

**Experiential Self-Consciousness: Rationalism about the Value and Content of Experience**

by

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Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of

The Kenneth P. Dietrich School of Arts and Sciences in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

University of Pittsburgh

2017

UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH  
Dietrich School of Arts and Sciences

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# Experiential Self-Consciousness: Rationalism about the Value and Content of Experience

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University of Pittsburgh, 2017

In having a visual experience, we can come to know facts of at least two kinds: facts about our environment (“there is a red cup before me”), and facts about ourselves (“I am having an experience as of a red cup”). How do these types of knowledge—perceptual knowledge and perceptual self-knowledge—relate?

For a certain type of rationalist a visual experience is *identical* with a form of self-awareness of the relevant visual experience. For you to be aware of having an experience *E* is nothing over and above you having *E*. Specifically, the rationalist holds that this fact is grounded in the way a capacity for thought expresses itself in experience as what I call experiential self-consciousness.

I argue that this form of rationalism provides a novel way of approaching critical debates about visual experience, including the structure of perceptual representation and the grounds for perceptual knowledge. In experience things can self-consciously *look* to the subject to be specifically *thinkable* ways: the way experience makes things look to the rational subject can, in part, be expressed through the sort of contents experience makes it available for the subject to think. Moreover, in experience the objects of perceptual knowledge can be self-consciously *present* to the subject. I argue this type of perceptual presence supports a novel, non-evidentialist internalism about perceptual knowledge and justification. Moreover, I suggest rationalism illuminates an association between experience bearing representational content and a type of self-conscious experiential *unity*.

I also spend significant time placing rationalism in its historical context, specifically a broadly Leibnizian theme running through Kant's views on experience. I argue that placing a type of rationalism central to a reading of Kant allows us to (i) appreciate the way Kantian intuitions (*Anschauungen*) are conceptual and yet non-judgmental representations; (ii) see the way sensations (*Empfindungen*) figure in Kant's thinking merely as abstractions from self-conscious states; and (iii) read the Paralogisms chapter of the *Critique of Pure Reason* as consistent with Kant holding a substantial conception of the thinking and perceiving subject.

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As we perceive something, we rouse ourselves, so to speak, as though from a sleep with respect to the object. We grasp [it], comprehend it, we grasp ourselves with respect to it, [and] reflect upon ourselves.

J. N. Tetens, 1913, p. 284

By the term 'thought' I understand everything which we are aware of as happening within us, insofar as we have awareness of it. Hence, *thinking* is to be identified here not merely with understanding, willing and imagining, but also with sensory awareness.

René Descartes CSM 1. 195

## PREFACE

In many ways, writing a dissertation in general is a personal task—but among its parts, the preface is perhaps the most directly intimate. Accordingly, given the extent to which my time in Pittsburgh has been personally significant to me, I have always looked forward to writing this bit. Unfortunately, circumstances have left little time, and there is more I would like to express than I am able to do here. Suffice it to say that Pittsburgh is a special place, and that the themes that animate Pitt’s philosophy department have left an indelible imprint on my thinking. Indelible also will be the memory of the Cathedral of Learning—especially its 14<sup>th</sup> floor—where so often I found myself turning off the lights (and sometimes on again).

While a dissertation is a personal project, it incurs debt to the work and support of others. I first want to thank my co-advisors John McDowell and Stephen Engstrom. The significance of John’s appreciation of the fundamental themes in thinking about perception is apparent throughout the work, but what will be less evident is what I owe to his support in completing my work. I could neither have started nor completed the piece without his guidance. In Steve’s sensitivity to the deep layers of Kant’s thinking I found the perfect sounding board for my historical exploration of Kant’s relation to rationalism. Our meetings, as fun as they were intellectually engaging, stand out as among the best moments of my academic path in Pittsburgh. I should also thank Anil Gupta and Wayne Wu. Neither shares my final conclusions, but my exchanges with them critically

shaped my thinking (I believe I may have attended Anil's seminar on perception four times in its different guises).

