

# “I Am the Original of All Objects”: Apperception and the Substantial Subject

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## Abstract

Kant’s conception of the centrality of intellectual self-consciousness, or “pure apperception”, for scientific knowledge of nature is well known, if still obscure. Here I argue that, for Kant, at least one central role for such self-consciousness lies in the acquisition of the content of concepts central to metaphysical theorizing. I focus on one important concept, that of <substance>. I argue that, for Kant, the representational content of the concept <substance> depends not just on the capacity for apperception, but on the actual intellectual awareness of oneself in such apperception. I then defend this interpretation from a variety of objections.

[An] object can only be represented in accordance with its relations and is nothing other than the subjective representation of the subject itself, but made general, for I am the original of all objects.

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R4674, *Duisburg Nachlaß* 17:646 (1773–5)  
IMMANUEL KANT

## 1. Introduction

THE DELPHIC ORACLE ADVISES, “Know thyself.” This injunction takes on special urgency in the Modern period. As is well known, several notable figures, including Descartes, Locke, and Leibniz, construe self-knowledge as, at least in some ways, prior to knowledge of nature.

Kant is famous for proclaiming a “Copernican revolution” according to which “we can cognize of things a priori only what we ourselves have put into them” (Bxviii). This Copernican turn requires a perhaps startling emphasis on the role of the subject in constituting “that order and regularity in [appearances] that we call nature”, an order put there by the “nature of our mind” (A125; see also B165).

It is clear that one intended element of the Copernican turn consists in showing that the principles constituting the order and regularity of nature are (or are derived from) those “pure” (i.e. non-empirical) concepts of the understanding that Kant calls the “categories”.

Categories are concepts that prescribe laws a priori to appearances, thus to nature as the sum total of all appearances (*natura materialiter spectata*) ... all appearances of nature, as far as their combination is concerned, stand under the categories, on which nature (considered merely as nature in general) depends, as the original ground of its necessary lawfulness (as *natura formaliter spectata*) (B163–5)

The categories are both the most fundamental concepts constituting the content of thought — by virtue of being the fundamental concepts of an object in general (A290/B346) — and the basis for the objective principles governing the entirety of phenomenal nature.

One might then think that the articulation of the fundamental principles of nature in terms of features of the finite rational (human) mind constitutes the entirety of Kant’s idealism concerning the subjective contribution knowledge of nature. While this is certainly part of Kant’s view, he implicates subjectivity in the constitution of nature even more tightly than the above would suggest, for he holds that the categories themselves depend on a further element — viz. a rational being’s capacity for self-conscious awareness of its own activity in thinking. Kant calls this form of self-consciousness the “pure apperception” (B132).

In two arresting remarks from the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant states the dependence of the categories on pure apperception. First, in the “A” edition of the Paralogisms section of the first *Critique*, Kant claims, “Apperception is itself the ground of the possibility of the categories” such that the “thinking I (the soul) ... cognizes the categories, and through them all objects, in the absolute unity of apperception, and hence cognizes them **through itself**” (Observation on the sum of the pure doctrine of the soul, A401–2, original emphasis). Second, in the revised “B” edition of the first *Critique*, Kant argues in Transcen-

ental Deduction that the principles of “the objective determination of all representations [i.e., the categories] ... are all derived [*abgeleitet*] from the principle of the transcendental unity of apperception” (Transcendental Deduction §19, B142).<sup>1</sup>

Kant’s remarks concerning the role of self-consciousness in grounding the possibility of the categories, and thus knowledge of nature, are perplexing. It is not clear what he means in saying that the categories are “derived” from apperception, nor is it clear why apperception would “ground the possibility” of the categories. In what follows, I explicate one way in which pure apperception plays a crucial role for Kant in explaining the possibility of the categories by discussing one category in particular — viz. <substance>.<sup>2</sup> I focus on <substance> both because it is, as Kant is reported to have said, the “most pre-eminent” of the categories and “thus the basis of all other cognition” (*Metaphysik Mrongovius*, 29:769–70), and because of the way it figures in the historical context of debate concerning the origin of the content of central metaphysical concepts. I argue that Kant must appeal to pure apperception as the only possible source of the content of the concept <substance>, in so far as he understands this concept to have anything more than purely logical or grammatical significance.

With respect to the category <substance>, Kant distinguishes between the logical/grammatical notion of a concept’s always taking the subject place in a categorical judgment (e.g., B149, B186, B288) — what

<sup>1</sup> Kant does not typically refer to the categories themselves as “principles”, though he does of course think that the principles of objective representation discussed in the Analytic of Principles section are derived from the categories. Kant may thus be simply obliquely referring to the categories themselves by appealing to the principles and their “derivation” from apperception. Thanks to an anonymous referee for encouraging clarity on this point.

<sup>2</sup> Concepts are designated using pointy brackets. I shall use ‘categorical’ in discussion of the categories and ‘categorical’ for discussion of judgments which take strict subject-predicate logical form. For brevity’s sake I speak of the category <substance>, but Kant typically characterizes the category as that of <subsistence-inherence> (e.g., A80/B106). For my purposes these can be treated interchangeably.

I shall call a ' $\langle \text{substance} \rangle_L$ ', from the "schematized" or temporal conception of a substance as a permanent being (A144/B183) — what I shall call a ' $\langle \text{substance} \rangle_S$ '. However, between these two notions lies the conception of a substance purely as a metaphysical subject, as that in which a property (specifically, an "accident") inheres — a ' $\langle \text{substance} \rangle_M$ '. For example, in his discussion of substance in the First Analogy, Kant says,

The determinations of a substance that are nothing other than particular ways for it to exist are called **accidents**. They are always real, since they concern the existence of the substance (negations are merely determinations that express the non-being of something in the substance). Now if one ascribes a particular existence to this real in substance (e.g., motion, as an accident of matter), then this existence is called "inherence," in contrast to the existence of the substance, which is called "subsistence." (A186-7/B229-30)

This notion of a substance as that in which accidents inhere is necessary for Kant to carry out his account of the possibility of a science of nature, but it cannot be analytically derived from the purely logical conception of a term that is always in the subject position and never in the predicate, and it is presupposed by Kant's conception of a permanent substratum. I argue that pure apperception is thus the only possible source for the content of  $\langle \text{substance} \rangle_M$ .<sup>3</sup>

In the next section, I explicate the metaphysical conception of a substance. I also indicate its role in the broadly Aristotelian conception of a science of nature Kant shares with other figures in the Modern period. Finally, I raise a problem for understanding the origin of the content of the metaphysical conception of substance I call "the problem

of the subject". Section three examines the details of Kant's view of  $\langle \text{substance} \rangle$ . I examine what I take to be the primary alternative account for explaining the source of the content of the categories and of  $\langle \text{substance} \rangle$  in particular. This is what I call the "logicist" interpretation championed by (among others) Béatrice Longuenesse and Stephen Engstrom. I argue that logicism cannot provide the needed explanation of the content of  $\langle \text{substance} \rangle_M$ , nor is it needed to explain how an appeal to apperception, in deriving the content of the categories, is compatible with the project of the Metaphysical Deduction. I then provide a positive "actualist" account of the nature of apperception and its role in provisioning the content of our concept  $\langle \text{substance} \rangle_M$ , after which I discuss, in section four, a variety of objections that arise concerning the way in which the proposed interpretation integrates with other aspects of Kant's mature critical theory of cognition. Finally, in section five, I summarize and conclude the paper. I thus argue that, according to Kant, the self-conscious "I" is the original basis for all scientific knowledge of nature by virtue of being the source of our metaphysical conception of a substance.

## 2. Conceiving of Substance

We can better understand Kant's position on self-consciousness, the categories, and their joint significance for achieving a science of nature, by focusing on a particular Leibnizian strain of thought concerning the connection between self-consciousness and the acquisition of concepts central for metaphysical theorizing, including the concept  $\langle \text{substance} \rangle$ . To that end, this section divides into two parts. First, I discuss in greater detail the conception of a substance as it connects with metaphysical theorizing in the Modern period. I then discuss a view, widely held in the Modern period, objecting to the legitimacy of this conception of substance. In the second subsection, I discuss Leibniz's solution to this problem, and set up a framework for discussing Kant's solution to the issue in the critical period.

<sup>3</sup> Note that I'm primarily concerned with the *source* of the representational content, not the justification for applying the concept. Moreover, in what follows, when I discuss apperception as the source of the concept  $\langle \text{substance} \rangle$ , unless otherwise indicated I mean in particular the concept  $\langle \text{substance} \rangle_M$ .

2.1 *Substance & the Problem of the Subject*

The basic notion of a metaphysical subject, or “substance”, is of that in which properties inhere. Substances thus *substand*, and they also *subsist*, or exist independently of other things. Though Modern philosophers were not always entirely clear as to how to explain this notion of “independence”, there is a straightforward way of connecting the conception of the subsistence of a thing to the notion of its *substanding*, in the sense that subsisting things do not exist by virtue of their *inherence* in anything else. A *substanding* thing may well be *causally* dependent on another substance, but it does not inhere in any other thing.

Hence, if a *substanding* thing subsists, in the sense that it does not itself inhere in anything else, then substances are loci of explanation insofar as they constitute the termini of questions concerning the instantiation of properties. Non-substantial beings, such as properties or events, might stand in as loci of explanation in limited cases. For example, one might say of a fight that it is vicious, or of a rainbow that it is beautiful. Similarly, one might hope of justice that it is blind. But the fight and the rainbow are adjectival on the beings that constitute them (respectively, the fighters and the raindrops), while talk of the blindness of justice, if we are to avoid reifying the property, is purely metaphorical. Hence, substance plays its explanatory role because the inherence relation that a property has to the substance which has it is a kind of asymmetric dependence relation that the substance does not stand in to anything else.<sup>4</sup>

Proper or scientific knowledge of nature requires, in the broadly Aristotelian tradition within which Kant is enmeshed, knowledge of why things are the way that they are.<sup>5</sup> Because properties depend asymmetrically on the substances that have them, the study of substance explains the instantiation of one property or pattern of proper-

ties rather than another. Hence, on this conception of proper science, the object of proper scientific study is substance. Such knowledge, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, was typically regarded as *a priori*, not (or not just) because (as in our contemporary usage of ‘*a priori*’) it is knowable independently of experience, but rather because *a priori* knowledge is knowledge *why* or from what *ground* some fact obtains. For members of this tradition, experience can at best provide a *posteriori* knowledge of *what* is the case. For example, experience only speaks of the instantiation of some determinate property. It cannot tell one *why* it is the case that the property is instantiated.<sup>6</sup>

If one were sympathetic to content empiricism, where the content of all possible thought must ultimately be traceable to sense impressions, then one might object that the concept <substance>, as described, is empty. It was widely taken for granted that sense impressions could not present final subjects of inherence.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, it is not clear that sense impressions can even present an inherence relation. Perhaps the senses present only particulars.<sup>8</sup> This “problem of the subject”, as I will call it, thus generates a *prima facie* challenge to any account for how we come by the legitimate thought content of a substance as a subsisting and *substanding* being.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>4</sup> For discussion of several of these points, see (Langton 1998, ch. 3).

<sup>5</sup> This is true even of philosophers, such as Descartes, Locke, and Newton, who might otherwise reject “scholastic” ways. For discussion, see (De Jong and Betti 2010; De Jong 2010; Pasnau 2014).

<sup>6</sup> *A priori* knowability in this sense of knowledge of that in virtue of which something is the case, and not merely that it is the case, was widely held in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to be the epistemic ideal towards which all doxastic states aim; see (Pasnau 2014) for discussion; see also (Arnould and Nicole 1683, 233; Adams 1994, 109; Smit 2009; Hogan 2009, 53–4).

<sup>7</sup> See, e.g., (Locke 1970, 546 (ECHU IV.iii.14)); (Boyle 1991, 13); (Kant ID, 2:393); (Herz 1771, 123).

<sup>8</sup> Newton, for example, was in fact rather famously skeptical that we could have any knowledge of substance at all. See, e.g., his remarks in the General Scholium in the *Principia* (Newton 2004, 91).

<sup>9</sup> Of course, this is a problem only if the senses are our sole means of access to reality. As we will see, Descartes, Leibniz, and the pre-critical Kant all deny this. For discussion of this problem, referred to as the “objection from perception”, see (Broackes 2006, 158).

2.2 *The Leibnizian Reply*

Leibniz provides one well-known account of the a priori source of our concept of a substance and its properties.<sup>10</sup> Leibniz argues that it is via introspection or “reflection” on one’s self and one’s causal powers that one first grasps the concept of a substance. Leibniz develops this view in notes constituting his initial reply (1698) to Locke’s objections concerning innate ideas, arguing that reflection is a form of awareness of not only mental activity or states, but of the mind itself.<sup>11</sup>

It is very true that our perceptions of ideas come either from the external senses or from the internal sense, which one may call reflection; but this reflection does not limit itself solely to the operations of the mind [*esprit*], as is said [in Locke’s ECHU II.1.4]; it extends to the mind itself, and it is in apperceiving [*s’appercevant*] it that we apperceive [*appercevons*] substance.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Descartes is another obvious proponent of the importance of self-knowledge for knowledge of nature. For Descartes, all knowledge of substance is purely intellectual, as is indicated by his famous “wax argument” in the *Second Meditation*. As he puts it, “when I distinguish the wax from its outward forms — take the clothes off, as it were, and consider it naked” (CSM II:22; AT VII:32) then what is grasped purely intellectually is the nature of the wax as an enduring thing with determinable features (consisting of being extended, flexible, and changeable (CSM II:20; AT VII:31)), and possessing a particular modal profile (of taking on “countless” possible forms (CSM II:21; AT VII:31)). Descartes argues that “the perception I have of it [the wax] is a case not of vision or touch or imagination — nor has it ever been, despite previous appearances — but of purely mental scrutiny” (CSMII:21; AT VII:31). He also says in the *Third Meditation* that, “[m]y understanding of what a thing is, what truth is, and what thought is, seems to derive simply from my own nature” (CSMII:26; AT VII:38). For further discussion along these lines, see (Pasnau 2013, 139). For objections to this reading, see (Williams 2005/1978, 220–1); (Carriero 2009, 440, note 32); cf. (Morris 2014).

<sup>11</sup> Leibniz articulated these replies in a letter to Thomas Burnett, a frequent correspondent of Leibniz’s and a friend to Locke. Leibniz attempted to engage Locke via Burnett several times, with no success. For further discussion of the history of this particular aspect of Leibniz’s correspondence with Burnett, see Gerhardt’s discussion translated in (Leibniz 1916, 5–7).

