

## *Why Kant Is Not a Kantian*

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**ABSTRACT.** A central debate in early modern philosophy, between empiricism and rationalism, turned on the question which of two cognitive faculties—sensibility or understanding—should be accorded logical priority in an account of the epistemic credentials of knowledge. As against both the empiricist and the rationalist, Kant wants to argue that the terms of their debate rest on a shared common assumption: namely that the capacities here in question—qua cognitive capacities—are self-standingly intelligible. The paper terms this assumption the *Layer-Cake Conception of Human Mindedness* and focuses on Kant's argument against the empiricist version of the assumption, in particular, as that argument is developed in the B version of the *Transcendental Deduction* in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. The paper seeks to show how a proper understanding of the structure of the B Deduction reveals its aim to be one of making sense of each of these two capacities (sensibility and understanding) in the light of the other. For the front of the argument that is directed against the empiricist, this means coming to see how a reading of the text that is informed by the layer-cake conception (and which therefore takes the Transcendental Aesthetic to furnish us with the full story about the nature of our faculty for sensory apprehension) is mistaken. For the front of the argument which is directed against the rationalist, this requires coming to see how a mere *inversion* of the central claim of such a reading would be equally wrong. It would require seeing how a discursive faculty of

understanding able to traffic in nothing more than empty concepts would no more amount to a genuinely cognitive power than would a faculty of intuition able to traffic in nothing more than blind intuitions. That is, it requires seeing how each of these faculties depends on its relation to the other to be the sort of faculty that it is in a finite rational being.

It is not uncommon for the “ism” formed when those three letters are added to the last name of a great philosopher to denote a way of thinking that the philosopher in question was centrally concerned to undo. Why this is no accident—why this should recurrently be so for terms such as “Platonism,” “Spinozism,” “Wittgensteinianism,” and so on—would be a fitting topic for an ambitious book on the nature of philosophy. A related topic of such a book would be why it is that serious philosophy cannot be captured through anything like a summary of a “position”—why genuine philosophical thought necessarily evades the mode of communication attempted by such putatively philosophical genres of work as the “philosophical encyclopedia” or “philosophical lexicon.” The central claim of this paper may serve as an illustration of our imaginary book’s general point.<sup>1</sup> It may be put as follows: Kant is not a proponent of (what often goes by the name of) “Kantianism”; on the contrary, he is its first great critic.<sup>2</sup>

Insofar as this paper seeks to offer anything resembling an abstract or summary of Kant’s “position” or “argument,” it must therefore necessarily fail its purpose. Its aim must rather be to communicate the movement of Kant’s thought—something that undergoes distortion the moment one attempts to freeze it into a thesis or set of theses deliverable by some more familiar form of intellectual demonstration. Kant’s generic term for the form of philosophical activity at issue in this paper is “critique.” Our discussion will focus on a relatively local dialectical moment within the pursuit of this larger activity—the moment he calls a “deduction.” The most general claim of this paper might be put as follows: We are apt to misunderstand Kant in the way touched upon in the first sentence of this paper, if we take ourselves already to understand what terms such as “critique” and “deduction” are supposed to mean independently of our being able to make sense of why his text comes in the very particular shape—with all its initially puzzling twists and turns—that it does.

The following three dualities are central to Kant’s philosophy: (1) *sensibility* and *understanding*, (2) *a priori* and *a posteriori*, and (3) the *form* and *matter* of cognition. On many readings of that philosophy, the point of these distinctions is to underwrite various forms of philosophical dualism. Hence all three of the following theses are commonly attributed to Kant: (1) our faculty of sensibility could have the very same character that it presently does independently of its entering into cooperation with our faculty of understanding<sup>3</sup> (and vice versa), (2) empirical and a priori cognition represent two independent modes of knowledge each of which could be enjoyed by a creature incapable of enjoying the other,<sup>4</sup> and (3) the matter and the form of our cognition are sufficiently independent of each other

that either admits of individuation and specification apart from its relation to the other.<sup>5</sup> The primary purpose of the paper is to show that (1) is a misreading. Its twin secondary purposes are to provide reasons for thinking that (2) and (3) are no less misguided and hence to suggest that all three—both as philosophical doctrines in their own right and as readings of Kant—must stand or fall together. This paper is therefore a prolegomenon to what one might call an anti-dualist reading of Kant. If any or all of these dualisms are essential to (what is often called) Kantianism, then the aim of this paper is to show that Kant is not a Kantian.

## I. TWO CONCEPTIONS OF HUMAN MINDEDNESS

In order fully to appreciate just how deeply “un-Kantian” Kant is, one needs to get into view the manner in which he seeks to unearth and extinguish a deeply rooted assumption—one that has controlled much modern philosophical thought about the nature of human cognition.<sup>6</sup> Here is one guise of the assumption in question—its empiricist guise—in which it receives the following specification: Our nature as sensibly receptive beings, insofar as it makes a contribution to cognition, represents a self-standingly intelligible aspect of our nature. According to this assumption, to claim that the sort of knowledge that animals like us—rational animals—have requires “something more” than our merely sensible nature is to claim that there are capacities which must be “added on” to our “merely animal” capacities for sensation and desire. To understand human cognitive functioning in this way is to picture it as a layer cake: the bottom level of the cake is the layer of our merely animal capacities for interacting with the world. The layer that sits on top of that is the upper layer of human cognitive functioning: the layer of our (more or less) distinctively human (so-called rational) capacities. What is crucial to the assumption is the following idea: that the internal character of the manifold constituting the bottom layer remains unaffected by the introduction of the upper layer. Just as in a layer cake with a lower layer of chocolate and an upper layer of vanilla: the fact that there is a layer of vanilla sitting on top of the chocolate does not affect the internal character of what it is to be chocolate. So, too, according to the deep-seated assumption: just because, in the human case, there happens to be a layer of cognitive functioning, which involves “additional” capacities (say, the capacities to employ concepts and make judgments) sitting on top of our merely animal nature, does not alter or otherwise affect the internal character of the capacities which make up the lower level—the human animal’s capacities to be sensibly affected by and desire objects in the world.

According to the traditional assumption, this just *is* what it means to say human beings are animals—that they could, in principle, have precisely the same sentient capacities as some other species of hominid which is, if you will, a mere animal—a nonrational animal. Let us call the species of animal here in question *homo erectus*. The idea here is of a species of animal lacking our capacities for

rational thought and judgment, but that is, in all other respects, *just like us*. The underlying assumption may be spelled out in a bit more detail through the following thought experiment: it is possible to arrive at a perfectly adequate conception of the nature of this animal's cognitive capacities by starting with an adequate conception of our own cognitive capacities and then simply *subtracting* from that larger set of capacities those which we have and it lacks. Or, alternatively, moving in the opposite direction, we can start with a conception of that creature's capacities and arrive at a fully adequate conception of "the human capacity to acquire knowledge" (what Kant calls our *Erkenntnisvermögen*) by simply supplementing its repertoire of capacities with those that figure in ours but not in its.

The assumption in question therefore turns on what we might call a *conjunctivist conception of the relation between sentience and sapience qua cognitive capacities*—for, on this conception, our sentient cognitive faculty, as we encounter it *in act* (say, in an exercise of, say, *seeing that such and such is the case*) is one which could, at least in principle, be exercised just as well and in precisely the same manner by a nonrational animal—that is, by an animal outfitted with our visual sensory equipment but lacking our higher-order intellectual "modules" for subsequently processing the input with which such equipment initially provides us. There is therefore, on this view, no conceptual bar to conceiving our capacity for visual apprehension qua cognitive capacity as constituting, in this sense, a *highest common factor* in the repertoire of the cognitive capacities of the two creatures here under consideration. The capacity here under consideration is *one and the same capacity*, considered qua capacity for providing a creature with sensory material for cognition: The sorts of "representations" it yields, and the sort of "content" those representations "contain," is one and the same—regardless of the wider environing context of further capacities within which those "representations" or that "content" happens to figure within the mental life of the creature in question. If the two species of animal here under consideration differ, on this conception, it is only because one of them—the one that is like us—happens to be blessed with "further" capacities, which the "mere" animal lacks and the absence of which keeps that creature from being able "to work up" the sensory material it takes in from the environment into our more sophisticated form of cognition. But when we arrive at these so-called higher forms of cognition, what we start with—what we are *given*—through the exercise of our faculty for sensibility is just what that creature would start with—what it would be given—in its sensory commerce with the world. I shall call this conception of how the respective exercises of sentient and sapient capacities are related to one another in our capacity to acquire knowledge the *layer-cake conception of human mindedness*.

For Kant, the capacities to negotiate the world that one finds in a nonrational animal (such as its capacity for sensation and desire) are merely given aspects of its nature, whereas it is essential to an adequate conception of rational knowledge that no formal aspect of its exercise be merely given. What happens when we move through the *Stufenleiter* of forms of cognition, from considering the form

of cognitive capacity involved in nonrational animal cognition to a form that essentially involves the use of concepts and the formation of judgments, is that the sort of animal under consideration is one whose nature is transformed through and through.<sup>7</sup> A corollary of this Kantian thesis (which is crucial for the region of his theoretical philosophy with which this paper is concerned) is the following: The possibility of something's being given to the sensory consciousness of a rational animal, if that animal's awareness thereof is to be conceived as an integral moment in the exercise of its overall capacity for rational cognition, requires that *that* capacity for sensory affection radically differ in its internal character from that of any nonrational animal. It requires that we come to see how the capacity for sensory affection in the rational animal exhibits the marks of the form of its capacity for cognition and thus how the episodes of such sensory consciousness are themselves shaped by the manner in which they are, *ab initio*, such as to be apt to bear on rational reflection on how things are.

We might term the resulting conception a *disjunctivist conception of the relation between sentience and sapience qua cognitive capacities*<sup>8</sup>—for, on this conception, our sentient cognitive faculty, as we encounter it *in act* (say, in an exercise of, say, *seeing that such and such is the case*) represents a faculty whose form is utterly distinct in character from any whose exercise might manifest itself in the sensory life of a nonrational animal—even if, when investigated from a merely physiological point of view, that animal's sensory equipment might reveal itself to be in countless respects physiologically indistinguishable from our own. As Descartes, of all people, had already clearly stated: unlike in the case of the “mere” animal, “intellection must already be contained *in the formal concept* of human sensory perception.”<sup>9</sup> As the allusion to Descartes already makes clear, a commitment to the impossibility of the self-standing nature of our sensory faculty is by no means new with Kant. Such a conception of the dependence of our sensory capacity on our rational faculty is clearly present in Aristotle and (though under various sorts of pressure in the early modern period) has yet to be abandoned by Descartes (as it is by most of the British empiricists). What is new with Kant is a concern to ward off a form of skepticism that he sees as a consequence of our having lost hold of the wisdom contained in this traditional idea.

It is an interesting question (which goes well beyond the scope of this paper to consider) to what extent Descartes would have been able fully to affirm the following claim: At the level of a formal characterization of what it is to have a faculty of receptivity, qua cognitive capacity, there is nothing which may figure as a highest common factor across the capacities of two creatures only one of which is a rational creature. On the conception which I will attribute to Kant, if the two creatures here under consideration may be said to have a capacity in common, it is only because of their “having something in common” at a very *generic* level of description—a level of description of “the” capacity in question which completely abstracts from the manner in which it specifically figures in the exercise of their respective forms of cognition.<sup>10</sup>

An eagle and a human have upper and lower limbs in common, but what they have in common is not a highest common factor. In the case of their lower limbs we refer to what they have in common as “legs.” So it may help to concentrate the mind if we focus instead on their upper limbs, where we are less apt to be confused by the presence of a common term. The latter sorts of limb are sufficiently different as to render us less inclined to refer to both sorts through the use of a common term.<sup>11</sup> In an eagle the upper limbs of the creature are wings, in a human they are arms. Generically speaking, they are both upper limbs. But one cannot turn the one into the other by adding some features—such as, say, an elbow to the one, or some feathers to the other. They differ in form, not merely in matter. What they generically have in common must formally differ in order for these limbs<sup>12</sup> to belong to the two very different forms of life that they do.<sup>13</sup> We might summarize the point here at issue by saying that in his critical philosophy Kant holds that the concept of human sensibility is related to the concept of a creature with a faculty of sensibility not as the concept of the layer of chocolate in a layer cake is related to the concept of chocolate cake, but rather as the concept of a human arm is related to the concept of an upper limb.

To hold on to this point and think through its implications is a central ambition of Kant’s theoretical philosophy. It commits him to what Matthew Boyle has helpfully termed “a transformative conception of rationality.”<sup>14</sup> Adopting Boyle’s terminology, in connection with the issues in the interpretation of Kant to be explored in this paper, I shall speak of the *transformative conception of human mindedness*. The layer-cake conception is often simply assumed in contemporary philosophy without noticing that one thereby has foreclosed the possibility of a transformative conception. For one can be a proponent of the former without being a critic of the latter.<sup>15</sup> Indeed, most contemporary philosophers are the one without being the other. Yet it is arguably one of the marks of modern philosophy that the converse is no longer possible: one can be a proponent of the transformative conception only by being a critic of the layer-cake conception. The aim of this paper is to argue that a proper understanding of the overall structure of the argumentative strategy of the B Deduction reveals Kant to be a proponent of the one in just this way—through the manner in which he is a critic of the other.

## II. THREE EXEGETICAL PUZZLES CONCERNING THE *CRITIQUE OF PURE REASON*

The concerns of this paper involve an intertwining set of systematic and exegetical concerns. Let us finally turn now to the latter. Here are three central exegetical puzzles with which any satisfactory reading of the *First Critique* must come to grips:

1. First puzzle: What is the relation of the doctrine of the formal conditions of sensibility set forth in the *Transcendental Aesthetic* and the doctrine of the formal conditions of understanding set forth in the *Transcendental Analytic*?

2. Second puzzle: What is the relation of the versions of the *Transcendental Deduction* offered in the A and B editions of the *First Critique*?
3. Third puzzle: What is the relation between the first half and the second half of the *Transcendental Deduction* in B?

The main exegetical claim of this paper may be summed up as follows: The proper resolution of each of the three puzzles depends upon the proper resolution of the other two. This means that we must answer the first question properly if we hope to make genuinely satisfactory progress on the other two. In its relation to contemporary Anglophone Kant commentary, the main polemical claim of this paper may therefore be put as follows: most accepted solutions to the first puzzle render the second and third puzzles insoluble.

These three exegetical puzzles all concern the relation of one part of the text to another part of the text. The first and the third evidently concern the relation between two halves of what is supposed to be a single text—in the one case, the relation between the halves of the main body of the *First Critique* (the two halves of *The Doctrine of Elements*) and in the other case the two halves of a relatively small but nonetheless integral portion within that main body (the two halves of the B Deduction). The second puzzle concerns the relation between the two versions of that small portion of the *Critique*—the two different ways in which Kant sought to present one and the same teaching over the course of his two superficially markedly different attempts to do so. This, in turn, becomes no less a puzzle about two halves of the text, once the two editions of the *First Critique* are printed and bound together in a single volume (most conspicuously in German editions, where the A Edition is printed on the upper half of each page and the B Edition on the lower half of each page), having come to be regarded by posterity as comprising the full expression of a single work.

The ensuing questions regarding how to understand the relation between these textual parts and the wholes in which they are situated parallel questions regarding how to understand the relation between the cognitive capacities of which they treat. The layer-cake conception of human mindedness holds that our sensory faculty makes a self-standingly intelligible contribution to our capacity for knowledge; it regards our capacity for thought as building on and supplementing that which is merely given to sense. What we might call “the layer-cake conception of the architectonic of the *Critique of Pure Reason*” operates with a corresponding view of the role of the Transcendental Aesthetic within the work as a whole, regarding it as elaborating a self-standingly intelligible doctrine of the conditions of sensible representation; it regards the Transcendental Analytic as building on and supplementing that prior account of the formal conditions of sensibility with a doctrine of the formal conditions of thinkability. This “parallel” is in fact no mere parallel. It is one and the same issue. The textual puzzles and the philosophical puzzles intertwine. Achieving a proper understanding of the relation of these textual parts to the overall structure of the work and achieving a proper understanding of the relation of the ingredient sub-capacities to our cognitive capacity as a



whole turn out to be two sides of a single task. This much a layer-cake theorist and an anti-layer-cake theorist might be able to agree on. Where they differ is on the relative logical priority of the relevant parts to the relevant wholes. This will become particularly evident when we turn to the B Deduction, where these twin challenges in literary form and philosophical content come to complement each other to a remarkable degree. We shall see that the task of understanding the unity of that text and the task of understanding the unity of our cognitive capacity of which it treats are one and the same.

