

THE ANALYTIC OF CONCEPTS

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Abstract: The aim of the Analytic of Concepts is to derive and deduce a set of pure concepts of the understanding, the categories, which play a central role in Kant's explanation of the possibility of synthetic a priori cognition and judgment. This chapter is structured around two questions. First, what is a pure concept of the understanding? Second, what is involved in a deduction of a pure concept of the understanding? In answering the first, we focus on how the categories differ from the pure forms of sensibility and examine whether they are known only to be the pure forms of human thinking or rather the forms of discursive cognition as such. In answering the second, we draw a distinction between the application and the exemplification of the categories and use it to identify different ways of understanding Kant's project in the Transcendental Deduction of the Categories. These questions connect because the answer to the first determines how we should understand the kind of entitlement which is to be established in the Deduction.

1. Introduction

The aim of the Analytic of Concepts is to derive and deduce a set of pure concepts of the understanding, the categories, which play a central role in Kant's explanation of the possibility of synthetic a priori cognition. The book has two chapters which correspond to the tasks of derivation and deduction

just mentioned, one on the clue to the discovery of all pure concepts of the understanding – the Metaphysical Deduction – and one on the deduction of the pure concepts of the understanding – the Transcendental Deduction. Both chapters are widely recognised as crucial to the success or otherwise of Kant’s project in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, and the latter especially has prompted perhaps the most extensive commentary of any part of the *Critique*. The result is an overwhelming range of important questions and topics on which we might focus in this chapter, any one of which could only be partially addressed. We will limit our focus to two central questions which relate to the two chapters of the Analytic of Concepts and their respective tasks: first, what is a pure concept of the understanding; second, what is involved in a deduction of the pure concepts of the understanding?

What is a pure concept of the understanding? The issue we’ll pursue here is how the pure concepts of the understanding differ from the pure forms of sensibility, that is, the pure forms of sensible intuition, space and time. Kant derives the pure concepts of the understanding from forms of judgment which are necessarily involved in thinking. But in *whose* thinking? Kant is clear, in the Transcendental Aesthetic, that although space and time are the pure forms of *human* intuition and sensibility, there could for all we know be discursive cognizers who had different such forms. Are the forms of judgment, and thus the pure concepts of the understanding, similarly known only to be the forms of *human* judgment and thought, or could they have wider scope? This under-discussed issue is central to how we should think about the categories and the relation between the understanding and sensibility. It is the topic of §2.

What is involved in a deduction of the pure concepts of the understanding? Unlike our first question, this one can in no sense be described as ‘under-discussed’. Many would say quite the opposite. Nevertheless, we think that a number of influential discussions of the Transcendental Deduction fail to draw an important distinction between the application and the exemplification of the categories which is essential to making sense of Kant’s project both in the Transcendental Deduction specifically and more widely in the first *Critique*. In §3 we will show how this distinction can be used to illuminate the structure of the Deduction, and use it to motivate different ways of understanding Kant’s project.

We conclude by relating our two discussions and suggesting that there is a single neglected question that is central to both parts of the Analytic of Concepts.

2. The Metaphysical Deduction

We start with some straightforward commentary. Kant tells us that the Analytic of Concepts is not the analysis of the *content* of concepts but rather the much less frequently attempted **analysis of the faculty of understanding** itself, in order to research the possibility of *a priori* concepts by seeking them only in the understanding as their birthplace and analysing its pure use in general. (A65-66/B91)

At this point in the *Critique*, Kant has only characterised the understanding negatively, as a non-sensible faculty of cognition. He now gives us a positive characterisation of the understanding as “a **faculty for judging**” or a “faculty for thinking.” (A69/B94) Thinking is “cognition through concepts.” (A69/B94) Concepts rest on functions and a function is “the unity of the action of ordering different representations together under a common one.” (A68/B93) Putting this together, we get the idea that the role of the understanding is to order different representations under a common one.

