3. …time, although it is not itself an object of outer intuition at all, cannot be made representable to us except under the image of a line, insofar as we draw it, without which sort of presentation we could not cognize the unity of its measure at all… (B156)[[19]](#endnote-19)
  4. …for in order subsequently to make even inner alterations thinkable, we must be able to grasp time, as the form of inner sense, figuratively through a line, and grasp the inner alteration through the drawing of this line (motion), and thus grasp the successive existence of ourself in different states through outer intuition… (B292)

Taken together, these passages establish that time is not accessible to consciousness in sensibility alone. For if “we cannot even represent (*gar nicht vorstellen*) time” without representing it as a line, and if features of time (such as its unity, infinity, and successiveness) can be made available to us only via our constructed representation of it (the image of a line), then consciousness of time is not achieved in sensibility alone. Rather, according to Kant, we require our figurative representation of time for awareness of time and its features. Since figurative representation requires figurative synthesis, which itself depends on the understanding (B130 and B154), it follows that our awareness of time depends on the understanding too.

At this point, one might raise two worries about the reasoning just outlined. First, one might object that in the passages above, Kant in fact means to say only that *conceptually* representing time requires figurative synthesis. As one might argue, he uses terms such as ‘*denkbar*’ (thinkable) and ‘*faßlich*’ (graspable) to explain the kind of cognitive achievement our figurative representation facilitates (B292), and *thinking* and *grasping* are activities belonging to our conceptual faculty. Thus, one might reason, the passages concern only what is required for the sort of representation of time that amounts to *cognition* (*Erkenntnis*), which obviously must involve both the understanding and sensibility. Given this, perhaps the passages do not establish that we lack another conscious representation of time that does not amount to cognition—perhaps we have conscious *intuition* of time in sensibility alone.[[20]](#endnote-20)

Second, one might object that even if Kant believes we must represent specific *features* of time via its figurative representation (e.g., its unity, infinity, and successiveness), it does not follow that time itself is entirely phenomenologically absent from consciousness in mere sensibility. After all, an object can be present to consciousness without all of its features being present to consciousness as such, as when, for example, I see a cat from afar without seeing the color of its eyes. Thus, one might again conclude that Kant’s discussion of the figurative representation of time leaves room for *some* awareness of time in mere sensibility.

However, there are both textual and philosophical reasons to resist these objections. First, in the passages cited above, Kant writes that time “cannot be made representable to us except under the image of a line [*uns nicht anders vorstellig machen können, als unter dem Bilde einer Linie*]” (B156) and that “we cannot even represent [*gar nicht vorstellen*] time” without drawing its figurative representation (B154). This unqualified language provides strong prima facie evidence that *any* conscious representation of time requires figurative synthesis. Second, the properties of time that Kant says we access from the figurative representation are the *core* properties of time (unity, infinity, one-dimensionality, and successiveness). One undoubtedly can be aware of an object without being aware of *all* of its properties, but it is doubtful that one can be aware of an object without being aware of *any* of its core properties. In the absence of further countervailing evidence to the contrary, therefore, we should conclude that Kant thinks time is inaccessible to consciousness in mere sensibility.[[21]](#endnote-21) This is not to say that the figurative representation of time does not involve quasi-perceptual presence to the mind, but it is to say that the faculty of sensibility does not on its own provide us with awareness of time or its features.

Now consider Kant’s remarks on space. Here too, textual evidence suggests that Kant believes we rely on synthesized representations for awareness of space and its features. Since representations that require syntheses cannot occur independently of the understanding, it follows that space is not phenomenologically present to consciousness is sensibility alone. First consider the following two passages from the *Critique*. In the first, Kant explains why space can be considered an “empty intuition without an object” (A292/B348); in the second, he appeals to the in principle imperceivability of empty space to suggest that the world cannot have an absolute spatial boundary. In the first passage, Kant writes:

The mere form of intuition, without substance, is in itself not an object, but the merely formal condition of one (as appearance), like pure space and pure time, which are to be sure something, as the forms for intuiting, but are not in themselves objects that are intuited […] If light were not given to the senses, then one would also not be able to represent darkness, and if extended beings were not perceived, one would not be able to represent space. Negation as well as the mere form of intuition are, without something real, not objects. (A291-2/B347-9)[[22]](#endnote-22)

And later (in the Antinomy of Pure Reason):

[If the world had a] first beginning in time and [an] outermost boundary in space […] it would be bounded by empty time on the one side and by empty space on the other […][But then] a perception of boundedness through absolutely empty time or empty space would have to be possible, through which these world-ends would have to be given in a possible experience. But such an experience, as completely empty of content (*als völlig leer an Inhalt*), is impossible. Thus an absolute boundary of the world is empirically impossible, and hence also absolutely impossible. (A520-1/B548-9)

In both these passages, I take Kant to be suggesting (at minimum) that empty space is not the kind of thing that can be phenomenologically represented. That is, as something purely formal, space itself is a completely “empty intuition” (A292/B349) and so contains nothing that could be phenomenologically present to the mind.

Might one object here that Kant’s discussion concerns only perception (*Wahrnehmung*) in the technical sense and so does not establish that empty space is not phenomenologically (or quasi*-*perceptually) present the mind in mere intuition? On my view, Kant’s concern with the absence of representable *content* in empty space shows that even *quasi*-perceptual representation of completely empty space is impossible—we cannot phenomenologically represent empty space because empty space lacks phenomenologically representable content on Kant’s view.[[23]](#endnote-23) Thus, when Kant denies that space is an object that is intuited, he is not simply asserting that empty space is not an object of perception (*Wahrnehmung*), nor is he simply asserting the ideality of space; rather, Kant is making a more fundamental claim about the character of space itself, *viz*., that it is not the kind of thing that could ‘present’ itself to consciousness phenomenologically (either perceptually or in a quasi-perceptual way).[[24]](#endnote-24)

Importantly, however, in suggesting that space is not quasi-perceptually represented, Kant clearly does not mean to say that we can have no phenomenologically present representations of space *at all*. Indeed, several of Kant’s remarks in the *Critique* make clear that we *do* have quasi-perceptual or imagistic representations of space and its features when figurative syntheses play a role. At B155 for example, Kant argues that we “represent the three dimensions of space” by “**placing** three lines perpendicular to each other at the same point,” and he clearly has in mind an imagistic representation. However, Kant is also clear that these determinate, imagistic representations presuppose figurative synthesis and so are not accomplished in sensibility alone. As Kant writes at B154, space as “the mere form of intuition […] does not yet contain any **determinate** intuition at all, which is possible only through the consciousness of the determination of the manifold through the transcendental action of the imagination [i.e., figurative synthesis].” Thus, although Kant holds that we *can* represent space as an object of consciousness and that these representations *are* quasi-perceptual in character, he does not hold that these representations can occur independently of syntheses (and hence independently of the action of the understanding).[[25]](#endnote-25)

***3. Why We Should Remain Anti-Intellectualists about Givenness***

The conclusions drawn above might tempt one to adopt a thoroughgoing intellectualist reading. For as one might reason, if space and time cannot be consciously represented without intellectual acts of synthesis, then they also cannot be *given* independently of these acts (and hence independently of the understanding). However, as I argue in this section, there are compelling reasons to resist this intellectualist conclusion (and hence to find an alternative interpretation of what Kant means when he describes space and time as “given”).