### III. AN OUTLINE OF THE PROBLEM THE DEDUCTION ADDRESSES

Before entering into the details of even just a very general outline of the argument strategy of the Deduction, it is advisable first to be clear about what the question Kant there seeks to address is supposed to be. And in order to get clear about this, it helps first to be clear about how Kant's own focal question—expressed in his own somewhat idiosyncratic terms—is related to longstanding concerns that have plagued the philosophical tradition. So, before we turn to Kant, let us back up before him for a moment and start by formulating a philosophical question which may be termed *the traditional question*—and which may be stated as follows: What is the relation between being and (what we take to be) knowledge?

The skeptic asserts that the nature of being and that of our putative knowledge thereof must necessarily fail to coincide and thus that our so-called “knowledge” is at best just that: *so-called* knowledge. The dogmatist denies this: he maintains the contrary by insisting that they, at least in principle, *can* coincide. The aim of dogmatic metaphysics is to adduce a general reason that licenses us to take certain putative first-order material claims to knowledge at face value for what they seem to be. The dogmatist therefore takes the skeptic's question to be well posed but takes the philosopher to be able to supply a general reason which shows that we should answer the skeptic's question with respect to certain claims to material knowledge in the affirmative rather than in the negative. Kant is usually read as if he himself were—in the sense of the term just introduced—some sort of dogmatist. He is usually read as if he thought that he may accept the terms of the problem which the skeptic sets us, but then, operating within those terms, introduce some additional requirement or consideration which saves the day and allows us to conclude that certain bits of material knowledge are invulnerable to skeptical doubt. The Transcendental Deduction in particular is often read as constituting such a bit of argument—one which supposedly delivers such a general argument for why we should answer the traditional skeptic's question in the affirmative. It is read as if its aim were to show us how to move from the skeptic's premises to the sort of conclusion that the skeptic represents as unattainable.

It is crucial to the reading of Kant that I seek to recommend that this is a mischaracterization of the angle of his intervention in the traditional philosophical



dialectic between the skeptic and his critics. It completely misses the motive of Kant's refocusing philosophical attention on questions centered around a consideration of the *form* of our cognitive capacity, and away from disputes centered around vindicating particular material exercises of it. What Kant himself does in the Transcendental Deduction is to reformulate the traditional question into (what I will follow Sebastian Rödl in calling) *the critical question*: What is the relation between *the general form of what is* and *the general form of knowledge*?<sup>16</sup> In the light of the critical question the previous history of metaphysics is revealed to be the pursuit of a form of *dogmatic* metaphysics: For this way of doing metaphysics seeks the general form of what is otherwise than by reflecting on the general form of thought and experience.

Under the pressure of the critical question, the fundamental nature of the skeptical problematic itself comes to be transformed through and through.<sup>17</sup> The traditional skeptical worry is revealed to turn not merely on a *doubt* (about whether we can have this or that bit of knowledge) but rather on a *boggle* (about how knowledge could so much as be possible)—a deeper underlying worry about how the general form of thought and experience could amount to anything other than a *mere mirroring back to us* of that which our merely subjective forms of cognition *impose* on that which is given to us—yielding a conception of how the world is which merely reflects the manner in which (given how we are constituted) we cannot help but think of it. Once fully thought through, this yields a form of skeptical worry even more dire than the one which originally confronted the Cartesian skeptic. If the Cartesian skeptic is someone who wants to know which of his thoughts are true, which of his experiences are veridical, then the figure I will call the Kantian skeptic deprives us of the resources for so much as being able to enjoy an experience (waking or dreaming), for so much as being able to frame a thought (true or false). Thus the Kantian problematic inquires into the grounds of the possibility of our being able to enjoy an experience or entertain a thought-content in the first place. The Kantian asks: What does it take to have thoughts that are vulnerable to how things are? The Kantian problematic is concerned, in the first instance, not with the distinction between truth and falsity but with what it is to stick your neck out in thinking, which Kant calls the *objective validity* of judgment, with what I will sometimes call the *objective purport* of judgment.<sup>18</sup>

Thus for the Kantian inquiry, it is no less deep a problem how any of our experiences or thoughts of the world could so much as be *false*—as it is a problem to understand how it is that any of them could be true. However, the possibility of a fully generalized Kantian skepticism is first made possible in the early modern period through the advent of a form of empiricism that insists that our cognitive access to the world must, in the first instance, be *purely* sensory. On this conception, there is a self-standing sensory way of knowing what is—one which can operate independently of the exercise of a capacity for thought. For the British empiricists, that is what human sense perception is: the operation of this mere animal capacity in us to be affected by objects in such a way that our transaction with those objects results in purely sensory impressions.

Kant clarifies the fundamental underlying commitment of such a form of empiricism and attempts to show that it amounts to the following claim: What is given to the senses does not as such exhibit the form of thought. This comes to the same thing for Kant as claiming the following: The forms of our intellect—or (as both Aristotle and Kant call them) the Categories—do not as such apply to what is. They come into relation with what is only in a second step: a step in which they are brought to bear on sense impressions. So, on this picture, the first step in our cognitive commerce with the world is purely sensory—there is nothing about what is given through such a commerce with the world which yet reflects any aspect of our form of understanding; then, in a second step, the understanding comes into play and works that raw sensory matter up into something fit to be a candidate for entering into a relation of objective purport between how we take the world to be and how it is. This leaves us with a picture in which our forms of understanding always operate at an unbridgeable remove from the reality regarding which they seek to provide us knowledge. It thus makes it difficult to avoid the very conclusion that Hume drew (when he sought to think through the presuppositions of this empiricist picture of the relation between the exercise of our sensible and intellectual capacities): The forms of our understanding—categories such as substance and causality—now appear, at best, to involve mere subjective *projections* onto something already given, something to which the unity of thought is external. This conclusion follows from Hume's prior commitment to the empiricist variant of the layer-cake assumption—the assumption that the unity of thought is exogenous to the unity of the mode of sensory apprehension at play in our cognition of objects. Hume fully grasped the philosophical implications of a resolute commitment to this assumption. Therein lay his greatest insight.

Hume is Kant's main example of a philosopher who has fully thought through the commitments of this early modern form of empiricism. His dialectical importance, relative to the project of the Transcendental Deduction, lies in the claim that categories such as substance and causality must, at best, merely reflect ingrained habits to associate sensory impressions in certain ways. Kant agrees with something in Hume here and disagrees with something here. He agrees with Hume, against the traditional rationalist, that we can apprehend *what is* only by being affected by it; without this, we cannot think it. That is, he agrees with Hume, against the rationalists, that our capacity for discursive thought cannot be a self-standingly intelligible faculty. Kant, however, disagrees with Hume's converse commitment: namely, that our capacity to enjoy our form of sensory consciousness (one which putatively delivers up mere impressions which are only subsequently “worked up” into intellectual ideas pertaining to objects) is a self-standingly intelligible capacity.

Kant wants to show that the truth in traditional empiricism must be elucidated in such a way that it does not end up landing us in increasingly dire forms of philosophical trouble—not only in the preliminary form of trouble that Hume himself identified (a form of skepticism in which he thought it was possible to

acquiesce), but also (once it is strictly thought through) in the far more extreme predicament of (what I have called) Kantian skepticism—the predicament which Kant thought was the real upshot of conceding to either a rationalist or an empiricist the assumption that either our sensible or our intellectual faculty makes a self-standingly intelligible contribution to human knowledge. This assumption lands us in this far more extreme form of philosophical trouble because it becomes a mystery how could it be so much as possible to have experiences or think thoughts which have the very form of purport that our experiences and thoughts undeniably do have. This means that Kant is conducting an argument on two fronts—one directed at the empiricist and one at the rationalist—while waging a campaign against what is ultimately to be unmasked as a single enemy. The aim is to show that what is philosophically fatal in each of the two traditionally opposed philosophical approaches flows from a single assumption—one that they share. I will concentrate in what follows on Kant's critique of the empiricist variant of the assumption.

An essential part of that critique, Kant came to think, requires showing the following: That the truth in traditional empiricism (that knowledge requires sensory affection) *does not prohibit* the initial character of what is initially given in an episode of sensory consciousness, qua the episode of sensory consciousness that it is, from exhibiting the form of thought. If this is what must be shown in order to avoid the predicament of Kantian skepticism, then this provides us with a clear overview of the overall task of the *Transcendental Analytic*: to show that the form of what is can be nothing other than that of the consciousness of the thinking, judging, experiencing subject.<sup>19</sup>

In the *Transcendental Aesthetic*, Kant has shown that what we intuit through the senses has, as such, a certain form: namely, that of space and time: We represent what we intuit—that is, what we take in through sensory apprehension in forming an immediate singular representation of an object—as spatial and temporal in form simply in virtue of our intuiting it in the first place. If this is so, then in order to overcome the layer-cake conception of human mindedness Kant needs to be able to show the following: that the form of sensory consciousness as it figures in sensory apprehension of an object cannot as such bear no internal relation to the form of the capacity which we exercise in engaging in acts of thought and judgment about that same object. Or to put the point in language slightly closer to Kant's own: What is given through the senses, simply in virtue of being intuited, already exhibits a form which is not simply other than that which the categories prescribe.<sup>20</sup>

#### IV. THE AIM OF THE B DEDUCTION

The aim of what is to be shown by the end of the B Deduction may be summed up as coming in the following three steps:

**1. What has already been shown in the *Transcendental Aesthetic***

What we intuit through our senses has, as such, a certain form: namely, that of space and time. We represent what we intuit as spatial and temporal merely in virtue of intuiting it. Space and time are the forms of *our* intuition.

**2. What is shown in the first half of the B Deduction**

That which is given through the senses can only exhibit unity of intuition (regardless of what the specific character of the form of intuition in question is) if it exhibits the unity of thought—the forms of categorical unity—those forms of unity which characterize any finite discursive intellect.

**3. What remains to be shown in the second half of the B Deduction**

What is given through the senses exhibits the form of thought if and only if the categories do not prescribe a unity that is simply other than that which something exhibits insofar as it is in space and time.

The crucial question is this: What is accomplished in the progress from the second to the third of these steps? Only if we properly understand this are we in a position to appreciate the true nature of the progress from the first to the second of these steps. In order to clarify what the philosophical stakes are here, I will engage in a brief digression to discuss some of the issues that have tended to dominate Anglophone commentary on Kant's theoretical philosophy. I will present these issues as involving four (as I will call them) *choice-points* in a reading of the *First Critique*.

I will begin by presenting these choice-points separately, as if they represented fully independent exegetical issues—but, in fact, I do not think they do: I think that the commitments incurred in an attempt to take (what we might call) the left-hand or the right-hand fork at *any* one of these choice-points are intimately related to the commitments one must incur in any attempt to take the left-hand or the right-hand fork at any of the other three. Many commentators proceed as if these choice-points represented fully independent exegetical forks in the road. They thus try to take the left-hand fork on one issue while taking the right-hand fork on another. Let us first treat them separately therefore, as if each represented an issue about which one could come to a view, independently of determinately settling on a view regarding the others—that is, as if each represented an issue which were genuinely conceptually distinct from the others.

**V. A FIRST CHOICE-POINT IN READING THE *DEDUCTION*:  
RESTRICTIVE VS. NONRESTRICTIVE CONCEPTIONS  
OF SUBJECTIVITY**

It is clear that Kant's aim in the *First Critique* is to elucidate the concept of a finite capacity for theoretical knowledge. But much depends upon how the concept of

finitude or limitation is elaborated here. There is a tendency to elaborate it in (what I will call) *restrictive* terms—in accordance with a conception according to which the finite knower is pictured as if he were *sealed into a delimited sphere*. According to this picture, there is an area, within which our reason operates, but the price of our being able to enjoy its satisfactory operation within that domain is that we must reconcile ourselves to the substantive possibility of “running up against a limit”—a limit the other side of which we can dimly make out, although we cannot have knowledge of what goes on there. So, on this picture, our form of knowledge is restrictive because it debars us from being able to enjoy a kind of knowledge it would make sense for us to hanker after but which, alas, we cannot have.<sup>21</sup> Kant is often read as if his conception of the finitude of our faculty of knowledge is to be explicated in accordance with such a picture. Indeed, the term “Kantianism” is often taken to denote some version of such a picture.<sup>22</sup> A nonrestrictive conception of knowledge is one that rejects precisely such an interpretation of wherein the finitude of our cognitive capacity lies.

In the terminology that I will employ henceforth: to turn left at this choice-point is to endorse a restrictive conception; to turn right is to endorse a nonrestrictive conception.<sup>23</sup> Here then is a pair of formulations of what it might mean to read Kant as having a restrictive and a nonrestrictive conception respectively:

**1. A Fairly Standard Reading of Kant: Conditions of Experience as Restrictions**

All claims of necessity were, in Kant’s view, subject to conditions. For instance, particular claims of, for example, causal connection are always conditional on some prior state of affairs . . . , and general claims that objects conform to the requirements of the possibility of our experience are also subject to a condition—the condition, presumably, *that we do in fact experience them*. Kant’s general position on necessity would thus . . . suggest . . . that the conditions of the possibility of experience are restrictions on what we can experience. . . . The principles of thought which Kant’s argument will finally produce . . . have to be regarded as “restrictions” on those cases of consciousness which do in fact count as cognitive judgments.<sup>24</sup>

**2. An Alternative Reading of Kant: To Show That the Subjective Conditions of Experience Are Not Merely Subjective**

Kant takes himself to show that the requirements of the understanding are not just subjective requirements but genuinely requirements on objects themselves.<sup>25</sup>

The first way of reading Kant invites us to understand the conditions on the possibility of our enjoying knowledge of objects as foreclosing certain other possibilities—where the latter are conceived as genuine possibilities of knowledge that, alas, are not open to us. The second way contests the assumption present in the first reading that what these conditions “exclude” are genuine possibilities.

We will return to this issue below. Let us simply note for the moment that either of these two ways of reading Kant can agree with much of the letter of the

other's formulations of Kantian thoughts, while completely differing in its understanding of the underlying spirit of the letter. For example, they can agree that Kant saw the very survival of philosophy as resting upon our being able to make sense of the possibility of there being *subjective* but *necessary* conditions for the possibility of experience, while differing completely with regard to how to unpack the very idea of a "form of subjectivity"—hence completely differing about the character of the sort of necessity Kant claims for the categories. On the restrictive conception, the dimension of subjectivity hereby introduced into an account of knowledge restricts or otherwise compromises the character of the objectivity to which such a form of knowledge can lay claim (it is merely true "for us"); whereas on a nonrestrictive conception, the relevant dimension of subjectivity that is to come into view is properly understood only once it is appreciated that it is nothing other than a condition on the possibility of the only conception of objectivity we are coherently able to think through and make sense of. Regarding the topic of "the conditions of knowledge," Robert Pippin observes that if "the only way to make sense of such a subjective contribution was to accept that their status as subjective was also a *restriction* and that therefore we were restricted to possible objects of 'our' finite experience," then this immediately raises "the issue of what sort of subjective restrictions these could be if not psychological."<sup>26</sup> This, in turn, raises the concern that any way of understanding what a restrictive conception of such conditions amounts to will in the end inevitably be faced with the threat of devolving into a philosophically hopeless form of subjectivism.<sup>27</sup>

If one begins by understanding Kant's conception of finitude to be a restrictive one, then it is almost impossible to avoid eventually sliding into (what I call) an *impositionist* reading of the *First Critique*—a reading according to which the categories of the understanding are taken to *impose* certain forms of unity on an exogenous matter. Or, to put the same point the other way around: a reading according to which the forms of the understanding are taken to be exogenous to the inner character of that which is given to us in sensibility. There is much to be said about what an impositionist reading involves and why the sorts of assumptions it makes about how to read Kant might seem either textually or philosophically compelling to some readers of Kant. The motivation of such a reading can often seem to begin innocently enough—such as simply in a certain choice of terminology for describing a topic as basic to the text as the manner in which exercises of the understanding are to be described as "operating" "on" a manifold of sensible representations. It is standard in Anglophone Kant commentary to speak in this connection of a concept "imposing" a certain form of unity on a manifold. These terminological choices naturally encourage a certain picture of the relation between sensibility and understanding, especially when they are supplemented by further assumptions—ones that, in turn, further encourage and reinforce the original terminological choices themselves. Rather than exploring the problems with impositionism in its own right as a reading of Kant, what I shall do, instead, is turn to a discussion of some textual assumptions that have

contributed to making the problems raised by an impositionist reading urgent for contemporary Kant commentary. This will take us, in a moment, to our next choice-point.

