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Leibniz on Innate Ideas and Kant on the Origin of the Categories

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Abstract: In his essay against Eberhard, Kant denies that there are innate concepts. Several scholars take Kant’s statement at face value. They claim that Kant did not endorse concept innatism, that the categories are not innate concepts and that Kant’s views on innateness are significantly different from Leibniz’s. This paper takes issue with those claims. It argues that Kant’s views on the origin of intellectual concepts are remarkably similar to Leibniz’s. Given two widespread notions of innateness, the dispositional notion and the input/output notion, intellectual concepts are innate for Kant no less than for Leibniz.

1 Introduction

In his essay against Eberhard, Kant emphatically denies that there are innate concepts:

The *Critique* admits absolutely no implanted or innate *representations*. One and all, whether they belong to intuition or to concepts of the understanding, it considers them as *acquired*.¹

In particular, “universal transcendental concepts of the understanding”, i. e. the categories, are “acquired and not innate” (*Entd.*, 8:223, see 249). Several scholars take these statements at face value. They hold that Kant did not endorse concept innatism, that the categories are not innate concepts², and that Kant’s views on innateness are significantly different from Leibniz’s.³

1 *Entd.*, 8:221; see e. g. *Br*, 11:82; *ML*₂, 28:542; *MMrongoivius*, 29:763; *MK*₂, 29:949, 951f. Translations of Kant’s writings, where available, are from Kant 1992–. I use small capitals to indicate concepts.

2 De Pierris 1987; Oberhausen 1997; Buroker 2006, 132–134.

3 Zöllner 1989; Quarfood 2004, 86–89; Hanna 2014, §1.1.

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This paper takes issue with those claims. It argues that Kant's views on the origin of intellectual concepts are remarkably similar to Leibniz's. Moreover, given two widespread notions of innateness, the dispositional notion and the input/output notion, intellectual concepts are innate for Kant no less than for Leibniz.⁴

When I use the expression "intellectual concepts" with regard to Leibniz, I refer to those that the *New Essays* call intellectual ideas or ideas of reflection (e. g. *NE*, I.i.11, I.i.23). They are the ideas that, according to Leibniz, we should regard as innate even if we accepted people's "common framework" and we held that some mental content derives from causal interactions with material bodies (*NE*, I.i.1, IV.iv.5). They include UNITY, SUBSTANCE, CAUSE, POSSIBILITY, ACTION and VIRTUE.⁵

Given Kant's views, all concepts can be said to be intellectual, because the faculty that generates concepts is the intellect (*KU*, 5:406; *LPölit*, 24:568). The intellect does this by conferring conceptual form to nonconceptual representations. However, when I use the expression "intellectual concepts" with regard to Kant, I refer to the concepts that he classes as being "given a priori"⁶ – concepts like UNITY, SUBSTANCE, CAUSE, POSSIBILITY, ACTION and VIRTUE.⁷ Given Kant's views, these concepts are intellectual *par excellence* because the intellect provides not only their form, but also their content. This derives from the reflection that the intellect carries out on the acts that it performs in the course of experience.

The second section of this paper explains how this process takes place by focusing on the origin of the categories. They are Kant's paradigmatic example of concepts given a priori and the only ones whose origin is discussed in several passages from the 1770s to the 1790s. The third section compares Kant's and Leibniz's views on the origin of intellectual concepts. It highlights the substantial agreement between Kant's and Leibniz's views. It also argues that, given the dispositional notion and the input/output notion of innateness, intellectual concepts are innate on Kant's view no less than on Leibniz's. The fourth section examines the objection that Kant cannot be a concept innatist because his texts contain three arguments against concept innatism. I argue that the three arguments are compatible with Kant's innatism. They are best seen as attacking a different

⁴ The texts cited in Section 2 show that Kant's views on the origin of intellectual concepts remain substantially unaltered from the 1770s to the 1790s. I do not discuss Kant's stance toward innatism in the 1750s and 1760s, on which see Oberhausen 1997, 72–75.

⁵ *NE*, Preface, 51; I.iii.3, I.iii.16, I.iii.18, II.i.2, IV.iv.5.

⁶ On the meaning of this expression, see p 21. below.

⁷ The first four are categories (A80/B106). ACTION is a predicable (A82/B108). On their non-empirical origin, see A112. On VIRTUE, see *Religion*, 6:183.

kind of innatism, Christian Adolf Crusius' preformationism. I conclude with an explanation of why Kant denied that he was a concept innatist, even though he ascribed concept innatism to Leibniz. (In what follows, the expressions 'innatism' and 'innatist' are used to refer specifically to *concept* innatism, as distinct from innatism regarding beliefs, biological traits, faculties or knowledge.)

2 Kant on the Origin of the Categories

Kant states that the categories, like all representations, "are acquired" (*Entd.*, 8:223). They are formed "on the occasion of experience; for on the occasion of experience and the senses the understanding forms concepts which are not from the senses [...] We practice this action [...] as soon as we have impressions of the senses".⁸

Despite the occasional use of the term 'action' [*Handlung*], Kant does not hold that we choose to form the categories. He classifies the categories as "given concepts", as opposed to "made concepts" like MERMAID.⁹ A "concept is given insofar as it does not arise from my faculty of choice [*Willkür*]".¹⁰ The formation of the categories is the result of spontaneous mental acts. We carry out those acts "on the occasion of experience" because, "[a]s far as time is concerned no cognition in us precedes experience, and with experience every cognition begins" (B1; see B118). Cognitions in Kant's sense include not only judgements, but also concepts.¹¹

"[A]lthough all our cognition commences *with* experience, yet it does not on that account arise *from* experience" (B1). This is the case for the categories, that are given a priori with regard to their content.¹² This means that their content does not depend on the content of our experience, unlike the content of empirical concepts such as GOLD. What, then, determines their content?

Kant's texts from the 1770s and early 1780s state repeatedly that we form the categories by *abstraction*. Occasionally, they also mention *reflection*, stating for

⁸ *ML*, 28:233f. The claim that the categories are formed on the occasion of experience is reiterated in A66/B91; A86/B118; *Ref.* 4172 from 1769–1770, 17:443; *ML*, 28:190; *MVolckmann*, 28:373f.; *MMrongoivius*, 29:762f. See Oberhausen 1997, 115–118.

⁹ Kant's example is the concept of a naval clock that, in his time, had not yet been invented.

¹⁰ *WienerL*, 24:914. Kant distinguishes given concepts from those that arise from the faculty of choice, e.g. in A729/B757.

¹¹ See e.g. A320/B376f. This is Kant's broad sense of 'cognition' [*Erkenntnis*]. For the narrow sense, see e.g. A92/B125, B146.

¹² A729/B757; *LBusolt*, 24:654; *WienerL*, 24:914.

instance that the categories are “abstract concepts of reflection”.¹³ Their content must derive from whatever the relevant acts of abstraction and reflection are applied to. These might be either the laws that define the logical forms of judgement, or acts of sensible synthesis. Let me illustrate each suggestion in turn.