Kant’s clue to the discovery of the pure concepts of the understanding resides in the fact that he thinks there are only certain forms in which we can order representations in judgment. These are the logical functions of the understanding in judgment, or the forms of judgment, and they are listed in the Table of Judgments. (A70/B95) The table has four titles, each of which has three moments. This table provides a clue to the pure concepts of the understanding because Kant holds that “the same function that gives unity to the various representations **in a judgment** also gives unity to the mere synthesis of various representations **in an intuition**, which, expressed generally, is called the pure concept of the understanding.” (A79/B104-5) Thus there are twelve pure concepts of the understanding, each corresponding to one of the forms of judgment and likewise organized into a table, the Table of Categories. These concepts comprise “all original pure concepts of synthesis that the understanding contains in itself *a priori*.” (A80/B106)

So far, so good, though even this two-paragraph sketch raises more questions than it answers. Why does Kant think that there are only these forms of judgment? What justifies the correspondence between the Table of Judgments and the Table of Categories? What explains the connection between any particular form of judgment and its corresponding category?

These are excellent questions which we will not be able to address here.¹ Instead, we will focus on the status of the pure concepts of the understanding and their relation to human cognition. In particular, are the pure concepts of the understanding necessary for all discursive cognition, i.e. cognition that requires both sensibility and understanding, or are they only necessary for human discursive cognition? Could there be discursive beings who have other ways of thinking about objects, sensibly conditioned intellects with different categories?²

These questions can also be pursued at the level of the forms of judgment, since the connection Kant draws between these forms and the pure concepts of the understanding does not allow a gap which might restrict the one but not the other to human cognition alone. (A79/B104–5, B143) So the issue is also whether there could be discursive cognizers who have other forms of judgment. Those who answer negatively are committed to an asymmetry. For Kant is explicit that, in the case of our forms of sensibility, “we cannot judge at all whether the intuitions of other thinking beings are bound to the same conditions that limit our intuition.” (A27/B43) Note, however, that Kant only affirms the *epistemic* possibility of discursive cognizers with other forms of sensibility: it is compatible with what we know for there to be such beings. Plausibly this commits him to the logical or conceptual possibility of such beings. But Kant does *not* commit to the real or metaphysical possibility of discursive cognizers with other forms of sensibility:

It is also not necessary for us to limit the kind of intuition in space and time to the sensibility of human beings; it may well be that all finite thinking beings must necessarily agree with human beings in this regard (though we cannot decide this). (B72, emphases added)

His claim, then, is that we cannot know whether or not there really are or really could be discursive cognizers with other forms of sensibility.³ So the symmetrical view in the intellectual case would be the claim that we cannot know whether or not there really are or really could be discursive cognizers with other forms of understanding. Call such a view *Symmetry*. And let *Asymmetry* be the view that such beings are really impossible and we can know as much.

¹ For discussion, see the entries listed under Further Reading.

² In this section we draw on joint work with A. W. Moore. See Gomes, Moore, and Stephenson (ms.) for more detailed consideration of these issues.

³ Contra e.g. Van Cleve (1999: 40), Maddy (1999: 101), Buroker (2006: 63, 100), and Marshall (2014: 55on.6).

Who endorses Symmetry? Who endorses Asymmetry? We suspect that the default view is Asymmetry but the lack of explicit discussion of the topic makes it hard to know.⁴ The rest of this section sets out a range of considerations relevant to this debate. We split them into textual and systematic considerations.

Textual Considerations

Are there texts which tell one way or the other? Consider the following two passages, which might be thought to endorse the relevant symmetry between the forms of sensibility and the forms of understanding:

But for the peculiarity of our understanding, that it is able to bring about the unity of apperception *a priori* only by means of the categories and only through precisely this kind and number of them, a further ground may be offered just as little as one can be offered for why we have precisely these and no other functions for judgment or for why space and time are the sole forms of our possible intuition. (B145-6)

But, on the other hand, it would be an even greater absurdity for us not to allow any things in themselves at all, or for us to want to pass off our experience for the only possible mode of cognition of things – hence our intuition in space and time for the only possible intuition and our discursive understanding for the archetype of every possible understanding – and so to want to take principles of the possibility of experience for universal conditions on things in themselves. (*Prol* 4:350-1)

The Asymmetry theorist can explain these passages by reading them in light of those texts where Kant distinguishes discursive from non-discursive cognition (e.g. B72, B138-9, B145, B148-9, A252, A254-5/B309-10, A286-8/B342-4; *KU* 5:405ff.; *Br* 10:130ff.). A proponent of Asymmetry will allow that there could be cognizers whose thinking, if such it be, is not governed by the forms of our own thinking. But this is not to allow that there could be *discursive* cognizers whose thinking is not governed by the forms of our own

⁴ It might seem that those who read Kant as committing to the absolute necessity of the laws of (pure general) logic are implicitly committed to Asymmetry. See Tyke Nunez (2018: §6) for discussion. But it is a delicate issue how these two debates relate, for it is a delicate issue what the relation is between the laws of logic and the forms of judgment. Note also that Asymmetry theorists will not deny that the *schematized* categories, if such there be, are peculiar to human cognition. The debate concerns the forms of judgment and the *pure* categories.

thinking. And the passages above can both be read as merely allowing the possibility of *non-discursive* cognition. This is compatible with Asymmetry.