Before we take this step, however, it is worth pausing for a moment to notice how the problem Pippin raises is related to our opening question—namely, how we can comprehend ourselves to be animals, that is, subjects of sensibility, and at the same time subjects of reason? The difficulty posed by that question can be traced to the following apparent dilemma: On the one hand, insofar as we possess the power of reason, we strive for general, nay, universally valid cognition; and it seems that such cognition must be (as Thomas Nagel puts it) from nowhere.<sup>28</sup> For such cognition must not be shaped by any manner in which the knowing subject is contingently determined (e.g., her location in space and time, her sensibility, her inclinations, etc.). Indeed, it is precisely for this reason that such knowledge possesses unlimited authority—a form of authority exceeding the limitation on any point of view. On the other hand, insofar it is equally true of us that we are embodied sensing beings, in space and time, it is never the case that we are simply nowhere; rather it is essential to our nature that we are always somewhere at some time, and that these enabling conditions on the exercise of our power of knowledge determine our cognition, ineluctably confining each of its exercises to a certain determinate point of view. It is thus natural to comprehend our sensibility to be *in some sense* a limitation of our reason. What is at issue between a restrictive and a nonrestrictive conception is how this “limitation” is to be understood.

On the restrictive interpretation, one operates with an opposition of the “subjective” and the “objective.” Such a reading of Kant tends to go hand in hand with a related opposition between the “thing-in-itself” (which we cannot cognize because our cognition is conditioned by our sensibility) and “appearance” (which we can cognize through our sensibility, and which precisely for this reason cannot yield even a single glimpse of reality, as it exists independently of our form of mindedness). Within this interpretative schema, there is room for many variants. But the underlying problem they all share is the same. The nonrestrictive interpretation turns on the thought that Kant’s entire theoretical philosophy aims to think through precisely this schema as the source of a fundamental unclarity in modern philosophical thinking—an unclarity in the very idea of what it would mean for reason to achieve self-understanding as a finite cognitive subject. On this alternative way of reading Kant, it is nothing less than the primary purpose of his theoretical philosophy to dissolve the central philosophical assumption which gives rise to the standard interpretative schema in the first place—the idea that reason is added from the outside to our nature as finite sensory beings. Kant’s main aim concern to show how we can comprehend the subjectivity of our cognition (which resides in its sensory and material character) as one that exhibits, even in its exercise in sensory perception, a certain *form*—one that is, albeit *sensory*, yet at one and the same time, through and through, *rational*.



VI. A SECOND CHOICE-POINT IN READING THE *DEDUCTION*:  
TWO-STAGE VS. ANTI-TWO-STAGE READINGS OF THE  
RELATION BETWEEN THE *AESTHETIC* AND THE *ANALYTIC*

Of the four choice-points that I discuss here, the one we shall discuss next is the one that most immediately and obviously requires one to take a stand for or against a layer-cake conception of human mindedness. This second choice-point has to do with whether one should accept what I will call a *two-stage reading* of the *First Critique*. Most Anglophone readings of the work involve some version of a two-stage reading—so that many of the central exegetical controversies in the literature actually can be seen to turn *au fond* not on whether to accept such a reading or not, but rather simply on the much narrower question of *which* version of a two-stage reading one ought to accept. What I want to do in my characterization of this second choice-point is to bring out how the exegetical controversies here in question all participate in a common assumption—how they all make a common left turn with respect to this shared choice-point. For most readings of the *First Critique* represent some version of a two-stage reading. This can only come into view if we develop a sufficiently schematic understanding of the crucial assumption that underlies such readings—that is, if their many differences from one another do not obscure what all such readings have in common. Here are three versions of such a reading:

1. **The standard variant of the two-stage reading:** There are two temporally discrete stages in apperceptive consciousness: a first apperceptive stage in which a manifold of bare sensory consciousness is constituted, followed by a second stage in which it is then synthesized and brought into accord with the unity prescribed by the categories of the understanding.
2. **The unconscious/conscious variant of the two-stage reading:** There are two temporally discrete stages, the first of which is sub-apperceptive: at this stage the forms of sensory input are processed but not yet brought to the level of consciousness; this is then followed by a second stage in which they do rise to the level of consciousness. This is possible only through the involvement of the categories and the forms of unity that they confer.
3. **The “logically but not temporally distinct” variant of the two-stage reading:** There are two logically distinct and self-standingly intelligible moments of cognition which co-occur in actual sensory consciousness: a merely receptive moment of sensory uptake of that which is given and an intellectual moment in which what is given is apprehended as displaying forms of categorical unity. They, however, are merely logically distinct: any actual material exercise of our cognitive capacity always involves both.

In my discussion below, I will focus mostly on the third option. For it is the one that brings out most clearly what is the philosophically fateful aspect of the presupposition shared by all two-stage readings. Nevertheless, it is by far the least

common of the three in the literature. The first of the three options mentioned above is the one most widely explored in the Anglophone secondary literature on Kant. This requires that one read the Transcendental Aesthetic as treating of a form of conscious awareness of an object (the sort given to us in the sort of immediate singular representations which Kant calls intuitions) that is pre-categorical and as considering that form of awareness to be something we can enjoy through a self-standing exercise of our faculty of sensibility. Such a form of sheer sensory awareness is taken, on the standard variant of a two-stage reading, to be what is given to us *first* in the process of cognition—where “first” means that this stage of cognitive processing is taken to be prior in a temporal as well as a logical sense. A proponent of the standard variant will generally go on to read the Transcendental Analytic as introducing what is taken to be a further requirement on genuinely objectively valid representations of objects—one that comes into play when these elements of an episode of sensory consciousness are “brought under” concepts—where this business of “bringing things under concepts” is construed as both a temporally and logically posterior stage in the cognitive process to mere sensory awareness of the object.

Option two, the second of three variants mentioned above, notices that the first option runs into a great many problems—both of a systematic as well as of an exegetical sort. It seeks to remedy these by kicking the first stage of the cognitive process downstairs, so that it occurs below the threshold of apperceptive consciousness. This allows one to preserve the letter of a great many things that Kant says in the Transcendental Analytic about how essential the categories are to our so much as being able to enjoy an intuition of an object, while preserving most of the spirit of the first option. It may also seem to have other charms. (One may be delighted, for example, by the way it now allows one to praise Kant for being the father of cognitive science.) Unlike either of the first two variants, it sees Kant as everywhere animated by a concern to theorize about the nature of the subpersonal levels of processing which are antecedent to our apperceptive consciousness of objects. It therefore requires that one read a great many passages where Kant seems to be discussing something that falls above the line of apperception and within the purview of self-consciousness as actually being about forms of cognitive processing below that line and outside that purview.<sup>29</sup>

The third option involves an appreciation that pushing the first stage of a two-stage temporal picture of cognitive processing underground does not really solve any of the problems which arise for the first reading, either exegetically or philosophically, while creating quite a few new ones of its own. Perhaps the most clear-sighted exponent of this subtlest variant of a two-stage reading within the Anglophone tradition of Kant commentary is C. I. Lewis. Experience always comes to us as unity, Lewis insists—a unity in which the contributions of our sensible and intellectual faculties are inextricably intertwined.<sup>30</sup> Moreover, according to him, the common error of both traditional empiricism and traditional rationalism is to attempt an impossible separation of the two. All such factorizing analyses of the phenomenology of experience—ones which attempt to isolate two temporally

successive contributions in experience of each of these faculties—end up failing to do justice to the actual thoroughgoing unity of our experience. In all of these respects, Lewis is a forceful opponent of both of the first two variants of the two-stage reading. On the other hand, he insists that the categories (qua pure forms of understanding) and the given (qua sheer deliverances of sensory manifolds) must be independent of each other—that neither limit the other.<sup>31</sup> This is a conclusion that he thinks is forced upon us through an act of transcendental reflection in which we consider what is required in order for our concepts about the world to be subject to a form of a genuinely external constraint that comes through our actual interaction with the world.

Let us trace for a moment how Lewis arrives at this conclusion—for it helps to bring out the crucial assumption that is also present in a more disguised form in the other variants of a two-stage reading.<sup>32</sup> Lewis's opening move is recognizably Kantian. He begins from the thought that all conceptual activity must in some sense come from us—that it is a form of activity. He is here following Kant in taking it that all cognition must involve an element of spontaneity. But, according to Lewis, this requires that we also recognize a given element in experience—something that operates as a constraint from outside the sphere of conceptual activity—the element in knowledge which we, as knowers, must be able to take in without bringing something to it. Lewis's thought here is that in order for knowledge of the world to be something more than the contemplation of our own reflection it must come from something genuinely outside us; and he takes himself simply to be echoing Kant in taking it that that must mean that cognition involves an element of passivity. For this element of passivity to make a genuinely independent contribution, it must be logically—even if it is not temporally—distinct from that which is made by our faculty of spontaneity.

So Lewis's picture is this: Without some contribution of spontaneity, the deliverances of our senses would be mere impacts—as Kant says: blind—less even than a mere dream. But, on its own, the mere activity of thinking is empty—as Kant repeatedly says: *ohne Sinn oder Bedeutung*—as long as its play remains unconstrained from without. What Lewis calls “the given” is that which is thus delivered up to the mind, furnishing it with content upon which to operate, thus rescuing its operations from emptiness and arbitrariness. Lewis takes us to have no choice but to acknowledge such a fully independent given element in experience, if we wish to frame a conception of what it is to have an empirical worldview according to which (that which we wish to be able to look upon as) our “worldview” amounts to something more than wholly unconstrained fabrication. Indeed, without the constraint of the given, what we are left with is less even than a mere fabrication. For there can be fabrication only where there can be an intelligible possibility of something more; and without any constraint on the operations of our spontaneity, the distinction between mere fabrication and something better lapses. There is no longer any basis for distinguishing between those of our constructions that afford a glimpse of how things are and those that are mere caprice. Without the possibility of drawing a distinction between

mere caprice and genuinely world-guided belief, there is no longer anything in our so-called worldview that is recognizable as world-directed thought.

What makes Lewis a proponent of the two-stage reading—his rejection of the first two variants of such a reading notwithstanding—is the manner in which he construes the aforementioned second condition on knowledge. He takes himself, in thus construing it, to be following Kant. He assumes that the freedom of conceptual activity must be constrained wholly from outside its own sphere, if we do not wish to lose our grip on thought's possession of content. Hence Lewis declares not only something Kant would be happy to declare: "If there be no datum given to the mind then knowledge must be contentless and arbitrary; there would be nothing which it must be true to."<sup>33</sup> But he also goes on to declare: "The pure concept and the content of the given are mutually independent; neither limits the other."<sup>34</sup> Lewis therewith insists that the given, qua merely given, must remain utterly uncorrupted by the concepts which we bring to it, on pain of our falling into a vicious form of idealism—one in which we are no longer able to see our conceptual activity as constrained by anything from outside its own sphere. Thus he is committed to regarding the initial form of a manifold of sensory receptivity, considered as the sort of logical moment it is in the constitution of knowledge, as one that is exogenous to the form of conceptual knowledge.<sup>35</sup>

I will refer to any reading of Kant that rejects the common presupposition of the three variants of a two-stage reading sketched above as an *anti-two-stage reading* of the *First Critique*. This initial characterization of what qualifies a particular reading as an anti-two-stage reading is therefore purely negative. What all anti-two-stage readings have in common is merely this: that they think that the three ways of reading Kant sketched above are not only mistaken, but are mistaken for the same reason. It will become clear later why I presently choose to formulate the general shape of an opposition to two-stage readings as I do, in such merely privative terms (saying nothing positive yet about the nature of the alternative to a two-stage reading). At that point, we will take up some of the difficulties involved in trying to turn right at one of these choice-points.

## VII. A THIRD CHOICE-POINT IN READING THE *DEDUCTION*: TWO SENSES OF THE TERM 'INTUITION' (AND RELATED TERMS)?

Consider the following quotation from Henry Allison:

[A] tension, if not outright contradiction, has often been noted between the official definition of 'intuition' as a "singular representation" and the account of sensible intuition. The problem is that, according to Kant's theory of sensibility, sensible intuition provides the mind with only the raw data for conceptualization, not with the determinate knowledge of objects. Such knowledge requires not only that the data be given in

intuition, but also that it be taken under some general description or “recognized in a concept.” Only then can we speak of “representation of an object.” Kant gives clear expression to this central tenet of his epistemology in the famous formula, “Intuitions and concepts constitute, therefore, the elements of all our knowledge, so that neither concepts without an intuition in some way corresponding to them, nor intuition without concepts, can yield knowledge.” (A50/B74)<sup>36</sup>

Allison is noting a problem that must arise for any proponent of a two-stage reading.

Consider now the form of a solution to this problem which Allison himself endorses:

The key to the resolution of this tension is well expressed by W. H. Walsh, who remarks that a Kantian sensible intuition is only “proleptically” the awareness of a particular. The point here is simply that, although intuitions do not in fact represent or refer to objects apart from being “brought under concepts” in a judgment, they *can* be brought under concepts, and when they are they *do* represent particular objects. In this respect, they differ from purely subjective or aesthetic “representations,” such as feelings, which can have no representative function. Thus . . . it is really necessary to draw a distinction between determinate or conceptualized and indeterminate or unconceptualized intuitions.<sup>37</sup>

Some version of this solution has become very popular in Kant interpretation. The solution to the problem is, in effect, to insist that one must distinguish two sorts of intuition—those that figure in the first layer of the layer-cake picture of sensory cognition and those which figure in the second layer, once the former have come to be reshaped in the light of their interaction with our higher cognitive capacities. The first sorts of “intuition,” according to Allison, are nonconceptual modes of apprehending an object; these require no involvement of the understanding. The second sorts of “intuition” are such that they can come into view for us as episodes of consciousness with objective purport only once they have been informed by the categories. Notice, as long as things are put this vaguely, any of the three variants of a two-stage reading spelled out above could help itself to such a distinction (between two fundamentally different sorts of “intuition”) and then spell out the details of how the two sorts differ from one another in accordance with the demands set by that particular variant of a two-stage reading.

Once one makes this move, one starts to see that it requires one to begin to make all sorts of further local decisions. Further distinctions now urgently need to be introduced—distinctions which the text itself does not originally force upon a reader, but which are now dictated by the interpretative presuppositions which one brings to one’s reading of the text. These subsidiary decisions will flow from which sense of the term “intuition” is supposedly at issue in a given passage. So every time one encounters the term, one is, in effect, now obliged to see it as coming with an implicit subscript. For, according to such an understanding of the work, in each such occurrence of the term, Kant’s topic must be either intuitions of the first sort or intuitions of the second sort. To such an interpreter, Kant is bound often to

seem not very clear as to which of the two is really at issue. So a terminologically perspicuous view of what is at issue can now come to seem to require of a commentator that he take a pen to the text and begin to introduce a little subscript for each occurrence of the term “intuition,” clearly indicating which sort of intuition is Kant’s topic where. So what initially looked to be just one large choice-point suddenly devolves into an enormous series of lots of little choices to be made. How many choices? Initially, it might seem that the number of choices that need to be made is no larger than the number of occurrences of the term “intuition” in the text.

As indicated above, however, further reflection upon this issue will reveal that the term “intuition” represents only the tip of the iceberg of the problem that arises here. For the commentator will also need to distinguish two senses of “form” of intuition (hence two senses of “space,” two senses of “time”), two senses of “synthesis,” two senses of “manifold,” and so on, for virtually every major supposed term of art in Kant’s theoretical vocabulary. If Kant seems to be largely discussing only one of the possible two cases under some particular terminological heading—say, under the heading of “form of sensibility”—this then raises the question why he neglected to discuss the other case in more detail.<sup>38</sup> This eventually becomes a pressing issue about the structure of the text. For on the two-stage approach to reading the text, Kant appears not only to neglect crucial topics, but also constantly to contradict himself—an appearance that must be undone by doing him the favor of improving on the text by continuing to introduce yet further distinctions—ones which he allegedly needs, but failed properly to make. Part of what creates this appearance of constant contradiction—of which the example Allison cites above is really nothing more than one very vivid instance—is the assumption that one can treat the initial introduction of a term such as *Anschauung* as the introduction of a term of art—as the introduction of a term no understanding of which is possible apart from the provision of a *definition* of the term. In thus treating Kant’s initial gloss on such a term as a definition, the commentator takes it that he has already, right at the outset, been provided with a sufficient account of what it is to be such a thing—in this case, about what it is to be that form of representation that Kant seeks to designate with the word “*Anschauung*.”<sup>39</sup> If Kant then later suggests that in order to enjoy something which is an intuition one requires more than was contained in the initial definition of what such a representation is, it then appears that he is contradicting his initial definition and introducing a new definition. Hence arises the strategy of seeking to mitigate the problem by insulating the two definitions from each other by taking them to be definitions of two different (if albeit interrelated) notions regrettably designated by a common term. We thus multiply distinctions in order to save the text from itself. One result of such an approach to the text is that it rapidly begins to appear as if Kant’s book is very badly written, indeed.