Kant’s texts from the 1770s state that the categories are abstracted “on the occasion of experience from the laws of reason”,¹⁴ “the laws inherent to the mind”¹⁵ or the “laws of our thought”.¹⁶ The *Metaphysical Deduction of the Critique of Pure Reason* relates each category to the laws that define a logical form of judgement.¹⁷ Thus, building on Kant’s statement that the *Metaphysical Deduction* establishes the “origin” of the categories (B159), one might take them to derive from reflection on the logical forms of judgement.¹⁸

To clarify how this process might take place, let us consider the category of substance. On the occasion of experience, the senses gather information and convey it to the understanding. Being the “faculty of rules” (A126, A158/B197, A299/B356), the understanding has a natural propensity to reflect on the information that it receives from the senses in order to seek regularities. It “is always busy poring through the appearances with the aim of finding some sort of rule in them” (A126). The acts with which the understanding reflects on the information provided by the senses are acts of judgement, because “[w]e can [...] trace all acts of the understanding back to judgements”.¹⁹ Being conscious of our own acts of judgement, we spontaneously apply our tendency to seek regularities to them. By doing this, we note that several of our judgements ascribe properties (predicates) to objects (subjects), that is, they are categorical judgements. Our understanding includes the capacity to abstract, that is, to divert attention from the features that differentiate judgements of this kind and to focus on their shared feature, which is their logical form.²⁰ By reflecting on the form of categorical judgements, the under-

13 *Refl.* 409 from 1772–1779?, 15:155; see *ML*, 28:233; *MVolckmann*, 28:373f.; *MMrongovius*, 29:761f.

14 *Refl.* 4172 from 1769–1770, 17:443.

15 *De mundi*, 2:395.

16 *Refl.* 3988 from 1769, 17:378; see *Refl.* 3930 from 1769, 17:352.

17 A76–83/B102–109. Early statements of this doctrine of the origin of the categories can be found in *Refl.* 3930, 4172 from 1769–1770, 17:352, 443; *Refl.* 4851 from 1776–1778, 18:8. Kant’s references to the original acquisition of the categories in texts from the 1790s fit easily within this picture (*Entd.*, 8:223; *MK*, 29:951).

18 See A321/B377f. and Oberhausen 1997, 196f., 213–219. I do not take a stand on whether this process presupposes, as an intermediate step, the formation of schemata (Longuenesse 1998).

19 A69/B94, trans. modified.

20 For Kant’s understanding of abstraction, see *PrAnthr*, 7:131.

standing gives rise to the concept of “something that can exist only as subject and never as mere predicate”:²¹ an ultimate subject of predication, that is, a bearer of properties that cannot itself be borne by anything else. This is Kant’s concept of substance. More precisely, it is the pure, non-schematized category of substance.²²

On this account, we formulate judgements before forming the categories. This may seem to be incompatible with two Kantian tenets. First, Kant holds that we can judge only if we possess concepts, because judgements are composed by concepts.²³ Second, Kant states that the acquisition of empirical concepts presupposes the possession of intellectual concepts, of which the categories are the foremost examples (*Entd.*, 8:222f.). It follows that we can only formulate judgements if we already possess intellectual concepts, presumably including the categories. Thus, we cannot formulate judgements before forming the categories.

To avoid this difficulty, one could hold that the categories are formed through reflection on a special kind of judgements, or of representations similar to judgements (proto-judgements), that are formed by non-conceptual representations.²⁴ Alternatively, one could hold that the categories derive from non-judicative acts of sensible synthesis that we carry out on occasion of experience. For instance, when we represent perceived objects as being permanent across time, that is, as substances, we combine successive sensory representations as belonging to a single item. Reflection on these acts of combination might lead to the formation of the category of substance.²⁵

21 B288; see A348, B129, B289.

22 According to Grüne 2009, reflection and abstraction are acts through which we do not form the categories, but we render obscure (i. e. unconscious) categories clear (i. e. conscious). I do not follow Grüne’s interpretation because several Kantian texts state that reflection and abstraction are necessary for forming concepts, rather than for transforming obscure concepts into clear concepts. Readers who endorse Grüne’s interpretation are invited to regard this paper as a comparison of Leibniz’s views on the origin of intellectual concepts with Kant’s views on the origin of what Grüne calls “the categories as clear concepts”.

23 Kant uses the term ‘judgement’ for acts of judging and for the mental representations associated with those acts. Roughly, Kantian judgements in the first sense are acts of formulating sentences in one’s mind. According to Kant, while we perform those acts we combine concepts into certain mental contents. Judgements in the second sense are mental combinations of concepts, which form what Kant calls the matter or content of judgements (A266/B322; *WienerL.*, 24:928). Judgements in the second sense are composed by concepts.

24 This suggestion is fleshed out in Vanzo 2012, 147–181. Zuckert’s account of Kant’s views on empirical concept formation employs the expression “proto-disjunctive judging” to characterize a “non-conceptually guided, but nonetheless proto-conceptual (i. e. unifying), synthesis of the sensibly given manifold” (Zuckert 2007, 46, 55).

25 See Kant’s characterizations of the schema and schematized category of substance (A144/B183, A242f./B300f.). For a more precise characterization of this proposal, see Grüne 2009, 218 f.

In what follows, I will not discuss whether the categories are best conceived of as deriving from reflection on acts of sensible synthesis or on the forms of judgements or proto-judgements. Establishing this would require a lengthy discussion that does not bear on the relation of Kant's views to Leibniz's. Instead, I will discuss two objections that can be raised against both accounts of the formation of the categories. According to these objections, the accounts cannot express Kant's considered view because they conflict with other claims he makes. I will consider two putative conflicts. First, the accounts might appear to entail that the categories are not pure concepts, as Kant claims, but empirical concepts. The example of the acquisition of SUBSTANCE makes clear that, in order to form that concept, we must have had some experience. This is required by four of Kant's statements: "all of our cognition commences *with* experience" (B1); we have "absolutely no implanted or innate *representations*" or "cognitions" (*Entd.*, 8:221; *MSchön*, 28:468); the categories are formed "on the occasion of experience";²⁶ and "we can search in experience" for "the occasional causes" of their "generation, where the impressions of the senses provide the first occasion for opening the entire power of cognition to them".²⁷ Nevertheless, the accounts provided above do not make SUBSTANCE an empirical concept in Kant's sense because "nothing is to be encountered" in its content "that belongs to sensation".²⁸ Our sensations provide the content of empirical judgements, but SUBSTANCE does not derive from reflection on their content. It derives from reflection on their form, which does not depend on our sensations. Any sensory experience, regardless of its content, will prompt our mind to formulate judgements of subject-predicate form, from which we derive the category of substance. This explains why the categories, unlike empirical concepts, are "universal" concepts.²⁹ We all share the same concept of substance because we all form subject-predicate judgements and we reflect on them, even though the contents of those judgements and the experiences on which they depend vary from one person to another.