Finally, while I was very significantly helped in discussion with my fellow students, I want to acknowledge especially the friends Pittsburgh afforded me, who nourished me intellectually and otherwise: Ben Schulz, Alison Springle, Tom Marré, Preston Stovall, Miloš Vuletic, and Tom Breed. I should single out especially Laura Tomlinson, Stephen Makin, Ori Beck, and Eric Palmer. Their absence from my career in Pittsburgh is unimaginable. I should also thank Joanna Sterling, Dora Lukacevic and Aaron Rosen, as well as my mother Tamar, my sister Esther, and my brother Joel, for supporting me throughout my efforts.

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my father, Dirk de Bruijn (ד"ר): his memory is a blessing.

## NOTE ON SOURCES AND ABBREVIATIONS

References to Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* use standard A/B notation. I generally use the translation of Paul Guyer and Allen Wood (1997, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), with occasional references to Kemp Smith (1929, London: Palgrave MacMillan), and translations of my own.

References to other works by Kant are by volume and page number to the standard *Akademie Ausgabe*, abbreviated as AA (1902-present, *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, edited by the Königlich Preussischen (now Deutschen) Akademie der Wissenschaften. Berlin: G. Reimer (now Berlin: De Gruyter).

I use abbreviations for the following of Kant's works:

- Anthr. = (1974) ('Anthropology') *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*. Transl. Gregor, M. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff.
- AC = (2012) *Anthropology Collins*. AA 25. In *Lectures on Anthropology*. Transl. Wood, A. W. and Louden, R. B. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- CJ = (2001) *Critique of Judgment*. Ed. Guyer, P. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- D = (1973) ('Discovery') 'On a Discovery, According to which Any New Critique of Pure Reason Has Been Made Superfluous by an Earlier One.' In *The Kant-Eberhard Controversy*. Ed. Allison, H. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- JL = (1988) *Logic*. Transl. Hartman, R. and Schwarz, W. New York: Dover Publications.
- LF = (1746) ('Living Forces') 'Thoughts on the True Estimation of Living Forces and Assessment of the Demonstrations that Leibniz and Other Scholars of Mechanics Have Made Use of in This Controversial Subject, together with Some Prefatory Considerations Pertaining to the Force of Bodies in General.' AA 1:3-181.
- LM = (1997) *Lecture on Metaphysics*. Transl. Ameriks, K. and Naragon, S. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- PM = (1992) ('Physical Monadology') 'The Employment in Natural Philosophy of Metaphysics Combined with Geometry, of which Sample I Contains the Physical Monadology' In *Theoretical philosophy: 1755–1770*. Transl. Walford, D. & Meerbote, R. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- ML<sub>1</sub> = (1997) *Metaphysik L<sub>1</sub>*. AA 28. In *Lectures on Metaphysics*. Transl. Ameriks, K. and Naragon, S. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- ML<sub>2</sub> = (1997) *Metaphysik L<sub>2</sub>*. AA 28. In *Lectures on Metaphysics*. Transl. Ameriks, K. and Naragon, S. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- MMr = (1997) *Metaphysik Mrongovius*. AA 29. In *Lectures on Metaphysics*. Transl. Ameriks, K. and Naragon, S. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- MH = (1997) *Metaphysik Herder*. AA 28:39 – 53. In *Lectures on Metaphysics*. Transl. Ameriks, K. and Naragon, S. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- MD = (1997) *Metaphysik Dona*. AA 28. In *Lectures on Metaphysics*. Transl. Ameriks, K. and Naragon, S. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- MK<sub>2</sub> = (1997) *Metaphysik K<sub>2</sub>*. AA 28. In *Lectures on Metaphysics*. Transl. Ameriks, K. and Naragon, S. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- MvS = *Metaphysik v. Schön* (AA 28).
- MVi = *Metaphysik Vigilantius* (AA 29) In *Lectures on Metaphysics*. Transl. Ameriks, K. and Naragon, S. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- MFNS = (1970) *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science*. AA 4. Transl. Ellington, J. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing.
- NE = (1992) ('New Eleucidations') *Nova Dilucidatio*. In *Theoretical philosophy: 1755–1770*. Transl. Walford, D. and Meerbote, R. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- ProL = (2001) *Prolegomena for Any Future Metaphysics*. Transl. Ellington. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing.
- R = ('Reflexionen.') Kants handschriftlicher Nachlaß. AA 14-19.
- R CV = Reflexionen in Kant's copy of *Critique of Pure Reason*. AA 23.
- VSGE = *Vorarbeiten zur Schrift gegen Eberhard*. AA 20.
- SGE = (1973) *Schrift Gegen Eberhard*. AA 20. In *The Kant-Eberhard Controversy*. Allison, H. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- UG = (1992) ('Ultimate Grounds') 'Concerning the ultimate ground of the differentiation of directions in space.' In *Theoretical philosophy: 1755–1770*. Transl. Walford, D. and Meerbote, R. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