If one turns right at the second choice-point and decides to opt for an anti-two-stage reading, this makes available a strategy for reconciling these moments in Kant’s text (which appear to a commentator such as Allison to involve enormous tensions, if not outright contradictions) in a very different way. Indeed, it is open

to the proponent of the anti-two-stage reading (in a way that it is not open to the proponent of the two-stage reading) to pose for herself the task of trying to make sense of the book on its own terms—namely by taking as her point of departure the assumption that the book is written exactly as it should be in order for it to be doing exactly what it is trying to do. Then, rather than constantly assuming that what appears to us to be an undesirable tension or outright contradiction is one, we can ask at each such point instead: why is the book written just as it is? Rather than undertaking to rewrite Kant's text so that it can be made to say what we imagine it is supposed to, such a reader may inquire instead: Why, in order to execute its task, ought this book assume precisely the form that it does?

Under the pressure of this latter question, one crucial exegetical assumption underlying two-stage readings of the text may come to light, allowing one to negotiate this third sort of choice-point in an entirely different way. The exegetical assumption is the following: that the prosecution of the task of the *First Critique* is compatible with the work having the form of an ordinary treatise. The form of the traditional philosophical treatise comes from mathematics: one begins with definitions and unassailable propositions, and one proceeds to demonstrate further truths that follow from them. At any point in the traditional treatise, the truth of what has been shown up to that point does not depend upon what comes later. This, in turn, requires that the meanings of the crucial terms which figure in such a demonstration be fixed once and for all at the start and that what is shown over the course of the demonstration be inessential to a proper understanding of their earlier employment. Consider the following passage from Kant:

Whereas . . . mathematical definitions *make* their concepts, in philosophical definitions concepts are only *explained*. From this it follows: . . . That in philosophy we must not imitate mathematics by beginning with definitions, unless it be by way of experiment. . . . In short, the definition in all its precision and clarity ought, in philosophy, to come rather at the end than at the beginning of our enquiries. (A730/B758)

To take the right turn at the third set of choice-points is to reject the idea that a work of critique has the form of a mathematical demonstration and to take seriously that we only fully understand the concepts that we deploy in philosophical reflection once we have completed the task of critique.

This requires reading Kant's book in a very different way than it has usually been read. It requires getting fully into view that the structure of a work of critique must be dialectical from the start. Glosses on the central notions that figure in such a work are introduced, but the characterizations that figure in these initial glosses are subsequently shown to admit of a manner of understanding that leads us into philosophical difficulties. This eventually prompts us to want to enrich those characterizations. But first Kant wants to show us that as long as we remain with the initial understanding of the characterization, taking it not to require further commentary or reflection—assuming that we have already fully plumbed the conditions of the possibility of the target notion—then we will operate with an



understanding of the notion in question that will inevitably lead us into perplexity. It is the task of critique to show us how to avoid the ensuing aporia. This requires that we further reflect on the conditions of the possibility of our initial topic of reflection. This requires, in turn, that the notion in question be further clarified in a manner that reveals how we may vindicate our entitlement to our initial gloss on the notion—how it admits of an understanding that does not lead to such aporia. Each such step of further clarification in Kant generally involves showing that the notion in question brings with it very substantial further conditions on its possibility—conditions from which our initial gloss had abstracted and it is this which had led to our initial sense of perplexity.

The initial gloss, however, when we were first presented with it, will seem to capture all that ought to be required to grasp the notion in question if a certain traditional philosophical manner of framing the notion in question were equal to the task of adequately grasping its conditions of possibility. To stick with the example of “intuition”: it is initially glossed by Kant as “immediate singular representation” and contrasted with another form of representation (mediate general representation). Now we can say that we need both sorts of representation, that the one is blind and the other empty apart from their relation to each other. But this still leaves us with the question of just how deeply the conditions of the possibility of the one are entwined in those of the other. Perhaps we could still in some sense “enjoy” the one sort of representation without the other? It is then shown over a great many pages that the initial gloss is not to be understood as the characterization of a self-standingly intelligible form of representation—that its very possibility requires the involvement of a capacity whose exercise cannot be restricted to the production of such representations.

This is not to recant our initial gloss of what an intuition is, nor to replace it with a new one, but rather to clarify what it is to be entitled to the notion in the first place—to reveal that the notion of a singular immediate representation of the sort that an empiricist such as Hume is apt to think can figure in an episode of consciousness prior to the involvement of the categories is subject to a dilemma: Either it is a notion of a sort of representation that is genuinely blind (and thus cannot be “related to” and hence “of” objects in even the manner in which Hume imagines possible) or it is a notion of representation to which we can vindicate our entitlement only by giving up on Hume’s assumption that its formal character may be specified independently of the involvement of the understanding. Only once we understand this do we really understand what a blind intuition is: it is a privative exercise of a capacity whose healthy functioning yields intuitions of objects. As with its nonmetaphorical counterpart, we understand what blindness is only if we understand what it means to see. We must reverse the two-stage reading’s conception of which form of representation has logical priority here. We must come to see that the sort of “blindness” at issue here is intelligible only against the background of the logical priority of a form of exercise of our capacity for receptivity that is informed by the understanding.

VIII. A FOURTH CHOICE-POINT IN READING THE *DEDUCTION*:  
THE RELATION BETWEEN SUBJECTIVE AND OBJECTIVE  
UNITY OF CONSCIOUSNESS

The tendency among many commentators on Kant is to think that Kant's criticism of Hume is of such a sort that it is compatible with Hume and Kant agreeing on the following point—let's call it *the point of putative agreement between Hume and Kant*: The form of consciousness which Hume takes to be initially available to us through the exercise of our sensory faculty is not sufficient to give us objectively valid representations of objects. (The difference between them is then taken to be the following: Hume thinks that what we add to what is thus initially given is merely a subjective projection, whereas Kant thinks it is a form of representation which has a claim to objective validity.) The fourth choice-point has to do with whether there is such a point of putative agreement between Hume and Kant. To turn left here is to think that Hume and Kant agree on at least this much; to turn right is to think that Hume wins if Kant cedes what Hume here (along with many a "Kantian") takes to be self-evident.

The standard way of turning left at this choice-point involves a certain construal of the distinction between subjective unity and objective unity—or subjective validity and objective validity. What is conceded to Hume here is that the following idea is in itself perfectly intelligible: that we could enjoy a form or unity of consciousness that is merely subjective through and through—that the intelligibility of such a form of subjectivity does not require the real possibility of genuine perceptual knowledge. The concession to Hume might also be put like this: it is perfectly intelligible that the only way in which our representations could be connected to one another is via relations of mere association. If one reads Kant in this way, as making such a concession, then one will most likely take his task to be one of showing how we can go from enjoying mere subjective unity of consciousness to enjoying objective unity of consciousness. On such a reading of Kant, the categories are then taken to be able, as it were, to kick consciousness into a higher gear. The lower gear—the merely subjective gear—is a self-standingly possible first gear. However, in order to become genuine knowers, we must be able to get out of this first gear and into a second gear in which something is added to this merely subjective form of connection of representations in order to confer greater "objectivity" upon them.

Lewis White Beck is a particularly lucid exponent of this way of reading Kant. I will therefore use him to illustrate what it means to turn left at this (fourth) choice-point. Beck distinguishes between two senses of the term "experience" in the *First Critique*:

The opening sentences of the Introductions to both editions use the word 'experience' equivocally. In B we read: There can be no doubt that all our knowledge begins with experience. For [otherwise] how should our faculty of knowledge . . . work up the raw material of sensible impressions into that knowledge of objects which is entitled experience?

In the first sentence, 'experience' means "the raw material of sensible impressions," the manifold of apprehensions or Lockean ideas without the conceptual or interpretative activities of the mind. In the second sentence 'experience' means "knowledge of objects" . . . Let us call these two meanings "Lockean experience" and "Kantian experience," or, for short, L-experience and K-experience.<sup>40</sup>

This leads him then to propose a very particular characterization of the role of the categories in carrying out the overall project of the *Critique of Pure Reason*: the task of the categories is to transform L-experience into K-experience. Or as he puts it: "One way of reading the *Critique of Pure Reason* is to see it as an answer to the question: how do we move from L-experience to K-experience?"<sup>41</sup> Before continuing to explore Beck's reading, it is worth noting that when Kant addresses this topic (of the character of so-called experience if it were to lack the unity of the categories), he suggests that what we would be left with is less than Beck suggests:

The a priori conditions of a possible experience in general are at the same conditions of the possibility of objects of experience. Now I maintain that the categories . . . are nothing but the conditions of thought in a possible experience . . . [A]nd without such unity . . . no thoroughgoing, universal, and therefore necessary, unity of consciousness would be met with in the manifold of perceptions. These perceptions would not then belong to any experience, consequently would be without an object, merely a blind play of representations, less even than a dream. (A112)

What this passage suggests is that we would be much worse off without the categories than a commentator such as Beck imagines. He takes it that without the unity the categories confer we would be left with what Beck calls mere L-experience (rather than full-blooded K-experience). What Kant says is that what we would have would be less than a dream. It would not be any form of experience. The problem that looms here is Kantian in form, not Cartesian.

Beck introduces, somewhat like Allison, two different conceptions of intuition to go with his two different concepts of experience: an inspectional conception and a functional conception. Let us consider Beck on the inspectional conception of intuition:

The *Critique* begins with an inspectional conception of intuition and ends with a functional conception. According to this first conception, an intuition is a passively received inspectable sensory datum giving consciousness of an individual object independently of all categorization. It is given to consciousness ready-made and labeled.<sup>42</sup>

We can begin to see here how taking a left at this fourth choice-point is related to a left turn at each of the preceding three. As with each of the other left turns, this one implicitly commits the commentator to attributing the layer-cake conception to Kant.

Beck says: "The inspectional conception of intuition is presupposed in the 'difficulty' raised in §13." Beck therefore takes himself to have a crucial bit of text

that shows that Kant himself is committed to this way of understanding his own text. We will turn to that bit of putative textual evidence in a moment. Before we do, it will help to get a bit clearer what the stakes are here.

Here is what Beck takes to be crucial about the inspectional conception of intuition: “Given this conception of intuition, it is obvious that there could be intuitions which would not be tractable to categorial rules.”<sup>43</sup> Beck takes §13 to be committed to this claim; this is why he thinks it supports his reading. Let us look at that section:

That objects of sensible intuition must conform to the formal conditions of sensibility . . . is evident, because otherwise they would not be objects for us. But that they must likewise conform to the conditions which the understanding requires for the synthetic unity of thought, is a conclusion the grounds of which are by no means so obvious. Appearances might very well be so constituted that the understanding should not find them to be in accordance with the conditions of its unity. Everything might be in such confusion that, for instance, in the series of appearances nothing presented itself which might yield a rule of synthesis and so answer to the concept of cause and effect. This concept would then be altogether empty, null, and meaningless. But since intuition stands in no need whatsoever of the functions of thought, appearances would none the less present objects to our intuition. (*CPR*, A90–91/B122–23)

The question of the modality of the thought hypothesis here is crucial. A difference between a right turn and a left turn with respect to our fourth choice-point can helpfully be summarized simply in terms of the issue of how one understands the status of this possibility. There are two options here. The first option is to take the possibility under consideration here to be a fully intelligible one. Then Kant’s task is to show that, though things might be as this passage suggests, though the formal conditions of sensibility and the formal conditions of understanding might well be entirely orthogonal to each other in the manner described in this passage (so that in the series of appearances nothing presented itself which might yield a rule of synthesis), nonetheless and most fortunately, that is not how things stand. There is an argument—call it the Transcendental Deduction—which shows that this genuinely intelligible possibility does not in fact obtain.

The structural role of this argument in Kant’s work, on this reading, is thus not unlike that played by Descartes’s argument in the *Third Meditation*. There it seemed possible for there to be a gap between the way things appear to us and the way they are, but a further consideration is brought in to bridge this gap. Thanks to the existence of an omnipotent and benevolent Creator, we can rest assured that the items on either side of this gap are appropriately in accord with one another. Similarly, here, on this reading of Kant, there is a genuine gap between the conditions required for something to figure for us as an item in a series of sensory appearance and the conditions required for it to yield to a rule of synthesis. All that is required for it to meet the first set of conditions is that it be in space and time, whereas what is required for it to meet the second set of conditions is something

entirely different. But it turns out, on this construal of the task of the Deduction, that Kant can deliver an argument that guarantees that the items on one side of his gap are appropriately in accord with those on the other.<sup>44</sup> I will call this reading of §13 the “Phew!” reading of the text. It turns on the idea that it makes sense to suppose that we might have been screwed and left with a mere blooming buzzing confusion of sensory appearances, but Kant succeeds in showing that—Phew!—this turns out not to be the case! To turn right at this choice-point is to reject the “Phew!” reading. It is to read Kant as seeking to show that the possibility that is entertained here in §13 is to be unmasked as a merely apparent possibility.

It is worth noting in passing that the English translation does not do full justice to the hyperbolic subjunctivity of the mood in which this “possibility” is put forward here. The emphatic iteration of internally nested clauses all thrown into the mood of *Konjunktiv II* is the grammatically single most striking feature of the original German passage. Here is Kant’s German:

*Denn es könnten wohl allenfalls Erscheinungen so beschaffen sein, daß der Verstand sie den Bedingungen seiner Einheit gar nicht gemäß **fände**, und alles so in Verwirrung **läge**, daß z.B. in der Reihenfolge der Erscheinungen sich nichts **darböte**, was eine Regel der Synthesis an die Hand **gäbe**, und also dem Begriffe der Ursache und Wirkung **entspräche**, so daß dieser Begriff also ganz leer, nichtig und ohne Bedeutung wäre. Erscheinungen würden nichtsdestoweniger unserer Anschauung Gegenstände darbieten, denn die Anschauung bedarf der Funktionen des Denkens auf keine Weise.*  
[my emphases]

I defy you to find a passage anywhere else in the history of German philosophy that succeeds in piling up quite as many verbs conjugated in the grammatical mood of *Konjunktiv II* in such a short space. A short standard explanation of this grammatical form in a typical German grammar reads roughly as follows: “*Konjunktiv II verwenden wir hauptsächlich, wenn wir uns etwas vorstellen oder wünschen, das nicht möglich ist.*”<sup>45</sup> We have here to do with a grammatical form that can be and often is employed for other purposes (such as stating self-evidently improbable counterfactual possibilities), but which also recommends itself as particularly suitable for the expression of the sorts of “possibilities” in which philosophers are prone to traffic. Kant’s strikingly sustained iteration of this grammatical form can be read as signaling a question about the aspect of possibility of which the passage’s envisioned scenario putatively partakes.

## IX. TRANSCENDENTAL DEDUCTION AND PHILOSOPHICAL FICTION

An ordinary fiction involves an imagined state of affairs that falls within the realm of the possible, while not itself being actual. A fictional scenario in this sense invites us to consider something that happens not to be the case. When we contemplate the scenario put forward in an empirical fiction, we are able to grasp what it would

be for it to obtain: Its possibility may be grasped in thought. So, too, can the negation of what we grasp in getting into view what the fictional scenario invites us to contemplate. Indeed, our ability to grasp the negation of a fictional thought is crucial to our being able to conclude that that which the fictional scenario invites us to contemplate is *fictional*—something that is not the case. Both members of such a pair of thoughts—the thought of the fictional scenario and its negation—are equally thinkable. What makes the scenario fictional—rather than factual—is that, of the two members of this pair, it is the negation of the thought originally put forward that is the one that is the case.

A “philosophical fiction,” as I will employ the term, does not involve a scenario that just, as a matter of empirical fact, *happens* not to be the case. The exercise through which we come to see that it does not obtain is not one of looking to how the world is in order to ascertain whether it is admissible. Rather a quite different kind of exercise of our cognitive capacities is now called for. If we are to engage in (what Kant calls) transcendental philosophy then what is required is a capacity to become reflectively aware of the very capacities that are always already in act in our everyday exercises of our capacities for nonphilosophical thought and action. For Kant, such a philosophical attempt to achieve self-knowledge about the nature of our finite theoretical cognitive capacity calls for reflection on the conditions of the possibility of what can and cannot come into view for us as something that is really possible, thus on what can and cannot be grasped in thought and taken up in judgment, and hence on what does and what does not constitute a genuine exercise of our power for theoretical cognition.