Second, one might claim that we cannot form the categories by carrying out mental acts on the occasion of experience because we must possess the categories to have experience in the first place. As Kant states in B161, "the cat-

²⁶ See note 8 above.

²⁷ A86/B118. On Sloan's and Zammito's readings, Kant's biological metaphors too support the claim that the categories are formed on the occasion of experience, rather than being present in the mind at birth.

²⁸ A20/B34. This is a definition of "pure representation". It applies to SUBSTANCE because the categories are pure representations.

²⁹ *Entd.*, 8:223; see Grüne 2009, 142f. For the claim that different people have different empirical concepts, see A727f./B755f.

egories are conditions of the possibility of experience”. To dispel this worry, we should distinguish between experience in the strong sense (experience_s), which is informed by the categories, and experience in the weak sense (experience_w), which is not.³⁰ We need not claim that adult human beings, who possess the categories, have experience_w. However, we should limit the import of passages like B161 to beings who possess the categories and we should ascribe experience_w to young infants, who have not yet formed them. A full defense of the claim that Kant admits experience_w would require an entire paper. However, an overview of Kant’s statements on young infants will suffice to lend plausibility to this view. Kant’s texts on anthropology outline the passage from having mere “perception” to having “knowledge” and “experience” (*PrAnthr*, 7:128). Other texts call this the passage from *appearance* [*Erscheinung*] to experience [*Erfahrung*] through the application of the categories (e. g. *Prol.*, 4:312; *Refl.* 5203 [ca. 1776–1778], 18:117). In order to progress from perception, appearance or experience_w to knowledge or experience_s, we must be able to visually track objects presented to us (*PrAnthr*, 7:127 f.). To do this, we must “employ the organs” of sight “to dilate and restrict the pupils at will” (*ACollins*, 25:58), but we acquire this skill only around the fourth month (*PrAnthr*, 7:127; *ABrauer*, 21). It follows that infants under four months do not have experience_s, but only experience_w. Kant states that the capacity to reflect, which is required for the acquisition of the categories, undergoes a similar development, as does the capacity to form a concept of oneself.³¹

3 Leibniz and Kant on the Origin of Intellectual Concepts

The following four subsections will explore the differences and points of agreement between Kant and Leibniz regarding the origin of intellectual concepts: (1) the ways in which they are based on dispositions, (2) the role of experience in their manifestation, (3) the process by which the dispositions related to intellectual concepts are manifested, as well as (4) the relation between sensory stimuli and the content of intellectual concepts.

30 Both are instances of conscious experience because experience in Kant’s sense is always conscious (*EE*, 20:208). In this paper, I follow Kant’s usage. When using the term “experience”, I always refer to conscious experience.

31 *PrAnthr*, 7:127 f.; *ACollins*, 25:57; *Menschenkunde*, 25:860.

3.1 Dispositional Innateness

There are four substantive points of agreement between Kant's and Leibniz's views on the origin of intellectual concepts. To begin with, both Leibniz and Kant hold that intellectual concepts are dispositionally innate. A concept is dispositionally innate if and only if we have a disposition since birth to entertain thoughts involving that concept under appropriate circumstances.³²

Leibniz's view that intellectual concepts are dispositionally innate is well known. It is borne out by a famous line in the Preface to the *New Essays*: “[t]his is how ideas and truths are innate in us – as inclinations, dispositions, tendencies, or natural potentialities, and not as actions” (*NE*, Preface, 52, see I.iii.20). As for Kant, the dispositional innateness of intellectual concepts follows from a passage of the work against Eberhard:

There must indeed be a ground for it in the subject, however, which makes it possible that these representations [those of space and time and the categories] can arise in this and no other manner, and be related to objects which are not yet given, and this ground at least is innate. (*Entd.*, 8:221 f.)

This ground must consist of innate faculties or capacities because, as the *Metaphysik von Schön* states, “we cannot admit any innate cognitions at all, but only innate faculties and capacities”.³³ Which faculties or capacities provide such a ground depends on how, exactly, the categories are formed. If they derive from reflection on acts of judgement, the ground might consist of innate capacities to judge and to reflect on one's judgements. If they derive from reflection on acts of sensible synthesis, the ground might consist of innate capacities to carry out acts of sensible synthesis and to reflect on them. In either case, if the exercise of innate capacities leads to the formation of the categories, then the categories are dispositionally innate.

Curiously, the textual evidence for the dispositional innateness of intellectual concepts is found in a work where Kant denies that we have innate concepts. I will explain why Kant was concerned to deny this in Section 4. For the time being, it is useful to discuss how Kant might respond to the charge that, contrary to what he claims, he is a concept innatist.

³² Dispositional notions of conceptual innateness are widely used (e. g. Scott 1995, 93–95; De Rosa 2004; Boyle 2009, 14).

³³ *MSchön*, 28:468. Other passages ascribe innate faculties and capacities to us. See *KU*, 5:307; *ADohna*, 161; *MSVigilantius*, 27:571; *MK*, 29:949.

The statement that only “faculties and capacities” are truly innate suggests a possible answer. Kant might claim that dispositional innateness is not the innateness of a concept, but only the innateness of certain capacities. It is misleading to say that the categories are dispositionally innate. All that is really innate are the capacities that lead us to entertain the categories.

In response, one can grant that, for Kant, the dispositional innateness of intellectual concepts depends on the innateness of faculties and capacities. This implies that the innateness of intellectual concepts is not a basic or primitive form of innateness. However, it is unclear why it should imply that it is not a *real*, albeit derivative, form of innateness.

We might suppose that Kant did not regard it as an authentic form of innateness on Lockean grounds. As is well known, Locke held “that the dispositional theory trivializes the doctrine of innate ideas”.³⁴ In his view, saying that an idea is dispositionally innate amounts to saying that we are able to form that idea. This would make all the ideas that we are able to form innate, rendering the very notion of innateness trivial. Leibniz replied that the dispositional theory is not trivial because our mind is “differentially predisposed” to form certain ideas, but not others (Jolley 2005: 114).

Kant could not reject the dispositional innateness of the categories on Lockean grounds. This is because, exactly like Leibniz, Kant holds that we have a differential predisposition to entertain the categories, rather than empirical concepts, under appropriate circumstances.³⁵ In his view, we may or may not entertain any given empirical concept. However, we will entertain the categories if we entertain any concepts at all. This can be gathered from Kant’s claim that the categories, unlike empirical concepts, are necessary conditions for experience (B161). It is reinforced by his statement in the work against Eberhard that the acquisition of empirical concepts “already presupposes universal transcendental concepts of the understanding” (*Entd.*, 8:222f.). Not only are intellectual concepts dispositionally innate for Kant as they are for Leibniz, but also, Kant can employ the same argument of Leibniz to deny that dispositional innateness is a trivial form of innateness.³⁶

³⁴ Jolley 1990, 158. See Locke 1975 [1690], I.ii.5 and the comment of Locke’s spokesman in *NE*, I.i.5.