First, consider the following line of argument, which many anti-intellectualist interpreters embrace as a reason to conclude that the intuitions of space and time depend only on the faculty of sensibility.[[26]](#endnote-26) According to Kant, space and time are *infinite* magnitudes with *holistic* mereological structures, and these properties are explanatorily connected: the wholes of space and time precede the parts, and becauseevery finite part presupposes a greater whole in this way, space and time are infinite (A25/B39-40 and A32/B48).[[27]](#endnote-27) But according to Kant, synthesized representations of magnitudes build from parts to wholes and so cannot have these properties. As Kant writes, in extensive magnitudes represented through synthesis, “the representation of the parts makes possible the representation of the whole (and therefore necessarily precedes the latter)” (A162/B203). Since space and time are represented such that the representation of the whole makes possible the representation of the parts, and since Kant holds that the mereological properties of our original representations of space and time match the mereological properties of their space and time themselves, it follows that no synthesis can be responsible either for our original intuitions of space and time or for features of space and time as objects that are given in those intuitions.[[28]](#endnote-28) In other words, since Kant holds that space and time are holistically structured, he is committed to denying that the intuitions of space and time result from synthesis. As he characterizes this holistic structure in the case of space, the “parts cannot as it were precede the single all-encompassing space as its components (from which its composition would be possible), but rather are only thought **in it**” (A25/B39).[[29]](#endnote-29)

Related observations explain why it would be mistaken to try to defend intellectualism by arguing that the figurative representation of time (discussed above) simply *is* the “original representation **time**” treated in the Transcendental Aesthetic (A32/B47-8). One might naturally assume that *representation* must involve awareness and conclude on this basis that the figurative representation of time must *be* our original representation of time (insofar as it is that through which we first become conscious of time and its features). However, Kant in fact denies that the figurative representation of time can be identified with the original intuition. For first, as we have seen, Kant holds that the figurative representation of time is a constructed representation in which the parts make possible the whole, rather than the reverse. In the original intuition of time, in contrast, “every determinate magnitude of time is only possible through limitations of a single time grounding it” (A32/B48). Second, Kant also makes clear that the original intuition of time is a representation of *inner* rather than outer sense. As he writes, “[t]ime can no more be intuited externally than space can be intuited as something in us” (A23/B37). But the figurative representation of time is a specifically *spatial* representation, i.e., it is a representation of outer sense. Consequently, it cannot be identical to the original intuition of time discussed in the Aesthetic.[[30]](#endnote-30)

A second reason to reject thoroughgoing intellectualism pertains to Kant’s understanding of the relationship between the givenness of space and time and the determination of their particular properties in geometry. In an important set of remarks published in 1790, Kant clarifies that although metaphysicians and mathematicians have fundamentally different aims in investigating space, they both presuppose an “original representation of a unitary, infinite, **subjectively given** space”.[[31]](#endnote-31) As Kant puts it, metaphysics considers space “in the way it is **given**,before all determination of it in accordance with a certain concept of object,” but geometry considers space insofar as it can be “**constructed** (*gemacht*)”.[[32]](#endnote-32) In the latter, representations of space are “derived” and determine only *finite* spaces (in accordance with concepts of objects), but Kant insists that geometry nonetheless presupposes an “original” or “foundational representation of space,” which “represents the original space as infinite, in fact as infinitely given”.[[33]](#endnote-33) Insofar as syntheses and determination go hand in hand, this strongly suggests that space is originally given *before* all synthesis-involving procedures of determination. And since Kant intends to offer parallel accounts for space and for time, we can also conclude that time is not dependent on synthesis for its original givenness.

Finally, note that this can also help us see why recent attempts by intellectualist interpreters to *identify* the so called “formal intuition” of space with the original intuition of space discussed in the Aesthetic are unsuccessful. In the B-Deduction, Kant argues that *formal intuition* (in contrast to the mere *form of intuition*)is that which represents space “as **object** (as is really required in geometry)”, and he says that formal intuition always owes its *unity* to the synthesis of the understanding (B160-161 fn). In addition—and this is the point intellectualist interpreters have taken as vindication of their view—Kant also seems to suggest that space is first *given* in intuition through the synthesis required for formal intuition (B160-161 fn). To such an argument, anti-intellectualists typically respond (in line with the arguments outlined above) that synthesis could *not* be responsible for the holistic mereological structures of space and time, but in recent years, several novel intellectualist arguments have attempted to preempt this point. Consider Williams’s (2018) suggestion, according to which it is a mistake to assume that representations resulting from synthesis always build from parts to wholes. According to Williams, the synthesis of formal intuitions is in fact not the same as the synthesis involved in generating extensive magnitudes (which *do* build from parts to wholes), for formal intuitions (on Williams’s account) are unified by the “original synthetic unity of apperception,” which works via “the subject’s *recognition* of the possibility of accessing any part of boundless space”.[[34]](#endnote-34) That is, as Williams argues, formal intuitions *are* unified by synthesis, but they are not unified by a synthesis that builds from parts to wholes.

However, at the core of Williams’s account is the assumption that synthesis can account for the unity of our original intuition of space (which she identifies with formal intuitions) *without* accounting for its infinity. For as Williams sees it, the unity of formal intuition should be conceived of as a unity applied to a pure manifold *already assumed to be infinite*—this is clear in her claim that Kant understands unity as a requirement imposed on an already “boundless” spatial manifold.[[35]](#endnote-35) But as we have seen, Kant holds that there is a crucial explanatory connection between the unity of space and its infinity. In particular, the unity of space is that property in virtue of which every finite region is possible only as part of a *single* greater whole, and because space has this holistic mereological structure, it is infinite. That is to say, for Kant, the unity of space explains and entails its infinity. But given this, it cannot be correct to say that Kant understands the unity but not the infinity of space as dependent on our intellectual (rather than our sensible) faculty.[[36]](#endnote-36)

Similar considerations explain why we should not endorse Messina’s (2014) moderate intellectualist interpretation. According to Messina, the original synthetic unity of apperception explains the unity of space by necessitating it, but this necessitation does not involve synthesis. Thus, Messina argues, we can grant that the intuitions of space and time must be synthesis-independent without embracing full-fledged anti-intellectualism.[[37]](#endnote-37) Nonetheless, like Williams, Messina argues that the understanding imposes its unity on a manifold of spatial parts that is already givenas infinite.[[38]](#endnote-38) And as we have seen, this cannot be correct. For Kant, space and time are originally given as *both* infinite *and* unified.[[39]](#endnote-39) Thus, we should avoid attributing to Kant a view according to which sensibility alone accounts for the infinity of space and time, while the understanding accounts for their unity. And more generally, if it is admitted that the infinity of space is intellect-independent (which commentators such as Williams and Messina grant), it should also be admitted that the unity of space is intellect-independent. As I see it, this provides a strong reason to reject even moderate intellectualist interpretations of the original intuitions of space and time (such as Williams and Messina offer).[[40]](#endnote-40)

Finally, notice that anti-intellectualists can also accommodate the B160-161 footnote by maintaining that the footnote implies neither that the unity of space requires a synthesis nor that the formal intuition of space is identical to the original intuition of space discussed in the Aesthetic. As already noted, Kant says in the B160-161 footnote that *formal intuition* represents space “as **object** (as is really required in geometry),” and he argues that this formal intuition “presupposes a synthesis […] through which all concepts of space and time first become possible” (B160-161 fn). He also says (in a line that is often taken to support intellectualism) that the synthesis through which “the understanding determines the sensibility” is that through which space and time “are first **given** as intuitions” (B161 fn). However, given that Kant distinguishes explicitly between the form of intuition, which “gives the manifold”, and the formal intuition, in which space is “represented as **object**”, it is open to anti-intellectualists to argue that Kant means only to say that space and time are first given in *formal intuitions* through synthesis. On a reading of this sort, formal intuitions are characterized by a kind of unity that is owed to the understanding’s synthesis (as Kant describes this unity in the B160-161 footnote, a unity involving the “**comprehension** (*Zusammensetzung*) of the manifold”), but this is not the unity of our original intuitions (which, as already argued, is a unity explanatorily linked to the synthesis-independent infinity of space and time).[[41]](#endnote-41)

If the arguments above are correct, then we should remain committed to the view that the givenness of space and time (as infinite, unified magnitudes) is independent of the understanding. That is, space and time are given in sensibility alone, which is to say that we must be anti-intellectualists about their givenness. At the same time, however, I have argued (in section 2 above) that space and time are not objects of *awareness* in mere sensibility. I now turn to the question of how these two claims can be reconciled. In the section that follows, I argue that the two claims are compatible because, for Kant, givenness is a metaphysical rather than broadly epistemological notion, which does not imply presence to consciousness.