<sup>12</sup> (Leibniz 1978, 5:23–4).

Leibniz repeats this conception of reflection’s role in the generation of the concept <substance> in other work, and extends the view to include other central metaphysical concepts. Commenting on Locke’s theory concerning the origin of all of our ideas in his *New Essays on Human Understanding* (1704), Leibniz says:

Now, reflection is nothing other than attention to what is within us, and the senses do not give us what we already bring with us. Given this, can anyone deny that there is a great deal innate in our mind, since we are innate to ourselves, so to speak, and since we have within ourselves being, unity, substance, duration, change, action, perception, pleasure, and a thousand other objects of our intellectual ideas?<sup>13</sup>

Since reflection is simply “attention to what is within us”, and we are, as Leibniz jokingly puts it, “innate to ourselves”, all relevant ideas (concepts) of a substantial subject are gained by reflection on ourselves. According to Leibniz, the content of such concepts originates in the contemplation — reflection — of our own nature. If we could not so reflect on our own nature, we would never even be able to *conceive* of the substance-accident relation.<sup>14</sup> In the *Monadology* Leibniz further emphasizes this position, arguing that

it is thus, as we think of ourselves, that we think of being, of substance, of the simple and the compound, of the immaterial, and of God himself, conceiving of that which is limited in us as being without limits in him. These reflective acts provide us

<sup>13</sup> (Leibniz 1996, 294).

<sup>14</sup> The details of Leibniz’s view are contested and require more discussion than I can provide here. See (Anderson 1981; Jolley 1988, 1990, ch. 10; McRae 1972, 1995; Perkins 1999) for discussion. For our purposes it is enough to note that Leibniz construes reflection, however it is ultimately to be understood, as the sole source for the concepts necessary for metaphysics, and specifically the concept <substance>. It is this view that I argue Kant takes up and develops.

with the principal objects of our reasonings (Leibniz 1969, 645–6, §30).

In these passages I take Leibniz to make two claims. First, the meta-physical knowledge that we have of nature as a plurality of substantial beings depends on, and is posterior to, our epistemic grasp of *ourselves* as substantial beings. Second, the priority of self-knowledge to our understanding of nature comes from the role the self plays as a *source* of the content of our ideas (or concepts).

In arguing that the self is a privileged source of representational content, Leibniz endorses what we may call the “Difference Thesis” regarding introspection.<sup>15</sup> Introspection provides a privileged and peculiar sort of epistemic access to ourselves.<sup>16</sup> Introspection is privileged because it provides a better route to self-knowledge than, e.g., external perception or testimony. It is peculiar because it is a special way of getting self-knowledge, wholly different from perception or testimony. This view of self-knowledge, coupled with claims concerning what the self is — viz. a simple unitary substance — provides a basis for a Leibnizian resolution to the problem of the subject. It is on the basis of this privileged and peculiar access that we each have to ourselves that we enjoy our capacity to represent (i.e., have an idea of, conceive of) anything external to (i.e., distinct from) us *as a substantial thing*. Given that *representation* of substance (or the capacity thereto)

<sup>15</sup> For discussion of the Difference Thesis in contemporary philosophizing about self-knowledge, see (Gertler 2011, 10–12) and (Smithies and Stoljar 2012, 4–6). The Difference Thesis is not trivial. Philosophers sympathetic to empiricism can plausibly deny it, as they construe introspection as a form of perceptual access, and thus in principle no different from perception of external objects. Locke and Hume plausibly deny the Difference Thesis in favor of conceiving of introspection merely as internal perception. More contemporary figures who, for a variety of reasons, deny the Difference Thesis include (Armstrong 1968; Dretske 1994; Byrne 2005; Goldman 2006, ch. 9; Schwitzgebel 2012).

<sup>16</sup> For discussion of these features of introspection, see (Byrne 2005). As Byrne notes, they can come apart, with accounts of self-knowledge allowing that introspection is privileged even if not peculiar; see, e.g., (Ryle 2009, 160).

is a condition of *knowledge* of substance, rejecting the Difference Thesis would thus, according to Leibniz, be tantamount to rejecting the possibility of knowledge, and even conception, of substantial nature altogether.

Let me lay out the various claims a bit more explicitly. Leibniz conceives of reflection as marking a privileged relation to ourselves different from that to any other object. This is the “Difference Thesis”.

**Difference Thesis:** Introspection (specifically, self-conscious reflection) provides a privileged and peculiar relation to oneself *as subject*, and is in this way epistemically distinctive.

The Difference Thesis underwrites the role of self-consciousness in metaphysical theorizing. This is spelled out in the “Source” and “Priority” theses.

**Source Thesis:** The content of self-consciousness is the source of the content of at least some of the concepts central for engaging in metaphysical speculation, such as <substance>, <being>, <unity>, etc.

**Priority Thesis:** Self-consciousness is prior to, and necessary for, metaphysical knowledge of substances and at least some of their properties.

Thus, Leibniz’s conception of how we can come to have knowledge of substantial beings depends in part on his account of how we can even come to think or represent such beings, which he articulates via his notion of “reflection”. While it is certainly worth considering whether this strategy of explaining the source of concepts like <substance> in the special nature of self-conscious awareness (“reflection”) could ever be successful, my interest here is in the question of whether we can see this strategy in Kant’s work.

During the 1770s Kant at times seems to be pursuing a version of this Leibnizian strategy. For example, in a 1769 note on Baumgarten’s *Metaphysica*, he says that

by means of our senses only the relations of things can be revealed, and we can represent the absolute or the subject only from our selves. The idea of substance actually comes from the *repraesentatione sui ipsius* [representation of oneself], insofar as we represent that something is separate from us (R3921, 17:346; see also R4493, 17:571–2; R5290, 18:144; R5297, 18:146)<sup>17</sup>

The lecture texts we have from the 1770s, as well as various notes, also suggest that Kant holds that we represent ourselves in a special or unique manner. For example, in lectures shortly after the *Dissertation* Kant says, “We have no intuition in the whole world except the intuition of our self; all other things are appearances” (*Anthropologie Collins* 25:15 (1772–3)). Kant’s point here is *not* that we have only one intuition — viz. of ourselves. Rather, it is that all of our *outer* intuitions are of non-substantial appearances, while our inner (though non-intellectual) intuitions present ourselves as *substantial subjects*. In a *reflexion* also from the early-to-mid 1770s, Kant says, “The I is the intuition of a substance” (R4493, 17:571 (1772–5)). Similarly, in the *Metaphysics L<sub>1</sub>* lectures, from roughly the same period, Kant contrasts consciousness of external objects with consciousness of the self. One intuitively oneself immediately, but the same is not true of external objects (28:206–7, 224). The self so intuited (as intelligence) is substantial, simple, and immaterial (28:224–5).

In the quote that forms the epigraph to the present paper — R4674, from the *Duisberg Nachlass* of 1775–6 — Kant writes of the “I” as the “original of all objects”. And, as he does in the lecture material cited above, Kant *contrasts* the special access we have to ourselves with our access via intuition to external objects. The intuition of oneself is of an object whose properties are not presented, as outer things are, merely in terms of relations.<sup>18</sup> The language Kant uses in R4674 is also echoed

in other texts from the mid-1770s. For example, Kant states that the “I” is the “original concept” of substance which we “borrow” for use in our conception of other substances (*Metaphysics L<sub>1</sub>*, 28:225–6). Relatedly, he remarks that “the I expresses the substantial; for that substrate in which all accidents inhere is the substantial. This is the only case where we can immediately intuit the substance” (*Pölitiz Metaphysik* 28:226 (1777–80)).

Thus, Kant’s view in the 1770s at least suggests endorsement of the Difference Thesis, and with it the Priority and Source theses, though full substantiation of these claims requires more discussion than I can provide here.<sup>19</sup> However, one might think that even if Kant accepts such claims prior to the publication of the first *Critique*, he thoroughly rejects the Leibnizian strategy for resolving the problem of the subject in the “critical” period of 1781 and later. In the next section I argue that this is not so.

### 3. Kant on Substance

In this section I examine Kant’s rejection of any derivation of the category <substance> from intuition (and from the contents of sense more broadly), discuss possible readings of his positive view — in particular what I call the “logician” interpretation — and defend my preferred “actualist” one.

#### 3.1 Sensibility & the Problem of the Subject

In the critical period, Kant is clear as to what cannot be given via sensibility. For example, he says that “a manifold’s combination (*Verbindung*)

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to criticize. For example, in the *Nachlass*, Kant says “I would not represent anything as outside of me and thus make appearance into experience (objectively) if the representations did not relate to something *that is parallel to my I*, through which I refer them from myself to another subject” (R4675, 17:648 (1775); my emphasis). For discussion, see (Guyer 1987; Carl 1989b, 1989a; Serck-Hanssen 2001; Laywine 2005, 2006; Kitcher 2011).

<sup>17</sup> For related discussion see (Laywine 2005, 8–9).

<sup>18</sup> There is also indication in the *Duisberg Nachlass*, as there was in Kant’s lectures, of his endorsement of the rational psychology he would later come

<sup>19</sup> See (Allison 2015, 58–9ff) for some supporting discussion of Kant’s endorsement of Leibniz’s general strategy.

as such can never come to us through the senses" (B129). One important form of combination is *predication*. Its categorial counterpart is *subsistence-inherence*.<sup>20</sup> If we take seriously Kant's clear statement that the senses cannot combine anything, then we cannot construe the senses as representing anything by *predicating* features of objects.<sup>21</sup> Predication occurs only in judgment, or in the synthesis of perceptions with the "dynamical" categories in **experience**. Hence, the senses alone cannot represent (or present to consciousness) anything as predicated of anything, and correspondingly, of any quality as inhering in anything.<sup>22</sup>

Consider the sensory grasp of the particular redness of a particular rose, in contrast with the conceptual grasp of a particular rose as red. One can apprehend the redness of the particular rose without thereby apprehending that the rose is red.<sup>23</sup> In apprehending this bit of the rose's redness, one is representing a particular portion of space and a

<sup>20</sup> I leave open exactly how we should understand the notion of "counterpart" here. At the least, Kant intends the relation between logical subject and predicate to prove an epistemological guide to our conception of a substance. But he may intend more than this, depending on the reading of the project of the Metaphysical Deduction that one endorses. I discuss this issue in further detail below.

<sup>21</sup> It is important to note here that the claim is that no predication occurs in *intuition*, not that no predication occurs in *experience*. This is one reason for thinking that Kant cannot hold a view of intuition according to which it intrinsically possesses a "content", understood in terms of a correctness condition. In contemporary terms, this means that Kant cannot hold that the "Content View" is true of intuition. For discussion of the Content View, see (Siegel 2010, 2011) and (Schellenberg 2011). For critical discussion of the view as it relates to Kant's conception of intuition, see (McLear 2016a, 2016b).

<sup>22</sup> Kant's position on this matter is also clear from his statement that the dynamical categories (relation and modality) apply necessarily only to *experience* and not unconditionally to *intuition*. The mathematical categories (of extensive and intensive magnitude) are the only categories that apply "apodictically" to intuition (A160-1/B199-200; see also A178-80/B220-3).

<sup>23</sup> This way of construing intuition sits well with a conception of intuitions as relating to tropes. For defense of this view, see (Smit 2000) and (Grüne 2009, 65-71).

particular property filling or bounding that space. In this way, intuition offers only the awareness of spatially and temporally grouped properties without any further representation of their underlying "unity" (as Kant would say) in a particular object.<sup>24</sup>

The point about predication and inherence being absent in intuition is a wholly general claim, and holds of inner sense just as of outer. In general, intuition does not say anything "of" anything. It simply presents elements of the subject's environment or itself (i.e., of what can interact with the subject's receptive sensible powers in outer or inner sense), and Kant takes sensory intuition to present properties or states, not the subjects thereof.<sup>25</sup> These include (for us) such things as shape, hardness, location, color, and so forth. These are features of objects, and being aware of them allows a subject to be cognitively connected (de re) to the objects in which the features inhere. However, such a cognitive connection does not amount to a representation that presents an object as having the relevant feature, or as the feature's itself inhering in an object.

### 3.2 *The Importance of Pure Apperception*

At least by the publication of the first *Critique*, Kant denies that we can have anything like a privileged *intuition* of a substantial self, and so de-

<sup>24</sup> One might object here that these considerations show at best that there is no de dicto awareness of a subject. But perhaps there is de re awareness. Insofar as intuition allows for the tracking and responsive differential discrimination of objects then this might count as a form of de re awareness; cf. (McLear 2015, 104-5 and note 60). But there is no further sense in which the awareness of sensory qualities in intuition extends to a sensory awareness of the metaphysical subject of those qualities, else the objections considered above would hold. There is also the issue of whether there can be de re representation of phenomena independent of any activity of synthesis on the subject's part. Such a position would require discussion of the ontology of Kant's transcendental idealism, which goes beyond what I can discuss here. For additional discussion of this issue see (McLear 2015, 97-106, 2016b, sec. 3.2).

<sup>25</sup> For further discussion of the content of intuition, see (Allais 2009); (Tolley 2013); (McLear 2016b, 2016a).



nies that the concept <substance> can be abstracted from reflection on an (inner) intuition of the self. Despite this, the centrality of the transcendental unity of apperception, especially in the B-Deduction, for Kant's argument concerning the categories suggests that there might be a continued reliance on something like the Leibnizian strategy for resolving the problem of the subject. However, one important difference from Kant's pre-critical view is that the awareness in the pure apperception of oneself as subject is wholly intellectual rather than sensible. For example, Kant says,

this representation [viz. the "I think"] is an act [*Actus*] of spontaneity, i.e., it cannot be regarded as belonging to sensibility. (B-Deduction §16, B132)

In the transcendental synthesis of the manifold of representations in general, on the contrary, hence in the synthetic original unity of apperception, I am conscious of myself not as I appear to myself, nor as I am in myself, but only that I am. This representation is a thinking, not an intuiting. (B-Deduction §25, B157)

The consciousness of myself in the representation I is no intuition at all, but a merely intellectual representation of the self-activity of a thinking subject. (Refutation of Idealism, B278)

[I]f I have called the proposition "I think" an empirical proposition, I would not say by this that the I in this proposition is an empirical representation; for it is rather purely intellectual, because it belongs to thinking in general. (Refutation of Mendelssohn's Proof of the Persistence of the Soul, B423)

Kant's position in these passages is that the awareness of oneself as the subject of mental activity is not sensory, but rather a special form of intellectual representation, one that is neither judgment nor concept but the basis for both. Kant terms this activity of intellectual self-

consciousness "pure apperception".<sup>26</sup> The critical Kant thus endorses two important claims. First, he holds that self-consciousness is fundamentally *bifurcated* into sensory (i.e., inner intuition) and non-sensory (i.e., pure apperception) modes.<sup>27</sup> Second, he holds that the sensory mode does not present a metaphysical subject — indeed it presents no subject at all — and that it is only in pure apperception that one's self is presented, albeit in not in a manner that supports various inferences of interest to the "rational psychologist" (more on this below).