I also use the following abbreviations for works by other authors:

G.W. Leibniz:

- A = (1923-) *Samtliche Schriften und Briefe*. Cited by series, volume and page. Berlin: Akademie Verlag.
- AG = (1989) *Philosophical Essays*. Eds. Garber, D. and Ariew, R. Indianapolis: Hackett Press.
- Disc. = (1991) *Discourse on Metaphysics and Other Essays*. Eds. Garber, D., and Ariew, R. Indianapolis: Hackett Press.
- G = (1875-90) *Die Philosophischen Schriften von Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz*, 7 vols. (cited by volume, page.) Ed. Gerhardt, C.I. Berlin: Weidmann.
- L = (1969) *Philosophical Papers & Letters*. Ed. Loemker, L. Dordrecht: D. Reidel Publishing Co.
- LD = (1973) *Leibniz and Dynamics: the Texts of 1692*. Eds. Costabel, P., transl. Maddison, R.E.W. London: Methuen.
- LOC = (2001) *G.W. Leibniz, The Labyrinth of the Continuum: Writings on the Continuum Problem, 16720-1686*. Ed. Arthur, R.T.W. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- M = (1991) *Monadology*. Ed. Rescher, N. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.

René Descartes:

- AT = (1996) *Oeuvres de Descartes* 11 vols. Eds. Adam, C. and Tanner, P. Paris: Vrin/CNRS.
- CSM = (1991) *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes* Vols. i, ii, iii. (vol. iii is a selection of Descartes' letters). Eds. Cottingham, J., Stoothoff, R., Murdoch, D. and Kenny, A. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Christian Wolff:

- DM = (1965) ('Deutsche Metaphysik') *Vernünfftige Gedanken von den Kräften des menschlichen Verstandes und Ihrem richtigen Gebrauche in Erkenntnis der Wahrheit*. In Wolff, C. *Gesammelte Werke*, division 1, vol. i. Hildersheim: Georg Olms.
- DL = (1965) ('Deutsche Logik') *Vernünfftige Gedanken von den Kräften des menschlichen Verstandes und Ihrem richtigen Gebrauche in Erkenntnis der Wahrheit*. In Wolff, C. *Gesammelte Werke*, division 1, vol. i. Hildersheim: Georg Olms.

AzDM = (1983) ('Additional Comments to the *Deutsche Metaphysik*') *Der vernünftigen Gedancken von Gott, der Welt und der Seele des Menschen, auch allen Dingen überhaupt, anderer Theil, bestehend in ausführlichen Anmerckungen* In Wolff, C. *Gesammelte Werke*, division 1, vol. iii. Hildesheim: Georg Olms.