³⁵ A passage in the B-Deduction (B145f.) suggests that we might also have a predisposition to entertain the categories, rather than other a priori concepts.

³⁶ Note that the dependence of dispositionally innate concepts on faculties or capacities is not distinctive of Kant’s philosophy, as opposed to Leibniz’s. Every form of dispositional innateness presupposes the possession of innate faculties or capacities. This is because a concept is dispositionally innate only if we have a disposition since birth to entertain thoughts involving that

3.2 The Role of Experience

The second point of agreement between Leibniz and Kant is that, according to both, the dispositions related to intellectual concepts are manifested on the same occasion. We saw above that, for Kant, we come to entertain the categories on the occasion of experience. Leibniz too states that, although intellectual concepts are innate, “without the senses we would never think of” them (*NE*, I.i.11). The same applies to any other concepts and thoughts:

Experience is necessary [...] in order that it [the soul] take notice of the ideas which are in us. (*NE*, II.i.2)

I agree that, in the present state, the external senses are necessary for our thinking, and that if we did not have any, we would not think.³⁷

These passages make clear that, for Leibniz as for Kant, the dispositions related to intellectual concepts are manifested on the occasion of experience. Yet these passages also reveal a difference between Leibniz and Kant. Unlike Kant (e. g. A86/B118), Leibniz does not explicitly state that intellectual concepts are *formed* or *generated* on the occasion of experience. Some texts suggest that, on the contrary, they are fully formed in the mind since our creation and experience only triggers consciousness of them. The *New Essays* (II.i.2) state that reflection, occasioned by experience, brings about the “actual perception” of distinct ideas. These “are in us before they are perceived”. Elsewhere, Leibniz claims that “we find” intellectual ideas “in ourselves without having formed them” (*NE*, I.i.1). The well-known analogy of the veined block of marble carries the same implication (*NE*, Preface, 52). Although reflection (the sculptor’s work) brings to consciousness an intellectual concept (the shape of Hercules), that concept existed as a fully formed, albeit hidden actual mental content before it was brought to consciousness. Kant rejects any view along these lines when he claims that intellectual concepts are formed in the course of experience.

The texts reveal a difference between Kant’s and Leibniz’s choice of terms and images. However, this linguistic and rhetorical difference does not correspond to a substantive philosophical difference. This is because, although Leibniz grants that we have some mental content prior to experience, he provides a dispositional

concept under appropriate circumstances. We can have a disposition since birth to entertain thoughts involving that concept under appropriate circumstances only if we are capable since birth to entertain such thoughts under appropriate circumstances. Hence, for Leibniz as well as Kant, the dispositional innateness of a concept presupposes innate capacities.

³⁷ Letter to Queen Charlotte of Prussia (1702), A I xxi 344, trans. in L 551; see *NE*, II.xxi.73.

account of mental content. More precisely, he provides dispositional accounts of innate truths, innate ideas and concept possession.

Innate truths are true propositional mental contents. They are present in our soul as an inborn “disposition, an aptitude, a preformation, which determines our soul and brings it about that those truths are derivable from it” in the course of experience.³⁸ Leibniz uses similar terms for innate ideas in a passage cited at page 9 above. The passage states that ideas “are innate in us” as “inclinations, dispositions, tendencies, or natural potentialities, and not as actions”. This applies not only to intellectual concepts but to all ideas, because all ideas are innate. To possess a concept of *x* means to have a “faculty of thinking” about *x*, an “ability to think about” that “thing”,³⁹ a disposition to form thoughts concerning it:

That the ideas of things are in us means therefore nothing but that God, the creator alike of the things and of the mind, has impressed a power of thinking upon the mind so that it can by its own operations derive what corresponds perfectly to the nature of things.⁴⁰

Leibniz’s dispositional account of innate truths, innate ideas and concept possession constrains the interpretation of the claim that we “find” intellectual concepts “in ourselves without having formed them, though the senses bring them to our awareness” (*NE*, I.i.1). This sentence is sometimes taken to refer to the passage from concepts that are actually, but obscurely, present in our mind to concepts that are both actual and clear. This interpretation contradicts Leibniz’s statement that intellectual concepts are innate in us only as dispositions. The act of finding a concept within ourselves is the first manifestation of our disposition to have thoughts involving that concept on the occasion of experience. If this is correct, Leibniz and Kant should not be contrasted as endorsing respectively content innateness and faculty innateness.⁴¹ They both hold that intellectual concepts are dispositionally innate. What Leibniz calls finding and Kant calls generating those concepts is the first manifestation of certain dispositions in the course of experience.

John Callanan holds that, nevertheless, Leibniz and Kant ascribe different roles to experience:

³⁸ *NE*, I.i.11, echoed in a letter to T. Burnett (1703), G 3:291. On Leibniz’s choice of terms, see Tonelli 1974, 442f.

³⁹ *Quid sit Idea?*, G 7:263, trans. in L 207.

⁴⁰ *Quid sit Idea?*, G 7:264, trans. in L 208.

⁴¹ Cf. Zöllner 1989, 224, 227 f., 230; Waxman 1991, 20; 2005, 26 n. 10; Hanna 2001, 32.

For Leibniz, the role of sensible experience is at most that of a possible enabling condition for the realization of contents determined by the predisposition of our rational capacities alone. (1) Such a conception makes space for the possibility of an application of those rational capacities through alternative enabling conditions (such as the intuitional capacities of a different kind of being) – on such a conception, human sensibility is merely a sufficient but not necessary condition for the realization of the outputs of our rational capacities. Kant’s discursivity thesis on the other hand entails that the contribution of sensibility is not a mere enabling condition for concept-application. (2) Sensibility must instead be thought of as co-determining the possible “sense and significance” (*Sinn und Bedeutung*) of our *a priori* concepts in combination with the contribution of the understanding. An *a priori* concept’s application conditions, i. e. sensible intuition, provide strict limits for any possible application of the categories.⁴²

Kant’s views are closer to Leibniz’s than this passage indicates. To take (1) first, Kant states that “room [...] remains for some other sort of intuition [than ours] and therefore also for things as its objects” (A286/B343; see *Prol.*, 4:351). The categories would apply to the sensible intuitions of such non-human beings as they do to our own intuitions. This is because the categories “are free from” the “limitation” to “our sensible intuition” 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 means that, for Kant as for Leibniz, human sensibility is not “a necessary condition for the realization of the outputs of our rational capacities”, including the manifestation of dispositions related to the categories.