Attention to the distinction between other forms of discursive cognition and non-discursive cognition is important because Kant allows a kind of symmetry between our grasp of the possibility of other forms of sensibility and our grasp of non-discursive cognition, intuitive intellection, intellectual intuition, and the like. In both cases, we cannot represent to ourselves in cognition proper what such alien forms might be like; we can form a negative but no positive conception of them. This is the kind of symmetry Kant endorses in the following passage, for example:

Even were they possible, we could still not conceive of and make comprehensible other forms of intuition (than space and time) or other forms of understanding (than the discursive form of thinking, or that of cognition through concepts). (A230/B283)

It is compatible with this symmetry that there is an asymmetry between the forms of sensibility and the forms of discursive understanding, i.e. with Asymmetry.

What about texts that seem to tell against Symmetry? The situation is similar. Consider:

The pure concepts of the understanding are free from this limitation and extend to objects of intuition in general, whether the latter be similar to our own or not, as long as it is sensible and not intellectual. (B148)

This text can seem to tell in favour of Asymmetry. For it states that the pure concepts of the understanding extend to objects of intuition in general, and one might read that as saying that any being which is given objects in intuition must use the pure concepts of the understanding to think about those objects. But the passage shows only that all objects of sensible intuition can be thought by the categories. It doesn't show that there could not be different forms of discursive understanding which can also be used to think about such objects.⁵

We mention one further general textual consideration which is instructive, if likewise not decisive. Kant explicitly considers the possibility of there being non-human forms of sensibility and takes pains to qualify his claims about space and time as concerning *human* intuition. (e.g. A26/B42, A35/B51)

⁵ See Moore (2012: 122n.40).

There are no comparable passages where Kant explicitly considers the possibility of there being non-human categories or takes pains to qualify his claims about the forms of judgment as concerning only human thinking and understanding. This can seem to tell in favour of Asymmetry. In response, a Symmetry theorist might point out that Kant doesn't exactly dwell on the fact that space and time are only forms of human intuition, and, contrary to what Holmes might have us believe, one cannot always draw important conclusions from a lack of barking dogs.⁶

Systematic Considerations

Are there broader, more systematic issues on which we could draw to decide one way or the other? Both theorists have what might be thought of as an attractive picture of the relation between sensibility, the understanding, and cognition, which is to say that neither view looks particularly ad hoc or otherwise inelegant. The Asymmetry theorist thinks of the relation between cognizers, discursive cognizers, and human discursive cognizers as a set of concentric circles. The Symmetry theorist treats the forms of intuition and the forms of judgment on a par. Both views are structurally attractive.

What about other systematic considerations? We begin with a worry about Symmetry. The Symmetry theorist will presumably accept that there is *a* function of the understanding which is shared by all discursive beings, namely that of ordering representations under a common one in accordance with the principle of the unity of apperception. For they are Symmetry theorists and the same is true of sensibility: space and time might for all we know be peculiar to us, but surely Kant thinks there is a passive, receptive function to sensibility as such that is shared by all discursive beings. So what is the relation between the discursive understanding in general and the categories and forms of judgment in particular? The Symmetry theorist thinks that the former is shared but the latter might for all we know be variable. What explains this discrepancy?

There are different ways of pressing this worry.

1. Kant takes the Table of Judgments to be complete; it “exhaustively exhibit[s]” the functions of unity in judgment. (AA68/B94, cf. A81/B107)⁷ But how can the Table of Judgments be complete if we cannot rule out discursive cognizers with alternative forms of judgment? To answer this

⁶ ‘The Adventure of Silver Blaze’ in Conan Doyle (1993).