***4. Givenness as a Metaphysical Notion***

The suggestion that we should combine aspects of anti-intellectualism with the recognition that space and time are not available to consciousness in sensibility alone has been recognized by several scholars in recent years. Notably, Grüne (2016), Tolley (2016), and Onof and Schulting (2015) all argue for anti-intellectualist readings of the original intuitions of space and time while acknowledging that synthesis is required for awareness of these intuitions and their contents.[[42]](#endnote-42) However, to date, none of these scholars has offered an alternative account of givenness to replace the standard account of givenness as presence to consciousness.[[43]](#endnote-43) Instead, they argue that the original intuitions of space and time are synthesis-independent without explaining the sense in which space and time or our original intuitions of them are “given”.[[44]](#endnote-44) Thus, their readings leave unanswered an important question: what does Kant mean when he says that space and time are *given*? And what notion of givenness should anti-intellectualist readers embrace, given that givenness in mere intuition cannot be cashed out in terms of presence to consciousness?[[45]](#endnote-45)

In what follows, I argue that we should understand givenness to be a metaphysical notion where space and time are concerned. In particular, to say that space and time are “given” in mere sensibility is to point to three related facts (one about space and time themselves, one about their relation to our minds, and one about our original intuitionsof them). First, according to Kant, space and time themselves are metaphysically “given” in the sense that they are *real grounds* of all other spatial and temporal possibilities (including the possibility of spatial and temporal relations and the possibility of spatial and temporal objects). That is, space and time have a special status as first in the metaphysical order as grounds of possibility (among spatial and temporal things), and they count as “given” in virtue of playing this grounding role.[[46]](#endnote-46)

Second, space and time are also “given” *to the mind* in the sense of being represented in intuition because they play the grounding role just specified. As I argue below, there is good evidence that Kant thinks empirical objects can be given to us in intuition by being causally or compositionally related to other represented things, even when they are not consciously represented. So too, Kant holds that space and time count as given to the mind (and hence as represented in intuition) because they stand in relations of metaphysical grounding to other represented things. Thus, Kant’s claim that space and time are given to the mind without being consciously represented is part and parcel of his broader account of intuition on which many things are represented in intuition in virtue of their metaphysical relation to other represented things (rather than in virtue of being objects of awareness).[[47]](#endnote-47)

Third, and finally, the *intuitions* of space and time also count as “given” in the sense that they issue from the nature of our faculty of sensibility rather than from an arbitrary act of choice—this aspect of givenness is also metaphysical in the sense that it pertains to the ground of the existence of our representations of space and time (as original intuitions). And this notion of givenness is explanatorily related to the others. As I will argue, Kant holds that our intuitions of space and time must issue from the nature of our faculty of sensibility (rather than from an arbitrary act of choice) if space and time are to play their role as real grounds of possibility.

Before turning to the textual evidence supporting this reading of givenness, let us recall the kind of reasoning that has led proponents of the phenomenological approach to think that givenness must entail quasi-perceptual presence to consciousness. Recall (from the earlier discussion of the Kästner remarks) that Kant holds that geometrical representations of space (which are constructed from parts to wholes) presuppose “the original representation of a unitary, infinite, **subjectively given** space.”[[48]](#endnote-48) And as he argues, this original representation of space is that which “grounds the possibility of [the geometer’s] task.”[[49]](#endnote-49) Proponents of givenness as phenomenological presence reason that this “original”, “subjectively given” space must be an object of immediate awareness if it is to play this grounding role, and scholars like Carson (1997) capture this line of reasoning particularly well. As she says, because “the geometrical properties of space are […] dependent on, derived from, the original representation of space,” Kant must have “independent grounds for asserting the infinity and singularity of this original representation”— namely, he must be “making claims ‘of a phenomenological character’” about space as it is originally given.[[50]](#endnote-50)

But notice that this reading is not forced on us. For first, Kant does not indicate that epistemological priority can be inferred from metaphysical priority. That is, he does not indicate that if the original representation of space metaphysically precedes (and thus does not depend on) “objectively given” representations of space, then so too our awareness of the former does not depend on the latter. Second, Kant’s characterization of the infinity of “original” space does not give any obvious indication that he intends for that infinity to be analyzed in phenomenological terms.[[51]](#endnote-51) Kant says that “one cannot name a magnitude, in comparison with which each assignable [unit] of the same type is only equal to a part of it, anything other than **infinite**,” but this characterization of infinity can be interpreted in non-phenomenological terms: space is infinite, we can say, because every finite part of space is surrounded by a larger space.[[52]](#endnote-52) Thus, when Kant says in the Aesthetic that space is “represented as an infinite **given** magnitude” and that the “original representation **time** must therefore be given as unlimited” (A25/B39 and A32/B48), we need not read him as saying that we are phenomenologically acquainted with infinite magnitudes. Rather, we can read him as saying that space and time, which are infinite magnitudes, also qualify as *given*, and they qualify as given for reasons having nothing to do with their phenomenological presence to consciousness (reasons to be spelled out presently).[[53]](#endnote-53)

So what textual evidence supports the conclusion that Kant endorses a metaphysical account of givenness? As a helpful starting point, consider the following discussion from the mid-1780s, where Kant suggests that there is an analogy between the givenness of space and the givenness of God understood as the *ens realissimum* (or ‘most real being’). Kant writes:

[T]he *ens realissimum* must be given antecedently to the real concept of all possibility, […] just like space it cannot be antecedently conceived as possible, but as given; but [just as space is not given as] an object that is actual in itself, but rather [as] a merely sensible form in which alone objects can be intuited, so the *ens realissimum* is also not given as an object but as the mere form of reason for thinking the difference in everything possible in its thoroughgoing determination, consequently as an idea that is (subjectively) actual before something can be conceived as possible; from which however it does not follow at all that the object of this idea is actual in itself. (R 6290 1783-84, AA 18:559)[[54]](#endnote-54)

Here, Kant says that the *ens realissimum* and space “cannot be antecedently conceived as possible, but as given”. He also says that they are both given “as form” rather than “as object”. How should we understand these claims? Kant seems to be making the following point. Whereas we can think of particular spatial possibilities (e.g., the possibility that a spatial object is at a particular place) and ask whether that possibility is *merely* possible or also actual, we cannot think of the possibility of space itself in this way—we cannot think about the possibility of space without at the same time thinking of space as actual.[[55]](#endnote-55) The reason for this, according to Kant, is that space is represented (veridically) as the ground of all spatial possibilities. Similarly, when it comes to the *ens realissimum*, Kant argues that we must assume the *ens realissimum* as the ground of possibilities in general.[[56]](#endnote-56) That is, because we represent the *ens realissimum* as the ground of all possibility, we cannot ask of the *ens realissimum* itself whether *it* might be merely possible; as soon as we think of any possibilities at all, we already assume the *ens realissimum* as actual. In this sense, Kant argues, we must conceive of both the *ens realissium* and space as “given”. Both space and the *ens realissimum* are *given* in the sense that they are necessary grounds of possibility, and since they are grounds of the *existence* of possibilities, they are *real* (as opposed to either merely logical or merely epistemic) grounds of possibility. Put differently, space and the *ens realissimum* both have to be assumed as actual in their respective domains for considerations of possibility to get started, and for this reason they count as *given*.[[57]](#endnote-57) When Kant says in the Aesthetic that space and time are given magnitudes that ground our representations of other spatial and temporal things, I take it he is pointing to this role.

One conclusion it may now be tempting to draw is that givenness and actuality are one and the same. After all, Kant seems to hold that we represent both space and the *ens realissimum* as actual because we represent them as given. He also argues in other texts that an important difference between *intuiting* and *thinking* is that thinkingan object does not entail its actuality, while having it given in intuition does (e.g., see KU AA 5:401-403).[[58]](#endnote-58) However, we should not conclude that givenness is exhausted by actuality, for as we have seen, Kant argues that the givenness of space and the *ens realissimum* pertains not only to the fact that we must represent them as actual but also to the fact that we must represent them as actual because they are firstin the order of possibility. As Kant puts it, the *ens realissimum* is “given” as the “form of reason,” which is to say that we must represent all possibilities in general as grounded in a most real being; likewise, space is “given” as a form of sensibility, which is to say that we must represent everything that can come before us in outer intuition as grounded in space (and as having spatial predicates that are determined by the nature of our form of intuition). Of course, there may be a sense in which we can think about having forms of intuition other than space and time, but as Kant suggests in the passage above, we cannot represent the absence of space in the way that would be required for us to ‘antecedently conceive it as possible’ rather than as given, and we cannot represent any outer appearances *at all* without first presupposing space as their ground. Presumably, Kant would want to make similar arguments concerning time (for inner appearances).[[59]](#endnote-59) Thus, according to Kant, the status of space and time as first grounds of possibility entails their actuality (though not their transcendental reality), but they count as *given* because they play this role in grounding possibilities, not merely because we must represent them as actual.