Turning to (2), the application of the categories beyond the boundaries of human intuition is possible because Kant holds that sensibility limits neither the meaningfulness, nor the applicability of the categories. “[A]fter abstraction from every sensible condition”, the pure categories still have a “meaning [*Bedeutung*]”, albeit “only a logical meaning” (A147/B186, trans. modified; see A219/B267). Even if we set aside the hypothesis of beings with non-human forms of intuition, Kant holds that the logical meaning of the categories can be determined in more than one way. Consider the category of cause. Its logical meaning is defined in very broad terms as “something that allows an inference to the existence of something else” (A243/B301). Kant specifies this notion in two different ways, which correspond to the two “sides” or “kinds of causality” (A538/B566, A543/B571). On the one hand, there is “sensible causality”, which belongs to the “sensible world” and is “conditioned” or “mechanically necessary” in “accordance with constant natural laws” (A538/B566; A539/B567; *KpV*, 5:104). On the other hand,

⁴² Callanan 2013, 14 f., numbers added.

there is “intelligible causality” or “causality through freedom”, which belongs to the “intelligible world” of the noumenal self (A358/B566; *KpV*, 5:49, 104). It is “unconditioned”, “original” and “free” from natural necessity, relating instead to the moral law (A541/B569; A544/B572; *KpV*, 5:49, 50).

The notion of sensible causality derives from the schematization of the pure category of cause, which identifies the conditions under which we can apply the category to objects of sensible intuition. Intelligible causality – the causality of the non-sensible, noumenal self – “receives meaning” not from conditions of sensible application, but from pure reason and its “moral law” (*KpV*, 5:49). Claims concerning intelligible causality are instances of thought, as opposed to theoretical knowledge (*KpV*, 5:50). Nevertheless, Kant stresses that we *ought* to admit such a causality (*KpV*, 5:29 f.). We can conclude that neither for Leibniz, nor for Kant does “sensible intuition” provide “strict limits for *any possible* application of the categories”. Kant too holds that the meaning and applicability of at least some intellectual concepts extend beyond the “restricting condition” of sensibility.⁴³

3.3 Reflection and Attention

The third point of agreement between Leibniz and Kant concerns the process whereby the dispositions related to intellectual concepts are manifested. Neither Leibniz, nor Kant provide many details of how this process unfolds. However, they both reject Plato’s suggestion that it is a process of recollection (e. g. *NE*, I.i.5; *MVolckmann*, 28:371 f.) and they both claim that it involves reflection. Leibniz calls intellectual concepts “ideas of reflection” (*NE*, I.i.23). He states that “reflection suffices to discover the idea of substance within ourselves”.⁴⁴ Kant would deny that reflection *suffices* to discover the notion of substance, but he

⁴³ A146/B186. Kant calls the formation of the categories original acquisition, as opposed to the derivative acquisition of empirical concepts (*Entd.*, 8:222 f.). According to Callanan 2013, 17, this implies that the categories are “originally manifested only through the conditions of sensible intuition that make experience of objects possible”, beyond which they lack “sense and significance”. Yet, as Yamane 2008, 832–836, has shown, with the expression “original acquisition” Kant only means that the categories are not derived from anything external to the understanding. This may be sensations, as is the case for empirical concepts, or divine illumination, as Crusius claimed. Kant’s use of “original acquisition” does not rule out that the logical meaning of the categories can be further specified in more than one way, as is the case for the category of cause. ⁴⁴ *NE*, I.iii.18. Leibniz also claims that, “to be aware of what is [innately] within us, we must be attentive” (*NE*, I.i.25, see I.ii.12).

agrees that reflection plays a central role in its acquisition. He calls the categories “abstract concepts of reflection”⁴⁵ and he repeatedly states that the formation of any concept involves reflection, besides comparison and abstraction.⁴⁶

One might suspect that Leibniz and Kant use the term “reflection” to refer to different mental processes. After all, “reflection” was used in a variety of ways in the early modern period.⁴⁷ Kant uses it in several different ways⁴⁸ and neither he, nor Leibniz provide a detailed account of the reflection which is involved in concept formation. Nevertheless, their statements agree in several respects. For Leibniz as for Kant, the reflection in question is occasioned by experience, leads to the formation of intellectual concepts and involves attention. Kant describes the effects of attention in Leibnizian terms, as an increase in the clarity and distinctness of representations.⁴⁹ For both Leibniz and Kant, the acts of reflection involved in the formation of intellectual concepts appear to be identical to a certain use of attention. While discussing innateness, Leibniz explains that “reflection is nothing but attention to what is within us” (*NE*, Preface, 51). For his part, Kant uses “attention” as a replacement for “reflection”. Some passages state that concept formation involves comparison, *reflection* and abstraction.⁵⁰ Other passages call the same three mental acts comparison, *attention* and abstraction.⁵¹ Kant also accepts Leibniz’s view that the acts of attention with which we form intellectual concepts are directed “to what is within us” (*NE*, Preface, 51). He adds that those acts do not depend on our choice. Leibniz too could make that claim because, like Kant, he allows for both voluntary and involuntary mental acts of attention.⁵²

45 See page 22 above.

46 e. g. *Refl.* 2854 and 2876 from the 1770s, 16:547, 555; *WienerL.*, 24:907–909.

47 Compare e. g. Locke 1975 [1690], II.i.4 with Reimarus 1766: §39.

48 Compare A260/B316 with *WienerL.*, 24:909 = *LHechsel*, 396; *WarschauerL.*, 610; *Jäsche-L.*, 9:94.

49 On attention and clarity, see *MMrongoivius*, 29:878; *WienerL.*, 24:842; *ADohna*, 90. On attention and distinctness, see *EE*, 20:226 f. n.; *LPhilippi*, 24:342.

50 e. g. *Refl.* 2854 and 2856 from 1773–1779?, 16:547, 555; *WienerL.*, 24:909 = *LHechsel*, 396.

51 e. g. *LPölitz*, 24:567; *WienerL.*, 24:907 = *LHechsel*, 394. *WarschauerL.*, 610, calls the second mental act “reflection or attention”, suggesting that the two terms are interchangeable.

52 *NE*, II.i.14, II.xix.1. For examples, see respectively *NE*, II.i.14, II.xix.1.

3.4 Input/Output Innateness

The fourth point of agreement between Leibniz and Kant concerns the relation between sensory stimuli and the content of intellectual concepts. Leibniz and Kant agree that, although sensory stimuli occasion acts of reflection and attention, the content of intellectual concepts is not derived from those stimuli, but it is contributed by the mind. This is the sense in which many authors call ideas (Williams 1978, 133, 135; Rozemond 1999, 457–458), beliefs (Stich 1975, 15), traits (Prinz 2002, 193) or conceptual structures (Chomsky 2000, 64) innate. Following Stephen Stich (1975, 13–16), I dub this the input/output notion of innateness. A concept is innate in the input/output sense if and only if, even though its acquisition may have been occasioned by sensory stimuli, its content does not derive from sensory stimuli, but it is contributed by the mind.