If an *ordinary* fiction is something that falls within the realm of the possible, but not that of the actual, then a “*philosophical* fiction”—as I will employ the expression—involves the attempt to contemplate a scenario that does not even fall within the realm of the really possible. Whereas an empirically fictional scenario invites us to consider something that happens not to be the case, a philosophically fictional scenario invites us to undertake to frame the idea of something that falls outside the space of all of the genuine possibilities that there are. I said earlier that when we contemplate the scenario put forward in an empirical fiction, we are able to grasp what it would be for it to obtain: Its possibility can be grasped in thought. When we engage in the “contemplation” of the “scenario” put forward in a philosophical fiction, we only apparently grasp what it would be for it to obtain: Its real possibility can be only seemingly grasped in thought. To show that a particular scenario *is* a philosophical fiction therefore involves showing that its initially seemingly genuine possibility amounts to nothing more than just that: a *seeming* possibility.

The following is the relation that may be said to obtain between what a transcendental deduction seeks to show and what a philosophical fiction purports to get into view: Of the two members of the pair, only one constitutes a genuine exercise of our capacity for reflection and understanding, whereas the other constitutes a miscarriage of thought—a miscarriage stemming from a pseudo-exercise of that

capacity, one that engenders the impression that we are able to step outside the space of what is thinkable, judgeable, or possible. The pseudo-possibility of which the Transcendental Deduction of the Categories treats is the one that is envisioned in the above quotation from section 13.

What is a “transcendental *deduction*”? Well, what is an ordinary (nonphilosophical, nontranscendental) deduction? The literal meaning of “to deduce” (in Latin) is: “to carry something forth or over to something or somewhere else.” The most familiar meaning of the term in contemporary parlance derives from the employment of the nominalization of the relevant Latin verb to translate a bit of Aristotle’s Greek—the bit of his Greek from which the modern English word “syllogism” derives. A deduction, in this sense, is a logical procedure by means of which one proposition is derived through its formal relationship to others—say, to take the most famous sort of case, through its formal relationship to a pair of premises, one major and one minor.

In its broadest sense, “deduction” in Kant’s day was a general term for some form of methodological derivation or other, most commonly the derivation of a right or entitlement.<sup>46</sup> (The modern English expression “tax deduction” has its etymological roots in this older use of the term.) Within the juridical context, for a party in a legal dispute to provide a deduction of X is for him to show that he has a valid legal claim or right to X. Hence Kant himself observes, in explaining his terminology:

Jurists, when speaking of rights and claims, distinguish in a legal action the question of right (*quid juris*) from the question of fact (*quid facti*); and they demand that both be proved. Proof of the former, which is to state the right or the legal claim, they entitle the *deduction*. (A84/B116)

Thus the employment of the term “deduction,” in the context of a showing that we have a valid claim or right to certain concepts, is based on a metaphorical extension of the manner in which the jurists of Kant’s day employed the term to signify the derivation or vindication of an entitlement to a claim or right. To deduce a nonphilosophical concept in this sense is to vindicate our entitlement to use the concept in (nonphilosophical) ordinary empirical contexts. To deduce such a concept is to show that it is genuinely contentful, that it can figure in objectively valid judgments regarding what is the case. Or to put it the other way around, it is to show that it is not a pseudo-concept—not, for example, a usurpatory concept, as Kant claims the concept of *fate* or that of *fortune* is.<sup>47</sup>

What is at issue in each case in one of Kant’s several philosophical deductions, however, is not the vindication of our entitlement to concepts that might or might not make the grade along such a dimension of failure or success. Hence what is at issue is not this sort of a (nontranscendental) deduction—one that aims only to demonstrate that a particular concept is suited to serve in first-order empirical knowledge. Rather what is at issue is a deduction of a formal concept—that is, a concept arrived at through transcendental reflection. Or, more precisely, if we restrict ourselves just to the *First Critique*: a concept that is framed in order to



articulate some aspect of the formal character of our finite capacity for theoretical cognition. The most famous such formal concepts in Kant's theoretical philosophy are those that articulate the formal conditions of unity that any concept must exhibit in order to be a genuinely schematizable concept of an object suited to serve in objectively valid judgments regarding what is the case. Unlike the first-order material concepts that merely partake of this unity, the formal concepts articulate these conditions of unity themselves. The latter sort of "concept" are thus not suited to figure as predicates in ordinary material judgments of what is the case. For the job of such formal concepts is not to articulate what is the case, but rather to articulate what it *is* to claim or judge that something is the case; they do this by articulating the *form* of any such claim or judgment.

The manner in which a formal concept occurs in relation to first-order cognition is always through the mediation of a material concept: through the form in question being materialized. Thus, for example, the category of substance comes to be in act in empirical cognition only through some material substance concept figuring as the predicate concept of a judgment regarding what is the case. More generally, a form of the understanding informs that of which it is the form only through its being actualized in a judgment in which a nonformal concept partakes of the form in question, bringing it to bear on the logical subject of a judgment. That is to say, the categories are conceptual forms that we make use of in our every act of cognition—hence concepts that we deploy long before we ever bring them, through the assistance of philosophy, to reflective consciousness and name them. According to Kant, the form of genuinely object-involving thought has a twelvefold dimensionality. It is this twelvefold dimensionality of the formal character of all objectively valid judgeable content that Kant seeks to articulate in his table of pure concepts or (as he also calls them) categories of the understanding. A deduction of *such* concepts requires showing that the forms in question constitute the formal intellectual conditions of the possibility of *any* empirical cognition. Thus a deduction of *such* concepts is necessarily a *transcendental* deduction.

We noted before that within a juridical context, for a party in a legal dispute to provide a deduction of X is for him to show that he has a valid legal claim or right to X. Such a showing of entitlement is required if and when someone's claim or right to something has been challenged. If such an attempted showing in a court of law is found by a competent legal authority to have failed to vindicate the party's entitlement to X, then the party in question must relinquish his claim to X—at least if he wishes to avoid legal sanction. Similarly: to deduce a nonphilosophical concept is to vindicate our entitlement to use that concept in ordinary empirical contexts; where, here too, a failure to do so—or worse still a showing to the contrary (say, one that reveals the concept in question to be a usurpatory concept)—will require us, at least if we wish to avoid justified rational rebuke, to set aside our original claim that the concept in question is suitable for cognition. What is at issue in both of these nonphilosophical contexts of deduction are forms of entitlement or claim that *can* be relinquished: Life can go on, even if we have

to give up on the particular resource to which we, in such disputes, seek to claim legitimate possession. I can, if I have to, do without that particular green patch of arable land on which I was going to build a house or without that particular seemingly contentful concept through which I wanted to explain why I always lose at poker. It is less clear what it would be to “give up” on (what Kant calls) *the* forms of the understanding. If these are revealed to be less than we had hoped them to be, then the outcome is one in which the conditions of the possibility of objectively valid judgment amount to nothing more than the illusion of the possibility of such a form of judgment. If an attempt to deduce the forms of our understanding fails then—as Kant himself puts the point—we have given the skeptic what he most desires:

The concept of cause, for instance, which expresses the necessity of an event under a presupposed condition, would be false if it rested only on an arbitrary subjective necessity, implanted in us, of connecting certain empirical representations according to the rule of causal relation. I would not then be able to say that the effect is connected with the cause in the object, that is to say, necessarily, but only that I am so constituted that I cannot think this representation otherwise than as thus connected. **This is exactly what the skeptic most desires. For if this be the situation, all our insight, resting on the supposed objective validity of our judgments, is nothing but sheer illusion.** (B168) [my emphasis]

As with juridical deductions of legal claims and ordinary deductions of empirical concepts, so too philosophical deductions proceed in the context of responding to a challenge to a claim of legitimacy: they seek to vindicate our entitlement to something once that entitlement has been called into question by some sort of skeptic—that is, by someone who casts doubt on the legitimacy of the claim. When the challenge in question is philosophical in form so, too, must be the response.

What is at issue in “the Deduction” that concerns us in this paper are not claims about what is the case, but rather considerations regarding what is necessarily involved in the apprehension of anything’s ever possibly being the case. If a transcendental (i.e., genuinely philosophical) deduction of a formal concept fails then we cannot respond by simply relinquishing the concept in question. There is no such thing as a finite discursive thinker exchanging (what Kant calls) the forms of understanding for some other set of forms. For the job of the set of concepts here at issue is not to articulate what is the case, but rather—as we put it before—to articulate what it *is* to claim that something is the case. And, if it turns out that we are unable to do this, then our problem is not that the claim that we set about to overturn is now to be recognized as true and the one that we sought to vindicate is now to be recognized as false; rather our problem is that our apparent capacity to engage in acts of claiming or judging has been revealed to be a fantasy. The very rational capacity that sought self-knowledge, and thus was an act in the attempt to achieve reflective self-understanding of the form of all rational activity, turns out itself not to be a viable form of capacity at all. If this is so, then neither do the ingredient capacities (such as sensibility and understanding) to which a critique of pure

reason had sought to vindicate its entitlement—let alone the comparatively more recondite species of exercise of those capacities seemly executed in our attempt to frame a philosophical fiction—such as our capacity to wonder whether something apparently true may be false, our capacity to suspend judgment, etc.

To overturn the sort of fiction to which a transcendental deduction responds involves showing that it is the mere fantasy of a possibility. If a transcendental deduction succeeds, then the seeming possibility presented in the challenge to which it responds is revealed to be (what I earlier called) a philosophical fiction. Each of Kant's transcendental deductions comes paired with a philosophical fiction to which it responds. The first step to getting clear about the task of a given deduction requires getting clear about the character of its correlative philosophical fiction—how the latter seemingly allows for the possibility of the ground of the challenge it seemingly presents.

#### X. §20 OF THE B DEDUCTION: HOW THE FIRST HALF ENDS

When we read the conclusion of the first half of the Deduction in the B edition, if we read the text the way Allison and Beck do, the following ought to become an urgent question for us: Why doesn't what Kant says at that point suffice to secure the conclusion of the Deduction as a whole? After all he takes himself to be able to conclude the following at this juncture: "All sensible intuitions are subject to the categories, as conditions under which alone their manifold can come together in one consciousness" (B143). What is missing? If accord with the conditions of the unity of consciousness is a condition on something's being in consciousness, then this already suggests that Kant has secured his entitlement to a fairly strong claim—namely one to this effect: if sensible intuitions are to figure in consciousness then they must be subject to the categories. This is a condition on their being more than simply nothing to us. That might suggest that what has been shown by the end of the first half of the Deduction is something along the following lines: something can be an intuition all right without being subject to the categories, it would just be nothing to us—we wouldn't be conscious of it.

Section 20 here secures a conclusion toward which the first half of the Deduction has been building for some time. But how is that conclusion to be understood? It seems to involve at least a claim to the following effect: if there were such a thing as a sensory state of the subject lacking conformity to the requirements of the original synthetic unity of apperception, it would be nothing to me. Such states of the subject would not be ones in which that which was present to my senses would be cases of something's being present to *me*.<sup>48</sup> But questions can still remain about just how strong this conclusion should be taken to be. Indeed, Kant's immediate reformulation of the point appears to be intended to bring out how very strong he himself takes the claim here at issue to be:

All the manifold, therefore, so far as it is given in a single empirical intuition, is determined in respect of one of the logical functions of judgment, and is thereby brought into one consciousness. (B143)

In the original German, Kant famously capitalizes the indefinite article here (“... *in Einer Anschauung*”), flying in the face of the conventions of German grammar, presumably in order to bring out that the conditions at issue here are conditions both on something’s being *an* intuition and on anything’s partaking of intuitional unity.<sup>49</sup> This looks to say that in order to meet the conditions on something’s *so much as being an intuition* it must be subject to the categories. So it now looks as if the following idea is to be rejected as well: the idea of something’s being subject to the conditions on intuitional unity while not being subject to the conditions on categorial unity. Is that sufficient to rule out a two-stage reading? Not necessarily. A two-stage reader will be able to find wiggle room here. He may conclude that all that is ruled out are certain versions of a two-stage reading: namely those according to which what the first stage yields are full-blooded intuitions. But such a reader can still wonder whether it need rule out a more austere version of a two-stage conception: namely one according to which all that has to figure in the first stage are mere “non-conceptual representations”—a manifold of sheer receptivity that (as Allison puts it) “provides the mind with only the raw data for conceptualization.” This would then suggest a reading of the conclusion of section 20 that would still be amenable to a two-stage construal—and hence to a conclusion along the following lines: something *can* be present to the senses without its being subject to the categories. Admittedly, such a “something” could not be present to me, and we must now concede that such a something will amount to less than an intuition, yet it would still not be a mere nothing, for it can still be an object of the senses.

The “of” here (on this understanding of what it is for something to be “an object of the senses”) must admittedly now be understood to be of a wholly different kind than the “of” of self-conscious representation. For what qualifies something to be an object “of” the senses no longer requires that it be an object for me. It requires merely that it figure in sensibility in some way.<sup>50</sup> Nevertheless, as long as it remains open to our two-stage reader to suppose something along these lines, he can continue to maintain that the conditions for objects to be present to the senses remain self-standingly intelligible and fully independent of the conditions for objects to be thinkable. The former set of conditions are provided for by the Transcendental Aesthetic and the teaching of the first half of the Deduction (about the way in which the original synthetic unity of the understanding is a condition on an object’s being present to me) may be taken merely to show how those sensible conditions require supplementation before we can enjoy a genuinely apperceptive consciousness “of” that which is antecedently and independently given in sense—that is, before we can enjoy the sort of sensory consciousness *of* an object in which the “of” has been converted from the merely sensory “of” into the robust “of” of intentionality.

This suggests that in order to understand what is at stake in the Deduction as a whole, it is not enough simply to attribute to Kant a thesis such as that “all sensible intuitions are subject to the categories,” for everything depends upon a proper understanding of what such a claim really comes to and what its putatively intelligible negation might amount to. (As we have just seen, a two-stage reader is able to offer a reading of Kant on which that string of words states something that he is happy to attribute to Kant.) This is where the first half of the Deduction leaves matters: having shown that categorial unity is a condition on anything’s being something for me, but without yet having definitively ruled out the possibility of a kind of presence to sense—a first stage of mere sensory processing—in which objects may be present to my senses without being present to me. To claim that there is such wiggle room is just another way of claiming that the “possibility” mooted in section 13 is a genuinely intelligible one. It is this “possibility” that the second half must reveal to be a merely seeming possibility for the task of the Deduction to be complete.

## XI. §21 OF THE B DEDUCTION

Section 21 comes in two parts: a commentary on what has been shown in the first half, followed by a meditation on what would count as the Deduction’s having fully completed its task. Kant interrupts the prosecution of the Deduction at the midpoint of the task in order to conduct a halftime show in which he comments on how the game is going. His point at the outset of that commentary is that a certain standard reader of the *First Critique* may think things are going very well here at halftime (indeed, that “the Kantian” is about to win the game against the skeptic), whereas Kant’s own claim will be that the game could actually still go very badly. For what has happened so far is perfectly consistent with the Kantian being trounced by the skeptic—with his leaving matters in such a state that (as he puts it in section 27) he “gives the skeptic what he most desires.”

Section 21 of the B Deduction is titled an “Anmerkung”—an “observation.” Why is this commentary, this “observation,” there at this point in the text? I take this question to be related to our second exegetical puzzle above, pertaining to the relation between the A and B deductions. There is an objection the B Deduction is structured so as to avoid. The objection in question is one that the Deduction in A (already on the standard reading offered of it in Kant’s time) appears to be open. The entire structure of the B Deduction reflects an effort to make perspicuous how a proper understanding of its aim will no longer allow such an objection to appear to be sustainable. I do not take this concerted effort to restructure the Deduction to reflect any sort of retraction of the A Deduction on Kant’s part, but merely an attempt to rewrite it entirely, from beginning to end, with his focus on presenting it in such a manner that it is now to be made clear, once and for all, that if one’s reading of the Deduction continues to leave it looking vulnerable to the objection in question then one has utterly misunderstood its entire point. John McDowell

has discussed this issue at some length in an important article; here is how he puts the objection:

Kant wants to establish that experience has its objective purport in virtue of being informed by the pure concepts of the understanding. The objection is that that ensures only their thinkability and a condition for objects to be thinkable is not thereby a condition for them to be capable of being given to our senses. Indeed (the objection goes on) the Transcendental Aesthetic has already supplied an independent condition for objects to be able to be given to our senses: they must be spatially and temporally ordered. For all Kant can show, objects could satisfy that condition for being present to our senses without conforming to the requirements of the understanding.<sup>51</sup>

Such an understanding of the Deduction—one that takes it to be open to this objection—inevitably encourages an impositionist reading. It looks as if, on this construal of the Deduction, our initial access to objects has nothing to do with the forms of the understanding; rather these are viewed as subsequently imposed on an independently available, purely sensory form of access to objects. The role of the categories, on such a reading, looks to be a “restrictive” one—one of somehow ensuring or allowing that that which we experience be additionally amenable to the conditions of thought (that is, over and above, already being fully and independently amenable to the conditions of sensibility). The B Deduction is rewritten precisely to invite such a reading and then to reject it.