This prepares us to understand the second side of Kant’s account of the givenness of space and time. In particular, we can now see why the fact that space and time are given as first grounds of possibility also explains why they count as represented in intuition and so as given *to the mind*. The best way to draw out this connection is to begin with an observation about Kant’s account of *empirical* intuition. Namely, although many now find it natural to assume that whatever we *represent* is also something of which we are *aware*, Kant rejects this assumption in his account of empirical intuition.[[60]](#endnote-60) Consider his discussion of Newton’s *lamellae*, which presents especially clear evidence of this. In the course of his dispute with Eberhard in the years following the publication of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant writes that it is not unusual for empirical intuition to have “a part of which one is not *conscious*,” and it is a mistake to assume that what is not consciously represented therefore is not represented in sensibility at all. In *On a Discovery*, he puts this as follows:

Thus, the obscurity of the partial representations of a whole, as a result of which only the understanding can determine their presence in this whole and in its intuition, does not raise them above the sphere of sensibility and convert them into objects of reason. Newton’s *lamellae*, of which the colored particles of bodies consist, have not yet been seen through a microscope. Nevertheless, the understanding not only recognizes (or supposes) their existence, but also that they really are represented in our empirical intuition, albeit without being consciously apprehended. (AA 8:205)

In other words, Kant holds that objects may be represented in intuition without our having conscious awareness of them. Since ‘representation in intuition’ and ‘givenness’ are synonymous on the sense of givenness currently under discussion, it follows that things can be given in intuition (in the representational, ‘to the mind’ sense) without being objects of awareness.

But in virtue of *what* do things count as represented in intuition if not in virtue of being objects of awareness? Some evidence in the *Critique* suggests that *causal* relations can account for how things become represented in empirical intuition. Consider the second postulate of empirical thinking, where Kant spells out the conditions on cognizing an object as *actual.* According to Kant, an empirical object can be cognized as actual in virtue of “its connection with some actual perception in accordance with the analogies of experience, which exhibit all real connection in an experience in general” (A225/B272). Since Kant also holds that givenness in intuition is a condition on any cognition whatsoever (A51/B75), he must hold that what is causally connected with an actual perception (thereby qualifying as actual) is capable of being given in intuition. Putting this together with Kant’s discussion of Newton’s *lamellae*, it is plausible to conclude that things unconsciously represented in empirical intuition can count as represented by virtue of their causal connections to other represented things.[[61]](#endnote-61)

But causal relations are not the only relations that can ground unconscious representation in intuition. Other textual evidence suggests that *composition* relations can also ground unconscious representation in empirical intuition on Kant’s account. Consider, for example, Kant’s claim that when a material object “is given in empirical intuition as a whole,” it is “consequently [given] with all its possible parts” (A513/B531). Assuming we do not consciously represent all the parts of objects, we can conclude that Kant thinks some parts of material objects are unconsciously represented in the empirical intuitions in which they are given. This same point is suggested in the following passage from the *Jäsche Logic*:

If we are conscious of the whole representation, but not of the manifold that is contained in it, then the representation is indistinct. First, to elucidate this, an example in intuition. We glimpse a country house in the distance. If we are conscious that the intuited object is a house, then we must necessarily have a representation of the various parts of this house, the windows, doors, etc. For if we did not see the parts, we would not see the house itself either. But we are not conscious of this representation of the manifold of its parts, and our representation of the object indicated is thus itself an indistinct representation. (LL, AA 9:34)

Here, Kant is quite explicit that intuition must represent the parts of the house such as the windows and doors because they are the compositional conditions of the existence of the whole house. But he is also explicit that this representation is not always conscious. As he puts it, our representation of the whole house is “indistinct” when our representation of the parts is “not conscious”.

With these elements in hand, we can now see why *space* and *time* might count as given to the mind in *a priori* intuition even though they are not immediate objects of awareness. Namely, while space and time do not *cause* or *compose* other represented things, Kant does think that they stand in metaphysical grounding relations to other represented things.[[62]](#endnote-62) As we have seen, all particular spatiotemporal things presuppose space and time as their first grounds of possibility. But given this, it plausible to conclude that whenever a particular spatiotemporal thing is represented, the mind must also be metaphysically related to space and time themselves (since space and time themselves must ground the possibility of the spatiotemporal particular in question). Therefore, it is plausible to conclude that space and time are given to the mind in virtue of this metaphysical relation. That is, just as things can be given in empirical intuition in virtue of their causal or compositional relations to other represented things, so too things can be given in *a priori* intuition in virtue of their grounding relation to other represented things. This fits well with Kant’s claim in the Aesthetic that in order to represent things as in space or as in spatial relations “the representation of space must already be their ground” (A23/B38). As I see it, it is this grounding relation that explains why space and time are given to the mindin intuition, not that they are objects of immediate awareness. Put differently, space and time are unconsciously represented in *a priori* intuition by virtue of their metaphysical relation to the spatial and temporal possibilities that they ground, and in virtue of being represented in intuition in this way, they also qualify as given to the mind.[[63]](#endnote-63)

Finally, the third and last side to Kant’s account of the givenness of space and time relates to the origins of our representations of space and time. As is well known, Kant makes an important distinction in his lectures on logic between concepts that are “given” and concepts that are “made”. Concepts that are given (*conceptus datus*) are concepts that are produced through the nature of our understanding or through experience; concepts that are made (*conceptus facti*) are chosen or generated by us arbitrarily.[[64]](#endnote-64) As Kant puts it in the *Vienna Logic*,

All our concepts are either *given* concepts or ones that are *made*. A concept is given insofar as it does not arise from my faculty of choice. It can be given, however, either *a priori* merely in the understanding, or *a posteriori* though experience. I have many concepts that are given to me through the nature of my understanding, and which I have not fabricated. E.g., the concept of cause, time, etc. In just the same way, many concepts are given to us through experience. E.g., that water is a fluid body. (LL, AA 24:914)

Although here Kant says that the concepts of time (and presumably space) are given through the nature of the understanding rather than through the nature of sensibility (where the latter is clearly his considered view), his suggestion that a representation counts as given (*gegeben*) rather than made (*gemacht*) when it issues from the nature of our faculties is directly relevant to our understanding of the givenness of space and time. For if we are considering our original intuitions of space and time (and not space and time as represented *in* those intuitions), we can say that these intuitions are given rather than made because they issue from the nature of our sensibility. This helps us explain what Kant means in the Kästner comments when he says that the “original representation” of space is “subjectively given”, whereas the particular constructions of space with which geometry is concerned are *gemacht* (i.e., *made*). Particular constructions in geometry result from our faculty of choice, while the original intuitions of space and time issue from the nature of our faculty of sensibility.

Finally, we can also articulate the relationship between this notion of givenness and the previous two as follows. For Kant, if the representations of space and time *were* the result of an act of choice, then this would be transparent to us, and we would not represent space and time as *necessary* (contra the arguments of the metaphysical expositions). And importantly, Kant holds that if we did not represent them as necessary, then we also would not represent them as the grounds of all spatial and temporal possibilities. Kant makes this clear in the Transcendental Dialectic in another discussion of the analogy between space and the idea of the *ens realissimum*. According to Kant, if we represent space as a first ground of possibility, thenwe also represent it as necessary (and so too in the case of the *ens realissimum*) (A619/B647).[[65]](#endnote-65) But from this we should draw the following conclusion. If the representations of space and time were to result from an act of choice (rather than arising from the nature of our faculties), then we would not represent them as necessary and hence also would not represent them as first grounds of possibility. Thus, we can infer from the fact that space and time are represented as *necessary* grounds of possibility to the conclusion that our representations of them must issue from the nature of our faculties rather than from an arbitrary act of choice.

To summarize, then, I have argued that we should embrace a threefold explanation of the givenness of space and time. *Space* and *time* are given magnitudes because of the metaphysical role they play as first grounds of possibility. In virtue of this role, they are also qualify as represented in intuition (whenever we represent any other spatial or temporal possibilities or actualities) and so as *given to our minds*. And finally, the *intuitions* of space and time are given (as representations) because of their origin in the nature of our sensible faculty—again, a metaphysical fact rather than a fact about our epistemic access to them. This account upholds the anti-intellectualist’s insight that neither space and time nor our fundamental representations of them are dependent on synthesis for their givenness. But at the same time, it also does not insist against the textual evidence that space and time are objects of awareness in sensibility alone.