As Leibniz denies body-mind interaction, he claims that no ideas, not even sensory ones, owe their content to sensory stimuli (*NE*, II.i.2). However, he emphasizes this for intellectual concepts, stating time and time again that they are “drawn from our mind”.⁵³ Even if we accepted the “common framework”, according to which some mental contents are “given” to the soul “by the senses”, we should deny that intellectual concepts “reach us through the senses” (*NE*, I.i.1). For his part, Kant is at pains to stress that “all attempts to derive” intellectual concepts

from experience, and so to ascribe to them a merely empirical origin are entirely useless and vain. I need not insist upon the fact that, for instance, the concept of cause involves the character of necessity, which no experience can yield. (A112)

Intellectual concepts “contain no sensory appearance whatsoever” and their content is “wholly independent of experience” (*Prol.*, 4:315).

Despite the similarities highlighted in this section, Kant’s and Leibniz’s claims on the origin of intellectual concepts are not identical. On the one hand, Kant appears to hold that we manifest the dispositions related to intellectual concepts by reflecting on forms of judgement or acts of synthesis. This claim cannot be found in Leibniz. On the other hand, at least on some readings (Jolley 1990, 160–162), Leibniz holds that the dispositions related to intellectual concepts supervene on unconscious perceptions. Although Kant agrees with Leibniz on the pervasiveness of unconscious mental processes (*PrAnthr.*, 7:135), he does not link intellectual concepts to unconscious perceptions, nor does he ever explain

⁵³ *NE*, I.i.23; see e. g. Preface, 48: “the soul inherently contains” their “source [*principes*]”.

whether the dispositions associated with intellectual concepts have a categorical basis and, if so, what it might be. Despite these differences, Kant's views on the origin of intellectual concepts are remarkably similar to Leibniz's. Most notably, intellectual concepts are innate in the dispositional and input/output sense both on Leibniz's and Kant's account.⁵⁴

4 Kant's Arguments against Preformationism

This section discusses an objection against the ascription of innatism to Kant. The objection is that Kant cannot have been an innatist because he formulates three arguments against innatism: the lazy reason argument, the no necessity argument and the slippery slope argument.⁵⁵ I argue that the three arguments are compatible with Kant's innatism and are best seen as addressing another kind of innatism, Christian Adolf Crusius' preformationism. Preformationists rely on the claim that God planted certain concepts in our mind at the beginning of our life, or even in a previous life,⁵⁶ to explain (a) the origin of innate concepts and (b) the fact that objects of experience exemplify those concepts.⁵⁷ Kant appeals to God neither in his account of (a) the origin of intellectual concepts, nor in the Transcendental Deduction, that accounts for (b). Hence, Kant's arguments against preformationism do not pose any threat to his brand of innatism.

⁵⁴ Quarfood 2004, 87, identifies a further difference between Kant and Leibniz. Kant focused on epistemological questions, "whereas the Leibnizian view is closely bound to the ontology of monadology". Yet this, *per se*, does not require Kant's views on the origin of the categories to differ significantly from Leibniz's views. Also, *pace* Quarfood 2004, 89, although explaining the formation of the categories was not one of Kant's central concerns, it is not an "irrelevant" concern. Kant's view that experience presupposes the employment of pure concepts naturally raises the question of how we come to possess those concepts.

⁵⁵ I do not discuss a fourth argument, which I have found only in one lecture transcript (MSchön, 28:468).

⁵⁶ See *Br.*, 10:131 on Plato. Although Kant regards Plato as a preformationist, his criticisms of preformationism focus mostly on Crusius.

⁵⁷ Crusius also holds that innate concepts are dispositionally innate, that we become conscious of them on the occasion of experience, and that unconscious innate concepts influence our behavior. See Crusius 1744, §92; 1745, §232; 1747, §82, 83 and 257. Kant associates Crusius with preformationism, e. g. in *Prol.*, 4:319; *Refl.* 4893f. from 1776–1778, 18:21f.

4.1 The Lazy Reason Argument

The lazy reason argument can be found in texts from the 1770s and early 1780s. On the face of it, they employ the argument against a variety of targets: the admission of anything (presumably, any representation) as innate (*Enzickl.*, 29:16); the admission of innate “concepts” of space and time (*De mundi*, 2:406); Crusius’ “ready-made [*eingepflanzte*] concepts” (*Br.*, 10:131); or “uncreated and inborn [*unerschaffen und ungebohren* (sic)] concepts”, again with reference to Crusius.⁵⁸ The texts reject innatism on a methodological ground: “one must remain within nature as long as it is possible, without appealing to God straight away”.⁵⁹ This sentence has two implications. The first is that, in order to explain the origin of concepts, innatists must appeal to God. Not by chance, the expositions of the lazy reason argument mention Crusius, for whom God planted innate concepts in our mind. The second implication is that it is possible to explain the origin of concepts while remaining “within nature”. The argument goes as follows:

[P1] It is methodologically unsound to accept supernatural explanations of a phenomenon if a natural explanation is available.

[P2] A natural explanation of the origin of concepts is available.

[C1] It is methodologically unsound to accept supernatural explanations of the origin of concepts.

[P3] Innatists must accept a supernatural explanation of the origin of concepts.

[C2] Innatism is methodologically unsound.⁶⁰

This argument is not compelling against innatism in general because innatists need not make any claims about God or supernatural entities. They can provide naturalistic (e.g. evolutionary) explanations of the origin of concepts. Indeed, Chomsky (1966, 65) and his followers often stress that innatism is an empirical, naturalistically respectable hypothesis. The lazy reason argument only prevents one from embracing innatism in conjunction with theological claims such as those made by Crusius. Kant outlines the origin of arbitrary concepts like MERMAID from mental operations on previously acquired concepts, the origin of

⁵⁸ *ML*, 28:233, trans. modified.

⁵⁹ *Enzickl.*, 29:16; see *De mundi*, 2:406; *Refl.* 4473 from 1772, 17:564; *Br.*, 10:131; *ML*, 28:233; A772–774/B800–802; *Prol.*, 4:322; *MSchön*, 28:467 f.

⁶⁰ Some passages appear to support the following variant of the argument. (P1) It is methodologically unsound to accept supernatural explanations. (P2) Innatists must accept a supernatural explanation of the origin of concepts. (C) Innatism is methodologically unsound.

empirical concepts from the processing of sensory information, and the origin of intellectual concepts from the manifestation of inborn dispositions to reflect on our own mental acts.⁶¹ As none of these explanations combines innatism with theological claims, the lazy reason argument does not apply to Kant. However, it applies to Crusius' preformationism.