## INTRODUCTION

### A RATIONALIST THEME

There are many traditional epistemological questions to which some version of *rationalism* has seemed a plausible approach. For example, many philosophers hold that when it comes to our justification for believing true mathematical or ethical propositions, the relevant entitlements derive from our character peculiar to us as rational subjects. Plausibly aspects distinctive of our capacity for thought provide a priori support for the relevant beliefs. For some philosophers, this sort of rationalist orientation extends beyond our beliefs in abstract mathematical truths or ethical principles, and can ground more concrete beliefs as well, e.g., the non-obtaining of certain skeptical scenarios.

But rationalism has not seemed nearly as plausible as an approach to certain other epistemological questions: those arising from the character of our sensory awareness. The reason is straightforward. In the above cases, rationalism is understood as an orientation on a priori knowledge and justification specifically. The character of a capacity for thought is held to shed light on our epistemic standing vis-à-vis certain propositions in abstraction from sense affection and empirical contingencies. By contrast, knowledge that derives from sense perception is paradigmatically a posteriori. It can seem of limited promise to approach such a posteriori knowledge from the rationalist perspective of a capacity for thought as such. This point is not merely epistemological, but also tracks certain apparently evident facts about the character of our conscious mind. In its phenomenal richness, sensory consciousness is not thought-like, and

appears to derive from a distinctly sensible capacity. Plausibly then, understanding perceptual knowledge requires leaving behind traditional rationalist interests in our character as subjects of thought, and focusing instead on our nature as sensible beings.

But the aim of this dissertation is to explore a version of rationalism as providing a compelling approach to the character of sensory awareness, and the way it grounds perceptual knowledge. Perceptual knowledge is, of course, *knowledge*, and accordingly it is not implausible to wonder whether there is a more general way in which reflecting on our capacity for thought can illuminate our entitlement to such knowledge, i.e., a way of thinking about rationalism that does not restrict its purview to our supposed entitlement to a priori truths.

One way to express this rationalist approach to sensory awareness is by considering the capacity for thought as encompassing an ability to have “intuitions” of a sort. For present purposes, intuitions are distinctly rational perceptual confrontations with objects: they are at once states of sensory consciousness, and states fundamentally shaped by the capacity for thought.<sup>1</sup> Accordingly, if for humans perception involves “intuitions,” then *pace* the above sketch, there is after all not a sharp break in our mental economy between thoughtful states and the rich, sensuous structure of our conscious experiences. Experiential consciousness itself can reflect the subject’s possession of a rational nature. In this sense, my interest is in how to understand “intuitions,” the way they spell out an approach to the character of sensory awareness, and the way they ground perceptual knowledge.

What, then, are “intuitions” in the relevant sense? The central rationalist thesis running as a theme through this dissertation is that intuitions are experiences associated with a distinctly

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<sup>1</sup> That is, I consider empirical intuitions, and not what Kant calls “pure intuitions.” Nor do I focus on the idea of purely intellectual intuition, as in the grasping of abstract truths (e.g., Chudnoff 2013. Chudnoff’s work has recently drawn attention to the possibility of an “intuitive” perceptual epistemology, but I do not subscribe to the particulars of Chudnoff’s program. See discussion in Chapter 5 below.)

rational form of self-awareness. Suppose you are having a conscious perceptual experience of a red cup before you. It is natural to think that in virtue of having this experience you can come to know facts of at least two kinds: facts about the cup before you (“there is a red cup before me”), and facts about yourself (“I am having an experience as of a red cup before me”). How do these types of knowledge—perceptual knowledge and perceptual *self*-knowledge—relate?