Another way of seeing the point here is to imagine an interlocutor—as we have already seen in the cases of both Henry Allison and Lewis White Beck—who wishes to distinguish sharply between two notions of ‘intuition’ which are putatively in play in the *First Critique*, only now in our imagined scenario our hypothetical interlocutor (unlike Allison or Beck) is perfectly willing to make a terminological concession. (It is important not to confuse such a merely terminological concession with some form of progress on the substantive underlying issues here.) Our hypothetical interlocutor, as we shall now imagine him, is prepared to cede the term ‘intuition’ to the conceptualist, so that its employment is restricted to the second of the two senses of ‘intuition’ previously distinguished. Our imaginary interlocutor is prepared to refer to only the more robust, conceptually informed, sort of singular immediate representation as an “intuition.” Yet it is still open to our interlocutor—our modified Allisonian, if you will—to respond to the first half of the B Deduction as follows:

Yes, I admit that, as a matter of terminology, we can refuse to count a state of a subject as an intuition in the robust sense (that is, as a case of having an object available for cognition) unless the state in question has categorial unity. But we can introduce a terminological distinction at this point and distinguish between “intuitions” in the robust sense and “mere objects of the senses”—mere nonconceptual modes of representing an object. But the original objection still remains in place: the categories have been shown to be valid only for the former and not the latter. If that is the case, then the initial problem posed by section 13 has not been answered, but merely evaded.

It is important to see that the philosophical stakes raised by this form of worry do not substantially differ from those raised by the objection that figures in the McDowell quotation above. Moreover, if Kant is not equipped to respond adequately to this worry, then it looks as if the requirement that intuitions have categorial unity amounts (as Hume had claimed) to nothing more than mere subjective imposition. It looks to be something that the structure of our minds brings to experience in order to turn its deliverances into the sorts of things that can be true or false, but that (due to its thus merely “imposing” such a structure or unity on experience) its claim to genuine objective validity remains dubious at best. For it looks as if the unity here in question comes merely from the mind and has nothing to do with the objects which it enables us to think about. It looks to be, as John McDowell puts it (in the article cited above), something merely “superadded to the requirement for things to be present to our senses and to have nothing to do with the things themselves”—that is, with “the things as given to our senses.”<sup>52</sup>

From Kant’s point of view, if this objection were to go through—if it were true that the unity that the categories prescribe has nothing to do with the form of sensory experience as such—then the claim that Kant is seeking to vindicate through a Transcendental Deduction of the Categories of the Understanding (namely that the pure concepts of the understanding have genuinely objective validity) would not only turn out not to have been vindicated, but, worse still, and utterly contrary to Kant’s most cherished intention, the Deduction would have succeeded in showing precisely the opposite of what it sets out to show. For, if the objection goes through, then the categories are shown not to be valid for that which is given to us in sensory consciousness as such. If that is the case, then all the categories would represent mere conditions on *the thinkability for us* of that which is given to us in such a self-standing form of consciousness.

Kant organizes the way the entire B Deduction is written precisely so as to be able, first, to thematize this objection, and then to address it: to invite it and then to repudiate it. The repudiation in question does not take the form of a direct answer to the objection (for that is to give the skeptic what he most desires), but rather to elucidate why the objection itself is based on a misunderstanding of both what the Deduction seeks to show and how it seeks to show it. The essential move, in rebutting this objection, is to deny the central assumption of the layer-cake conception of human mindedness—an assumption that is crucial to the very intelligibility of the objection in the first place. Or, to reformulate the assumption in question in terms that allow us to see how such a denial figures at the heart of the Deduction, we can put our point as follows: the Deduction is rewritten in such a way as to make it as clear as Kant possibly can that the Transcendental Aesthetic does not present us with a separate and independent condition for objects to be given to our senses.

Let us now look briefly at some of the detail of Section 21 of the B Deduction. This is Kant’s halftime commentary on how the B Deduction is going, delivered from the midway point in its execution. Section 21 is, in the first instance, a comment on the proposition defended in the previous section and on where we stand



once that proposition is secured. Here is the proposition—the *Hauptsatz*—that stands at the heading of §20 of the B Deduction: “All Sensible Intuitions are subject to the Categories, as Conditions under which alone their Manifold can come together in one Consciousness.” In commenting on this proposition, Kant insists that he is by no means finished with the Deduction at this point:

Thus in the above proposition a beginning is made of a deduction of the pure concepts of understanding; and in this deduction, since the categories have their source in the understanding alone, independently of sensibility, I must abstract from the mode in which the manifold for an empirical intuition is given and must direct attention solely to the unity which, in terms of the category, and by means of the understanding, enters into the intuition. (B144)

In a moment we will want to inquire what sort of abstraction was in place in the first half of the Deduction and what it means that Kant now proposes to lift that abstraction. But first let us ask what sort of division (between a “first half” and a “second half”) in the Deduction it is that it is the task of Section 21 to both effect and to reflect upon.

Dieter Henrich has been taken by many to show that a careful reading of the text requires us to accept that what this commentary aims to show us is that the overall form of the B Deduction is one in which we have a single proof, but that it requires two separate steps to carry it out.<sup>53</sup> If the alternative to holding this is to claim that Kant takes himself to have largely completed the Deduction by the time he reaches the conclusion of section 20 and that what he does in the “second half” is to reinforce or reprove the same proposition in some further way or to prove some minor corollary consequent upon it, then I suppose I agree with Henrich. I agree that in this sense of “more” there is more than just that first “step.” But this still leaves the question whether what figures in Henrich’s reading as a “step” is happily viewed as a self-standingly intelligible moment in an argument—one that admits of a full and proper understanding independent of the issues litigated in the second half of the Deduction. The reading I favor is one on which the language of “steps in a proof” (and a privileging of the question of how to count them and how many of them there are) must be deemed misleading. The aim of the second half of the Deduction is in no small part to clarify what it is properly to understand the force of what is claimed at the end of the first half. Kant has placed this issue at the center of our attention by allowing a certain abstraction to be in place in the first half of the Deduction that is now lifted. Until now, in the first half of the B Deduction, we have considered the understanding in relation to a manifold of intuition, abstracting from the particular formedness of that manifold of intuition. Now we lift that abstraction and ask ourselves the question: how does this form of unity—that which belongs to our forms of sensibility—relate to that considered in the first half of the Deduction—that is required for objectively valid judgment?

Once the abstraction is lifted, the form of unity that had previously been treated in the Transcendental Aesthetic is to be reconsidered, now with regard to

the question of its degree of accord or lack thereof with the form of unity that the categories prescribe. In particular, once the abstraction is lifted, we are supposed to come to see the pure intuitions of space and time (treated in the Aesthetic) in a new and proper light. To see them in this light is to reject the crucial assumption underlying all two-stage readings. The second half of the B Deduction aims to show that the formedness of our sensibility, treated in the Aesthetic, cannot be in view fully independently of the form of apperceptive spontaneity, treated in the Analytic—even if the initial treatment of it had not yet revealed that its very possibility was subject to such a further condition.<sup>54</sup> Here is how Kant himself puts what remains to be shown if a deduction of the categories is fully to attain its purpose:

In what follows . . . it will be shown, from the mode in which the empirical intuition is given in sensibility, that its unity is no other than that which the category . . . prescribes to the manifold of a given intuition in general. (B144–45)

This is Kant's most precise statement of what the transcendental deduction of the categories is supposed to show. On the one hand, a proper understanding of this passage requires seeing that it requires us to forego any of the aforementioned left turns at each of the choice-points canvassed above. On the other hand, it also leaves open a construal of it that does not require that we take a hard right at each of these choice-points. The point at issue here is perhaps most easily clarified by considering it in relation to the second choice-point reviewed above—that which involves embracing a two-stage reading or rejecting such a reading. What I will call a *hard right turn* inverts the fundamental claim of the two-stage reading and argues that where the former holds there are two unities—sensible and intellectual—there is only one, that any distinction between these two forms of unity is merely notional. I take it that such a hard right turn would also involve a misreading of the Deduction.

We can distinguish a hard right turn at this choice-point from (what I call) a *soft right turn*. The soft right turn rejects the fundamental premise of any two-stage reading—namely the premise of the self-standingly independent character of the unity of our forms of intuition from those of the understanding—while refraining from simply turning it on its head and thereby insisting on an overly thoroughgoing identity between these two forms of unity. Kant says that the former unity (the unity of the manner in which objects are given to us) “is no other than that which the categories prescribe.” We may encapsulate his moral here by summarizing it via the following catchy slogan: “There is only one unity!” As we shall show in more detail below, this will not be false, but it does threaten a misunderstanding—one that is apt to encourage a hard right turn.

Before we continue to consider what is involved in an overly hard right turn and what is required to take an appropriately soft turn at this choice-point, let us recall for a moment the modified Allisonian response to the first half of the B Deduction. It turned on distinguishing between intuitions in the robust sense and mere objects of the senses and claiming that all the Deduction proves is that

the categories are valid for the former but not for the latter. Now let's look at what else Kant says in section 21 about what it would mean for a Deduction of the Categories to have fully attained its purpose—and not merely to have stopped at a point when it was only halfway completed. Here is Kant's own alternative formulation of what remains to be shown in the second half:

Only thus, by demonstration of the a priori validity of the categories in respect of all objects of our senses, will the purpose of the deduction be fully attained. (B145)

Notice: “all objects of our senses.” Thus Kant offers two formulations of what needs to be shown in the second half of the Deduction: (1) the unity of our mode of intuition is no other than that which the categories prescribe, and (2) the categories are valid for all objects of our senses. Part of what needs to be grasped is how these two ways of formulating what needs to be shown in the second half of the Deduction come to the same thing. A full appreciation of this point is incompatible with a reading of Kant that attributes to him a commitment to the layer-cake conception. If Kant can show that the categories are valid for all objects of our senses then the objection that he seeks to forestall no longer can arise. Hence Kant's insistence on the second way of putting his point here.<sup>55</sup> To show that the categories are valid for “all objects of our senses” is to show that the wiggle room that our two-stage reader imagined still to be available (at the conclusion of section 20) is illusory.<sup>56</sup> If Kant can show this, then he will have averted the risk that figured in the objection—he will have shown that the categories (which at first appeared open to the charge of being mere subjective impositions on the independent form of our senses) turn out to be partially constitutive of the very possibility of sensory consciousness in the first place.

## XII. ONLY ONE UNITY?

The second half of the Deduction wants to show that the unity of empirical intuition “is no other than that which the category prescribes.” It thereby seeks to show that two forms of unity we are apt, when doing philosophy, to construe as fully self-standing and independent of each other cannot be related to each other in the manner we imagine. But what is to deny that the unity of our mode of intuition and the unity of our forms of understanding are “fully self-standing and independent of each other”? Does it mean they are in every respect one and the same? The threat of taking an overly hard right shows up in the overarching slogan with which McDowell at one juncture summarizes the reading which he and I both favor of the B Deduction: “There is only one unity, common to the Aesthetic and the Analytic; not two separate unities.”<sup>57</sup> There is a way of understanding this remark that is compatible with the reading of the Deduction advanced in this paper. But the remark, taken on its own, is apt to strike many a serious student of

Kant's philosophy as self-evidently absurd. Does this mean there is no difference between unity of intuition and unity of concept? Does this mean that the synthesis of a sensible manifold into an intuition and the combination of concepts into a judgment are in every respect two cases of the same form of synthesis or combination? Positive answers to these questions will appear hard to square with the text of the *Critique of Pure Reason*. But even much less extreme ways of unpacking what the Deduction seeks to show here (in seeking to show that the unity of empirical intuition is no other than that which the category prescribes) can threaten misunderstanding.

The key to taking a soft right turn here is to be clear about the level of abstraction with respect to which it can be claimed that there is a single unity—one with which both that treated in the Aesthetic and that treated in the Analytic are in accord. Kant's term for this unity, considered at this level of abstraction, is *the original synthetic unity of the understanding*. This admits of forms of further determination, one sensible and one intellectual. This form of unity—categorical unity—characterizes both the manner in which objects are given to us in intuition and the manner in which concepts are combined in judgments. To say it can be in act in these two different ways is not to claim that the two sorts of synthesis in no way differ from each other. It is merely to claim that there is a level of description of form at which they have something generically in common.<sup>58</sup> I take this to be the point of the following famous passage: “The same function which gives unity to the various representations in a judgment also gives unity to the mere synthesis of various representations in an intuition” (A79/B104–5). This “function” grasped in its most abstract form is the original synthetic unity of apperception. This is Kant's most abstract characterization of the unity of the understanding. It exhibits the structural feature which became so important to Hegel: any determination of it is one in which the unity of the whole remains prior to the unity of the parts.

The formal character of the sort of unity here at issue is that of (what Kant calls) a *totum*, rather than that of a mere *compositum*.<sup>59</sup> The unity of sensibility (perhaps most vividly illustrated in Kant's manner of vindicating the claim that all parts of space are parts of one space) and the unity of knowledge (perhaps most vividly illustrated in Kant's manner of vindicating his claims on behalf of the ideas of reason) both partake of this generic form of unity. Anything that partakes of such unity partakes of the unity of the logical I<sup>60</sup>—the conditions of being jointly possible in a single consciousness, and thus of being necessarily jointly accompanied by the “I think.” A synthesis of concepts in a judgment is one way of making this highest form of unity more determinate in cognition; a synthesis of a manifold into an intuition is another way of making this highest form of unity more determinate in cognition—both presuppose the involvement of the understanding.<sup>61</sup>

A central claim of McDowell's earlier work *Mind and World* was the following: if we want to hold on the idea that our conceptual capacities inform the exercise of our sensory capacities (an idea McDowell tries to show is obligatory if we wish to avoid the two horns of the dilemma outlined in that book), then this requires that

the content of perceptual experience be propositional.<sup>62</sup> Transposed to the frame of the B Deduction, a quick way of summarizing the parallel thought would be as follows: If there is only one unity, and if we already know that the full-blown form of an exercise of our conceptual capacities in judgment is propositional in nature, then the unity of any object-related sensory consciousness which passively draws on these same capacities must be equally propositional in nature. The emphasis on the propositional here reflects a post-linguistic turn way of putting matters. The relevant misreading of Kant which I am concerned to ward off here is the following: since the categories inform the exercise of our sensory as well as our judgmental capacities, this requires that we view both a synthesis of a manifold into intuition and a synthesis of concepts into a judgment as not only involving at some level of abstraction the same form, but as involving at any level of specification a fully and determinately identical form—so that the form of perceptual experience must be in all respects identical to the form of judgment. What this expresses in the context of the interpretative issues surrounding the B Deduction is, in effect, the parallel move to the one that issued in the *Mind and World* doctrine that sensory experience has propositional content: a move that appears to license the conclusion that the form of our sensory consciousness as such for Kant is always already judgmental in character.<sup>63</sup> It is important to see that one can take on board the point which Kant aims to demonstrate in the second half of the B Deduction (that the unity of the manner in which objects are given to us is no other than that which the categories prescribe) without needing to efface in this way the differences in the manner in which the categories are involved in sensible and intellectual synthesis respectively.<sup>64</sup>

The claim to which the second half of the Deduction needs to entitle itself is not so ambitious as the following: there are no differences in the determinate character of that which gives unity to the various representations in a judgment and that which gives unity to the mere synthesis of various representations in an intuition. This would be overkill. In particular, it would make nonsense of the central arguments of the Transcendental Aesthetic, such as Kant's argument for the apriority of space. For that argument turns on the claim that there is a fundamental difference between sensible and discursive representation—between representing something *in* space and representing something *under* the concept of space. When we intuit objects as standing in spatial relations to one another, we presuppose a representation of the space (and the correlative form of spatial synthesis—say, *being outside of one another*) these objects are *in*.<sup>65</sup> When we represent a manifold of concepts, a predicate concept *under* a subject concept in a judgment, we presuppose a representation of the category (and the correlative form of categorial synthesis—say, *being a property of that substance*) that the predicative unity of the judgment presupposes. These are determinately different forms of “giving unity to a synthesis of representations” for Kant. To represent the former sort of intuitional unity of manifold is not to presuppose the representation of a comparatively determinable genus concept under which some comparably determinate species must

fall. Conversely, to represent the latter sort of judgmental unity is not to intuit objects as occupying places or regions in space. The claim regarding that which is generically common to the unity of sensibility and understanding—the claim to which the second half of the Deduction needs to entitle itself—must not be so excessive as to require the effacement of what is specifically different for Kant in the unity of sensible representation, on the one hand, and the unity of conceptual representation, on the other. What the second half of the Deduction needs to show is nothing stronger than this: that there is a higher and more determinable form of unity with which each of these two more determinate forms of unity accord. No more, but also no less, than this needs to be shown if the Deduction is to unmask the possibility mooted in section 13 as a philosophical fiction—as a merely apparent possibility. The task is to show that the conditions of the possibility of something's being present to our senses, on the one hand, and the conditions of the possibility of something's being thinkable, on the other, cannot be merely disjoint. These two sets of conditions of possibility presuppose the overarching unity, as well as the actuality of the activity of the spontaneous intellect.<sup>66</sup>

The central claim to which the second half of the Deduction must vindicate its entitlement must therefore neither be so weak as to permit the relation of sensibility and understanding to come apart from each other in the manner envisioned in the “possibility” entertained in section 13, nor to be so strong as to preclude the articulation of the unity of our cognitive faculty into its ingredient sub-faculties. The layer-cake conception conceives the unity of our cognitive power as a mere *compositum* of sensibility and understanding. Worse still, from Kant's point of view, it does so by conceiving the *matter* and the *form* of this power as comprising a mere composite. The Transcendental Aesthetic on this reading elucidates the self-standing form of one element of this composite, while the Transcendental Analytic elucidates that of the other. It has been the purpose of this paper to argue that (contrary to what a left turn at any of our four choice-points commits us to in reading the *First Critique*) the Deduction aims to show that the kind of condition on knowledge that the Transcendental Aesthetic articulates is reflectively *abstractable*, but not ontologically *extractable*—it is an internal formal aspect of a single unified capacity for cognition.