Below I argue that Kant pursues what I have called the Leibnizian strategy for resolving the problem of the subject. But given Kant's distinction between two different modes for apprehending oneself — viz. intellectual vs. empirical — this means that we should expect that only *pure* apperception is able to supply the content necessary for representing a metaphysical subject or substance. In the next subsection I motivate such a position by examining what I take to be a "gap" in standard analyses of Kant's conception of <substance>. I then go on to canvas and reject the most plausible alternative interpretations of Kant's view before presenting and defending a positive argument for construing pure apperception as central to the critical Kant's reply to the problem of the subject.

### 3.3 *A Gap in Kant's Conception of Substance*

The conception of substance that I've been primarily concerned with in this paper is the metaphysical conception of substance (<substance><sub>M</sub>) as that which *substands* and *subsists*.<sup>28</sup> However,

<sup>26</sup> He also occasionally calls pure apperception "reflection" (e.g., An 7:135n) or "transcendental consciousness" (e.g., Refl 18:306 (1785–89)).

<sup>27</sup> Kant rejects what, in contemporary discussion of this issue, has been called the "Uniformity Thesis" regarding self-knowledge. See, e.g., (Boyle 2009, 141); cf. (Shoemaker 1988); (Burge 1996, 2013); (Moran 2001).

<sup>28</sup> This metaphysical notion is the one clearly articulated by Kant's immediate predecessors. For example, see (Baumgarten 2013, 136); see also Wolff's definition of substance in specifically temporal terms (Wolff 1730, sec. 768) and Kant's notes on the Baumgarten passage (R3572–4 (c. 1764–70)).

the critical Kant is often taken to have only *two* distinct notions of substance, the logical/grammatical notion of what I have called  $\langle \text{substance} \rangle_L$  and the “schematized” notion of a  $\langle \text{substance} \rangle_S$ .<sup>29</sup>

**$\langle \text{substance} \rangle_L$ :** the logical-grammatical conception of a term which always takes subject rather than predicate place in a judgment

**$\langle \text{substance} \rangle_S$ :** the schematized conception of substance as the persisting and permanent substratum of change

Note that the concept  $\langle \text{substance} \rangle_M$  falls between the two other notions. There are three significant features to such a conception. First, the content of the metaphysical conception of substance includes the notion of a real subject of inherence, rather than a merely logical subject of predication.<sup>30</sup> Second, the real subject of inherence does not itself inhere in anything else. It is, with respect to this relation, ultimate.<sup>31</sup> Third, the represented metaphysical dependence relation of accident to subject is *asymmetric*. If A inheres in B, then B does not inhere in A. Moreover, in contrast to  $\langle \text{substance} \rangle_S$ , the concept  $\langle \text{substance} \rangle_M$  is not yet schematized. It does not refer to or otherwise contain temporal content. So it is not the concept of a permanent being, though the schematized  $\langle \text{substance} \rangle_S$  presupposes at least two of the three elements specified in the metaphysical conception —

viz. the notion of a real subsisting subject, and the notion of a real asymmetric dependence relation between subject and accident.<sup>32</sup>

The concept  $\langle \text{substance} \rangle_M$  is distinct from and presupposed by  $\langle \text{substance} \rangle_S$ . It is also my contention that  $\langle \text{substance} \rangle_M$  cannot be analytically derived from the purely logical conception of a  $\langle \text{substance} \rangle_L$ , as the former expresses a “real” metaphysical relationship not itself contained in the latter purely logical notion. Kant’s purely logical conception of a substance, as that term which only ever occupies subject place and never predicative place in a judgment, thus cannot of itself provide the content for thinking of something as a *metaphysically* real (final) subject of inherence.

This isn’t just a problem for any attempt to *analytically* derive the content of  $\langle \text{substance} \rangle_M$  from  $\langle \text{substance} \rangle_L$ . To see the basic problem with *non-analytically* deriving  $\langle \text{substance} \rangle_S$  from  $\langle \text{substance} \rangle_L$ , and why some further account of the content is needed, let’s first suppose it is true that, for Kant, there is a correlation between the structure of a judgment and the structure of the bit of reality concerning which that judgment is true. After all, he considers truth to be “the agreement of cognition with its object” (A58/B82).

<sup>29</sup> Van Cleve (1999, 105) marks the difference between the logical and metaphysical notions, but construes Kant’s logico-grammatical discussion of subject and predicate as in fact marking “an ontological distinction between kinds of entity, not a grammatical distinction between types of linguistic item.” For related distinctions between different conceptions of substance in Kant’s work see (Bennett 1966, 182ff); (Langton 1998, ch. 3); (Proops 2010, 461).

<sup>30</sup> For helpful discussion of this difference, understood as the difference between a “real ground” and a “logical ground”, see (Stang 2016, ch. 3).

<sup>31</sup> Note that it is entirely compatible with this point that a metaphysical substance stand in some other real grounding relation to something else, e.g., that it is *caused* to exist by some other thing.

<sup>32</sup> Wolff, for example, clearly presupposes the metaphysical conception in his temporalized definition of substance as “[a]n enduring and modifiable subject” in contrast to an accident, which is a being “that is not modifiable” (Wolff 1730, sec. 768). Wolff’s definition presupposes that substances are subjects of inherence (i.e., they stand) and that, as modifiable, they cannot exist as accidents of anything else (i.e., they subsist). However, it is a matter of some controversy whether Kant conceives of *phenomenal* substance as satisfying the subsistence condition for genuine substantiality, or whether phenomenal substance merely stands in as a kind of surrogate or proxy for genuine substance. For discussion of this issue, see (Langton 1998, 48ff; Van Cleve 1999, 120–1 and 137–8; Ameriks 2000b, 269; Wuerth 2014, 95). The notion of a “phenomenal substance” as a kind of proxy or stand-in for genuine substance is defined by Baumgarten (§193) as an accident that merely *seems* to subsist (Baumgarten 2013, 136). For the purposes of this paper I remain neutral concerning whether Kant regards phenomenal substances as both subsisting and subsisting, or if he regards them as ersatz substances that merely stand, with only things in themselves being genuine (i.e., non-ersatz) substances.

Then, on the simplest non-analytic derivation story (call this the “simple view”) about how the content of  $\langle \text{substance} \rangle_S$  is derived, we simply add the concept of time to that of  $\langle \text{substance} \rangle_L$ .<sup>33</sup> But the logical conception, at best, seems to model only the subsistence feature of substance, since, according to the logical conception, a term  $x$  occupies subject, and not predicate, position. Adding temporal content to this conception, as the simple view would have it, does not account for all of the content present in the concept  $\langle \text{substance} \rangle_S$ , since it does not account for a persistent *substratum* — i.e., something that really subsists. At best the view seems to show only that in thinking using the concept  $\langle \text{substance} \rangle_S$ , we *always* (i.e., at all times) put the relevant term  $x$  in subject place. But more than this is needed to account for the content of  $\langle \text{substance} \rangle_M$ . Thus the simple view provides no account of either the metaphysically real subject, or the dependence relation between inhering accident and substantial subject.

If the simple view is inadequate, then Kant needs some other account of how we non-analytically derive or otherwise acquire the content for thinking of something as a real metaphysical subject on which its accidents *asymmetrically depend*. If the simple view won’t work, what alternative interpretations remain for Kant?

In this section I consider two possible (and, I think, the only plausible) options for non-analytically deriving the (content of the) metaphysical conception. According to the first alternative — what I call the “logician” interpretation — the categories are identical with the logical functions of judgment, but applied (in a “real use” of the understanding) to intuition rather than concepts. Hence the category of substance just *is* the categorical form of judgment as applied to intuition. Crucially, according to the logicist, the real use of the logical form brings with it new content, and thus fills the gap in conception between  $\langle \text{substance} \rangle_L$  and  $\langle \text{substance} \rangle_S$ . According to the second alternative — call this the “actualist” interpretation, which I fa-

vor — though logicism is right to link the categories with the logical functions, the content of  $\langle \text{substance} \rangle_M$  cannot be derived from the logical forms of judgment applied in a sensory context. Instead, this content — and specifically the representation of an actual (*wirklich*) and not merely logical form of dependence — stems from the pure apperceptive awareness a thinker has of its own intellectual activity in thinking. I thus claim that, in following this strategy, Kant maintains, even in the critical period, a version of the Leibnizian strategy of deriving the content of the fundamental metaphysical concepts from self-consciousness. It is here, in pure apperception, that the critical Kant reaches for the source of our representation of a substance. I discuss logicism and actualism in detail below.

### 3.3.1 Logicism

Kant makes several remarks that suggest he closely links the categories with the logical forms of judgment. The latter are not simply a “clue” or “guiding thread” (“*Leitfaden*”) to the organization of the table of categories; they *are* the categories, at least in their “logical” use. The central texts are as follows:

The same understanding, therefore, and indeed by means of the very same actions through which it brings the logical form of a judgment into concepts ... also brings a transcendental content into its representations by means of the synthetic unity of the manifold in intuition in general ... . (MD §10, B105)

[The categories] are concepts of an object in general, by means of which its intuition is regarded as determined with regard to one of the logical functions for judgments. (TD Transition, B128)

That action of the understanding ... through which the manifold of given representations (whether they be intuitions or concepts) is brought under an apperception in general, is the logical function of judgments. ... But now the categories are nothing other than these very functions for judging, insofar as the manifold

<sup>33</sup> This kind of approach is suggested by (Strawson 1966, 77).

of a given intuition is determined with regard to them. (TD §20, B143)

In the metaphysical deduction the origin of the a priori categories in general was established through their complete coincidence [*völlige Zusammentreffung*] with the universal logical functions of thinking. (TD §26, B159)

[The categories] are in turn nothing other than **forms of thought**, which contain merely the logical capacity for unifying the manifold given in intuition in a consciousness a priori. (Phenomena & Noumena, B305–6)

[T]he pure concepts of the understanding are, of themselves, nothing but logical functions, but that as such they do not constitute the least concept of an object in itself but rather need sensory intuition as a basis, and even then they serve only to determine empirical judgments. (Pr §39, 4:324)

These texts communicate two important points. First, they indicate Kant's pursuit of a strategy for explaining how the pure categories, or fundamental concepts of metaphysics, arise from the intellect. This strategy aims to avoid commitment to any form of content nativism, and it seems a promising way to avoid a problem that plagues Kant's account of intellectual concepts in the 1770 *Inaugural Dissertation* — viz. explaining how the pure categories are “pure” in the sense of being traceable only to the intellect, without thereby implicating either intellectual intuition, which he denies, or sensible (inner) intuition, which would undermine their claim to purity.

Second, the very same logical functions for combining representations (concepts) in judgment, and which constitute the basis of study in what Kant calls “pure general logic”, are also the functions for combining representations (intuitions) in our experience of objects.<sup>34</sup> Thus

<sup>34</sup> Here I agree with Tolley's (2012) claim that pure general logic and transcendental logic are completely coincident in their extension, differing only as

for the understanding as a faculty of judging (A69/B94), each logical function of thinking (e.g., categorical judgment), when applied to a multiplicity of intuitions, results in a distinctive way of relating to, or “experiencing” in Kant's technical sense, an object.

I take the story thus far to be, at least as interpretations of Kant go, relatively uncontroversial, and should be acceptable to all parties (including myself). The point of controversy comes in the next step. A proponent of the logicist conception of the categories argues for a third claim, in addition to the above two points, that the categories should be understood to acquire their distinctive content by virtue of their essential tie to combination in sensory intuition. For example, according to Béatrice Longuenesse's influential gloss, this means that “the logical forms of judgment are forms of the unity of the combination of concepts in judgment. The categories ‘universally represent’ forms of the unity of the combination of representations in intuition. *What they add to the logical forms of judgment is thus the unity of intuitions under the latter.*”<sup>35</sup> Relatedly, Stephen Engstrom states that “the logical form in its potential for material and real use constitutes a category, one of the understanding's original ‘concepts of an object in general.’”<sup>36</sup>

Given that the categories “add to the logical forms of judgment”, as Longuenesse puts it, I understand the logicist view to claim that the very same function of the intellect for combination is distinguished by virtue of its use in judgment (i.e., logical use) or intuition (i.e., real use). Now, on the most straightforward reading of this proposal, in the real use of the logical function, it (now understood as a category) acquires *additional content* that is *non-analytically* related to the logical forms of judgment. Moreover, this additional content comes from the *essential* relation the logical forms have to synthesizing a sensory manifold in intuition. The logical forms guide synthesis in the intuition of objects,

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hylomorphic aspects — viz. the form (pure general) and matter (transcendental) of logic.

<sup>35</sup> (Longuenesse 2000, 94, my emphasis).

<sup>36</sup> (Engstrom 2018, 247–8).

and in virtue of this, can stand as general or “reflected” representations (i.e., the categories) under which such intuited objects may be subsumed.<sup>37</sup> For the logicist, since the categories make essential reference to the synthetic unity of a sensible manifold (whether that manifold is spatial or temporal or some other sensible form entirely), this explains where the additional content of the category (e.g., of <substance><sub>M</sub>) comes from. Ultimately though, the categories are nothing over and above the logical forms, but are rather the forms as employed in a specific context (i.e., forms of a specifically sensory matter).

However, at least with respect to the specific issue of the category of substance, I do not see how logicism can succeed in providing an explanation of the relevant content if one agrees (i) that the logical-grammatical conception of substance is distinct from the metaphysical conception, and (ii) that the experiential conception contains more content than that of a temporal relation holding between the referent of the subject term or concept and the referent of the predicate term or concept. Recall that the problem with the “simple view”, discussed above, lies in explaining how either the content of a metaphysically real subject or asymmetric dependence is supplied to the concept <substance><sub>S</sub> if the only material at hand is that of the merely logical-grammatical notion and a formal feature of intuition (i.e., time).

Now, if one accepts that the simple view is defective, then what does the logicist view add to supply the requisite model of real asymmetric dependence that the simple view lacks? There seem to be three options: (i) the addition is basic or brute and cannot be explained in further terms; (ii) the content of the logical form itself is more robust than I have so far allowed; (iii) the additional content may be abstracted (or extracted) out of experience in a manner that it cannot be from the logical form of the category or the pure intuition (or related concept) of time alone. Let me take these in turn.