* 1. ***Return to the Foundations of Geometry***

In the final section of this paper, I address two final worries one might have about adopting a metaphysical account of givenness and abandoning the phenomenological approach. First, recalling the arguments of section 1, does abandoning the phenomenological approach also force us to abandon Kant’s account of the foundations of geometry? As I argue, Kant does not hold that the secure status of geometry depends on space and time being immediately accessible to consciousness in mere sensibility. Rather, he holds that our original intuitions of space and time constrain geometry by acting as its grounds, but our synthesized representations of space and time show us what those original intuitions are like. Second, is there a compelling story to tell about *how* synthesized representations can reveal to us the nature of space and time themselves? I also sketch out a response to this worry.

To begin, let us consider the relation between the account of givenness defended in this paper and Kant’s views on geometry as a secure science. In section 1 above, I noted that many defenders of the phenomenological approach argue that our original intuition of space must act as an epistemological foundation for geometry and that it can act as such a foundation only if we have immediate, quasi-perceptual access to space in our original intuition of it. As Parsons (1964) has put it, Kant must appeal to our *prior* “concrete knowledge of the form of intuition” to determine the content of geometry, rather thanattributing to space those features that we first discover in geometry.[[66]](#endnote-66) The basic line of thought here is that Kant would be guilty of circular reasoning if he were to appeal to geometry to explain what features should be attributed to space and at the same time hold that our original intuition of space explains why geometry is on secure epistemological footing.[[67]](#endnote-67)

But consider that it does not follow from the fact that we require figurative synthesis to know features of space and time that geometrical cognition itself determines the *nature* of space and time as forms of intuition. One can hold that the original representations of space and time determine the content of geometry by functioning as its grounds, while geometry reveals to us what those grounds are like—this would be a way of explaining geometry’s special status. Moreover, Kant does not indicate that an adequate explanation of geometry *should* establish that geometry is founded on *independent* knowledge of space.[[68]](#endnote-68) Indeed, one of Kant’s criticisms of the Wolffian school is that it fails to acknowledge geometry as a source of insight into space itself. As Kant says in his remarks on the antithesis of the Second Antinomy,

Against this proposition that matter is infinitely divisible, for which the ground of proof is merely mathematical, objections have been put forward by **monadists**, who already lay themselves open to suspicion by the fact that they would not allow even the clearest mathematical proofs to count as insights into the constitution of space, insofar as it is in fact the formal condition of the possibility of all matter… (A439/B467)

That geometrical proofs “count as insights into the constitution of space” suggests that Kant does not regard it as damaging to the epistemological status of geometry to say that it affords us knowledge of space itself. Geometry is epistemologically secure because its object is “space, insofar as it is in fact the formal condition of the possibility of all matter,” but this is compatible with the idea that geometrical cognition is what reveals its features to us. It of course *would* undermine Kant’s explanatory project if it turned out that our synthesized representations determine the *nature* of metaphysical space and time, which in turn explain geometry, but Kant does not simply take it for granted that metaphysical and epistemological priority must go hand in hand in this way. Indeed, part of what is distinctive about Kant’s account of geometry is his effort to pull metaphysical and epistemological priority apart.[[69]](#endnote-69)

What about the second worry? Namely, if synthesized representations of space and time cannot *be* infinite or holistically structured, what justifies the claim that they can provide us with awareness of the infinity and holistic structure of space and time? One might think that a representation that is itself finite and non-holistically structured cannot exhibit the properties of infinity or holistic mereological structure to us, and yet Kant clearly intends to claim that we know that space and time are infinite wholes that precede their parts.[[70]](#endnote-70)

In my view, this shows that we should not attribute to Kant a view according to which our synthesized representations represent via a simple resemblance relationship. Indeed, it is noteworthy that in passages in which Kant cites the role of our figurative representations in making features of space and time available to us, he draws attention to what Michael Friedman (2000) has called their “kinematical” character.[[71]](#endnote-71) Kant writes, for instance, that we grasp the successiveness of time “through the drawing of [the] line (motion)” (B292). Likewise, he says that we represent the line as “progressing to infinity”, and it is plausible to infer that it is through the representation of motion that we exhibit the infinity of time (A33/B50).[[72]](#endnote-72) If this is correct, our synthesized representations of time can give us awareness of the infinity of time even when they themselves are always finite. Similar remarks can be made about our synthesized representations of space. Kant says that “we cannot represent the three dimensions of space at all without **placing** three lines perpendicular to each other at the same point” (B154), and it is plausible that he envisions a similarly kinematical representation as providing our basis for inferring to the infinity of space; because we see in our representation of motion that any figurative representation of a line can be extended arbitrarily far in any direction in space, we infer that space itself is infinite, i.e., greater than any finite magnitude one could measure out in it.

Finally, note that reasoning of this sort can also explain how synthesized representations, which build from parts to wholes, can give us epistemic access to magnitudes that are holistically structured. Although Kant does not explicitly address issues pertaining to whole-part structure, his discussion of “flowing” quantities suggests a connection between the representation of motion and the representation of magnitudes whose parts are made possible through the whole. According to Kant, synthesized representations themselves build from parts to wholes, but the representation of motion allows us to see them as continuous or “flowing,” and quantities of this sort have the distinctive feature that their parts “are only boundaries, i.e., mere places of their limitation,” rather than independent elements whose aggregation makes possible a whole (A169/B211).[[73]](#endnote-73) In short, although our synthesized representations are not themselves infinite, holistically structured, and so forth, they do not represent merely via resemblance, and so they are able to ‘exhibit’ or represent to us the properties we ultimately attribute to space and time themselves.

***Conclusion***

To conclude, many commentators construe the givenness of space and time in terms of their phenomenological presence to consciousness and thus in broadly epistemic terms. In contrast, I have argued that Kant regards givenness as a metaphysical notion and in fact denies that space and time are phenomenologically accessible to us in mere sensibility. According to Kant, our synthesized representations are the epistemic grounds of our originalintuitions of space and time, while our original intuitions of space and time explain and determine the nature of our synthesized representations.

I have also argued that one need not adopt the phenomenological approach to preserve the most important insights of anti-intellectualist readings—*viz*., (i) that geometry is epistemologically secure because of the way in which it is grounded in our original intuition of space and (ii) that only synthesis-*independent* original intuition can account for our representations of space and time as infinite, singular wholes. For once we understand givennessin terms that do not require presence to consciousness, claims (i) and (ii) are not undermined by the textual evidence that synthesis is required to make the core features of space and time accessible to us.

Finally, while intellectualist readings of Kant do justice to his claims concerning the role of synthesis in making features of space and time available to us, they accomplish this at the cost of undermining his distinction between our original intuitions of space and time, on the one hand, and our derivative (synthesized) representations of them, on the other.[[74]](#endnote-74) Anti-intellectualism does not make this mistake, but it also cannot be fully vindicated without an account of givenness appropriate to our “original” intuitions of space and time. I have argued that the phenomenological approach fails to provide such an account and that construing givenness as a metaphysical, non-phenomenological notion is a compelling alternative. Space and time are *given* in original, synthesis-independent intuitions, but these original intuitions do not make space and time immediately present to consciousness.[[75]](#endnote-75)

***Abbreviations***

AA Kant, I. 1900 –. *Kants gesammelte Schriften*. Eds. Preussische Akademie der Wissenschaften (vol. 1–23), Deutsche Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin (vol. 23), Akademie der Wissenschaften zu G.ttingen (vol. 24 f.). Berlin.

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C —. 1999. *Correspondence.* Ed. A. Zweig. Cambridge University Press.