⁷ For discussion, see e.g. Reich (1986), Brandt (1991), Longuenesse (1998), Wolff (1995, 2017), Lu-Adler (2018), and Evans, Sergot, and Stephenson (2020).

question, the Symmetry theorist can draw on a distinction between *the* understanding and *our* understanding, comparable to the distinction between *a* faculty of sensibility and *our* faculty of sensibility. For they may hold that the derivation of the Table of Judgments from the nature of judgment shows that it is complete for *human* cognizers, not for all discursive cognizers. But they allow that the ordering function of the understanding is shared by all discursive beings, so they must then claim that the derivation of the Table of Judgments turns on the specific way in which that ordering gets carried out in human cognizers. What is it about us that determines the derivation in this way?

2. Both the Metaphysical and Transcendental Deductions seem to proceed from considerations about the discursive understanding in general (A66/B90-1), the former from its function of ordering representations under a common one, the latter (especially in the B-edition) from the unity of apperception (cf. *MAN* 4:476 for a similar point in terms of judgment). Again the Symmetry theorist can distinguish the understanding in general from our understanding and claim that there is an aspect of the Analytic of Concepts which turns on the understanding in general and an aspect which turns on our understanding. But this just shifts the issue. What is it about us on which the relevant aspect of the Analytic of Concepts turns?

3. Symmetry theorists accept that discursive thinking as such requires unity of apperception. But Kant tells us of the pure concepts that “they alone contain” the unity of apperception. (B148) There are two ways to read this claim, and both are problematic for Symmetry. Either Kant means that only the pure concepts contain unity of apperception, or he means that the pure concepts contain only the unity of apperception. On either reading, it looks like Kant is ruling out there being anything which could explain the possibility of variation in the pure concepts of discursive beings given the invariance of unity of apperception.

So there’s an explanatory burden on Symmetry: to explain how you can rule out variability in the general characterisation of the understanding without being in a position to rule out variability in the particular forms of the understanding. And we can push this objection one-step further. Symmetry is the claim that for all we know the specific categorial and judgmental forms are variable just as for all we know the specific sensible forms are variable. We have been asking what could explain the former. This question is all the more pressing if one thinks that we have a ready answer in the sensible case which doesn’t apply to the understanding. For instance, one might think that the fact that we cannot know whether or not sensible forms could vary is

somehow connected to the fact that sensibility is receptive and depends for the matter of its representation on affection by something independent of it. (A20/B33, A51/B75) If so, the connection would not hold for the understanding, since it is not receptive and is able to bring forth representations itself. (A51/B75) It could be the asymmetry between a receptive faculty and a spontaneous faculty which explains the truth of the Asymmetry thesis.

But let us now turn to a challenge for Asymmetry. The Asymmetry theorist denies that Kant admits the epistemic possibility of other forms of (discursive) understanding. This is because they think that the categories and forms of judgment hold for all discursive cognizers. But what is the status of this claim? It is presumably known a priori. So is it synthetic or analytic? The Symmetry theorist might claim that either option looks problematic. Asymmetry faces a dilemma.

Suppose first that the Asymmetry thesis is synthetic a priori. The aim of the *Critique* is to explain the possibility of synthetic a priori cognition. But Kant's explanation of how it is that we can have synthetic a priori cognition does not seem to apply to this case, at least not without making the truth of the Asymmetry thesis depend on us in a way which undercuts its content. Perhaps instead the Asymmetry thesis is supposed to play a role in Kant's explanation of the synthetic a priori. But how can it do this if it is itself synthetic a priori? And if the thesis is neither explanandum nor explanans, what is its justification, its motivation, its point? Suppose instead, then, that the Asymmetry thesis is analytic. How could an analysis of the *concept* of discursive cognition entail these specific forms? If neither option is palatable, then this is support for Symmetry.

We think both horns of this dilemma might be resisted. On the first, there are a range of claims that Kant makes in the *Critique* which look to be synthetic a priori and yet which don't seem to be accounted for *by* his explanation of the possibility of the synthetic a priori.⁸ The Asymmetry thesis would be a further example. On the second, one might just accept that it is *analytic* of discursive cognition as such that it is governed by these particular forms. The claim would be comparable then to the claim that discursive cognition involves sensibility and understanding and the claim that sensibility is passive and receptive while the understanding is active and spontaneous. In either case, what was posed as a dilemma for the Asymmetry theorist is really just the question of what status to give Kant's fundamental claims about the

⁸ See Marshall (2014) for an excellent discussion.

mind and his general argumentative strategy in the deductions. And we think there are multiple routes available on these controversial issues.