4.2 The No Necessity Argument

According to Graciela De Pierris (1987, 293 f.), Kant argues against innatism in a passage of the B-Deduction (henceforth: the Deduction) of the *Critique of Pure Reason* (B167 f.). The passage contains two arguments, the no necessity argument and the slippery slope argument. Both are directed against the view that the categories are “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 (a kind of *preformation-system* of pure reason)” (B167). Thus, Kant's target is not innatism as such, but preformationism.⁶²

Having claimed that the Deduction explains how the “*necessary* agreement of experience” with the categories “can be thought” (B166), Kant asks whether preformationism too can explain this. He denies that it can. Preformationism explains the agreement of experience with the categories, but it does not provide any reason to regard it as necessary. If we replaced the theory outlined in the Deduction with preformationism, “the categories would lack the *necessity* that is essential to their concept”. For instance, “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” (B168).

What does this lack of necessity amount to? According to the standard reading (e. g. Kemp Smith 1923, 6 f.), Kant means that, if we replaced the theory of

61 As for why we have certain inborn dispositions, rather than others, Kant would probably claim that the answer lies beyond our reach. He holds that it is impossible for us to answer questions on the basic structure of our cognitive system (B145 f.; *Entd.*, 8:249 f.). Kant might have held that this depends on the choice of a divine creator. However, he would deny that, from a theoretical point of view, we can know whether this is the case, because we cannot have theoretical knowledge of God.

62 Zöllner 1988, 78, and Callanan 2013 noted that Kant employs the no necessity argument primarily against Crusius.

the Deduction with preformationism, the claim that objects of experience necessarily exemplify the categories would not be warranted. According to John Callanan (2013, 20), Kant means that, if we replaced the theory of the Deduction with preformationism, we would not be able to generate empirical judgements with the form “it seems to me that *necessarily p*”, “where *p* makes some reference to an object or objects”. On both readings, the no necessity argument is directed against preformationism. However, if that argument can be directed against innatism in general as De Pierris suggests, or at least against Kant’s innatism, we will have reason to doubt that Kant was an innatist. It is preferable not to ascribe to Kant a view refuted by his own arguments.

The no necessity argument, however, does not threaten Kant’s innatism. This is because it does not aim to show that innatism, or even preformationism, is false. It only aims to show that preformationism fails to account for the necessary agreement between the categories and the objects of experience. Kant provides explanations of why there is such an agreement in the 1781 and 1787 versions of the Transcendental Deduction. Those explanations are compatible with a range of accounts of the origins of the categories. Space constraints prevent me from reconstructing those explanations in any detail. However, a sketch of the argument of the B-Deduction will suffice to make this apparent.

Kant argues that the objects of experience necessarily exemplify the categories because, in order to be conscious of what we are experiencing, we must carry out acts of judgement (B131f.). Every act of judgement involves the subsumption of what is being judged about under the categories (B143). As a consequence, experience involves the subsumption of objects of experience under the categories. This argument presupposes that the categories are available for us to apply to objects of experience. However, the argument does not entail any specific view on how they became available to us. It may be because, during the first months of our lives, we had a weak, non-categorial kind of experience (experience_w), we carried out mental acts on it, we reflected on those acts, and this led to the manifestation of certain innate dispositions. As we saw in Section 2, this is the account of the origin of the categories that Kant’s texts point towards. Yet it is not the only possible account of how the categories became available to us. They may have been implanted in our mind through surgical brain rewiring. They may even have been implanted in our mind by God. Although, elsewhere, Kant rejects this hypothesis on methodological grounds, the Deduction does not claim that it is false, but only that it fails to explain the necessary agreement between categories and objects. The argument of the Deduction, which explains that agreement, works equally well (or equally badly) regardless of whether the categories derive from reflection on our mental operations, from brain rewiring, or from divine acts, although each of these accounts raises

further questions that a full-blooded theory of the origin of the categories should address.⁶³

If this is correct, then neither the no necessity argument, nor the broader argument of the Deduction implies the falsity of innatism. The no necessity argument may refute preformationism as an explanation of the *necessity* of the categories, but it is compatible with a variety of accounts of their *origin*, including Kant's own innatist account.

4.3 The Slippery Slope Argument

When Kant outlines the no necessity argument, he puts forward the slippery slope argument as an aside. Once we accept preformationism with regard to intellectual concepts, “no end can be seen to how far one might drive the presupposition of predetermined dispositions [*Anlagen*] for future judgements”.⁶⁴ As predetermined dispositions are those associated with innate concepts, Kant is claiming that, if we accept preformationism with regard to intellectual concepts, we will have to extend it to any other concepts. As was the case for the no necessity argument, if the slippery slope argument can be directed either against innatism in

63 I argued at page 25 that, in Kant's view, infants who lack the categories have conscious experience (more specifically, experience_w). Hence, [C1] consciousness does not require the categories. Yet, the B-Deduction as I reconstructed it relies on the claim that consciousness involves acts of judgement and these presuppose the possession of the categories. Hence, [C2] consciousness requires the categories. The conflict between [C1] and [C2] can be avoided by noting that Kant distinguishes between two kinds of consciousness. He calls them discursive consciousness or consciousness of reflection and intuitive consciousness or consciousness of apprehension (*PrAnthr*, 7:134 n., 151). Discursive consciousness gives rise to judgements of the form ‘I think that [...]’. It requires the possession and employment of concepts. Intuitive consciousness requires the performance of acts of apprehension, which is “the composition of the manifold in an empirical intuition” (B129). As, for Kant, non-human animals have “*apprehensiones*” or the “I of apprehension” (*Refl.* 411 from the 1770s?, 15:166; *Refl.* 1531 from 1797, 15:958), but lack concepts, intuitive consciousness does not require the possession of any concepts. Hence, it does not require the possession of those special concepts that are the categories. [C1] refers to intuitive consciousness, whereas [C2] refers to discursive consciousness. Besides avoiding a conflict between [C1] and [C2], Kant's distinction between two kinds of consciousness avoids a conflict between the passages that claim (*Br.*, 11:52, 345; *Jäsche-L.*, 9:45 f.) and those that deny that non-human animals have consciousness (*LDohna*, 24:702; *WienerL.*, 24:846; *LHechsel*, 349; *MDohna*, 28:690; see *PrAnthr*, 7:127 on self-consciousness). The first set of passages refers to intuitive consciousness. The second set refers to discursive consciousness.

64 B167. Oberhausen 1997, 88 f., argued that the target of this argument is Crusius.

general, or against the innatism that this paper ascribes to Kant, we will have reason to doubt that Kant was an innatist.

The argument, however, applies neither to innatism as such, nor to Kant's particular brand of innatism. This is because innatists can discriminate innate from acquired concepts by following Kant's policy for isolating intellectual concepts. If the content of a concept *c* cannot be derived from sensory stimuli, then *c* is an intellectual concept:

[I]f you remove from your empirical concept of every object [...] all those properties that experience teaches you, you could still not take from it that by means of which you think of it as a *substance* or as *dependent* on a substance [...] Thus, convinced by the necessity with which this concept presses itself on you, you must concede that it has its seat in your faculty of cognition *a priori*. (B6)

Similarly, innatists can draw a boundary between innate and acquired concepts by claiming that we are entitled to regard a concept as innate if its content cannot be derived from sensory stimuli. This is what Leibniz claims with regard to intellectual concepts. He identifies them as the concepts that we would have to regard as innate even if we held that our other concepts derive from experience (*NE*, I.i.1, IV.iv.5). It follows that the slippery slope argument, like the lazy reason argument and the no necessity argument, fails as an argument against innatism in general, and also as an argument against Kant's particular form of innatism.