A natural answer might have seemed to be: not significantly. Of course perceptual self-knowledge is knowledge *of* a perceptual experience. But otherwise perceptual knowledge and perceptual self-knowledge seem fundamentally different in kind. Most obviously, these types of knowledge can seem to concern different stretches of reality (the “outer” and the “inner,” respectively). More fundamentally, perceptual knowledge and self-knowledge can also seem distinct and indeed opposed “modes” of knowing: the types of knowledge in question derive from fundamentally different epistemic sources. Perceptual knowledge is sense-mediated: for a subject *S* to have perceptual knowledge of some object *o*, *S* needs (at a minimum) to stand in an appropriate sensory relation to *o*. By contrast, many philosophers deny that self-knowledge is (in general) sense-mediated, and moreover, deny that it can be understood on the *model* of sense-mediated knowledge. Perceptual knowledge and perceptual self-knowledge can accordingly seem quite radically distinct.

However, for the type of rationalist in whom I am interested, the idea of rationality—the character of a capacity for thought—forges a much more intimate connection. For the rationalist, thought joins empirical (e.g., perceptual) knowledge and self-knowledge at the hip: the capacity is at once a capacity for representations of the external world, and the ground of a *sui generis* epistemology of itself. This idea is of course famously captured in Kant’s view that the capacity for thought, Kant’s faculty of understanding, is essentially “apperceptive,” its acts attended by

Kant's expression of self-awareness in thought, the "I think." In the course of this dissertation I will have reason to consider various aspects of the "I think," including its relation to the "I" as a distinct type of subject, and its relation to the contents it thinks: viz. the sort of contents distinctive of thought, i.e., contents properly characterized as conceptual.

But presently the most significant aspect of the rationalist view of self-awareness is that it posits a form of *first-order* self-consciousness. Consider the question: how do you know what you are presently thinking? For the rationalist, it is distinctive of a capacity for thought that a type of self-awareness is *internal* to its acts themselves. For you to be aware of thinking a thought *T* is nothing over and above you thinking *T*. It is this idea that has a ready application to a view of sensory consciousness. Ask: How do you know the character of your present visual experience? The rationalist gives the same sort of answer. For you to be aware of having an experience *E* is nothing over and above you having *E*. Specifically, the rationalist holds that this fact is grounded in the way a capacity for thought expresses itself in experience as a form of *experiential self-consciousness*.<sup>2</sup> Accordingly,

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<sup>2</sup>The conception of self-awareness as the expression of a capacity for thought extending to sensory, experiential states is of course a prominent theme in early modern rationalists like Descartes. As the epigraph above has it (CSM 1. 195)

By the term 'thought' I understand everything which we are aware of as happening within us, insofar as we have awareness of it. Hence, *thinking* is to be identified here not merely with understanding, willing and imagining, but also with sensory awareness.

But an idea broadly along these lines is not unique to early modern rationalists, and is shared by some empiricists. So Locke writes (Locke 1975 II. Xxvii.9)

When we hear, smell, taste, feel, mediate, or will anything, we know that we do so. Thus it is always as to our present Sensations and Perceptions.

Much like Descartes, Locke associates this ubiquitous self-knowledge with thought—specifically what Locke calls a "consciousness [that] is *inseparable* from thinking, and [...] seems to me essential to it." (ibid.).

**Experiential Self-consciousness:** for rational subjects, conscious perceptual experience is *identical* with a form of self-awareness of the relevant experience. As such, just in having *E*, the rational subject is in a position not merely to gain knowledge of her environment, but also of herself, namely her having *E*.

For purposes of this dissertation, intuitions are rational experiential states in this specific sense: states in which the subject is self-aware of her experiencing. The suggestion is that this conception of an intuition can play a critical role in our understanding of the nature of experiential consciousness, and its epistemic potential. Indeed, the upshot of the study of intuitions is that a rationalist approach to our capacity for thinking as such sheds light not merely on the foundations of our priori or “pure” knowledge (to the extent it does that), but also reveals the very same capacity as intimately associated with the grounds of more commonplace a posteriori knowledge: specifically such grounds as are located in perceptual awareness.

## OVERVIEW OF CHAPTERS

In this dissertation I develop a rationalist line as an approach to experience in two contexts.