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1. Unless otherwise noted, translations of passages from the *Critique of Pure Reason* follow the Guyer-Wood Cambridge Edition translation and use the standard A-edition/B-edition pagination. References to all other Kantian texts follow the abbreviation conventions listed in the at the end of this document and include the volume and page numbers from the *Akademieaufgabe* (abbreviated AA). [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. In what follows, I will use the terms ‘intellectualism’ and ‘anti-intellectualism’ rather than ‘conceptualism’ and ‘non-conceptualism’, since some operations of the understanding may not involve concept-application on Kant’s account. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. There are a few scholars who do not make this assumption. For instance, Smyth 2014 argues that “[w]hether something fulfils the criterion of giving us an object is determined not through phenomenological investigation, but conceptual analysis” (563). However, Smyth does not explain in detail how an alternative conception of givenness should be understood (which is appropriate, given his paper’s aims). Similarly, Tolley 2016 rejects a phenomenological conception of givenness but does not attempt to flesh out an alternative in detail (see note 45). [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. In line with both Kant and his German predecessors, I use ‘real grounds’ here to denote a kind of metaphysical ground. Importantly, however, in calling space and time ‘real grounds’ and ‘actual’, I do not mean to say that space and time really exist in the sense that would vindicate transcendental realism. Moreover, this is consistent with Kant’s use of ‘real ground’ in the Critical period. For Kant holds that real grounds divide into two different categories: *formal* grounds and *material* grounds (C, AA 11:36). Material grounds concern existence, while formal grounds pertain only to the spatial and temporal properties of things given in intuition. As an example of a formal ground, the sides of a triangle are said to be the formal ground of its angles (C, AA 11:36). Given this, there is no tension in calling space and time, which are transcendentally ideal, ‘real grounds’. And to say that space and time are ‘actual’ is no more controversial than saying that the sides of a triangle are ‘actual’ as formal grounds. See Stang 2019 and Stratmann 2018 for further discussion of Kant’s account of real grounds in both the Critical and the pre-Critical periods. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Kant draws a similar distinction between “given” and “made” concepts in the logic lectures. “Given” concepts are “produced either through the nature of our understanding or through experience”; “made” concepts “are generated by us arbitrarily, or fabricated, without previously having been given” (LL, AA 24:131-2). Thus, there are representations other than intuitions which can be “given” in this sense. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. See Allais 2009, Allison 2004, Carson 1997 and 2019, Fichant 2004, Kjosavik 2009, McLear 2015, Onof and Schulting 2015, and Shabel 2004, among others. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. See Parsons 1992: Intuitions are “immediate in the sense of […] involving presence to the mind analogous to perception. Kant seems to be saying that when he begins the fourth argument [of the Metaphysical Exposition] with the statement, ‘Space is represented as an infinite *given* magnitude’” (70). Note, however, that immediacy need not be understood epistemically and instead could be interpreted as a purely semantic notion (on which intuitions are immediate because they do not refer “by means of a mark” (A320/B377)). Abandoning Parsons’s claim here thus does not threaten Kant’s claim that intuitions are immediate. [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. Parsons 1992, 66. [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. Parsons 1992, 70. [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. Parsons 1992, 70. [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. Allais 2015, 146-7. [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. Importantly, Allais does not argue that the *infinity* of space is “given” to us in this way in its entirety. As Allais writes, “The idea that space is immediately presented to us as one and as infinite should not be understood to mean that the whole of space is given to us at once (which would be impossible) but that space is immediately presented to us as a whole that is prior to its parts” (2015, 164). McLear (also a relationalist) makes a similar point when he writes that Kant’s account does not require that we “conceive of the phenomenological character of being presented with an infinitely large object”—instead, all Kant’s account “phenomenologically require[s] is that any perceptual experience of space, or of something shaped or located in space, requires a representation of that space as merely a limitation of a larger whole” (2015, 95). Notice, however, that in making this qualification, Allais and McLear are not claiming that space is not phenomenologically present to consciousness in intuition; rather, they are pointing out that an object can be phenomenologically present to consciousness without all of its features being phenomenologically present as such. [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
13. In the Prize Essay of 1764, for example, Kant claims that the propositions of geometry are indemonstrable and immediately certain, but he provides no account of that certainty other than to say that geometry proceeds from ‘real definitions’, whereas metaphysics does not (Carson 1999, 644). [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
14. Carson 2004, 190. [↑](#endnote-ref-14)
15. See Carson 1997: “What Kant is claiming is that it is immediately certain and evident […] in virtue of our ‘insight into the constitution of space,’ that what Euclid’s postulates assert can be done can indeed be done, thus that they are true of space. […][T]his brings out the importance to this reading of the *immediacy* of intuition, in the sense of what Parsons describes as ‘phenomenological presence to the mind, as in perception’” (511). [↑](#endnote-ref-15)
16. Note that I do not intend to reject the claim that geometrical constructions in pure intuition are a source of quasi-perceptual evidence *within* geometry. However, this should be distinguished from the claim that space as it is given in our “original” intuition of it is quasi-perceptually present to the mind. [↑](#endnote-ref-16)
17. Shabel 2004 makes similar point in arguing that “a pure intuition of space provides an epistemic foundation for geometry” (207). [↑](#endnote-ref-17)
18. As is reflected in the section above, few proponents of the phenomenological approach in the secondary literature explicitly discuss Kant’s arguments concerning time. But since it is generally acknowledged that they parallel Kant’s arguments on space, I assume the phenomenological approach is meant to extend to time as well as to space. I also take it as an advantage of my approach that a metaphysical account of givenness clearly applies equally well to space and to time. [↑](#endnote-ref-18)
19. Translation slightly modified. Guyer and Wood translate *erkennen* as to “know” rather than “cognize”. [↑](#endnote-ref-19)
20. Thanks to an anonymous referee for raising this worry. [↑](#endnote-ref-20)
21. This is not to deny that there is a difference for Kant between representing an object’s features and representing an object *as* having those features (in a conceptual representation). My point here is just that one cannot be aware of an object without being aware of *any* of its core features (even prior to conceptual representation). [↑](#endnote-ref-21)
22. Note: Longuenesse 2005 appeals to this passage to argue that “[t]he representation of space as one, and as infinite, is a representation of the imagination” (73). While Kant does call space an “*ens imaginarium*” in his discussion at A291-2/B347-9, I think we should read this as a claim about the status of space *considered as an object or real entity* (i.e., space considered as an object or entity is an ‘imaginary being’) rather than as a claim about the metaphysical dependence of space (and its properties) on the imagination. [↑](#endnote-ref-22)
23. To put it in the terms Grüne uses, there is nothing “it is like” to have an intuition of empty space (2016, 89). Note that although Grüne makes the same point that I do—viz., space and time are not phenomenologically present to consciousness in their original intuitions—she does not offer an alternative account of their givenness (as I aim to do in section 4 below). Grüne also holds that givenness *is* to be understood in terms of phenomenological presence to consciousness for all intuitions other than the original intuitions of space and time, whereas I think it is a common occurrence in Kant’s view that objects are given in intuition without being made immediately present to consciousness. [↑](#endnote-ref-23)
24. Thus, although a proponent of the phenomenological approach might want to argue that space can be construed as quasi-perceptually present to consciousness without being construed as an object (and also without quasi-perceptual acquaintance being construed as ‘experience’ in Kant’s technical sense of the term), I take it that this is exactly the position these passages rule out. For if space is quasi-perceptually present to the mind, then it would *not* be entirely “empty of content,” as Kant says. So on my interpretation of the passages discussed above, to construe empty space as phenomenologically present to us *is* to construe it as a kind of object. [↑](#endnote-ref-24)
25. Thus, I am not advancing a short argument to the effect that space and time cannot be phenomenologically present to the mind because phenomenological presence to consciousness requires *sensation* (which is lacking in the case of pure representations). Rather, on my view, not only the figurative representation of time but also the synthesis-involving constructions in pure intuition in geometry arequasi-perceptual in character (a point that is important for Kant’s overall account of geometry). Without synthesis, however, space and time cannot be made phenomenologically present to the mind in these pure representations. [↑](#endnote-ref-25)