There is a second way to press this challenge. If the Asymmetry thesis is a priori, then, according to Kant, it's necessary. But what kind of necessity could be involved in the claim that it is necessary that the thinking of discursive cognizers as such is governed by the categories and forms of judgment? Analytic Asymmetry theorists have an easy answer: it is a conceptual necessity. Synthetic Asymmetry is more complicated. It must be a kind of real necessity. But what kind, and how can we cognize it? At this point the Asymmetry theorist can get defensive again. Their answer to those questions will depend on the deep and difficult details of Kant's argument in the deductions. In the meantime, they can point out that not even the Symmetry theorist can say that which particular forms of understanding we have is an entirely arbitrary, contingent feature of our subjective constitution. Our forms of understanding must at least be necessary to us as humans, otherwise we could not even expect invariance for human cognizers. And then the only further claim made by Asymmetry is that, unlike our sensible forms, our forms of understanding are also necessary to us as discursive beings. We return to this issue at the end of the chapter.

There is of course much more to say, but we hope to have done enough to raise and clarify some of the issues concerning the status of the pure concepts of the understanding, the forms of judgment, and their relation to the forms of sensibility.

3. The Transcendental Deduction

We turn now to the Transcendental Deduction. Once again, we start with the straightforward. Kant begins the Deduction by distinguishing the question of what is lawful (*quid juris*) from that which concerns the fact (*quid facti*). The former, which establishes the entitlement of a claim, is called a "deduction." (A84/B116) A transcendental deduction is one which explains "the way in which concepts can relate to objects *a priori*", and is to be distinguished from an empirical deduction "which shows how a concept is acquired through experience." (A85/B117) The pure concepts of the understanding require a deduction to show that they are not like the concepts of fortune and fate, concepts which

circulate with almost universal indulgence, but that are occasionally called upon to establish their claim by the question *quid juris* and then there is not a little embarrassment about their deduction

because one can adduce no clear legal ground for an entitlement to their use either from experience or from reason. (A84/B117)

How do we provide a transcendental deduction of the pure concepts? Kant claims that the transcendental deduction works towards a single principle: “that [the *a priori* concepts] must be recognised as *a priori* conditions of the possibility of experience (whether of the intuition that is encountered in it, or of the thinking).” (A94/B126) It is required for these pure concepts because there is a problem in showing “how subjective conditions of thinking should have objective validity.” (A89–90/B122) It is by showing that the pure concepts are conditions on the possibility of experience that their entitlement and objective validity is assured.

Once again, this brief sketch raises more questions than it answers. Why does Kant think that the pure concepts require a deduction? How does showing that the categories are conditions of the possibility of experience suffice to show their entitlement and objective validity? What is the structure of Kant’s argument for this claim? And, since Kant rewrote the Deduction in its entirety for the second edition of the *Critique*, there are further exegetical questions about the difference between the arguments in each edition. Our focus here will be limited to some foundational questions about the very nature of a transcendental deduction: What is the aim of such a deduction? And what would Kant have to show in order for that aim to be accomplished?⁹ For simplicity, we restrict our discussion to Kant’s framing of the problem in terms of entitlement, though the same points can be made in terms of objective validity.¹⁰

What is required in order for us to be entitled to use the pure concepts of the understanding? Kant’s general answer is that we must show that the categories are necessary conditions on the possibility of experience. This formulation is ambiguous between two distinct claims:

(S) Necessarily, subjects experience objects in accordance with the categories.

(O) Necessarily, the objects of subjects’ experience exemplify the categories.

The first is a claim about *us*: we have to make use of the categories in experiencing objects. The second is a claim about *objects* of experience: *they*

⁹ For discussion of other questions, see the entries listed under Further Reading.