For Kant, as for Aristotle, form and matter are internally related and only notionally separable through a reflective exercise of abstraction: that which we thus reflectively abstract can never be ontologically extracted from the nexus of unity in which it has its life. The “form” of which we here speak is therefore not a kind of *ens* that can be actual apart from the matter it informs. The form of knowledge is latent and operative in all material knowledge. Its activity manifests itself in one way in the spatiotemporal form that all sensory consciousness of objects exhibits, in another way in the predicative form that every categorical judgment displays, and in yet other ways in other forms of exercise of our cognitive capacity. Our *Erkenntnisvermoegen* is a unified capacity that is thus *in ενεργεια* in each and every exercise of its ingredient capacities of perception, imagination, understanding, judgment, and reason. It is the task of transcendental philosophy

to bring this latent form of the human cognitive power in all its dimensions to full reflective consciousness. It is one small aspect of this much larger task that the Deduction seeks to discharge.<sup>67</sup>

### XIII. CONCLUSION

In the central early modern controversy, the empiricist and the rationalist disagree as to which of two cognitive faculties—sensibility and understanding—should be given logical priority in an account of the epistemic credentials of knowledge. As against both the empiricist and the rationalist, Kant wants to argue that the terms of their debate rest on a shared common assumption: that the capacities here in question—qua cognitive capacities—are self-standingly intelligible. In the foregoing discussion I have focused on Kant's argument against the empiricist. A full account of his argument strategy, however, requires that one come to see how a reciprocal moral is to be drawn from his critique of the rationalist. The aim of the Deduction is one of making sense of each capacity (sensibility and understanding) in the light of the other. For the front of the argument that is directed against the empiricist, this means coming to see how the standard assumption of the two-stage reading (that takes the Transcendental Aesthetic to already furnish us with the full story about the nature of our faculty for sensory apprehension) is mistaken. For the front of the argument which is directed against the rationalist, this requires coming to see how a mere *inversion* of the central claim of such a reading would be equally wrong. It would require seeing how a discursive faculty of understanding able to traffic in nothing more than empty concepts would no more amount to a genuinely cognitive power than would a faculty of intuition able to traffic in nothing more than blind intuitions. That is, it requires seeing how each of these faculties depends on its relation to the other to be the sort of faculty that it is in a finite rational being.

### ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Beyond the fundamental debt to Haugeland and McDowell adduced in note 6 below, this paper is indebted to conversations with Mathew Boyle, Jason Bridges, Steve Engstrom, Johannes Haag, Matthias Haase, Andrea Kern, Irad Kimhi, Thomas Land, Jim O'Shea, Robert Pippin, Sebastian Rödl, Daniel Smyth, Barry Stroud, and David Wellbery.

### NOTES

1. A much shorter version of this paper, less focused on illustrating this point than the present version, appeared as "Kant's Critique of the Layer-Cake Conception of Human Mindedness in the B



Deduction" (in James R. O'Shea, ed., *Kant's Critique of Pure Reason: A Critical Guide* [Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2016]).

2. The topic of why this is no accident must be deferred to another occasion.
3. For reasons that will become clear below, I intentionally leave it vague at this point as to what aspect of our sensibility qua faculty of cognition is supposed to be independent of the understanding. In what follows, I will be concerned to argue against various versions of such a thesis. The version that will matter most below is the following: the formal character of our sensibility as spatiotemporal is independent of its relation to the understanding. This, however, is only one of many ways of attributing to Kant an overly dualistic conception of the relation of sensibility to understanding.
4. Here, too, there are a variety of ways of construing the distinction (in this case between the *a priori* and the *a posteriori*) in overly dualistic terms. The one that will matter most below is the (remarkably widely held view) that Kant's concern in the *First Critique* is not with the vindication of the possibility of empirical knowledge, but only with that of a priori knowledge—as if the possibility of one were independent of the other. If a priori knowledge is of nothing less nor more than the form of empirical knowledge and if (3) is to be recognized as nonsense, then this too must be nonsense. The way of (mis)reading the *First Critique* that presupposes the truth of (2) often goes hand in hand with a massive underestimation of how great the turn is from Kant's pre-critical to his critical philosophy.
5. Controversies as to whether the distinction between form and matter is properly to be construed in dualistic or anti-dualistic terms are, of course, not unique to interpretations of Kant's manner of deploying it. The very different philosophical and exegetical issues of which it treats notwithstanding, Christopher Frey's "Organic Unity and the Matter of Man" (*Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 32 [Summer 2007]: 167–204) is a paper every scholar of Kant ought to be made to study. It makes the case against a dualistic construal of Aristotle's original deployment of the distinction in a manner that helpfully (if unintentionally) almost perfectly mirrors some of the formal difficulties that arise in connection with the distinction in its Kantian setting.
6. Starting with this page, the interpretation of Kant presented in the following pages is the product of a collaborative effort. It was my privilege to read through the *First Critique* and discuss it in detail, line by line, over a period of six years, from 1993 to 1999, with John Haugeland and John McDowell, who were at the time my colleagues in the Philosophy Department at the University of Pittsburgh. A description of the *modus operandi* of our collaboration may be found in McDowell's paper "Notes on the B Deduction" forthcoming in Z. Adams and J. Browning, *Giving a Damn: Essays in Dialogue with John Haugeland* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2016.). John Haugeland is sadly no longer with us and I am thus no longer able to discuss these topics with him. I have, however, on any number of occasions continued to discuss both the exegetical details and philosophical implications of this reading of Kant with John McDowell and am probably no less indebted to these further conversations than to the original three-way cooperation. Though the reading of Kant's *First Critique* presented in these pages is in this way born of a collaborative effort, some of the wrinkles in formulation introduced here are due to me. If I could, I would clearly mark off what is the subsequent result of my own attempt to formulate the reading in question from what was fully and genuinely ingredient already in our original joint understanding of Kant. However, I am very far from being in a position to do this. Apologies to both Haugeland and McDowell for the many blemishes I have no doubt introduced through my attempt to make things clearer!
7. On what is involved in moving through the *Stufenleiter* of forms of cognition, see Sebastian Rödl, "Hegelian Dialectics and Aristotle's *Stufenleiter* of Souls" (forthcoming). To say that the sort of animal here under consideration is transformed through and through—as we move from considering the form of nonrational to considering that of rational cognition—is not to claim that the individual human being, over the course of her upbringing, is herself transformed from being the one sort of animal into being the other. The sort of "transformation" the individual undergoes, as the capacity for rational cognition in her gradually awakens and matures through its exercise by her, is not a topic taken up at any point in this paper. For a criticism of the philosophical tendency to confuse the first sort of "transformation" (from considering the formal nature of one sort of life-form to considering that of another) with the second sort of "transformation" (from the first nature to the second nature of a given life-form), see Michael Thompson, "Forms of Nature: 'First,' 'Second,' 'Living,' 'Rational,' and 'Phronetic,'" in G. Hindrichs and A. Honneth (eds.), *Freiheit: Stuttgarter Hegel-Kongress 2011* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 2013).

8. Disjunctivism in the philosophy of perception is a view about the relation between various exercises of our capacity for perception—in particular, about whether the successful and unsuccessful exercises of such a capacity can be so conceived that one may arrive at an adequate conception of the former by simply adding something to a conception of the latter as a self-standingly possible form of sensory deliverance—that is, by simply adding something to a so-called mere appearance. More specifically, disjunctivism is often taken to be the view that the concept of a mere appearance is to be conceived as a privative (and hence not as a logically basic) case of perceptual experience. This would mean that the unsuccessful exercise of our perceptual capacity as a faculty of knowledge presupposes the prior intelligibility of the possibility of its successful *exercise*. The sort of disjunctivism at issue in this paper involves a parallel claim, only now at the level of *capacities*. It is a claim about whether our sensory cognitive capacity can be so conceived that one may arrive at an adequate conception of perception as a faculty of knowledge by factorizing it into the operation of two independent capacities, so that something “intellectual” is subsequently added to a supposedly self-standing mere capacity for “sensory awareness” of an object.
9. Descartes, *VIth Meditation*, paragraph 10; AT VII 78; Cottingham, Stoot, and Murdoch (eds.), *Descartes' Philosophical Writings, Volume 2* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 54.
10. John McDowell puts this point well: “If we share perception with mere animals, then of course we have something in common with them. Now there is a temptation to think it must be possible to isolate what we have in common with them by stripping off what is special about us, so as to arrive at a residue that we can recognize as what figures in the perceptual lives of mere animals . . . But it is not compulsory to attempt to accommodate the combination of something in common and a striking difference in this factorizing way: to suppose our perceptual lives include a core that we can recognize in the perceptual life of a mere animal, and an extra ingredient in addition . . . Instead we can say that we have what mere animals have, perceptual sensitivity to features of our environment, but we have it in a special form” (John McDowell, *Mind and World* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994], 64).
11. Nothing of philosophical substance turns here on the degree to which we are inclined to use the same term or a different term for what is specifically different but generically the same. Yet is remarkable how often it is assumed in philosophy that where we find a common term for a capacity found in two very different life-forms there we have a form of commonality that must be analyzed as a highest common factor.
12. One has failed to appreciate the point here in question if one takes it to hold only of the upper limbs of the eagle and the human respectively, but not of their lower limbs—the ones for which we employ the generic term “legs.” These, too, must formally differ in no less profound ways in creatures whose preferred modes of self-transportation are to fly and to walk.
13. This way of putting the matter is intended to signal a respect in which Kant’s critical philosophy anticipates a central theme of Wittgenstein’s later thought.
14. The philosophical implications of this conception for a variety of contemporary debates have been powerfully brought out in a pair of papers by Matthew Boyle, to which the present paper is indebted in various ways. The first of these, “Tack-On Theories of Rationality,” is forthcoming in the *European Journal of Philosophy*. The second, “Essentially Rational Animals,” is to be found in G. Abel and J. Conant, *Rethinking Epistemology, Vol. II* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012).
15. One can criticize only that which one is able to recognize as a genuine possibility for thought. The layer-cake assumption often figures in modern philosophy as the only serious option for thought in this area—and thus not as a “position” or “thesis,” but rather as a philosophical requirement laid down on how one “must” think about the topic if one wishes to think seriously about it at all.
16. The ensuing discussion is indebted here at a number of subsequent points to the treatment of these issues in Sebastian Rödl’s *The Categories of the Temporal* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012); see especially 39–43.
17. See my paper “Two Varieties of Skepticism,” in Abel and Conant, *Rethinking Epistemology, Vol. II*.
18. It would go beyond the scope of the present paper to engage in a fuller discussion of why it is so helpful clearly to bear in mind the differences between these two problematics—a problematic of a Cartesian form and one of a Kantian form—if one wishes to avoid falling into common misreadings of Kant’s theoretical philosophy. It has ramifications for the interpretation of a great many different parts of the *First Critique*. In what follows, I will restrict myself exclusively to

commenting on the Deduction and will, for example, not say anything about the later portions of the Transcendental Analytic. But it is worth mentioning in passing here that Rödl's book, cited in note 16, brings out beautifully how Kant's Analogies of Experience are precisely concerned not to answer questions of a Cartesian form, as most contemporary commentaries on the Analogies suppose, but rather to reject them. The particular premises that Kant is rejecting with respect to the Analogies are, admittedly, Humean premises (that is, ones first fully made explicit by Hume), and this fact may occasion terminological misunderstanding. I am using the term "Cartesian" here in a very broad sense. The premises which figure as the central targets of the Analogies count, according to my classification, as "Cartesian"—in the extended sense of "Cartesian" which I employ in the paper cited above—in as much as they license a structurally homologous form of doubt to the one which structures the problematic of Descartes's *First Meditation*. So, in this extended sense of the term, the following (Humean) form of problem qualifies as Cartesian: given that all that I am presented with in experiencing an object are distinct momentary appearances of it, how can I ever know that this cluster of impressions are all of a single substance—i.e. are all "really" *appearances of something unified*? And the following qualifies as equally Cartesian: given that all that I am presented with in experience are distinct existences which succeed one another in time, how can I ever know that any such successive pairs stand in a relation to each other of cause and effect—i.e., that an earlier such appearance "really" is *the cause* of the later? Both of these problematics take their point of departure from the assumption that the categorial form in question (substance or causality) is something that cannot itself be perceived and must therefore be inferred from some barer form of manifold of receptivity. Moreover, both problematics help themselves to the idea that this barer form of manifold nonetheless involves a play of representations which displays various temporal features—such as temporal succession—even if these episodes of sensory consciousness themselves happen to be ones which are not (yet) informed in any way by the categories. Kant is out to reject these premises—not to show (as a Humean formulation invites us to) how we solve the problem while retaining them. Thus Kant is out to show that we cannot even make sense of the idea of a mode of sensory consciousness informed by such forms of temporality in the absence of categorial unity. His problems here, as elsewhere, therefore, may be said to turn on the recognition that we must reject a Cartesian formulation of the philosophical difficulty. The misreading of the Analogies here at issue is one that takes everything to turn on an answer to the question how we can know in any given case that there is relation of attribute and substance that obtains, or one of cause and effect that obtains, among the individual items we perceive. Such a Cartesian formulation of the difficulty must be exchanged for a Kantian one (one turning on how it is so much as possible to enjoy experiences whose form is such as to admit the intelligibility of such questions in the first place).