(1) The first context is Kant’s view of intuitions and their relation to the rational subject. Classically, the debate over Kantian intuitions concerns the question whether intuitions are conceptual, i.e., broadly intellectual states, or whether for Kant intuitions are representations of a non-conceptual and more primitively sensory variety. In Colin McLear’s depiction of the choice (McLear 2015, p. 81).

Either sensibility, independently of any synthesis [by the understanding], furnishes the mind with objective representations (intuitions), or such objective representations depend, at least in part, on mental acts of synthesis.

My argument in this area is for a distinct type of conceptualist answer to McLear's question, which centers on what I call Monism: the idea that for Kant the understanding is properly the faculty responsible for all cognitively significant representations, and is accordingly required to provide intuitions with their fundamental *form* or nature as presentations of objects.

In Chapter 1 I begin by considering the relation between intuitions and Kant's view of the synthetic activity of the imagination. While conceptualists understand imaginative synthesis as implicating the understanding in intuition, non-conceptualists argue either that imaginative synthesis is exercised by sensibility, or that it is not implicated in intuition. I argue that both non-conceptualist views are inconsistent with Kant's hylomorphic account of intuitions. More specifically, I argue that non-conceptualists' reliance on textual evidence is compromised due to unwarranted associations between conceptualism and a classification proper to judgment.

In Chapter 2 I continue to explore Kantian conceptualism by considering the way what Kant calls "sensations" (*Empfindungen*) constitute the material of intuition. This provides a broader perspective on Kant's view of the faculty of sensibility. For what I call Dualist readers, understanding and sensibility are independent representational faculties: sensibility and understanding both provide representations, even if the type of sensory representations Kant associates with sensibility stand in need of structuring or ordering by the understanding. By contrast, I argue for a type of Monism by building on aspects of Kant's Leibnizian heritage: only the understanding is genuinely a faculty for representations, and accordingly the representations Kant attributes to sensibility have existence merely as the passive *aspect* of entities informed by the understanding.

In Chapter 3 I leave the immediate context of intuitions to turn to their subject: Kant's thinking and perceiving "I." On so-called "Achilles" arguments popular with Kant's rationalist

predecessors like Wolff, Baumgarten, and Mendelssohn, the idea of a type of conscious unity proper to the subject is reason to consider the subject a substance. By broad consensus, in the Paralogisms section of the *Critique* Kant rejects such arguments. But I argue the consensus is wrong. Kant's target in the Paralogisms is limited to specifically empirical versions of the Achilles, specifically the Wolffian idea that self-awareness is a form of empirical affection. It follows that the unity and substantiality of the subject cannot be objects of *cognition*. But I argue this does not conflict with attributing to Kant himself a substantial view of the self, as well as a version of the Achilles.

(2) The second context in which I develop a rationalist approach to experience is the character of sense perception as it figures in several influential debates in the contemporary philosophy of perception, including how experience makes things look to the subject, the character of experiential intentionality, and how to understand perceptual grounds for knowledge.

In Chapter 4 I consider some prominent views about the character of self-awareness in experience. Specifically, I focus on recently popular "self-representational" approaches to consciousness, on which the conscious character of states is grounded in the way such states represent themselves. I press two points. First, the self-consciousness the subject enjoys in experience is not to be characterized as a form of self-representation: the way the subject is self-aware of her conscious experiential states is a result of her rational nature, but not of an intentional relation to herself or the state itself. Second, I suggest the subject's self-awareness in experience can serve in defense of a certain strategy for arguing for perceptual content. Some philosophers have argued against associating content with perceptual *looks* on the grounds that we cannot isolate a suitable sense of looks proper to experience. I suggest that the way experience

is self-consciously enjoyed by its subject provides one avenue for doing just that. As self-consciously enjoyed by the subject, experience specifies a specifically rational perspective in experience, from which things can *look* as they are to be *thought*, i.e., as specified by certain contents.