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<sup>37</sup> (Longuenesse 2000, 96).

On the first option, the content of the metaphysical concept derives from a basic or primitive connection between (a) the logical concept and (b) the pure form of intuition.<sup>38</sup> Since this is a basic or primitive connection between logical form and intuition, it cannot be explained in further terms. One might argue that this position is suggested by the fact that Kant himself seems to think his method for spelling out the transcendental conditions of experience — understood in terms of synthetic a priori knowledge — does not demand elucidation of the conditions of those very conditions.<sup>39</sup> If this is correct, then according to the primitivist position Kant need only show *that* appeal to logical form and the pure forms of intuition is necessary for the categorial representation of reality, not *how* this occurs.

However, the primitivist position has at least two shortcomings. First, it is rationally unsatisfying, since it denies that there can be any further explanation of the connection between the content of the forms of judgment and the categories. Second, it is unsatisfactory by Kant’s own lights. One of the tendentious claims that Kant is aware that he is making concerns the fact that there are concepts whose content does not derive from experience, and thus whose legitimacy in applying to objects of experience is open to question. For example, one of the aims of the *Metaphysical Expositions of the Transcendental Aesthetic* is to account for the source and nature of the content of our a priori concepts of space and time. In introducing the *Transcendental Deduction* in §13, Kant claims that a deduction of the source of the categories is significantly more difficult (A87–8/B119–20), especially since their content is such as to be universal (in being a priori) but not grounded

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<sup>38</sup> In the case of finite discursive subjects such as ourselves, the pure form in question is *time*. In creatures radically different from us, there may be some other pure form that plays the relevant role in cognition. Such a form would have to be like time in being a universal condition of appearances, even if it were otherwise radically different. Thanks to an anonymous referee for encouraging clarity on this point.

<sup>39</sup> See especially (Marshall 2014) for discussion of this issue.

in any experience at all (and so arousing “suspicion” as to their legitimacy).

Moreover, given Kant’s exhaustive distinction between analytic/synthetic and a priori/a posteriori judgment, he needs some way of accounting for all content by means of such a priori or a posteriori sources. And if my distinction between the three conceptions of <substance> is cogent, then the primitivist story does not explain how <substance> has the content it does. If this is correct, then adverting to a primitivist explanation of the content of the categories is a kind of mysterianism unacceptable even by Kant’s own standards. For this reason we should reject the primitivist defense of logicism.

Moving to the second option, a defender of logicism might try to defend a more robust conception of the logical form of judgment constituting a category’s content. This strategy rejects my characterization of the content of the purely logical conception of the categories (e.g., of <substance><sub>L</sub>) as merely “grammatical”, and thus as failing to provide the content for representing a real asymmetric dependence relation.

To adjudicate this dispute over the status of the logical form of judgment, we need to get clearer on Kant’s conception of judgment. In general Kant describes concepts as rules or functions for “the ordering of different representations under a common one” (A68/B93). This ordering is enacted when one representation is “subordinated” (*untergeordnet*) “under” another, as a species (or the members thereof) is to its genus (or the members thereof), and it is this subordination relation that is involved in the cognitive activity of judging.<sup>40</sup> And though all concepts have the “form” of generality and mediacy, Kant considers a specific concept to be constituted by its “content” (*Inhalt*), which con-

sists of the simpler and more general marks (themselves concepts) under which that concept falls (JL 9:95). For example, <human> consists of various marks, one of which is <animal>. The concept <human> thus “falls under” and thereby “contains” the concept <animal> and is thus subordinate to it.<sup>41</sup>

The containment metaphor thus stands for the manner in which a concept relates to others in a hierarchy of genus/species relationships, with each species being formed from its genus by the addition of some differential mark (as <rational> when added to <animal> forms the species concept <human>). The more specific concepts are contained “under” the more general concepts, and have those more general concepts as their content. Staying with our example, because <rational> and <animal> are both higher (i.e. more general) relative to <human>, <human> would therefore be subordinated under each of them, in each concept’s “extension” (*Umfang*) or “sphere” (*Sphäre*). Reciprocally, <human> would nevertheless itself contain both <rational> and <animal> in itself, as parts of its own content.<sup>42</sup> The concept <human> is thus subordinate to these other concepts in that their possession is necessary for thinking of something as human. But this analytic dependence of <human> on <animal> and <rational> cannot be of help to the logicist, since it is not a real asymmetric dependence relation.

However, Kant also uses ‘subordination’ in a different sense, with respect to judgment, not as subordination of representations under a *predicate*, but in terms of the predicate’s being subordinate to the *subject*

<sup>40</sup> The view of a concept as a representational act, which may only be carried out in judgment, of subordinating representations under a common one has been heavily emphasized by many commentators. See, for example, (Paton 1936, 1:285; Strawson 1966, 94; Pippin 1982, 33). For discussion and criticism of the interpretation of concepts as employed entirely in acts of judgment, see (Grüne 2009); (Land 2015); cf. (Heis 2013).

<sup>41</sup> Engstrom describes this as “analytic subordination” or “subordination in content”, which he contrasts with “synthetic subordination” or “subordination in use” (2018, 245n32; cf. Longuenesse 1998, 93–4), which I discuss further below. Both acts of subordination involve ordering one or more representations “under” a common logical ground — in the analytic case, the subordination of a concept and its objects to a predicate (e.g., of the objects falling under <bachelor> to <unmarried>); in the synthetic case, the subordination of a predicate to a subject (e.g., of <slovenly> to <bachelor>).

<sup>42</sup> For discussion, see (De Jong 1995, 623–6; Longuenesse 1998, ch. 4; Anderson 2005, 2015, chs. 2–3; Tolley 2012, 433–4).

term in the (categorical) judgment.<sup>43</sup> This might be a more promising notion for the logicist to pursue. For example, Kant says,

As to relation, judgments are either *categorical* or *hypothetical* or *disjunctive*. The given representations in judgment are subordinated one to another for the unity of consciousness, namely, either as *predicate to subject*, or as *consequence to ground*, or as *member of the division to the divided concept*. (JL §23 9:104; see also JL §§58–60 9:121–2; A322/B378; R3095 16:656 (1769–75))

Here the idea is not that representations are subordinate or “fall under” the predicate, but rather that the predicate is subordinated (in some different sense) to the subject.

Kant also sometimes speaks of the subject term of a judgment as the “condition” (*Bedingung*) of the assertion of the predicate in a way that is relevant to understanding the above described alternative “subordination” of predicate to concept. For example, Kant says in the *Transcendental Dialectic* of the first *Critique*,

The proposition ‘Caius is mortal’ I could indeed derive from experience by means of the understanding alone. But I am in pursuit of a concept (in this case, the concept ‘man’) that contains the condition under which the predicate (assertion in general) of this judgment is given; and after I have subsumed under this condition taken in its whole extension (‘All men are mortal’): thus do I proceed thereby to determine the cognition of my object (‘Caius is mortal’). (A322/B378)

The basic idea here is that in an act of judgment whereby some predicate is asserted of (or “determines”) some object (via the subject term), the subject term is the condition, or logical ground, of the assertion being made — i.e., of the predicate being asserted of the subject. The logicist might thus appeal to the notion of the subject term as a condi-

<sup>43</sup> For discussion, see (Longuenesse 1998, 86–90; Anderson 2015, 99–104).

tion of the predicate in accounting for the real asymmetric dependence relation represented by the content of  $\langle \text{substance} \rangle_M$ .

Engstrom (2018, 2.1) has recently articulated a sophisticated version of this kind of strategy. He argues for the existence of an asymmetry at the level of the subject-predicate relation itself, based on this notion of the subject term as the condition of the predicate. If successful, this would perhaps provide the basis for modeling the asymmetric real inherence relation present in  $\langle \text{substance} \rangle_M$ . As Engstrom puts it,

A categorical judgment can accordingly be regarded as lying, strictly speaking, in the assertion of what is thought through the use of the concept serving as predicate, for in that assertion the use of the concept serving as subject is consciously presupposed. The judgment is therefore an act in which another act, namely the use of the concept serving as subject, is contained, as the inner condition enabling the assertion of what is thought through the use of the concept figuring as predicate.<sup>44</sup>

If I understand Engstrom correctly, the putative fact that there is this internal and asymmetric dependence of predicate on subject in an act of (assertoric) judgment is then the basis, in the real use of a category, for the representation of a real (and not merely logical) asymmetric dependence of accident on subject. As Engstrom elaborates,

it can be seen that in the real use of the categorical form, the act of subordinating the predicate to the subject constitutes a rep-

<sup>44</sup> (Engstrom 2018, 246). Note that Engstrom construes assertion and judgment as tightly linked by Kant. On Engstrom’s reading, the act of grasping a truth-functional content (judging) goes along with the putting forward of that content as true (assertion). Engstrom (2018, 246n23), however, notes, “Kant does not explicitly mark the now familiar distinction between predication and assertion ... but by distinguishing modalities of judgment he is able to accommodate non-assertoric predication, for instance in compound judgments (A74–6/B99–101).” For discussion of the issue of the connection between assertion and judgment in the Early Modern period see, e.g., (Geach 1960; Hylton 1984; Buroker 1994; Owen 2003). For discussion of Kant on their connection, see (Nuchelmans 1983, 252–4; McLearn 2016b, 106–12).

resentation in which what is thought through the subject and what is thought through the predicate are conceived as so ordered that while the former does not depend for its possibility on the latter, the latter depends for its possibility both on the former, as its internal condition (or as the real of whose existence it is a determination), and also on a further condition, lying outside it.<sup>45</sup>

The parallel between the three “moments” of judging — viz. the use of a subject term, a predicate term, and assertion of the latter of the former — and the structure of the being so judged is then elaborated:

- (a) just as the positing of the subject is prior to the predication that determines it, so the existence of a real subject is prior to a determination of its existence;
- (b) just as the predication depends on the positing of the subject it determines, so a real determination depends on the existence of a real subject; and
- (c) just as the predication depends also on some condition in sensibility outside the positing of the subject, so a determination of a thing’s existence depends also on some condition in reality outside the existence of the real subject, namely on something indeterminately represented through the sensible condition on which the predication is conscious of itself as also depending.<sup>46</sup>

Engstrom’s account, if correct, would provide an explanation of the way in which the real use of the categorical form captures a dependence relation in the world, derived from the logical form of the category itself.

However, Engstrom’s position depends on the claim that the subject term is the “inner condition” (246) of the assertion of the predicate

term, such that there is a genuine relation of asymmetric dependence instantiated, and which can serve as a model conforming to the metaphysical case. But I see at least four problems with this claim.

First, it is not at all obvious that Kant’s conception of a condition — i.e., of a subject term as the condition of an asserted predicate — fits the kind of asymmetric dependence relation that Engstrom describes. The notion of predicate as subordinate to subject, or the latter as the condition of the former, as described in the passages from the *Critique* and the *Logic* quoted above, is one concerning conditions on inference.<sup>47</sup> For example, in the example Kant uses (A322/B378) of the judgment ‘Caius is mortal’ the condition of the predicate <mortal> is not <Caius> but rather <man>. Moreover, <man> is such a condition because its positing is sufficient for positing <mortal>. It is thus, insofar as Caius is a human being, that it can rationally be asserted of him that he is mortal, though there are obviously other ways in which something may be mortal than by being human. The (sufficient) conditioning of predicate by subject is thus always mediated by some further term under which the subject (in this case <Caius>) is itself subsumed in the purely logical sense of ‘subordination’ we examined above.<sup>48</sup> There is not obviously such a mediating element between substance and its properties.<sup>49</sup>

Second, Engstrom says, if “no concept [were] used as subject, no assertion would be possible” (247). But this point applies equally to the *predicate*, for one cannot assert anything by means of a subject

<sup>47</sup> See especially (Longuenesse 1998, 93–5ff) for discussion.

<sup>48</sup> (Longuenesse 1998, 95).

<sup>49</sup> One might, following Wolf, try a distinction here between “absolute” predication (or predication *nulla adjecta conditione*), concerning essential properties, and “hypothetical” predication (or predication *sub adjecta conditione*) concerning contingent properties. See (Longuenesse 1998, 99–101). However, I don’t see that this would work, for the notion of “condition” here seems different from that which Engstrom requires. In Engstrom’s (2018, 246) case he is looking to the subject term as the “condition of the possibility” of the asserted predicate, but in the case of absolute predication the subject is merely the *sufficient* condition of the asserted predicate.

<sup>45</sup> (Engstrom 2018, 250).

<sup>46</sup> (Engstrom 2018, 250).



term/concept alone. In defense of Engstrom's point, one might argue here that Kant sometimes suggests that in the assertion of some existent thing — what Kant calls “absolute positing” — a subject is asserted without a predicate concept.<sup>50</sup> Consider, for example, Kant's discussion of the issue of God's existence:

Now if I take the subject (God) together with all his predicates (among which omnipotence belongs), and say God is, or there is a God, then I add no new predicate to the concept of God, but only posit the subject in itself with all its predicates (A598–9/B626–7)

One might thus argue that here <God> is asserted (posited) without a correlate predicate. However, I don't believe such an argument succeeds. We can see this by briefly examining Kant's view of positing.