5 Conclusion

In this paper I have argued that, given two widespread notions of innateness, Kant is an innatist regarding intellectual concepts. His views on the origin of intellectual concepts are remarkably close to Leibniz's. Kant's arguments concerning innatism are best seen as attacking a specific kind of innatism, preformationism, that Kant rejects because of its theological commitments. If all of this is correct, one is left wondering why Kant denies that he is an innatist, while classing Leibniz as an innatist alongside Plato and Crusius.⁶⁵ There are two expla-

⁶⁵ As Oberhausen 1997, 71, noted, some texts also class Pythagoras as an innatist. See *LPhilippi*, 24:339; *Enzickl.*, 29:14 and, for less explicit comments, *Refl.* 4449 and 4451 from about 1772–1778, 17:555 f. Kant even takes the pain to import the expression 'original acquisition' from natural law to qualify his view of the origin of the categories as non-innatist. See *Entd.*, 8:223; *MSitten*, 6:258; and note 43 above.

nations for this. Although, as we shall see, they may both be correct, the second explanation is the best supported by Kant's texts.

The first explanation is that Kant did not regard dispositional innatism, which he endorsed, as innatism, and he held that neither Leibniz, nor Crusius endorsed dispositional innatism. On this reading, Kant maintained that innatists should take innate concepts to be "at least partially formed" since birth (Callanan 2013, 24 n. 15). If this is correct, then when Kant described Crusius as postulating "implanted predispositions [*Anlagen*] for thinking" (B167; see *MK*, 29:959), he did not understand them as authentic dispositions, but in some other way; for instance, as fully formed, but latent concepts. Yet Leibniz and, quite explicitly, Crusius (1747, §83) favoured dispositional innatism. Is it possible that Kant failed to notice this?

There are three reasons to believe that he did. First, Kant had limited historical interests and he did not pay much attention to the history of innatism. This can be seen from the fact that his comments on earlier innatists are rather sketchy; that he did not even take notice of Christian Wolff's dispositional innatism,⁶⁶ despite Wolff's strong influence in eighteenth-century Germany and Kant's praises for him (Bxxxvi); and that he did not mention Descartes', Cudworth's or More's innatism (Oberhausen 1997, 71 n. 191). Second, the comments on Leibniz's innatism in Kant's corpus are even more sparse than those on Plato's and Crusius' innatism (Oberhausen 1997, 91). This indicates that Kant did not carefully study the innatist theories of the *New Essays*, despite their similarity to his own views.⁶⁷ Third, the philosophical influence of the *New Essays* on German thinkers in the 1760s and 1770s was very limited.⁶⁸ In view of this, Kant's failure to notice that Leibniz was a dispositional innatist should not seem surprising.

⁶⁶ Compare Wolff 1740, 508; 1751, §819 with an addition to *RefI*. 4446 from about 1770–1778, 17:554, and *MK*, 29:959.

⁶⁷ There are three reasons to believe that, nevertheless, Kant read the *New Essays*. First, discussions of Leibniz's theory of cognition appear in Kant's notes around 1770, shortly after the publication of the *New Essays* in 1765. This is unlikely to be due to a merely indirect influence. The *New Essays* had little impact on Kant's peers (Tonelli 1974). Second, Markus Herz (1990 [1771], 63) relates Kant's views on the origin of the representations of space and time to Leibniz's views in his paraphrase of *De mundi*. Herz was the respondent at the defense of Kant's Inaugural Dissertation. Kant is likely to have carefully instructed him on his views in preparation for the disputation (Oberhausen 1997, 119–121). Third, the transcripts of Kant's lectures from between 1777 and 1785 state that Leibniz was a disciple of Plato, whereas Locke was a disciple of Aristotle (*Enzickl.*, 29:16; *MVolckmann*, 28:372, 376; *MMrongovius*, 29:761). This is an echo of *NE*, Preface, 47. Wolff, who passed away before the publication of the *New Essays*, contrasted Plato's innatism with Aristotle's and Locke's views, but he did not mention Leibniz. See Wolff 1740, 551; 1751, §820.

⁶⁸ Tonelli 1974, 446–454.

The second explanation is that Kant did not regard himself as an innatist because he did not identify innatism with a specific thesis on conceptual origin, but with a broad epistemological and metaphysical stance that includes a commitment to God as the source of innate concepts and the guarantor of their agreement with experience.⁶⁹ In favor of this explanation, it should be noted that Kant usually classes Plato, Leibniz and Crusius as innatists. In his view, they were all committed to such a view of God.⁷⁰ Moreover, as we saw in Section 4, some of Kant's texts direct the lazy reason argument against innatism as such. This would hardly be justified, unless Kant thought that innatism involves a commitment to a supernatural being. Finally, Kant's texts from the 1770s and 1780s associate innatism and its modern versions with theological commitments:

Recently [...] it was said that they [ideas] are innate [...] it was held that God has placed certain fundamental concepts in every human soul [...] (*MVolckmann*, 28:372; see *MMrongovius*, 29:761)

If they [cognitions] are inborn, then they are revelations. (*ML*, 28:233)

The doctrine of innate ideas leads to enthusiasm. (*Refl.* 4851 from 1776–1778, 18:8, trans. modified).

In eighteenth-century Germany, the term “enthusiasm” [*Schwärmerei*] bore religious connotations and was often associated to religious superstition.⁷¹

In conclusion, it is possible that Kant regarded Leibniz, but not himself as an innatist because he did not regard dispositional innatism as a form of innatism and he misunderstood Leibniz's and Crusius' positions. However, there is stronger evidence for the view that Kant took innatism to include unacceptable theological commitments, and he denied that he was an innatist so as to distance himself from the theological commitments of earlier innatists such as Leibniz. Once we separate innatism from those commitments, we can appreciate that Kant is an innatist and that his views on the origin of intellectual concepts are much closer to Leibniz's than has often been acknowledged.⁷²

⁶⁹ Oberhausen 1997, 71, 96 f.; Yamane 2008.

⁷⁰ For the ascription of this view to Plato, see e. g. *Br.*, 10:131; *MVolckmann*, 28:371 f.

⁷¹ Hinske 1988; Yamane 2008, 835 n. 9.

⁷² I would like to thank Michael Oberst, Tom Sorell and audiences in Bucharest, London and Padua for helpful comments on earlier versions of this paper. This research was supported by a Marie Curie International Incoming Fellowship within the 7th European Community Framework Programme.

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