¹⁰ And since Kant links the objective validity of a concept to the real possibility of its object (e.g. at Bxxvi), they could further be rephrased in terms of real possibility. See Gomes and Stephenson (2016: §4) for discussion.

have to exemplify the categories. These claims are distinct. It does not follow from the fact that subjects must experience objects in accordance with the categories that the objects of experience must exemplify the categories. At least, not without further argument.¹¹

Once we note this distinction, we can see that there are two distinct conclusions that the Deduction might be aiming at. First, Kant may be aiming to show that necessarily, we experience in accordance with the categories. Second, he may be aiming to show that necessarily, the objects of experience exemplify the categories. Many formulations of the problem of the Deduction are ambiguous on just this point. But the distinction is important for determining the structure and success of the argument. (One might think that the distinction disappears in the framework of transcendental idealism. We return to this below.)

Which of these conclusions would secure entitlement for the pure concepts of the understanding? That will depend on what it would be for the pure concepts to possess entitlement. On one notion of entitlement, a set of concepts possess entitlement just in case it is possible for them to be applied to the objects of experience. On a second notion of entitlement, a set of concepts possess entitlement just in case the objects of experience exemplify those concepts. Which notion of entitlement is Kant aiming to secure in the Deduction?

The first notion of entitlement provides an answer to a question that J.H. Lambert raises in a letter to Kant on October 13, 1770. (*Br* 10:105) In this letter, commenting on Kant's *Inaugural Dissertation*, Lambert raises the question of how it is possible for pure concepts of the understanding to apply to the objects which are given to us through sensibility given the sharp distinction between sensibility and the understanding. (*Br* 10:105, 109) This problem is solved when it is shown possible to apply the pure concepts to the objects given through sensibility. If the problem with the pure concepts is that it is not possible to apply them to the objects given in intuition, then establishing (S) will be sufficient to complete the Deduction.¹²

The second notion of entitlement solves one problem that Hume raises for our concept of cause. In his *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*,

¹¹ The distinction is made clear and insisted upon by Van Cleve (1999: 89), who summarizes it as that between “we must apply categories” and the “categories must apply”. It is central to Gomes (2010; 2017a). See Stroud (1968), Rorty (1970), Guyer (1987: 117), and Cassam (1987: 375) for related ways of pressing the point.

¹² See Laywine (2001: 3-4) for this reading of Lambert's worry.

Hume asks “how we arrive at the knowledge of cause and effect”, suggesting that “as a general proposition, which admits of no exception [...] the knowledge of this relation is not, in any instance, attained by reasonings *a priori*.” (EHU 4.2.6-7) One issue here is to explain the *origin* of our concept of cause. This is the issue that is central to Hume’s discussion of the topic in the *Treatise of Human Nature* (e.g., at THN 1.3.2). But there is a further issue here about our grounds for believing that there are any causes in the world, either as a general claim about events, or in the context of any particular causal judgment. This is the problem that comes to the fore in the *Enquiry* where Hume suggests that our grounds for believing in any particular instance of causation can be neither intuitive nor demonstrative. (EHU 4.2.32) If the problem with the pure concepts is that we have no grounds for thinking that they are exemplified by empirical objects, then establishing (O) will be sufficient to complete the Deduction.

Kant, of course, says himself in the *Prolegomena* that the *Critique of Pure Reason* is the “elaboration of the Humean problem in its greatest possible amplification” (Prol 4:261; cf. 4:259-261), so our presentation of the options here may be taken to unfairly stack the deck in favour of those who take the success of the Deduction to require the establishment of (O). We *do* hold that view. But our presentation of the options here is meant to be neutral. There are ways to make plausible the claim that Kant’s main aim is to show that we must experience objects in accordance with the categories. Our main aim is only to insist on the distinction.

One reason to insist on the distinction between (S) and (O) is that it can help illuminate the structure of the second edition version of the Deduction (hereafter: the B-Deduction). It is now widely accepted that the B-Deduction contains two separate parts, roughly §§15-19 and §§22-26, which are individually necessary and jointly sufficient for completion of the proof. And since Henrich (1969), interpreters of the Deduction have recognised that Kant’s emphasis on the two-part structure places an exegetical constraint on interpretations of the B-Deduction: each of §§15-19 and §§22-26 must make a distinct contribution towards the argument, and not simply restate the results of the other in the manner of the distinct expositions of the A-Deduction.

A bewildering range of interpretations have been offered of the nature and relation of these two parts.¹³ We hold that the two parts of the B-Deduction correspond to some version of (S) and (O) above. That is, the first part of the

¹³ See the entries listed under Further Reading.