Kant's distinction between absolute and relative positing marks a distinction between, respectively, positing an object as instantiating some predicate, and positing a relation between two predicates asserted in a judgment. Consider the following description of positing from Kant's pre-critical (1763) discussion of God's existence:

The concept of positing [*Position*] or setting [*Setzung*] is perfectly simple: it is identical with the concept of being in general. Now something can be thought as posited merely relatively, or to express the matter better, it can be thought merely as the relation (*respectus logicus*) of something as a characteristic mark of a thing. In this case, being, that is to say, the positing of this relation, is nothing other than the copula in a judgment. If what is consid-

<sup>50</sup> This is not something that I take Engstrom himself to claim. He contends that the positing of the subject in the first moment of a categorical judgment “is not a free-standing pure existential judgment” (Engstrom 2018, 250n32). He goes on to say, “Pure existential judgments (*S is, S exists*) are always derived from affirmative categorical judgments, in which posited subjects are determined.”

ered is not merely the relation but the thing posited in and for itself, then this being is the same as existence. (OPA 2:73)

So in saying that God exists, one absolutely posits the existence of an object that instantiates <God>. In saying that God is wise, one relatively posits a relation between two predicates <God> and <wise> (cf. OPA 2:74). Further, the position Kant stakes out in the discussion of the concept <God> at A598–9/B626–7 is not one according to which a subject concept is asserted in the absence of a predicate. Rather, what Kant says there is that some existent thing is (absolutely) posited as existing, and that <God> is truly predicated of that thing. This is clearly his position in the 1763 discussion, where he says:

If I say ‘God is an existent thing’ it looks as if I am expressing the relation of a predicate to a subject. But there is an impropriety in this expression. Strictly speaking, the matter ought to be formulated like this: ‘Something existent is God.’ In other words, there belongs to an existent thing those predicates which, taken together, we designate by means of the expression ‘God.’ These predicates are posited relative to the subject, whereas the thing itself, together with all its predicates, is posited absolutely. (OPA 2:74)

As this text makes clear, even a case of absolute positing includes the predication of a concept. So if the above is correct, the case of absolute positing is no counterexample to the claim that acts of assertion require both a subject and a predicate, for in absolute positing, a predicate is still asserted.<sup>51</sup> Hence, Engstrom's claim that no predicate may be asserted without a subject may be true, but it is also true that no subject may be asserted without a predicate. The grammatical fact of the subject's place in an assertion does not therefore give us the asymme-

<sup>51</sup> For more discussion of absolute vs. relative positing see (Stang 2016, sec. 2.8).

try necessary for explicating the real relation between substance and inhering property.

Third, while the *truth* of a categorical judgment depends on a relation between subject and predicate (e.g., in analytic judgment, containment of the latter in the former), this is not the same as the *predicate* depending on the subject. Moreover, as Kant indicates in his discussion of <substance> in the Dialectic, accidents “are not really subordinated to [substance], but are rather the way substance itself exists” (A414/B441). What this seems to indicate is that the kind of logical subordination characterized by the logical forms doesn’t really capture the difference between the real *coordination* relation of properties in subsistence-inherence and the real *subordination* relation of causes in cause-effect.<sup>52</sup> And if no relevant asymmetry can be generated in the purely logical structure of the judgment, there will be nothing that can stand in “conformity” (as Engstrom puts it), in the acts constituting a judgment, with the metaphysical structure of the inherence relation instantiated between property and substance.

Related closely to this third point there is a fourth and more general problem that any logicist approach faces, even if it *could* articulate the right kind of logical asymmetry between subject and predicate. This is the problem of explaining how the logical formal relation between subject and predicate can represent a *real* relation between substance and inhering accident. Recall that Engstrom says that

- (b) just as the predication depends on the positing of the subject it determines, so a real determination depends on the existence of a real subject

Here, and similarly for the other conditions, Engstrom contends that the logical relation marks out a form of dependence that is also really

instantiated between the substance and its accident. But why think that the logical relation marked in the categorical judgment can represent (or otherwise be relevantly analogous to) a real relation? Put another way, why think that the dependence relation (even if asymmetric) between the subject, as logical ground, and a predicate, is of the same kind as the real relation between a substance, as real ground, and its inhering properties? In fact, Kant’s distinction between logical and real grounds, first articulated in the 1760s and developed through the critical period, aims precisely at denying any such connection between logical and real grounds.<sup>53</sup> This is clearest in Kant’s discussion of the ground-consequent relation, but a related point holds for subsistence-inherence. Let me first briefly discuss the notion of a logical ground before making the point about subsistence-inherence.

A logical ground is one that posits its consequence solely by virtue of logical principles, such as the principle of identity or non-contradiction. So A is a logical ground of B just in case falling under A is sufficient for falling under B. So <human> is a logical ground of <animal> in that falling under the former is sufficient for falling under the latter. In this way a concept is the logical ground of any of its marks. It is clear that a logical ground, so understood, is governed by the principle of non-contradiction. For if A is the logical ground of B, then an object cannot be such as to be both A and not B.<sup>54</sup>

Kant’s position in the 1760s and later is that there are grounds that are not logical grounds. This means that A can be the (non-logical) ground of B even if it is the case that something can be both A and not B. Causation is the paradigmatic case for Kant (*Metaphysik Herder* 28:549; *Metaphysik Mrongovius* 29:808, 843). A can causally ground B’s existence even if there is no contradiction in positing A but not B. Subsistence-inherence is also a real, as opposed to logical, grounding

<sup>52</sup> Engstrom notes this difference between forms of subordination (246n22), but suggests that it is due simply to the fact that “while a predicate is no less dependent on its subject than is a consequent on its ground, it does not constitute a separate judgment in its own right.”

<sup>53</sup> For extensive discussion of the following points or issues related thereto, see (Stang 2019); cf. (Watkins 2005, 162–70 and chs. 4–5 passim, 2019; Longuenesse 2001; Stang 2016, 82–91; Stratmann 2018).

<sup>54</sup> See (Anderson 2005; Stang 2019, 89–90).

relation (A181/B225). For example, there is no logical contradiction in a substance's instantiating forces of various magnitudes, while it may yet be really impossible for there to be such co-instantiated forces in a single being (NM 2:171–2).

But if subsistence-inherence is a real, as opposed to logical, grounding relation, what explains how we are able to (even erroneously) represent such a real relation? It cannot be by virtue of anything about intuition (or its content), for Kant is quite clear that the relational categories are not necessary for the possibility of intuition, nor is their content contained in intuition or the appearances given by intuition (A178/B220). But the content cannot come from the logical form of judgment either, since Kant is clear that logical grounds cannot be real grounds. So how could one ever even represent a real relation of subsistence-inherence? From the point of view of the logicist, such a question might seem ill-conceived. For the logicist, representation of a real relation just *is* the representation of a logical relation in a sensory context (for us, a temporal context). But this, I contend, misses Kant's point that we can, in experience, represent real relations that are not themselves due to (or derived from, or dependent on) logical principles and that we cannot rely on representation of logical relationships to determine what is really possible.<sup>55</sup> On Kant's view, just as we distinguish between the representational content <subsistence-inherence> from that of <cause-effect>, each of which is necessary for representing the corresponding real relations, so too do we distinguish between the content necessary for representing a logical and real relation (i.e., between <logical necessitation> and <real necessitation>). But how could we derive the latter from the former?

<sup>55</sup> Kant's discussion at A414/B441–2 is again relevant here. See also Kant's discussion in the *Metaphysik Mrongovius* of the ground-consequence relation in judgment as merely analytic or logical and as distinct from that real relation between posited ground and consequent discussed by metaphysicians (29:820); cf. A279/B335, A721/B749.

Given these problems, I do not see how a defender of logicism can appeal to logical form itself to generate either the needed asymmetry or the representation of a real relation, and this brings us back to the problem with which we started — viz. what is it that is added in the real use of a function of the understanding that generates the content <substance><sub>M</sub>?<sup>56</sup>

This brings us to the third option for the logicist view, which concedes that while neither the logical function of judgment nor the pure form of time provide the needed content concerning dependence, the combination of the two in the experience of an object do. According to this version of the view, the experiential conception *contains* the metaphysical conception (i.e., it is a more determinate version of it). We can then acquire the metaphysical conception by acquiring the experiential concept. We can then isolate the metaphysical concept <substance><sub>M</sub> from its temporal specification by a process of abstraction.<sup>57</sup>

The problem with this option is that, like the primitivist, it leaves the source of the content of <substance><sub>M</sub> wholly mysterious. Kant construes abstraction as the isolation or extraction of an already present content.<sup>58</sup> Since our aim is to discover from whence the content specific to <substance><sub>M</sub> comes, we cannot simply appeal to abstraction from experience, for this restates the problem. All can concede that the experiential concept contains the metaphysical as part

<sup>56</sup> One further variant of this strategy, suggested by an anonymous referee, would be to claim that the logical functions are themselves derived from apperception of one's own activity, after which the categories are then derived from the logical functions in accord with the logicist strategy. As we've seen, though, Kant's description of the logical functions (particularly categorical judgment), at least on the most straightforward conception of 'logical', does not provide the requisite notion of dependence. Alternatively, if the logical forms themselves present real content by virtue of being derived from apperception, the variant collapses into a version of the apperception view that I discuss below.

<sup>57</sup> Thanks to Nick Stang, Sergio Tenenbaum, and an anonymous referee for pressing versions of this objection.

<sup>58</sup> See his remarks on abstraction in the *Inaugural Dissertation, Anthropology*, and the *Logic* (ID 2:394; An 7:131; JL 9:95, note 2).

of its content. The question is where that metaphysical content comes from, and we have seen that it cannot come from empirical or pure intuition, and it cannot come simply from the logical function in judging. It is not clear that there is any further experience-constituting element to which the logicist can appeal. The third option, then, fails to explain what needs explaining, and for that reason should be rejected.

Hence, none of the three ways in which one might try to characterize logicism results in an explanation of the content of  $\langle \text{substance} \rangle_M$ , and specifically the kind of *real asymmetric dependence* to which the metaphysical conception of a subsisting entity appeals. So while the logicist interpretation is certainly a plausible attempt at a non-analytic derivation of the schematized or experiential notion of the category of substance from its purely logical form, it does not ultimately provide an adequate explanation of the source of the kind of content that we have been examining with respect to the purely metaphysical conception.

Despite the problems I've laid out for the logicist view, one might nevertheless defend it by arguing that the logicist view sees an important advantage over any other attempt to explain the content of the categories. For it might seem that any appeal to something other than the logical forms of judgment for categorial content goes against Kant's derivational strategy in the Metaphysical Deduction. Why would Kant need to appeal to apperception for content if he took his argument in the Metaphysical Deduction, an argument that appears *before* the extended discussion of apperception in the Transcendental Deduction, as broadly cogent? This question is worth addressing in some detail.

As we have seen, Kant conceives of the categories as exemplifying in their forms of combination the "very same actions" (B105) through which judgments are provided logical form. The Metaphysical Deduction thus provides a "clue", or more literally, a "guiding thread" (*Leitfaden*), to the table of categories. The existence of the Metaphysical Deduction might then be seen as evidence against the interpretation I'm proposing, for, if I am correct, Kant's reliance on apperception in the way I claim might undermine his argumentative strategy for *all*

the categories, insofar as they are supposed to be derived or derivable from the forms of judgment *alone*.<sup>59</sup> Does the appeal to apperception therefore make the Metaphysical Deduction otiose?

Consider two points in response to this worry. First, one might argue that Kant may not intend to derive all the categories directly from acts of apperception, rather than, e.g., merely from possession of the capacity.<sup>60</sup> Perhaps each grouping admits of a different derivation strategy with respect to apperception. For example, perhaps only the categories of relation are so connected to apperception that they gain their metaphysical content from specific acts.<sup>61</sup> However, one might worry that this is too 'rhapsodic' an approach to be a viable option for Kant. In light of this sort of worry I evaluate some options for deriving the content of the other categories in a manner consistent with the one I outline for  $\langle \text{substance} \rangle_M$  in §3.4 below.

Second, assuming that all the categories owe at least some of their structure or content to apperception, this does not render otiose the strategy Kant pursues in the argument of the Metaphysical Deduction, for there Kant is primarily concerned to provide some unitary and a

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<sup>59</sup> Thanks to Colin Marshall, Eric Watkins, and Tobias Rosefeldt for helpful discussion of this point.

<sup>60</sup> For an argument aimed at showing how *all* of the categories derive from the principle of apperception (i.e., that the 'I think' must be able to accompany every representation of mine), see (Schulting 2012). Though I am sympathetic to many of Schulting's claims, his strategy differs significantly from mine. He is concerned with the *principle* of apperception, whereas I appeal to the structure of apperception itself. He argues that the derivation is logical and analytic. I argue that it is synthetic (i.e., there is content acquired via self-consciousness). Moreover, Schulting argues that Kant engages in the derivation of the categories, albeit in a thoroughly condensed fashion, in the first part of the B-Deduction. I make no such claim. However, I in various ways agree with Schulting regarding how Kant exploits various links between the categories and self-consciousness. See §3.4 below.

<sup>61</sup> It is of interest here that in Kant's notes for a deduction in the 1770s, of the three "titles of the understanding" with which he is concerned, two are relational categories (i.e.,  $\langle \text{cause} \rangle$  and  $\langle \text{substance} \rangle$ ). See (Guyer 1987); (Carl 1989a, 82–103); (Laywine 2005, 2006) for relevant discussion.

priori basis for determining exactly *which* of our concepts are cognitively fundamental and a priori. He says,

Transcendental philosophy has the advantage but also the obligation to seek its concepts in accordance with a principle, since they spring pure and unmixed from the understanding, as absolute unity, and must therefore be connected among themselves in accordance with a concept or idea. Such a connection, however, provides a rule by means of which the place of each pure concept of the understanding and the completeness of all of them together can be determined *a priori*, which would otherwise depend upon whim or chance. (A67/B92)

This then is the central role for the argument of the Metaphysical Deduction, in providing a principled and a priori basis for *exhaustively* determining which are the fundamental concepts. As Kant notes, there are a variety of pure a priori concepts (e.g., see his discussion of the “predicables” at A82/B108). So we need some account of which pure a priori concepts are fundamental to our cognition of objects. Kant thus wants an account that

has not arisen rhapsodically from a haphazard search for pure concepts, of the completeness of which one could never be certain, since one would only infer it through induction, without reflecting that in this way one would never see why just these and not other concepts should inhabit the pure understanding. (A81/B106–7)

Analysis of the logical functions of judging avoids a “rhapsodic” search for pure concepts because it tells us something about which acts of the intellect might be fundamental — viz. the basic logical acts of judgment through which any concept is applied. Analysis of these acts thus gives a “clue” to which fundamental concepts might be relevant to our cognition through concepts — viz. those concepts that arise from reflection on the very logical acts in question. But one can hold that Kant conceives of the categories as acquired via reflection on such logical

acts, without thereby being committed to holding that the content of the categories is nothing over and above those logical acts. As we’ll see in the next subsection, the content might also include that which is contained in the reflective awareness of the acts, as distinct from the acts themselves. One can thus agree with the logicist that the categories are closely tied to the basic logical forms, while yet disagreeing that the entirety of the content of the categories is yielded by those forms.

Hence, if I am right concerning the connection between apperception and the content of the concept <substance>, and it is true that there is a similar connection for all the other categories, there would still remain a need for a principled account specifying which a priori concepts are the fundamental ones, just like the kind Kant sketches in the Metaphysical Deduction. Thus, given these points, and the problems for the various versions of the logicist view elaborated above, I do not see logicism as providing a satisfactory explanation of the content at issue here.