19. See the pages from Rödl's book cited above for a very clear statement of the shape of the issue here, as it arises for Kant.
20. The reasons for sticking for the moment to this rather tortured way of putting the point will be taken up below.
21. I discuss this picture in more detail in my article "The Search for Logically Alien Thought" (*The Philosophy of Hilary Putnam, Philosophical Topics* 20, no. 1, 115–80).
22. I discuss what is involved in such an understanding of "Kantianism" in further detail in my paper "The Dialectic of Perspectivism, I" (*SATS*, Autumn 2005 issue).
22. In my paper "The Dialectic of Perspectivism, I" (*SATS*, Autumn, 2005), under the topic of (what I there call) "pseudo-Kantianism," I discuss in further detail just what is involved in such an understanding of (what I in this paper call) "Kantianism" and why it is philosophically catastrophic.
23. No political overtones are intended in my description of the turn that I oppose with respect to each of these choice-points as a "left" turn and the one I condone as a "right" one.
24. Paul Guyer, *Kant and the Claims of Knowledge* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 60–61, 153–4. Guyer views the conception of the conditions of the possibility of experience as *restrictions* as an alternative to the conception of the conditions of the possibility of experience as *impositions* on sense experience from without. The question that guides his account of Kant is to what extent Kant opted for one of these conceptions over the other. As will become clear below, my own view is: (1) if these were the only plausible options for reading Kant, then Kant would be a grossly overrated philosopher; (2) these are not genuine options anyway, for the conception of these conditions as restrictions, if strictly thought through, entails the conception

- of them as impositions; and (3) to read Kant as subscribing to either of these conceptions is to mistake the target of the Transcendental Deduction for its doctrine.
25. John McDowell, "Hegel's Idealism as Radicalization of Kant" [henceforth HIRK], in *Having the World in View: Essays on Kant, Hegel, and Sellars* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), 69–89; see 74.
  26. Robert Pippin, *The Persistence of Subjectivity* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 16.
  27. There is an entire tradition of Kant interpretation which turns on the assumption that the aim of the Transcendental Deduction is to move *from* some broadly psychological "facts" about the nature of our mindedness (how we "must" think) *to* a claim about the nature of reality (and how it "must" be). Barry Stroud has argued that any such strategy plays into the skeptic's hands—that this seeming candidate for how to answer the skeptic is nothing more than a disguised form of skepticism. (See the articles on Kant collected in Stroud's collection of essays *Understanding Human Knowledge* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000].) He has dubbed any form of argument that allows us to move in this way (from the one set of facts about us and how we must think to the other set of facts about the world and how it must be) a "transcendental argument." Since he also takes the deployment of such a form of argument to be Kant's own strategy for answering the skeptic and arriving at his own alternative "Kantian" position with regard to the nature of human knowledge, Stroud is also perfectly happy to talk of this strategy for answering the skeptic as issuing in "transcendental idealism." The term "idealism" for Stroud more generally names any philosophical position that results from an attempt of this general form to answer the skeptic's guiding question. Another way to put a central point of this paper would therefore be to say the following: The Transcendental Deduction does not rest on a transcendental argument, but rather seeks to show the hopelessness of any such form of argument strategy. Indeed, Kant's aim in the Deduction is precisely to show that Stroud is right about (what Stroud calls) "idealism" and therefore one of this paper's aims must be to show that Kant is not an "idealist" (in Stroud's—but certainly not only Stroud's—sense of the term). This, of course, leaves us with the philosophical task of recovering what the term "Idealism" does mean for Kant and in German Idealism. It also leaves open the question whether Stroud himself is (according to such an understanding of the term) himself an idealist, as well as the related question whether the form of reflection in which Stroud engages in his critique of "Kantianism" ought to count by Kant's own lights as Kantian—as an exercise of our capacity for (dare we say?) transcendental reflection or investigation. In this connection, see Stroud's essay "Seeing What is So," in Johannes Roessler, Hemdat Lerman, and Naomi Eilan (eds.), *Perception, Causation and Objectivity* (Oxford: Oxford University press, 2011). See especially where he writes the following about a form of philosophical investigation that he himself proposes:
 

"[I]t is the kind of (dare I say 'transcendental?') investigation that could take us to the bottom of, and so put behind us once and for all, the appeal of the traditional restriction of perceptual knowledge to something always less than the world around us. This is where real work is needed: on the conditions of possessing and understanding the concepts needed even to be presented with the traditional epistemological problem," (p. 97).
  28. Thomas Nagel, *The View from Nowhere* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1986).
  29. It also renders it utterly mysterious how such empirical and speculative claims can play such a substantial role in the exercise of a philosophical method that seeks to eschew both sorts of claims in favor of a form of reflection that proceeds in a resolutely transcendental and nondogmatic manner at every stage.
  30. This is the main lesson of chapter 1 of Lewis's *Mind and the World Order* (New York: Dover, 1929; reprinted 1956).
  31. These are the main lessons of chapters 2 and 3 of *Mind and the World Order*.
  32. The ensuing discussion of Lewis is heavily indebted to McDowell's paper "Putnam on Natural Realism," in R. E. Auxier, D. R. Anderson, and L. E. Hahn (eds.), *The Philosophy of Hilary Putnam* (Chicago: Open Court, 2015), 643–58.
  33. Lewis, *Mind and the World Order*, 38–39.
  34. Lewis, *Mind and the World Order*, 37.

35. It is to Lewis's credit that he sees how difficult it is to tell such a story. He sees, in particular, that he needs to find a way to allow that the data given to the mind be more than bare and brute. They must be able to "guide" belief. He thus needs to be able to conceive the postulated given element in experience in such a way that it be able to direct and underwrite our conceptual activity. So he here finds himself in a bind: the given must be able to "guide" experience without in any way "limiting" it. The given must constrain conceptual activity, while exercising its constraining influence from wholly outside the sphere of conceptual activity. The bind that Lewis finds himself in is that these two requirements on the given are not co-satisfiable. He must locate the given far enough "outside" the sphere of the conceptual to allow it to serve its function as "external constraint" (keeping our cognitive wheels from spinning in a frictionless vacuum), while placing it close enough to the edge of that sphere so as to permit it to serve its "guiding" function (warranting the application of some of our concepts, while refusing that of others). Lewis is thus faced with the following challenge: How is the given able to offer guidance to our concepts while remaining itself always conceptually unarticulated in nature? Lewis heroically strives to tell a story which allows him to walk this tightrope—a story according to which the given can serve its warranting function in spite of its being that which by its very nature cannot be captured by concepts. It is to this end that he attempts to draw the distinction between being an instance of a quale and being an instance of a concept. Lewis wants to be entitled to see the former sorts of instances as possessing many of the logical features that instances of the latter sort possess without themselves being instances of the latter sort. This requires that he be able to make sense of the idea that one can recognize (in some sense of "recognize") colligations of sense qualities as being the same without the mediation of concepts. In order to cash out this idea of a nonconceptual mode of recognition, he must draw on the implication of universality in the term "qualities" while conceiving the sort of universality here at issue as utterly distinct from the universality of concepts (on pain of having the supposedly "external" constraint collapse into the sphere of conceptual activity). Qualia represent, on this story, a distinct dimension of form in an account of experience from any contributed by the form of our understanding—each dimension of form must possess its own distinctive sort of universality. This is what makes the account in question still a variant of a two-stage story.
36. Henry Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism*, 1st ed. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1987), 67.
37. Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism*, 1st ed., 67–68.
38. It is a mark of how much more acute a two-stage reader of the *First Critique* Sellars is, in comparison to most others, that he at least *notices* that his interpretation raises a version of such a problem. Sellars thinks it is clear (as do I, for that matter) that what Kant discusses under the heading of the forms of sensibility—space and time—involves conceptualized manifolds of sensibility (what Sellars follows Kant in calling "intuitions"). Since Sellars thinks that we need to opt for (his own admittedly very idiosyncratic version of) a two-stage reading, this leaves Kant, in Sellars's view, having neglected anywhere adequately to discuss "forms of sensibility" properly so-called (understood as forms of manifolds of sheer receptivity). See chapter 1 of *Science and Metaphysics: Variations on Kantian Themes* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1968). The complaint in question can be found on p. 30: "[T]he characteristics of the representations of receptivity as such, which is what should be *properly* meant by the forms of sensibility are never adequately discussed, and the so-called forms of sensibility become ever more clearly, as the argument of the *Critique* proceeds, forms of conceptual representations." I concur with McDowell's comment on this: "Never adequately discussed" seems an understatement" (*Having the World in View*, 29).
39. Indeed, the standard English translation of a word such as *Anschaung*—often justified by Kant's later employment of the scholastic term *intuitus*—makes it impossible not to view the term that occurs on the first page of the Transcendental Aesthetic as something that stands in need of definition. This raises three sorts of questions: (1) about when and why Kant employs ordinary German words for the central concepts about which he seeks a reflective understanding; (2) when and in what manner Kant allows himself to gloss those terms using traditional Latin and Greek philosophical terms of art; and (3) about what happens when, in translating Kant into another language, one translates what in the original text are ordinary German words (intelligible to the healthy common human understanding)—in particular when the words in question stand for the central target concepts to be elucidated by the activity of critique—through a set of terms that only a philosophical expert can be expected to understand.

40. Lewis White Beck, "Did the Sage of Königsberg Have No Dreams?," in *Essays on Kant and Hume* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1978), 38–61; see 40–41.
41. Beck, "Did the Sage of Königsberg Have No Dreams?," 41.
42. Beck, "Did the Sage of Königsberg Have No Dreams?," 41.
43. Beck, "Did the Sage of Königsberg Have No Dreams?," 41.
44. The pairs of sides of these two gaps differ. The Cartesian seeks to bridge a gap between how things appear to me and how things are. The Kantian is here understood to be seeking to bridge a gap between what is merely present to sense and what can be present to sense in such a way that I am able to take it up in thought. To reach the far side of such a Kantian gap is to arrive at the near side of the Cartesian gap—to arrive at the possibility of something's being present to me as a thinkable appearance. (This will become clear below when we discuss the conclusion of section 20 of the B Deduction.) This profound difference can obscure from view the parallel between these bridge-building strategies. For such a "Kantian" preserves the most fundamental feature of Cartesianism: namely the desire to vindicate the integrity of his cognitive faculty by seeking a perspective on it from the outside. Descartes seeks such an assurance by looking to God—a being who is in a position to compare how things appear to me with how things are and to guarantee their occasional accord. Section 13's way of seeking such assurance requires the possibility of a perspective from which it can be ascertained that a relation of accord obtains between that which is merely given in sense and how things appear to me when I take that which is given in sense up in thought. And to do this without help from God! No wonder the specter of (what I called above) Kantian skepticism looms.
45. "We employ the *Conjunctive II* form primarily when we want to imagine or wish for that which is not possible." (I have taken this fairly randomly selected explanation of Konjunktiv II from the website *Lingolia*.)
46. Dieter Henrich has persuasively shown that a fixation on a narrowly logical construal of the sense of the term "deduction" has obscured from view not only the broader significance that this term had in Kant's own day, but more importantly the specific sense in which Kant himself sought to employ it. See his "Kant's Notion of a Deduction and the Methodological Background of the First Critique," in *Kant's Transcendental Deductions*, ed. Eckart Förster (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1989).
47. These are examples of seemingly empirical pseudo-concepts that are by their very nature unfitted to serve in empirical cognition, for "one can adduce no ground for an entitlement to their use" (A84–85/B116–17).
48. As McDowell helpfully puts in "Notes on the B Deduction": "They wouldn't be cases of *my* being sensibly conscious of objects."
49. Since we have no English word that both signifies unity and can be used to express the indefinite article, Kemp Smith seeks to capture the double sense of the capitalized "*Einer*" here through the immediate successive use of two English words: "a" and "single," in effect translating it twice over.
50. In "Notes on the B Deduction," McDowell formulates what it is still open at this juncture for the two-stage reader to suppose as follows: "[W]hat provides for the 'of' in the idea of sensory consciousness of an object . . . is just the fact that the consciousness we're considering is *sensory*, a case of an object being present to the senses; there's no need to invoke conformity to the condition of synthetic unity that's required for thought."
51. McDowell, HIRK, 73.
52. McDowell, HIRK, 73.
53. Dieter Henrich, "The Proof-Structure of Kant's Transcendental Deduction," in *Kant on Pure Reason*, ed. Ralph C. S. Walker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 66–81.
54. More specifically, Kant's argument strategy in the second half of the B Deduction goes through the formal intuitions. The relation between the categories and the formal intuitions is clarified, and in light of the relation between any objects of our senses to the formal intuitions, the validity of the categories for all objects of our senses is demonstrated. So the crucial step involves showing that the unity constituted by conformity to the requirements of our form of sensibility, which is the unity of the pure formal intuitions of space and time, is not an utterly separate form of unity



- of manifold—one that could be in place altogether independently of the sort of unity of manifold that consists in our perceptual experience's being informed by the categories.
55. The aim of the second half of the Deduction is expressed slightly differently in section 26, when Kant looks back on what he has accomplished. There he says that what needs to be shown is that he is entitled to the claim that the categories apply to “whatever objects may present themselves to our senses” (B159).
  56. One measure of how difficult Kant commentators have found it to come to terms with the extent to which Kant here is explicitly targeting the central commitments of (what I have called above) “Kantianism”—and hence one measure of how deeply the layer-cake conception has framed most readings of the *First Critique*—can be seen in the responses to the passages in which Kant expresses most clearly what the upshot of the Deduction is supposed to be. One could, for example, compile a long list of quotations from commentators responding in a horrified manner to the (so-called) “notorious” footnote at B160n. These range from attempts to find a way to read the footnote so that it turns out not to be saying what it certainly seems to be saying to attempts to concede what it is saying, but then to minimize the consequences of the concession—to read it as meaning that Kant is now suddenly “taking back” what he said before, retracting his prior commitment to “a strict separation” between sensibility and understanding. What the footnote makes clear, however, is that Kant takes himself to have shown that categorial synthesis is a condition of the possibility of the sort of unity of which the Transcendental Aesthetic treats: “In the Aesthetic, I have treated this unity as belonging merely to sensibility . . . although as a matter of fact it presupposes a synthesis which does not belong to the senses . . .” (B160n).
  57. McDowell, HIRK, 74n. Indeed, Haugeland, McDowell, and I used to view this as an adequate way to summarize our understanding of the main point of the Deduction. So much so that, as McDowell reports in “Notes on the B Deduction,” Haugeland went so far as, partly in jest, to print up lapel pins that displayed the slogan “There is only one unity” for each of us to wear!
  58. For further discussion of this point, see Thomas Land's article “Kant's Theory of Synthesis” in *Analytic Kantianism*, *Philosophical Topics* 34.
  59. A totum is a genuine unity: one in which the unity of the whole has logical priority over the unity of the parts, so that the very being of such “parts” is possible only in and through such a whole. A compositum is a mere composite—a whole in which the unity of the parts is prior to the unity of the whole, so that the being of the parts does not depend on their contribution to the whole. Kant's most famous deployment of this distinction occurs at A438/B466 in the statement of the thesis of the Second Antinomy (“Space should properly be called not *compositum* but *totum*, since its parts are possible only in the whole, not the whole through its parts.”); but it recurs in many different contexts throughout his corpus from the pre-critical writings to the *Reflexionen*.
  60. For such unity cannot be merely given; it presupposes synthesis.
  61. In *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), Heidegger notices that the B Deduction insists that the highest point of unity, common to sensibility and the intellect, should be identified with the understanding. He reads this as a retraction of the teaching of the A Deduction, where he takes the transcendental synthesis of imagination to have been accorded the status of the common root of sensibility and understanding. Heidegger sees the retraction as evident in Kant's remarks in the B Deduction that make explicit that the transcendental synthesis of imagination is itself a guise of the understanding. There is no retraction here. What occasions this impression is Heidegger's failure to distinguish sufficiently sharply between *understanding* and *judgment*. He tends to oppose both equally to sensibility and to see all three as standing at the same level. Thus in his search for a higher common root, he needs to search elsewhere and looks to the imagination, mistaking this for something that stands above the understanding. This overly intellectualist construal of the understanding leads Heidegger to the misimpression that everywhere that Kant in the B Deduction thinks the spontaneity of understanding—the synthetic activity of the self-conscious cognitive subject—is at work, there too judging must be going on. Heidegger sees this as a relapse on Kant's part in the B Deduction into a form of intellectualism that he had effectively criticized in the A Deduction. One aim of the reading offered here is to make it clear why there is no such relapse.
  62. This is how McDowell later summarizes what he takes to have been a fateful assumption in *Mind and World*: “I used to assume that to conceive experiences as actualizations of conceptual



capacities, we would need to credit experiences with *propositional* content, the sort of content judgments have” (“Avoiding the Myth of the Given,” in *Having the World in View*, 258).

63. This contention, that the license here (to move from a claim about the determinate character of the unity of judgment to one about the determinate character of that of sensibility) is *merely apparent*, contains no news for John McDowell, as he himself has repudiated this move and himself makes a version of this criticism of *Mind and World* (and of its correlative misreading of Kant) in a number of his later writings; see again especially “Avoiding the Myth of the Given.”
64. It would take us far beyond the scope of this paper to discuss the differences between the sort of form that characterizes a sensible manifold (conferring unity of intuition) and the sort that characterizes a manifold of concepts (conferring unity of judgment). For a probing discussion of this topic, see Daniel Smyth, “Infinity and Givenness: Kant on the Intuitive Origin of Spatial Representation,” *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 44 (2014): 551–79.
65. For an excellent discussion of this topic, see Daniel Warren, *Kant and the Apriority of Space Philosophical Review* 107, no. 2 [April 1998]: 179–224.
66. In “Notes on the B Deduction” when McDowell arrives at “There is only one unity” claim, he puts it like this: “There’s only one unity, the synthetic unity that’s intelligible only as an act of the spontaneous intellect.” This way of putting the point strikes me as excellent.
67. How successful is the B Deduction? To what extent, judged by its own lights, does it fully succeed in discharging the task that it sets for itself? This paper nowhere addresses questions of this sort. Its question throughout has been only this: What is the *aim* of the B Deduction? John McDowell explores reasons for thinking that it falls short of its aim in HIRK (see pp. 79ff) and “Notes on the B Deduction” (see section 6).