B-Deduction (§§15-19) establishes a claim about the epistemic capacities of rational subjects: that we must experience objects in accordance with the categories. The second part of the B-Deduction (§§21-26) completes the argument by showing not only that we must experience objects in accordance with the categories, but also that the categories must be (at least capable of being) exemplified by the objects of experience.¹⁴ Marking the distinction between (S) and (O) helps us isolate the contribution made by each part of the proof.

This proposal will be attractive to those who think that the Deduction aims to establish (O). But it is time to face up to the issue of transcendental idealism. The issues here are complicated, and it is not clear how transcendental idealism features in the argument of the Deduction. The worry we need to address is that transcendental idealism removes the distinction between (S) and (O). For if the distinction between (S) and (O) does not hold in transcendental idealism, then one might doubt that the distinction between (S) and (O) can be used to shed light on the aims and structure of the Deduction. Why would that antecedent be true? Transcendental idealism can be generally characterised as the doctrine that objects must conform to our conditions for cognizing them. (Bxvi; cf. A158/B197) And if objects must conform to our conditions for cognizing them, then one might think that it follows from our necessarily experiencing objects in accordance with the categories that the objects of experience necessarily exemplify the categories.¹⁵

There is much to say about this claim. But we do not think that it challenges anything we have said above. The point is not really that transcendental idealism removes *the distinction* between (S) and (O) but rather that it allows us to move from (S) to (O). It remains true, on this account of the way transcendental idealism enters the Deduction, that there is a *distinction* between (S) and (O). And it remains true, on this account, that something is needed to bridge the gap between (S) and (O). Different interpretations of transcendental idealism will yield different accounts of how the doctrine builds the bridge, and some will come close to claiming that the move is entirely analytic. But these are important differences. They are differences about the way transcendental idealism gets us from (S) to (O). They are not differences about whether we need to get to (O) or about whether it is transcendental idealism that gets us there.

¹⁴ See Gomes (2010). For discussion, see Schulting (2017) and Watt (2018).

¹⁵ See Schulting (2017: 142) for a version of this charge. For related discussion, see Schulting (2018) and Stephenson (2014).

The more serious challenge to our proposal is that the kind of entitlement secured by (S) is sufficient to complete the Transcendental Deduction.¹⁶ This wouldn't show that the distinction between (S) and (O) is unhelpful, but it would challenge the use to which we put this distinction in interpreting the structure of the Deduction above. As we say, the issues here are complicated. But there is a worry about interpreting the Deduction in this way. At the very end of the B-Edition of the Deduction, immediately after he has completed his proof of the objective reality of the categories, Kant raises an objection to what he calls "preformation systems" of pure reason. Preformation systems of pure reason are those on which

the categories were neither **self-thought** *a priori* first principles of our cognition nor drawn from experience, but were rather subjective predispositions for thinking, implanted in us along with our existence by our author in such a way that their use would agree exactly with the laws of nature along which experience runs. (B167)

And Kant complains of such views that

in such a case the categories would lack the necessity that is essential to their concept [...]. I would not be able to say that the effect is combined with the cause in the object (i.e., necessarily), but only that I am so constituted that I cannot think of this representation otherwise than as so connected; which is precisely what the skeptic wishes most. (B167-168)

That is, preformation systems of pure reason establish only "subjective necessity, arbitrarily implanted in us," (B168) a kind of necessity which falls short of what Kant wants to establish in the Deduction. (Cf. *Br* 10:131)

This section of the Deduction has a number of targets. First among them is Johann Schultz, who had suggested after the publication of the first edition of the *Critique* that pre-established harmony could be used to explain our entitlement to use the categories when thinking about the world.¹⁷ A second target is Crusius who, Kant tells us in the *Prolegomena*, held "that a spirit who can neither err nor deceive originally implanted these natural laws in us." (*Pro* 4:320) And a final target, as unlikely as it may seem, is Hume. For it is Hume who writes in the *Enquiry* that his account of Custom and Habit is

¹⁶ Watt (2018) holds this view explicitly, but it is implicit in other reconstructions of the Deduction.