### 3.3.2 *Actualism*

If logicism construes the concept <substance> as determining its content entirely in virtue of the logical form of categorical judgment, the “actualist” approach I argue for construes the real, thinking subject as a source of content for <substance>. As Kant puts it in the Refutation of Mendelssohn’s proof in the B-Paralogisms, with the ‘I think’ of pure apperception we “begin not from the concept of a thinking being in general but from an actuality [*einer Wirklichkeit*]” (B418). According to the interpretation I propose, the critical Kant derives the content of the concept <substance><sub>M</sub> from the pure apperception of the actuality of the thinking subject and its activity.

One virtue of this interpretation is that it helps explain the emphasis Kant places on the importance of self-consciousness in the deduction of the categories as well as statements he makes in the A-edition of the Paralogisms. These texts were mentioned in the introduction but are worth quoting here in full.

[The principles of] the objective determination of all representations, insofar as cognition can come from them ... are all derived [*abgeleitet*] from the principle of the transcendental unity of apperception. (Transcendental Deduction §19, B142).

Apperception is itself the ground of the possibility of the categories, which for their part represent nothing other than the synthesis of the manifold of intuition, insofar as that manifold has unity in apperception. ... Hence of the thinking I (the soul), which [thus represents] itself as substance ... one can say **not so much** that it cognizes **itself through the categories**, but that it cognizes the categories, and through them all objects, in the absolute unity of apperception, and hence cognizes them **through itself**. (Observation on the sum of the pure doctrine of the soul, A401–2, original emphasis)

Should we take seriously Kant's claims that the categories are "derived" from apperception, and that apperception is the "ground of the possibility" of categories a thinker cognizes "through itself"? If what I have said so far is cogent, then we have good reason for taking these remarks at face value, for there needs to be an explanation of the categorial content of  $\langle \text{substance} \rangle_M$ , and given that we've eliminated mere analysis, (inner) intuition, and the derivation of  $\langle \text{substance} \rangle_M$  from the sheer logical form of categorial judgment, there seems no other recourse than that of pure apperception.

First, as we've already seen above, Kant clearly denies that sensory intuition can provide a subject with the representational content of a  $\langle \text{substance} \rangle_M$ . This much is plain from the discussion, above, that the senses do not combine anything and that the relational categories are constitutive of experience but not intuition.

Second, Kant forecloses other possible sources of the content  $\langle \text{substance} \rangle_M$ . The content cannot be innate. Kant is explicit in his reply to Eberhard that neither the categories nor the forms of intuition

are innately possessed by the subject upon its creation (OD 8:222–3).<sup>62</sup> Concerning the categories themselves, Kant also speaks of their "givenness" (A728–9/B756–7), as well as the "occasional causes of their generation" (A86/B118).<sup>63</sup> None of these statements make sense if Kant regarded the content of the categories as innate.<sup>64</sup>

If the above is correct, and allowing a third premise — that all representational content is derived from either a priori or a posteriori sources — the conclusion would seem to follow. The only possible source for the concept  $\langle \text{substance} \rangle_M$  is the purely intellectual representation of oneself in the act of thinking. In sum, the argument I ascribe to Kant is as follows:

1. Sensory intuition cannot provide the representational content for the concept  $\langle \text{substance} \rangle_M$ .
2. Other than the subject of thought (i.e., the self-consciousness of pure apperception), there are no relevant a priori sources of a priori content.
3. All representational content is based on either a priori or a posteriori (experiential) sources.
4. ∴ The only possible source of the representation of a  $\langle \text{substance} \rangle_M$  is the purely intellectual representation of oneself in the act of thinking — i.e., pure apperception, or self-consciousness, provides us with the content of the concept  $\langle \text{substance} \rangle_M$ .

This argument from elimination does not, however, give us any real sense as to *why* pure apperception is a proper source for the content

<sup>62</sup> For discussion, see (Allison 1973); see also (Vanzo 2018).

<sup>63</sup> See also Refl. 4172 (1769–70), 17.443; *Metaphysik L<sub>1</sub>*, 28:190, 233–4 (1777–80); *Metaphysik Mrongovius*, 29:762–3 (1782/3); *Metaphysik Volckmann*, 28:373–4 (1784/85).

<sup>64</sup> It also will not do to say that Kant, like Leibniz, holds a dispositional theory of innateness. Dispositional nativism does not resolve the problem of the subject. Even on such a view, Kant must still explain where the content comes from.

of <substance><sub>M</sub>. How, then, might pure apperception provide the relevant content of something's subsisting and subsisting?<sup>65</sup>

Kant closely connects the concepts <action>, <causation>, and <substance>, as is clear from his remark in the Second Analogy that

Where there is action [*Handlung*], consequently activity [*Tätigkeit*] and power [*Kraft*], there is also substance, and in this alone must the seat of this fruitful source of appearances be sought. (A204/B250)

Kant also characterizes an act (*Handlung*) as that which “already signifies the relation of the subject of causality to the effect” (A205/B250). Kant further characterizes these links in metaphysics lectures from the critical period:

Action [*Handeln*] and effect [*Wirkung*] can only be ascribed to substance. Action is the determination of the force [*Kraft*] of a substance as a cause of a certain accident [*accidentis*]. Causality [*Causalitas*] is the characteristic of a substance insofar as it is considered as the cause of an accident [*accidentis*]. (*Metaphysik Pölitz* 28:564–5 (1790/1))<sup>66</sup>

The connection between <action>, <causation>, and <substance> is important because Kant repeatedly characterizes thinking or judging as an act (e.g., B130, A294/B350) and construes pure apperception as the intellectual awareness of these acts. These acts bring about certain effects — viz. judgments or thoughts —

<sup>65</sup> There is also the related question of how any act of apperceptive reflection and abstraction can generate a concept at all, much less one of the categories. This is an important issue, but I lack the space to properly address it here. Instead I assume, with Kant, that reflection *can* result in the possession of a new concept, and ask only how it might be thought to work in the case of <substance>.

<sup>66</sup> For extensive discussion of this conception of an act, as well as the related notions of substance and power in Kant's work, see (Watkins 2005, chs. 4–5; Smit 2009; Wuerth 2014, especially chs. 1, 6; Stang 2019, 92–4).

and such effects depend for their being on the actor — in this case the judger or thinker.<sup>67</sup> The thinker thus brings into existence and sustains her thoughts by virtue of the exercise of this power for such activity. Importantly, the judger or thinker does *not* depend on these various judgments or thoughts for its own being.<sup>68</sup> The thinker can exist without those very thoughts, but the reverse is not true. Moreover, the thinker brings those thoughts into existence — i.e., is their cause. The reverse is not true. There is thus an *asymmetric* dependence between thinker and thought. Moreover, the relation between thinker and thought is a *real* and not merely logical relation. As Kant puts it, “apperception is something real [*Reales*]” (B419; see also B418, B422n), and in deriving the content of <substance><sub>M</sub> from apperception, we derive it “from an actuality” (B418). Self-conscious thinking thus always includes a consciousness of a real asymmetric dependence relation of thought on the thinker, whose activity brings about and sustains the existence of the thought. Hence, in contrast to the logicist approach discussed in the previous section, the actualist position outlined here is well-suited to explain how representation of real relations is possible for the thinking subject.<sup>69</sup>

<sup>67</sup> I say more about the analogous role of apperception in grasping the content of the category of <cause-effect> in §4.4.

<sup>68</sup> This is, of course, compatible with a thinker depending on their thoughts (or other modifications) for various kinds of, e.g., determinate objective cognition or knowledge, or for being able to think various kinds of content. I discuss this point in greater detail in the section concerning determinacy below.

<sup>69</sup> One might object here that real things can stand in merely logical relations (e.g., *life* logically excludes *death*), so that the fact that apperception is real does not imply that the relation between thought and thinker is real instead of logical. However, this would be a mistake. Only *concepts* stand in logical relations; the concept <life> excludes the concept <death>. But the logical exclusion of the latter from the former is different from the *real* (i.e., metaphysical) exclusion of (the property of) *life* from (the property of) *death* (Kant discusses this latter form of exclusion under the topic of “real repugnance”). In the act of thinking, one apperceives the exercise of one's power to bring about and sustain that very thought. This is a real and not

While the real asymmetric dependence relation required for representing the standing subject of inherence is one element contributed in pure apperception, there is also the subsistence relation. We can then ask: Does pure intellectual self-consciousness provide any awareness of the thinker as not dependent upon anything else in the way that its thoughts are dependent on it — i.e., as not inhering in anything?<sup>70</sup> There is textual support for a positive answer to this question in Kant's discussion of Spinoza in the *Pölitiz Religion* lectures.<sup>71</sup> There Kant says that

my own self-consciousness testifies that I do not relate all my actions to God as the final subject which is not the predicate of any other thing, and thus the concept of a substance arises when I perceive in myself [*indem ich an mir selbst wahrnehme*] that I am not the predicate of any further thing. For example, when I think, I am conscious that my I, and not some other thing, thinks in me. Thus I infer that this thinking in me does not inhere in another thing external to me but in myself, and consequently also that

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logical relation. Thanks to an anonymous referee for encouraging clarity on this point.

<sup>70</sup> Note that since this consciousness is purely intellectual it counts neither as acquaintance (*Kenntnis*) nor as "proper" cognition (*eigentliche Erkenntnis*). I discuss this issue further below with respect to the First Paralogism.

<sup>71</sup> That Kant believed we could be conscious of the self as subject in this sense is also on display in his criticism of spinozism. In the Pölitiz lectures on religion from 1783/84, Kant goes so far as to say that "the concept of a substance arises when I perceive in myself that I am not the predicate of any other thing" (28:1042; Kant (1978), 75). Kant then argues that the spinozist is faced with a dilemma. Since there is only one substance in which everything inheres either I, as subject, am this substance, and therefore God — which contradicts my dependence, or I am an accident — which contradicts my awareness of myself as subject, as "I" (28:1052; cf. 28:1042). See (Allison 1980, 207; Wuerth 2014, 143–4 and ch. 5 *passim*) for relevant discussion. I also discuss these texts further below.

I am a substance, i.e. that I exist for myself, without being the predicate of another thing. (*Pölitiz Religion*, 28:1042 (1783/84))<sup>72</sup>

The crucial point here is that, according to Kant's lecture, in self-conscious thought one is conscious that it is *oneself* that thinks and not something else. In other words, one is conscious of one's *independence* or ultimacy as the ground of thinking. But then, as Kant notes, one can immediately infer that one's thought inheres in oneself (i.e., exhibits the form of real dependence we conceptualize via <inherence>) rather than something else, and thus that one is a substantial being (since exhibition of this kind of ultimacy just is what it is to be a substance).

Kant takes a similar line in his published work. For example, in the First Paralogism of the first edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant says that

in all our thinking the I is the subject, in which thoughts inhere only as determinations, and this I cannot be used as the determination of another thing. Thus *everyone must necessarily regard Himself as a substance, but regard his thinking only as accidents of his existence and determinations of his state.* (A349; my italics)

While Kant does not go so far here as to explicitly argue for the acquisition of the concept <substance><sub>M</sub> via reflection on the content of self-consciousness, he does endorse the anti-spinozistic point he makes in the Pölitiz lectures concerning the necessity of construing oneself as a substance in light of the content of self-consciousness. Moreover, Kant's use of 'inhere' and his reference to acts of thought as "accidents" indicates that he has something more than a merely grammatical con-

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<sup>72</sup> Further on in the same set of lectures, Kant also states that "[the conception of myself as accident] contradicts my concept of my I, in which I think myself as the ultimate subject which is not the predicate of any other thing" (*Pölitiz Religion*, 28:1052–3 (1783/84)).



ception of substance in mind — viz.  $\langle \text{substance} \rangle_M$ .<sup>73</sup> Thus, there is at least some positive textual evidence in favor of ascribing to Kant the position that in pure apperception one is conscious of a standing and subsisting subject.<sup>74</sup>

Aside from textual considerations, we can see why it is philosophically important for Kant's position that it is the activity of thinking or judging, rather than any other form of representing, such as intuiting, that is the occasion for acquiring the content of  $\langle \text{substance} \rangle_M$ . This might seem particularly pressing since all representations are such as to inhere in substantial subjects, so why would reflection on thinking (judging) in particular be necessary? The answer is that only in the pure apperceptive awareness of the activity of thinking does one get an instance of the kind of ultimacy necessary for conceiving of oneself as not only standing but also subsisting. To see this, consider that intellectual acts such as judging or inferring, according to Kant,

<sup>73</sup> Why not also (or instead) the conception of a  $\langle \text{substance} \rangle_S$ ? As we will see below, in §3.1, Kant's discussion in the First Paralogism is targeted precisely *against* the legitimacy of any inference from the concept of a  $\langle \text{substance} \rangle_M$  to that of a  $\langle \text{substance} \rangle_S$ .

<sup>74</sup> More may need to be said as to how one acquires a purely general conception of substance from reflection on the activity of thinking. For it may be that the structure of thought allows only a conception of thinking substance, and it may be necessary, in Kant's view, for there to be other kinds of cognitive material necessary for representation of a specifically *material* substance. Kant indicates such a requirement for conceiving of matter as substantial. Matter cannot be thought as *filling* space (as opposed to the geometer's space-occupying conception) without a specific kind of experience, which we gain via the sense of touch. Evidence for this comes in Kant's statement in the Remark to Proposition 5 of the Dynamics that the awareness of repulsive force is acquired via the sense of touch (4:510). He also endorses this position in the *Anthropology*, which explains why he says there that touch is the "most important" of the senses (7:155) and, in the corresponding lectures, says that touch is even necessary for acquiring the concept of a (material) substance (*Anthropology Friedländer* (1775/6), 25:494; cf. *Anthropology Mrongovius* (1784/5), 25:1242). My contention here is that representation of substance, whether mental, material, or something else entirely, requires that the subject represent a real and asymmetric dependence relation, and that such a content is not present in anything but (pure) apperceptive acts of thinking.

are acts that agents *do*, as opposed to those that *happen* to the agent (such as sensing or intuiting).<sup>75</sup> The intellectual acts are thus spontaneous rather than receptive in nature. Hence, in being the subject of a thought (i.e., being the subject thinking the thought that *p*), one must exercise a spontaneous causal power, and thereby be the ultimate cause and explanation of the thought. Other kinds of representation, such as sensory intuition, involve exercising a merely receptive causal power — one which depends on something external to it — and so fail to provide any occasion for consideration of the thinker's ultimacy.