26. See especially Allais 2015, Allison 2015, Grüne 2016, McLear 2015, Onof and Schulting 2015, Roche 2018, and Tolley 2016. [↑](#endnote-ref-26)
27. Some commentators have pointed out that this strictly speaking does not guarantee the infinity of space, since every space could be surrounded by a larger one, andthe distances between those spaces might converge to zero (e.g. see Parsons 1964, 191 and Smyth 2014, 574 n 41). However, I take it that Kant takes himself to be justified in ruling out this possibility on the grounds that Euclidian geometry establishes space’s metrical infinity. And if my arguments in this paper are correct, Kant can appeal to geometry as an epistemic basis for drawing conclusions about the nature of space (see section 5 below). [↑](#endnote-ref-27)
28. See Messina 2014, 16 and Onof and Schulting 2015, 13-14 for discussion of Kant’s commitment to a match between the mereological structure of the intuition of space and the mereological structure of space itself. Interestingly, Messina also argues that Kant’s views on synthesis entail that the intuitions of space and time cannot be synthesis-dependent, but he nonetheless advocates a moderate form of intellectualism by arguing that the understanding accounts for the unity of space and time without doing so via synthesis. I explain on page 15 below why I do not find Messina’s view fully compelling. [↑](#endnote-ref-28)
29. For further discussion of the holistic structure of space, see A438/B466. [↑](#endnote-ref-29)
30. See McLear 2015 and Onof and Schulting 2015 for further arguments for the conclusion that anti-intellectualism about the original intuitions of space and time is required by Kant’s claims concerning their whole-part priority. Recent challenges to these arguments can be found in Blomme 2017, Land 2016, and Williams 2018. I explain a core concern I have with these challenges below. [↑](#endnote-ref-30)
31. KT 309, AA 20:420. [↑](#endnote-ref-31)
32. KT 309, AA 20:419-21. Note that Onof and Schulting choose the term ‘constructed’ as the correct translation of ‘*gemacht*’. A more direct translation would be ‘made’, though it is clear that Kant *is* concerned with constructions in geometry in the present text. [↑](#endnote-ref-32)
33. KT 309, AA 20:419. [↑](#endnote-ref-33)
34. Williams 2018, 79. [↑](#endnote-ref-34)
35. Williams 2018, 79. [↑](#endnote-ref-35)
36. Friedman’s 2015 account faces the same difficulties, for as he argues, “The crucial idea is then that the transcendental unity of apperception […] unifies the manifold of possible perspectives into a single ‘all-encompassing’ unitary space by requiring that the perceiving subject, now considered as also a thinking subject, is able, in principle, to move everywhere throughout the manifold by such translations and rotations” (284). Like Williams, Friedman conceives of the unity of space as imposed on an already infinite spatial manifold (of “all oriented perspectives that an idealized perceiving subject can possibly take up” (2015, 184)). Similar points hold for Land’s proposal, which argues that because the imagination can represent “flowing” or continuous magnitudes, it has no difficulty representing *holistic* structures (2016, 168-9). As before, this proposal lacks an explanation of how a unifying synthesis of the imagination can account not only for the representation of a *continuous* magnitude (in which no finite part is the smallest) but also for the representation of an *infinite* magnitude (in which no finite part is the largest). For a compelling discussion of Kant’s commitment to the view that only intuition can account for our representation of the infinite, see Smyth 2014. [↑](#endnote-ref-36)
37. Messina 2014, 24. [↑](#endnote-ref-37)
38. Messina 2014, 20 and 27. [↑](#endnote-ref-38)
39. The link between infinity and unity is especially clear in Kant’s discussion of time: “The infinitude of time signifies nothing more than that every determinate magnitude of time is only possible through limitations of a single time grounding it” (A32/B48). However, Kant clearly intends for the same point to hold for space. [↑](#endnote-ref-39)
40. Onof and Schulting 2015 also acknowledge that infinity is entailed by the unity of space on Kant’s view (though they use the term “unicity” to refer to what I am calling ‘unity’) (15). I agree with many aspects of Onof’s and Schulting’s view and see myself as providing an anti-intellectualist account of givenness that they do not attempt to give. [↑](#endnote-ref-40)
41. Note: while I have given an indication of how the B160-161 footnote can be read as compatible with anti-intellectualism, I do not intend in this paper to provide a comprehensive discussion of this footnote or the distinction between form of intuition and formal intuition. I do, however, take the anti-intellectualist account of the footnote provided in Onof and Schulting 2015 to be convincing. For further discussion and a sense of the extent of the interpretive disputes, see Allison 2004, 115, Allais 2009, 404, Blomme 2017, Birrer 2016, Friedman 1992, 133, Longuenesse 2005, 68, Messina 2014, Roche 2018, and Williams 2018, among many others. I thank an anonymous reviewer for pressing me to explain more directly how anti-intellectualism can accommodate the B160-161 footnote. [↑](#endnote-ref-41)
42. Although Grüne is an anti-intellectualist about our original intuitions of space and time, it would be a mistake to paint her as an anti-intellectualist broadly speaking. For Grüne holds that all of our intuitions *except* our pure intuitions of space and time are synthesis-dependent (see 2016, 85-86). [↑](#endnote-ref-42)
43. As noted in note 3 above, Smyth 2014 rejects the phenomenological interpretation of givenness without attempting to flesh out an alternative. Smyth also does not indicate whether or not he intends to embrace anti-intellectualism about the original intuitions of space and time, which is why I have not included him in the list of recent anti-intellectualists above. [↑](#endnote-ref-43)
44. It has been suggested to me that we can avoid needing to provide an account of the sense in which space and time are “given” in their original intuitions by noting that Kant says only that “the form of all appearances can be given to the mind prior to all actual perceptions” (A26/B42) but never that space and time themselves are actually given in intuition. However, I take it Kant is clearly committed to the view that we have “original representations” of space and time, which are intuitions, and whenever something is *represented* in intuition it must also be *given* therein. [↑](#endnote-ref-44)
45. In a response to Watkins and Willaschek 2017, Chignell 2017 has suggested that accounts of givenness in terms of ‘presence to the mind’ are too metaphorical to be helpful. However, rather than providing an alternative account of givenness, Chignell argues that what is most important to Kant’s account of cognition is not his adherence to a givenness condition for cognition (contra Watkins and Willaschek) but rather his adherence to a modal condition: cognition requires really possible objects, and intuition proves the real possibility of an object. I see it as an advantage of my metaphysical reading of givenness that it is not metaphorical. For similar reasons, I see my reading as building in constructive ways on Tolley’s brief remarks about givenness, according to which space is originally “given” in intuition in the sense that it is “had in the mind” prior to being thought (2016, 12-13). Likewise, I see myself as building on Krüger 1968, who says in brief remarks that what is “given” can be “named” but not “derived” and is presupposed as “familiar” (29-30). [↑](#endnote-ref-45)
46. Note: I am not the first to point out that space and time serve as real grounds of possibility on Kant’s view (see, for example, Messina 2015, Stang 2016 and 2019, and Stratmann 2018). However, I am (as far as I am aware) the first to suggest that their role as grounds of possibility explains why they count as given. For further discussion of the different kinds of real grounds Kant distinguishes and for confirmation that space and time count as real grounds despite not really *existing*,see Stang 2019 and Stratmann 2018. [↑](#endnote-ref-46)
47. Thus, although space and time are unique in being ‘given’ in the grounds of possibility sense (i.e., empirical objects are not given in this sense), there is continuity between the empirical and the *a priori* case in Kant’s second notion of givenness: both space and time *and* empirical objects are ‘given’ in the to-the-mind sense of representation in intuition. [↑](#endnote-ref-47)
48. KT 309, AA 20:420. [↑](#endnote-ref-48)
49. KT 309, AA 20:420. [↑](#endnote-ref-49)
50. Carson 1997, 498-9. [↑](#endnote-ref-50)
51. Note that prior to the Kästner remarks, Eberhard had attacked Kant on the grounds that it would be absurd to think that we have *images* of infinite space and time. Kant responds by pointing out that in equating intuitions with images, Eberhard completely misunderstands his theory of pure intuition. As Kant writes, “For where have I ever called the intuitions of space and time, in which images are first of all possible, themselves images (which always presuppose a concept of which they are the *presentation*…)?” (DISC, AA 8:222). In other words, space and time are intuitions, but this does not mean that they are imagistic in character (or that that they *present* anything to consciousness). A proponent of the phenomenological approach might argue that what is imagistic or quasi-perceptual is not necessarily an image in Kant’s strict sense of the term, but a move of this sort would undermine the force of Kant’s response to Eberhard, since it is no more plausible to say that we have *imagistic* representations of infinite space and time than that we have *images* of them. [↑](#endnote-ref-51)
52. Strictly speaking, we must add the qualification that the distances between these larger spaces do not converge to zero. [↑](#endnote-ref-52)
53. The line I am advancing here also helps to answer Guyer’s 2018 objection that Kant undercuts his own arguments concerning givenness in claiming that space is given as infinite. According to Guyer, Kant’s discussion ultimately indicates that the actual infinity of space “is inferred, not simply given in pure intuition” (190). Thus, Guyer concludes, Kant’s claim that space is an infinite ‘given’ magnitude is a “myth”, even in the context of his own philosophy. However, if Kant does not understand givennes in terms of epistemic immediacy, then Guyer’s criticisms do not get a hold—in stating that infinite space and time are “given”, Kant is not making a claim about their immediate epistemic availability to us, and it is fully compatible with Kant’s account of the givenness of space to say that we infer to its infinity. [↑](#endnote-ref-53)