¹⁷ In Sassen (2000: 214).

a kind of *pre-established harmony* between the course of nature and the succession of our ideas; and though the powers and forces, by which the former is governed, be wholly unknown to us; yet our thoughts and conceptions have still, we find, gone on in the same train with the other works of nature. Custom is that principle, by which this correspondence has been effected. (*EHU* 5.2.21, our emphasis)

Why is this relevant? Addressing this issue in a long footnote in the *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science*, Kant writes that “preestablished harmony” makes for “merely *subjectively necessary*, but objectively merely contingent, placing together, precisely as Hume has it when he calls this mere illusion from custom.” (*MAN* 4:476) This charge also appears in the *Prolegomena* where Kant claims that, for Hume, reason merely “passes off [...] subjective necessity (i.e. custom) for an objective necessity (from insight).” (*Prolog* 4:257-8) Hume’s view is a form of pre-established harmony of the pure concepts and appearances, except with the characteristically Humean replacement of a divine being with custom as the source of agreement. And the charge which Kant emphasizes again and again in these texts is that such views establish only the subjective necessity of the pure concepts of the understanding where what is wanted is the objective necessity.¹⁸

This bears on the question of whether we should see the Deduction as aiming to establish (S) or (O). For one worry about views which establish only (S) is that they secure nothing more than the subjective necessity of the categories. Kant’s charge in all of these texts is that preformation systems establish only a mere “subjective necessity, arbitrarily implanted in us,” (B168) whereas what is wanted is “the *objective necessity* that characterizes the pure concepts of the understanding.” (*MAN* 4:476) This is not a worry about the *contingency* of the agreement between our application of the categories and their applicability, as is sometimes suggested.¹⁹ It is a worry about whether the necessity of the categories goes beyond our merely being conditioned to think in certain ways. Views which take the Deduction to establish only (S) must explain why they do not make the necessity of the pure concepts to amount to nothing more than the necessity of our experiencing in certain ways. This is “precisely what the skeptic wishes most.” (B167-8)

We suggest, then, that the distinction between (S) and (O) is helpful in thinking about the aim of the Transcendental Deduction, and that Kant’s remarks on preformation systems of pure reason show why a full deduction

¹⁸ See Gomes (2017b) and Land (2015) for further discussion.

¹⁹ E.g. by Land (2015: 37).

of the categories must establish (O). And this brings us back to the question we addressed in §2 of whether the pure concepts of the understanding are known to be the forms of *all* thinking, or only the forms of *human* thinking. For recall again that Kant characterizes preformation systems of pure reason as establishing “subjective necessity, *arbitrarily* implanted in us.” (B168, our italics) This can be read as suggesting that Kant’s objection here is not to subjective necessity *as such*: he does not deny that subjective necessity plays *some* crucial role in a satisfactory deduction of the categories. On this reading, Kant rather thinks that his own Critical system of pure reason is preferable precisely for establishing a *non*-arbitrary subjective necessity for the categories. And the discussion in §2 of this chapter indicates two ways in which we might show a subjective necessity to be non-arbitrary.

Essentially the same point can be made in terms of Kant’s characterization of Hume’s version of preformation system, which “*passes off* [unterschiebt] [...] subjective necessity (i.e. custom) for an objective necessity (from insight).” (*Prolog* 4:257-8, our italics). This too can be read as suggesting that Kant’s objection is not to subjective necessity *as such*. Rather, Kant thinks that his own Critical system of pure reason is preferable precisely because it establishes for the categories a subjective necessity that *rightfully amounts to* an objective necessity. And the discussion in §2 of this chapter indicates two ways in which we might show that a subjective necessity rightfully amounts to an objective necessity.

Space and time are the pure forms of human sensibility, but other discursive cognizers might for all we know have different forms of sensibility. Unity of apperception is the highest principle not only of the human understanding but of discursive understanding as such. We can recognize both as non-arbitrary subjective necessities that rightfully amount to objective necessities, but in different ways. For all we know space and time are non-arbitrary subjective necessities in virtue of our nature as human cognizers; they are objective necessities for the world as it appears to human cognizers. Whereas we know that unity of apperception is a non-arbitrary subjective necessity in virtue of our nature as discursive cognizers; it is an objective necessity for the world as it appears to any discursive cognizer.

In these terms, the neglected question we raised in §2 was the following: Which of these ways of knowing a non-arbitrary subjective necessity that rightfully amounts to an objective necessity does Kant accord to the forms of judgment and the categories? The very same question about the status of the pure concepts of the understanding turns out to be central to a proper

understanding of Kant's project in both the metaphysical and the transcendental deductions. It is central to the whole Analytic of Concepts.

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