Thus, in thinking (judging), one is not merely conscious that a thought occurs in one's mind, but rather one is conscious of doing something — viz. *thinking* (judging) — and thus of one's thought as depending on oneself for its existence and sustenance.<sup>76</sup> Pure apperception, as consciousness of one's activity in thinking, is a consciousness of precisely the real metaphysical dependence relation needed to explain the content of  $\langle \text{substance} \rangle_M$ . Kant thereby not only can eliminate other contenders for the content of  $\langle \text{substance} \rangle_M$ , he can also explain why the pure apperceptive awareness of one's intellectual activity is its source.

One might balk at construing Kant's thinker as a substance, but his entire strategy in the critical period involves elucidating the cognitive powers of the cognizing *subject*, which he construes as a substance. Kant repeatedly, and throughout his career, characterizes a power as a relation of a substance to its accidents and explicitly denies that the soul, as cognizing subject, could itself be simply *identified* with a power,

<sup>75</sup> For extensive defense of this point, see (McLear 2020; see also Pippin 1987; Allison 1990; Willaschek 2006; Kohl 2015).

<sup>76</sup> The subject of thought/agent of thought distinction has gained some prominence in discussions of the phenomenon known as "thought insertion" in contemporary psychology and philosophy of mind. The distinction is especially championed in (Stephens and Graham 2000) and subsequently taken up by a variety of philosophers and psychologists. See, e.g., (Radden 1998; Campbell 1999; Gallagher 2000; Coliva 2002; Bayne 2004; Kriegel 2004, 2021; Duncan 2019).

as, e.g., Wolff did (*Metaphysik L<sub>1</sub>*, 28:261; see also *Metaphysik Herder*, 28:25, 145; R 4762, 17:720 [1775–78]). The cognizing subject must be understood not as a power but as a substance that *has* powers.<sup>77</sup> Moreover, accidents, as Kant clearly states in the first *Critique*, are “determinations of a substance that are nothing other than particular ways for it to exist” (A186/B229), the existence of which is called “inherence, in contrast to the existence of the substance, which is called ‘subsistence’” (A187–7/B230).<sup>78</sup>

Given these points, and the obvious endorsement by Kant of the claim that all representational content is either a priori or a posteriori, Kant is thus in a position to conclude that pure apperception seems to be the best (and in fact only remaining) explanation of the source for the representational content of the concept  $\langle \text{substance} \rangle_M$ .

#### 4. Objections & Replies

There are no doubt many objections to the proposed account that deserve discussion. I consider four below: whether my account is consistent with Kant’s argument concerning  $\langle \text{substance} \rangle$  in the First Paralogism, whether it is consistent with his remarks concerning the inexplicability of the forms of judgment, whether the content of self-consciousness in pure apperception is sufficiently determinate to make

<sup>77</sup> Kant comments extensively on the relation between a substance and its accidents in the Herder lectures. For discussion, see (Watkins 2005, ch. 2; Wuerth 2014, ch. 5). And as Watkins (2005, ch. 6) makes clear, Kant’s conception of substances as possessing powers continues into the critical period and is integral to the argument of the Analogies.

<sup>78</sup> See also R5861 18:371 (1783–4). For discussion, see (Longuenesse 1998, 331–2 and note 17); (Rosefeldt 2000, 38 and note 59)). One means of downplaying Kant’s appeals to a cognizing subject of such accidents is to argue that the existence of cognitive powers does not, for Kant, imply the existence of a metaphysical subject. (Kitcher 1990) presents one such argument by attempting to contextualize Kant’s view as accepting several Humean premises, including a “bundle view” of the self. For criticism of the plausibility of Kitcher’s position, see (Allison 1990, ch. 4; Brook 1997; Wuerth 2006, 2014, ch. 1). For related discussion of the issue of the justification of Kant’s claims regarding the cognitive powers of the subject, see (Beck 1978) and especially the notion of “short-ranged rationalist reflection” discussed in (Marshall 2014).

sense as a reply to the problem of the subject, and finally whether the strategy for explaining the content of the category of substance can plausibly be extended to the other categories. I take these issues in turn.

##### 4.1 The First Paralogism

One might object that the position I attribute to Kant violates his commitment to epistemic humility, particularly concerning the nature of the subject as a substance. Essentially, the worry is that I attribute to Kant a position similar or identical to the position in rational psychology against which he argues in the First Paralogism.

In the A-edition version of the Paralogism, Kant agrees that “in all our thinking the I is subject” but asks what sort of use we are to make of this (A349). Here he is primarily concerned with the issue of the supposed *permanence* of the soul, and the extent to which we might be able to infer from the necessity of conceiving of oneself as (in my terms) a  $\langle \text{substance} \rangle_M$  to the conclusion that one is a  $\langle \text{substance} \rangle_S$ .

That I, as a thinking being, **endure** for myself, that naturally I **neither arise nor perish** — this I can by no means infer, and yet it is for that alone that the concept of the substantiality of my thinking subject can be useful to me; without that I could very well dispense with it altogether. (A349)

Kant’s primary aim here is not to argue against the position that the soul is *substantial*, but rather to argue against the epistemic fecundity of an argument from the first-person-derived concept of a  $\langle \text{substance} \rangle_M$  to a conclusion about the *permanence* of such a subject or substance.<sup>79</sup> This is especially clear given Kant’s insistence, immediately prior to the quote given just above, that

<sup>79</sup> For a similar reading, see (Van Cleve 1999, 173). Karl Ameriks (2000a, 67) argues that the A-edition First Paralogism fails to provide any non-spurious argument against the status of soul as a noumenal substance. I agree with Ameriks that Kant does not argue against the status of the soul as a substance, but deny that he ever intends to do so. His main aim concerns the

everyone must necessarily regard Himself as a substance, but regard his thinking only as accidents of his existence and determinations of his state. (A349)

Here one might object that such an interpretation attributes to Kant a position he would have deemed “unacceptably dogmatic”, insofar as it would seem to allow that the paralogistic argument Kant articulates is in fact successful in establishing that we are metaphysical substances.<sup>80</sup> Indeed, in allowing that we have consciousness of ourselves as metaphysical subjects one might think the interpretation contravenes Kant’s statement that

the first syllogism of transcendental psychology imposes on us an only allegedly new insight when it passes off the constant logical subject of thinking as the cognition of a real subject of inherence, with which we do not and cannot have the least acquaintance [*Kenntnis*]. (A350)

The crux of the objection hinges on Kant’s denial that we have any “acquaintance” (*Kenntnis*) with a real subject of inherence. Does this threaten the interpretation I’ve offered?

No, it does not. Kant’s use of ‘acquaintance’ is important here because the term is a technical one, denoting presentation to consciousness in intuition.<sup>81</sup> So we “cannot have the least acquaintance” with a substantial subject in the sense that we can have no sensible intuition of it. And since we have no sensible intuition, we have no basis for claiming that there is a *permanent* subject of all thought. But this is all compatible with construing the content of <substance><sub>M</sub> as deriving

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claim that we could have knowledge of the *permanence* of the soul, which he consistently denies. For a similar position see (Wuerth 2014, 166–7).

<sup>80</sup> For such an objection, see (Proops 2010, 462ff).

<sup>81</sup> Kant regularly uses the term in this manner in the logic lectures. See, e.g., the various “ladder of cognition” passages at *Jäsche Logik* (1800) § X, 9:64–5; *Dohna-Wundlacken Logik* (c. 1792) 24:730–1; *Wiener Logik* (1780) 24:846; *Logik Blomberg* (c. 1771) 24:132–3, 134–5, 136)

from pure apperception, for that content is not intuitive — i.e., temporal or spatial — in character.

Moreover, in claiming that the content of <substance><sub>M</sub> comes from pure apperception, I make no claim that Kant construes pure apperception as providing either *cognition* or *knowledge* of ourselves as such subjects. Kant can reasonably hold the former position — that we are conscious of ourselves as being a particular way in pure apperception — without risk of dogmatism, and thus without thereby endorsing the latter position — that we have cognition or knowledge of ourselves as permanent beings. And this is exactly what I take him to be doing in the A-edition version of the First Paralogism.

In any case, even if the above defense works for the first edition of the Paralogisms, one might object that, looking at the B-edition, this defense is not cogent. For, in the second edition of the Paralogisms, Kant appears to explicitly deny that pure apperception reveals anything about the subject.

Thinking, taken in itself [*für sich*], is merely the logical function and hence the sheer spontaneity of combining the manifold of a merely possible intuition; and in no way does it present the subject of consciousness as appearance ... In this way [i.e., in thinking] I represent myself to myself neither as I am nor as I appear to myself, but rather I think myself only as I do every object in general from whose kind of intuition I abstract. If here I represent myself as **subject** of a thought or even as **ground** of thinking, then these ways of representing do not signify the categories of substance or cause, for these categories are those functions of thinking (of judging) applied to our sensible intuition, which would obviously be demanded if I wanted to **cognize** myself. (B428–9)

Kant here denies that pure apperception presents any sort of sensory or intellectual appearance, but he also might seem to deny that pure apperception presents anything as subject or ground, in the metaphys-

ical sense with which the category is concerned. However, there are three points of note that should help mitigate this problem.

First, Kant is, as the last clause of the passage indicates, focused on the issue of cognition, so his rhetoric is directed against the position that we have *cognition* of the subject as permanent (via application of the category of substance). That one falls short of cognition of what is presented in intellectual self-consciousness is compatible with there being something of which one is aware in the having of such self-consciousness.<sup>82</sup> In this way Kant's position is exactly the same as was stated in the A-edition of the First Paralogism.

Second, and reinforcing the concern with cognition, Kant goes on to say that "in the consciousness of myself in mere thinking I am the **being itself**" (B429; emphasis in original), which indicates that though I have no cognition of myself (that would require intuition), I nevertheless am conscious of myself as the subject of my thoughts — as being the being itself who is thinking this very thought.<sup>83</sup>

Finally, in pure apperception, I am aware of my thoughts as *mine*. This goes beyond any merely logical or grammatical claim, as might be granted merely to the form of categorical judgment or the unschematized category of substance. The awareness of a thought as mine is not merely the awareness of a grammatical subject of predication. It is an awareness of *me*, and specifically, of myself as *thinker* — the "being itself", as Kant says. Kant allows that we have such awareness of ourselves as thinkers (indeed he argues for this) in the B-Deduction. He does not renounce this position in either edition of the First Paralogism (or in the Paralogisms more generally), and nothing he argues there goes against it. If this is correct, it does mean that Kant's argu-

<sup>82</sup> In the Refutation of Mendelssohn's proof, Kant says that in pure apperception we "begin not from the concept of a thinking being in general but from an actuality" (B418) and that "apperception is something real [*Reales*]" (B419; cf. B422n). This seems to indicate a real and not merely logical content to pure apperception.

<sup>83</sup> For a similar point, see Ameriks' reply to Klemme (Ameriks 2000b, xxiii–xxix) and especially note 46; cf. (Wuerth 2014, 167–8).

ment in the Paralogisms is perhaps more limited than some have taken it to be. But it doesn't mean ascribing to him either the kind of position in rational psychology that he criticizes or is limiting himself to a wholly austere position regarding the self as subject.

A further objection, raised by Karl Ameriks, is that the claim that the "I" is "absolute" in the metaphysical sense here at issue does not actually prove what is needed concerning the substantiality of the thinking subject.

The representation 'I' is absolute here in that there is no proper way of representing these thoughts which leaves no room for the phrase 'I think'. Yet this does not mean that I am truly the absolute subject of my thoughts as a substantial mental being ... as long as it is metaphysically possible ... that what I take to be a substantial soul is ultimately a set of (individually) non-mental beings ... In such a case I (as the thinking personality that I take myself to be) would really be an accident or resultant of those beings, and so but a prima-facie or relative and not absolute subject, and yet the representation 'I' would retain its ultimacy [in the sense at issue].<sup>84</sup>

Ameriks (2000a, 70) takes Kant to simply ignore this possibility in the A-edition Paralogisms, only to then take it up in the B-edition, where he provides an argument against the "mere assertion" of the substantiality of the soul at B410–12. Ameriks puts his challenge here in terms of realization by multiple substances, but the issue could just as well be pressed by appeal to a single substance (such as God) of which we are all accidents. The challenge is also suggested by the fact that Kant goes on to claim that "it is not determined whether I could exist and be thought of only as subject and not as predicate of another thing" (B419).<sup>85</sup>

<sup>84</sup> (Ameriks 2000a, 69–70).

<sup>85</sup> See (Wuerth 2014, 169) for an alternative way of addressing this problem by means of an appeal to Kant's "Virgil argument".

However, all that these passages show is that Kant denies that we can *cognize* or otherwise come to *know* our subsistence as ultimate subjects. Kant's arguments do not show that we do not at the least *represent* ourselves as subsisting and standing beings. Indeed, he seems to think that we *have* to represent ourselves as substances based on the content of self-conscious thinking. Moreover, the considerations that Kant (and Ameriks) raises do not even show that it is unwarranted to *believe* that the self is substantial, especially if we have to think in this way. The arguments are thus perfectly compatible with the central interpretive claim that I advance — viz. that it is in pure apperception, and nowhere else, that we come to be able to represent a metaphysical subject. Perhaps pure apperception is provisioning us with a misrepresentation. Sufficient theoretical grounds could never be given to warrant knowledge of the truth of it or its opposite.<sup>86</sup>

#### 4.2 *Is There No Explanation of the Categories?*

The second worry is that, by construing Kant as explaining the source of the content of the category of substance as grounded in pure apperception, my interpretation goes against his statement that we cannot explain why we have the categories that we do rather than some other set (B145–6).

Here is Kant's statement, in §21 of the B-Deduction, regarding the unexplained nature of the forms of judgment and the categories:<sup>87</sup>

<sup>86</sup> For defense of the claim concerning belief in one's substantiality and causal ultimacy, see (Pereboom 2006; McLearn 2020). For one sketch of how a kantian metaphysics of the self could be fleshed out in terms of something other than a single substance, see (Marshall 2010, sec. 4). Moreover, there may well be practical grounds on which Kant thinks we could have cognition of the self as substance, particularly in terms of its freedom, activity, and moral status. For discussion, see (Schafer, n.d.a, n.d.b).