54. Note: here the square brackets show my changes to the Cambridge translation. I have attempted to make the passage easier to parse while preserving the meaning of the original. [↑](#endnote-ref-54)
55. I refer to actuality rather than to existence here deliberately, for Kant refers to space and time as “actual” but not as something “existing” (*etwas Wirkliches sind, aber nichts Existierendes*) (R 6325, AA 18:647). Note also that the role of conceivability considerations here helps to bolter my claim below that what is given as a ground of possibility in this sense is also given *to a mind*: a mind attempting to represent spatial or temporal possibilities must already have a representation of space and time as the real ground of those possibilities. [↑](#endnote-ref-55)
56. Exactly how to understand the sense in which we must “assume” the *ens realissimum* is an important question, and a full answer would involve several questions about how to interpret the Transcendental Dialectic. Here I leave these issues unresolved and remark only that the relevant notion of assuming does not amount to cognition (*Erkenntnis*). [↑](#endnote-ref-56)
57. See also A619/B647 in the Transcendental Ideal, where Kant argues that we represent both space and the *ens realissimum* as necessary *because* we represent them as grounds of possibility. [↑](#endnote-ref-57)
58. In this third *Critique* passage, Kant explains why an intuitive understanding would not represent a difference between the possible and the actual: because an intuitive understanding represents everything it represents as *given*,it cannot represent anything as merely possible rather than actual. Here, Kant indicates that he sees an important connection between representing something as given and representing something as actual, and moreover he thinks that because we have a faculty of intuition that is different from our faculty of understanding, we can *think* objects—and so represent them as merely possible—without representing them as given. In saying this, however, I do not mean to suggest that givenness is exhausted by actuality. [↑](#endnote-ref-58)
59. See also Kant’s claims in the Metaphysical Exposition that “outer experience is itself first possible only through this representation [of space]” (A23/B38). In R 4673, he likewise describes space as “the first condition of the possibility of outer representations” (AA 17:638). And in R 6290, he appeals to the idea of being “antecedently given” to explain why possibility and actuality cannot be distinguished in space and time themselves: “…in the case of space and time possibility cannot be distinguished from actuality, since they both together contain all possibility in appearance in themselves as substrata that must be antecedently given” (AA 18:558-9). [↑](#endnote-ref-59)
60. For related discussion, see Jauernig 2021, especially 53: “Kant’s account of perception shares several important ingredients with Leibniz’s account, including the view that all perceptions comprise a multitude—indeed, an infinitude—of unconscious elements, or elements that are not ‘clear,’ to use Leibniz’s and Kant’s technical terminology.” Jauernig also discusses the *Jäsche Logic* passage that I cite below. [↑](#endnote-ref-60)
61. Here one might worry that this opens the door to saying that very distant objects are represented (albeit unconsciously) in empirical intuition, given that very distant objects are often causally connected to things we immediately perceive. This is an implication I would grant, though I would stress that this does not imply that we ever have perception (*Wahrnehmung*) of objects of which we are not aware, since perception on Kant’s account *does* require consciousness (A120). See Tolley 2017 for helpful discussion of this point. Thanks to both a reviewer and an editor for encouraging me to clarify this. [↑](#endnote-ref-61)
62. The *Stufenleiter* passage might appear to present a challenge to this line of interpretation, since Kant seems to say there that intuition is a subspecies of “representation with consciousness (*perceptio*)” (A320/B376). However, Kant also says in the *Stufenleiter* passage that representation with consciousness stands under the broader genus of “**representation** in general (*repraesentatio*)”, which suggests that he is open to unconscious representations. And when he describes intuition, he puts it under “**cognition** (*cognitio*)”, which he equates with “objective perception” (A320/B376-7). More specifically, he says that cognition “is either an **intuition** or a **concept** (*intuitus vel conceptus*). Here, I interpret Kant as saying that all cognition (or objective perception) has components that are either intuitions or concepts. Thus, the passage does not rule out the possibility of unconscious intuitions that are not yet components of a cognition in the ‘objective perception’ sense. I thank an editor for encouraging me to address the *Stufenleiter* passage. [↑](#endnote-ref-62)
63. This is compatible with Smyth’s 2014 claim that the functional role of intuition is to give us objects. However, whereas Smyth’s main aim is to explain what justifies Kant’s claim that space and time are originally represented in intuitions rather than in concepts, my aim is to explain what it means to say that space and time are given. [↑](#endnote-ref-63)
64. See LL, AA 24:131-2. [↑](#endnote-ref-64)
65. The passage goes as follows: “For, just as with space, since it originally makes possible all forms which are merely limitations of it, even though it is only a principle of sensibility, it is necessarily held to be a Something subsisting in itself with absolute necessity and an *a priori* object given in itself, so it also comes about entirely naturally that since the systematic unity of nature cannot be set up as a principle of the empirical use of reason except on the basis of a most real being as the supreme cause, this idea is thereby represented as an actual object, and this object again, because it is the supreme condition, is represented as necessary” (A619/B647). [↑](#endnote-ref-65)
66. Parsons 1964, 182. [↑](#endnote-ref-66)
67. Parsons in fact *does* think Kant is guilty of this circularity (1964, 182). [↑](#endnote-ref-67)
68. Here I agree with Friedman 2000, who also argues that Kant does not take spatial intuition to be a source of geometry-independent insight into space (193). However, I part ways with him in attempting to preserve the claim that space and time are given in sensibility alone. [↑](#endnote-ref-68)
69. Interestingly, Carson has also suggested that Parsons’ concerns about circularity can be answered by appealing to the grounding of geometry in our original intuition of space. As Carson says, “the nature of the form of intuition is determined independently of geometry, and thus *can* be called upon to explain our knowledge of geometry” (Carson 1997, 500 fn 9). It seems to me, however, that this argument should not be open to her, since she endorses the phenomenological approach. The upshot of Parsons’ (1964) discussion is that the grounding of geometry in our original intuition of space *fails* if the infinity of space consists in some phenomenological fact (because, as Parsons argues, purely phenomenological considerations cannot support the claim that space is infinite). So, assuming Parsons’ arguments concerning infinity and the possible scope of quasi-perceptual justification are correct, then if it is open to Kant to say that our original intuition grounds geometry, he must also hold that the nature of space is determined independently *both* of geometry *and*of phenomenological considerations (otherwise it will turn out that space as originally intuited is not infinite and so cannot ground our geometrical knowledge). [↑](#endnote-ref-69)
70. I thank an anonymous referee for raising this worry. [↑](#endnote-ref-70)
71. See especially Friedman 2000, 192-3. Blomme 2017 also offers a helpful discussion of the sense in which in representing a *moving* point we represent the features of time (see especially 82-4). However, Blomme holds that there are no *intuitions* of space and time other than their formal intuitions, whereas I reject this form of intellectualism. [↑](#endnote-ref-71)
72. Lest one worry that this undermines Kant’s claim that our knowledge of space and time is *a priori* (since at A41/B58 Kant suggests motion is an empirical concept), consider that Kant distinguishes between two kindsof motion and suggests that only one kind of motion presupposes experience: “Motion of an **object** in space does not belong in a pure science, thus also not in geometry; for that something is movable cannot be cognized *a priori* but only through experience. But motion as **description** of a space, is a pure act of the successive synthesis of the manifold in outer intuition in general through productive imagination, and belongs not only to geometry but even to transcendental philosophy” (B155n). In other words, although the idea of an *object* in motion presupposes experience, the motion involved in figurative synthesis (“motion as description of space”) does not. [↑](#endnote-ref-72)
73. Friedman 2000 also offers a helpful explanation of this point (213 fn 11). [↑](#endnote-ref-73)
74. Indeed, intellectualists typically argue that the *forms of intuition* (as opposed to the *formal intuitions*) are not properly speaking *representations* or *intuitions* at all (see Blomme 2017, Paton 1936, and Waxman 1991, among others). As such, no account of givenness is required for them, even though there is some sense in which they ground our synthesized representations. I agree with Messina 2014 that Kant takes the forms of intuitions to be representations rather than mere capacities to have other representations (21). [↑](#endnote-ref-74)
75. This paper has benefited enormously from the feedback of numerous mentors and colleagues. Special thanks to Lucy Allais, Nicholas Dunn, Dai Heide, Markus Kohl, JP Messina, Clinton Tolley, Eric Watkins, and two anonymous referees at the *European Journal of Philosophy*. [↑](#endnote-ref-75)