<sup>87</sup> This worry forms a central plank in Lorenz Krüger's (1968) objection to Klaus Reich's (1992) attempt to derive the forms of judgment from apperception. While I address aspects of Krüger's argument below, here I want to note merely that my interpretation is *not* aimed at any derivation of the *forms of judgment* from apperception (though I think the strategy I employ could also be used to defend against that type of objection). The issue, rather,

This peculiarity of our understanding, that it can bring about a priori unity of apperception [*Einheit der Apperception a priori zu Stande zu bringen*] solely by means of the categories, and only by such and so many, is as little capable of further explanation as why we have just these and no other functions of judgment, or why space and time are the only forms of our possible intuition. (B145–6)

This passage may seem to raise two problems. First, Kant might be taken as claiming here that the understanding produces unity of apperception *by means of* all the categories (including <substance>),<sup>88</sup> and second, that the categorial forms by which the understanding does so are given a priori as explanatorily irreducible or primitive activities. Accordingly, while apperception is related to all the categories, the relation is not obviously the one indicated by my interpretation. For on the one hand there is no talk in B145–6 of deriving the concept of substance from apperception, and on the other there is no appeal to apperception (or anything else) to explain why we have “just these and no other” functions of judgment. Let me take two points in turn.

Concerning the production of the unity of apperception (solely) by means of the categories, it is important to keep in mind two things. First, Kant conceives of the original synthetic unity of apperception (§16) as the “highest point” of cognition (B134n), as that “on which even the possibility of the understanding rests” (B137), and as the “ground of the possibility of the categories” (A401). If the possibility of the understanding, as the faculty for generating concepts, rests on this original unity of apperception, then the unity of apperception can-

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is how a category possessing content distinct from that of the relevant form of judgment is supposed to have gotten that content.

<sup>88</sup> For one contemporary version of this interpretation see Kitcher (2011, 2014), who construes apperception as *constituted* by the activity of making content-based transitions — and so fundamentally categorial transitions — between representations. For example, she says, “[W]hat he means by ‘apperception’ is not being conscious of a self, but recognizing (by having produced) necessary connections across mental states” (Kitcher 2014, 153).

not be produced by concepts generated by the understanding. Second, Kant's claim at B145–6 that the unity of apperception is brought about "by means of the categories" is specifically concerned with the "objective" unity of apperception, whereby "all of the manifold given in an intuition is united in a concept of the object" (B139). Kant's point here is that this objective unity is, in finite subjects, *discursive* in being brought about through concepts, and is not the result of some non-discursive intellectual intuition. Thus talk of the *objective* unity of consciousness requires an a priori objective unity brought about through the categories. But this does not entail either that the categories bring about unity of apperception *as such* or that they make possible the power to produce such unity. Hence Kant's discussion of the unity brought about by the categories is perfectly compatible with my proposed interpretation.

Concerning the central explanatory worry, my proposed interpretation only aims to give an account of how the content constituting  $\langle \text{substance} \rangle_M$  might be derived from the content of pure self-consciousness. The account does not aim to explain *why* self-consciousness grounds only this kind of content as opposed to other such content — i.e., why it is that pure self-consciousness presents a real asymmetric dependence relation in thought and not some other kind of relation altogether. Accomplishing this latter claim would require knowing more about the metaphysical nature of the subject, how and why it was created, etc. To be sure, my account provides an explanation of why the content of the concept  $\langle \text{substance} \rangle_M$  is what it is, but it doesn't explain why this content is this way and *no other way*, for it cannot explain why our self-consciousness takes the form that it does and not some other (e.g., intellectually intuitive) form. Hence, relating the concept  $\langle \text{substance} \rangle_M$  to pure apperception does not violate Kant's explanatory humility as expressed in B145–6.

#### 4.3 *Indeterminacy*

A third objection concerns the status, in pure apperception, of the "indeterminate consciousness" of oneself as subject. As I've argued above, this consciousness is not something that is or could ever rise to the level of cognition or knowledge. How then could a mental state that counts as neither cognition nor knowledge provide anything of sufficiently determinate content that it could resolve the problem of the subject I've outlined here? Even worse, if the consciousness of the "I" as subject is bereft of all qualities, as it must be if the apperception is "pure" in the sense with which Kant is concerned, how is it that one is aware of any feature of the self at all?

In reply to the first question, a central plank of Kant's critical philosophy is the claim that transcendental freedom is a condition of moral responsibility. According to Kant, the idea of such freedom, though wholly non-empirical, is sufficiently determinate to play this foundational role even though we can never have theoretical cognition or knowledge of its instantiation. Assuming that Kant's position here is coherent, there does not seem to be a further obstacle to saying that there are other cases of representation that do not lead to cognition or knowledge, but that have determinate content, and if my argument above is cogent, intellectual self-consciousness of one's substantial nature provides one such case.

Concerning the second question, we should distinguish between two different senses in which consciousness might have "content". There is the sense that Kant normally attaches to '*Inhalt*' as the *determinate* content of some object to which one is related.<sup>89</sup> This objective awareness of oneself is dependent on (or "determined" by) some empirical intuition. This means that one is not aware of any feature of the self other than that it appears in such and such ways (e.g., as upset, hungry, believing that it will rain, etc.).<sup>90</sup> In this sense, pure intellec-

<sup>89</sup> For a discussion of '*Inhalt*' as being a kind of relation to an object, see (Tolley 2014, sec. 5).

<sup>90</sup> For a similar position, see (Wuerth 2014, 144–5).

tual self-consciousness is wholly without content — it does not offer any objective content for determining oneself in any way. Nevertheless, for all Kant says concerning the “emptiness” of pure apperception, it is wholly compatible with his position that there is a kind of “subjective content” to pure apperception. This would include one’s awareness, as Kant says, that “I am the being itself” that is thinking, which is to say that in thinking I am aware of my existence, and of the acts of thinking in which I, as so existing, engage.<sup>91</sup> This awareness says nothing concerning what *kind* of being one is (e.g., material or immaterial), or any other determinate feature that one might possess. Thus, agreeing that in pure apperception there is no determinate representation of an object does not thereby require conceding that there is nothing at all to be gleaned from pure self-consciousness.

#### 4.4 The Other Categories

One might object to my proposal on the basis that the explanation of the derivation of <substance> from apperception is too *ad hoc* — i.e., it applies only to this particular concept and not to the other categories. If this charge were cogent, it would present a problem for the overall “actualist” approach I’ve advocated, since, for example, the logicist interpretation has at least the *appearance* of offering a systematic outline concerning the connection between the content of each category and its related form of judgment.

Giving an account, even in outline, of how each of the twelve categories derives content from apperception is obviously a large task, too large to accomplish here. Instead I want to discuss some features of the actualist strategy for connecting apperception and categorial content,

as well as how a derivation of at least some of the other categories would go. This won’t be enough to fully answer skeptical worries concerning the connection between apperception and the categories, but it should be enough to rebut the *ad hoc* charge.

The general strategy for deriving each category is that of finding some discrepancy between the pure logical form and the schematized category, with the explanation being that the content or structure of some actual intellectually self-conscious activity supplies the missing content. In each case, the content will concern some real asymmetry, dependence, or existence that cannot be represented purely via appeal to logical form, and which is presupposed by the schematized version of the category.

Other than <substance>, the above features are perhaps most easily seen in the other categories of relation. Indeed, in my explanation of the dependence of a thought on its thinker, I appeal to the way in which the thinker *brings about* or *causes* the thought to occur. The thought both inheres in and is caused by the thinker. The fact that these two categories relate so closely is part of Kant’s view, discussed above, that “causality leads to the concept of action, this to the concept of force, and thereby to the concept of substance” (A204/B249; see also A205/B250; R5289–90 (1776/78?) 18:144; R5650 (1785–88) 18:298–302). Indeed, Kant seems to think appeal to causation is a necessary part of understanding the occurrence of inhering accidents, as when he is described as saying that an act is the determination of substance as the cause of an accident (*Metaphysik Pölitz* (1790/1) 28:564–5).<sup>92</sup> The category of community is derived from the dependence of pure self-consciousness on interaction (whether in itself or another) for any objectual (i.e., intuitive) content. There is a dependence of self-consciousness on content, and of the content (as content) on this self-consciousness. As Kant puts it in describing the logical form of the concept, “the members of the division exclude each other and yet are

<sup>91</sup> Houston Smit (1999, 207–8) defends a similar point in arguing that the self-consciousness by which the categories are acquired as reflected representations is not itself consciousness of an *object*, and thus not a determinate form of consciousness that requires an intuition for its content, though of course it requires intuition as an enabling condition (in the sense that all cognition “begins with experience” (B1)). This is not to say that Smit would thereby endorse any of the further claims I have made here.

<sup>92</sup> For a similar appeal to the interconnection of <substance> and <cause>, see (Schulting 2012, 144–5).

connected in one sphere" (B113). Self-consciousness and its content are distinct from and yet depend on one another. They are disparate states connected in one subject, and more broadly, in one experience.

Another category that also relatively straightforwardly connects to pure apperception is actuality, or existence (Kant often uses these terms interchangeably).<sup>93</sup> Existence is derivable simply from the fact of self-consciousness. As we've seen, Kant claims that in pure apperception "I am the being itself" that is self-conscious (B429). Kant also expresses this fact in his (admittedly somewhat tortured) explanation of the relation between "I think" and "I exist" in the important footnote at B422-3 in the B-Paralogisms. Kant there describes "I think" as always connected, in its expression, to some empirical intuition, "which provides the material for thinking, [and without which] the act I think would not take place" (B423n). But the existence that is expressed in the "I think"

precedes the experience that is to determine the object of perception through the category in regard to time; and here existence is not yet a category. (B423n)

While it is admittedly obscure as to what Kant can mean in talking of a representation of existence that is "not yet a category" one thing he might be aiming to express is the idea that pure self-consciousness provides the basis for representing an existence, though not yet as determinate, and specifically, as determinate in time. One needs to move from the actuality of a being, to — via the content of the universal schema of time, and the determinate content of some particular empirical intuition — the actuality of some temporally determinate being. This point is compatible with his conception of the "I think" as expressing an empirical proposition insofar as the application or use of

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<sup>93</sup> In the Postulates the second modal category is now the category of "actuality" (*Wirklichkeit*) (A218/B266). Kant also explicates the schematized concept <actuality> in terms of "existence [*Dasein*] at a determinate time" (A145/B184)

the intellectual faculty depends on intuition, while also emphasizing that intellectual self-consciousness provides the basis for representing existence itself.

Much more needs to be said to fully substantiate the connection of each category with pure apperception. But the charge that the actualist strategy is *ad hoc* is not warranted, since there is at least some justification for thinking that other categories can be (and in fact are) so derived.

## 5. Conclusion

We have seen that Kant must provide an account of the source of the content of our representation of the real relation of asymmetric dependence necessary for representing anything as a subsisting and subsisting being. This content constitutes what I have called the concept <substance><sub>M</sub>. Given Kant's denial that intuition could present such content, he lacks any empirical explanation for the knowledge that we seemingly do possess concerning a world of substantial bodies in physical interaction, and the empirical subjects who cognize them.

According to the "actualist" interpretation for which I've argued, there is no possible source of content for <substance><sub>M</sub> other than the pure apperception of the actuality of the thinking subject and its activity. I contend that Kant explains the nature of this content by appealing to the self-conscious activity of the thinking being, which presupposes consciousness of the dependence of the thought on its owner, and thus a grasp of the basic relationship between a subject and its "accidents" or properties necessary for understanding anything as a substance. Such self-consciousness cannot provide knowledge of what the subject really is — i.e., what it is "in itself." Indeed, we cannot know or cognize whether the content of a purely intellectual self-consciousness accurately describes the reality of our own existence as ultimate subjects. Thus nothing about the position I've ascribed to Kant on this matter violates his overarching epistemic humility. But, insofar as <substance><sub>M</sub> is a category necessary for scientific knowledge of objects, this I-as-metaphysical-subject model is a necessary condition



for achieving such knowledge.<sup>94</sup> And while Kant seems to leave it as an exercise for the reader how exactly this I-as-metaphysical-subject stands as the model for the content of <substance> or the other categories, I hope to have shown that Kant's strategy here is both intelligible and at least prima facie coherent.

In sum, according to the position I take Kant to hold, we lack both the intuition of a substance, and any such innate representation of it. There is only one possible way to explain the grasp we have of the representational content of <substance><sub>M</sub>. This, according to Kant, is via the purely intellectual self-consciousness that necessarily is able to accompany any act of thinking, and which includes an intellectual consciousness of the thinker's mental states as belonging to, originating from, and thereby depending on it — whatever else *it* is. In such a way the thinker is provided with the content necessary for representing the ultimacy and real asymmetric dependence relations of things exemplifying the category <substance>. Kant thereby offers a qualified endorsement of the Difference Thesis and the concomitant Source and Priority Theses discussed in section two. In this limited sense then, for Kant, the "I" remains the original of all objects.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> If my understanding of Kant is correct, this places his position regarding the importance of self-consciousness in connection to the categories much closer to that of Jena-period Fichte and the early Schelling than one might otherwise expect. I have in mind here particularly Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre* as he presented it between 1794 and 1797 (see (Fichte 1982)) and Schelling's idealism in its early Fichtean phase (see especially "Of the I as Principle of Philosophy", as well as the other papers collected and translated in (Schelling 1980)). For a similar point regarding the relation between Kant and Fichte's views on self-consciousness, see (Neuhouser 1990, 78). Whether this connection between Kant and post-kantian German Idealism is a good or bad making feature of the interpretation depends more generally on whether one thinks of the post-Kantian German Idealists as close readers of Kant or as, in one way or another, misreading or otherwise departing from him. I intend to discuss these issues further in future work.

<sup>95</sup> This paper has received useful input from a variety of sources. Thanks to audiences at McGill, the University of Toronto, and the University of North Carolina for helpful questions and discussion. Special thanks to G. Anthony Bruno, Yoon Choi, Dai Heide, Colin Marshall, James Messina, and Tyke

### Translations & Abbreviations

Quotations from Kant's work are from the *Akademie Ausgabe*, with the First *Critique* cited by the standard A/B edition pagination, and the other works by volume and page. Where available, translations generally follow *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant*, general editors Paul Guyer and Allen Wood. References to other primary texts follow available English translations where possible. References to specific Cambridge translations of Kant are abbreviated as follows:

- An: *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*
- C: *Correspondence*
- CPJ: *Critique of the Power of Judgment*
- CPR: *Critique of Pure Reason*
- CPRR: *Critique of Practical Reason*
- G: *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*
- ID: *On the Form and Principles of the Sensible and the Intelligible World*
- JL: *Jäsche Logic*
- LM: *Lectures on Metaphysics*
- MM: *Metaphysics of Morals*
- NE: *A New Elucidation of the First Principles of Metaphysical Cognition*
- OPA: *The Only Possible Argument in Support of a Demonstration of the Existence of God*
- Pr: *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*
- Refl: *Notes and Fragments*
- Rel: *Religion within the Boundaries of Reason Alone*

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Nunez for their extensive and helpful comments on, and discussion of, the paper.

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