In Chapter 5 I turn to perceptual epistemology by suggesting that a view of experiential self-awareness yields new avenues for conceiving the shape of an *internalism* about perceptual justification. For epistemological disjunctivists about experience, the epistemic contribution of experience is such that (1) experience guarantees the knowledgeable character of perceptual beliefs; and (2) experience's epistemic contribution is "reflectively accessible." I argue that experiential self-awareness sheds novel light on the relation between these two claims. Specifically, rather than understanding the disjunctivist as conceiving of the epistemic contribution of experience as residing in a strong type of perceptual evidence, we can understand the disjunctivist view of experience as grounded in the way a subject's self-consciousness can include the *presence* to the subject of the objects of knowledge. I suggest this sheds light on disjunctivism as an anti-skeptical stance, and more generally grounds the disjunctivist approach to perceptual justification in a *sui generis* conception of perception as manifesting the subject's rational orientation on her environment.

Chapter 6, finally, is more exploratory. I sketch a non-standard approach to the relation between representational contents and the activity of the intellect. On the view I develop, thought involves its contents with a certain *unity*: contents of the relevant sort are self-consciously unified in the mind of a thinker. Specifically, I argue that experiential intentionality can be associated with the presence of just this sort of self-conscious unity in experience. A rational subject enjoys her experience in a self-consciously unified way: she comprehends herself as engaging in a single



experiential act. I suggest this provides a non-standard way of rendering a view of experiential content, as well as understanding the role of content in explaining perceptual rationality. Where standardly experiential contents are associated with judgment-like structures on which some object *o* is represented as some way *F*, my approach yields a type of representational intentionality that captures the subject's perceptual self-comprehension of being confronted with the objects of her knowledge. The idea that experience bears content, I suggest, depends on the role of the capacity for thought, but does not depend on the perceptual exercise of specifically empirical concepts like *F*.

## 1.0 UNDERSTANDING: THE FORM OF INTUITION

The debate between conceptualist and non-conceptualist readings of Kant's account of intuitions centers on the nature of the power Kant calls the "productive imagination."<sup>3</sup> In particular, philosophers have advocated three views on the question how the imaginative power relates to intuitions. On the one hand, conceptualists have argued that the productive imagination is operative in intuitions, and moreover, that the productive imagination is a power belonging to the faculty of understanding, which Kant characterizes as the faculty of concepts (A51/B75).<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, non-conceptualists have either maintained that the productive imagination is operative in intuitions but belongs not to the understanding but to sensibility, or held that the productive imagination is not operative in intuitions, but rather in furnishing further stages of cognition out of materials intuition provides.<sup>5</sup>

In this chapter I will defend conceptualism as an interpretation of Kant's use of the imagination. More specifically, I will argue that it is important to distinguish two conceptualist

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<sup>3</sup>For non-conceptualist readings, see Hanna 2005, 2008, 2011; Allais 2009; Tolley 2013; McLearn 2015; Schulting and Onof 2015. For conceptualist readings, see Ginsborg 2006, 2008; Wenzel 2005; Griffith 2010; Van Mazijk 2014a, 2014b; Gomes 2014, 2017; McDowell 2009b; Engstrom 2006; Connolly 2013. Kant contrasts the "productive imagination" with the "reproductive imagination," which he characterizes as a merely psychological process (CJ, 91n). Since it is only the productive imagination that is presently relevant, generic uses of "the imagination" in this paper will refer to the productive imagination.

<sup>4</sup>E.g., Ginsborg 2008, McDowell 2009b, Engstrom 2006.

<sup>5</sup>The former Hanna 2005, 2008, 2011; Allais 2009; the latter Tolley 2013. There is also a third option, which is to see the imagination as a separate power, standing apart both from sensibility and understanding. However, there seem both textual and philosophical problems with this suggestion (Van Mazijk 2014a, Onof and Schulting 2015). More importantly for our present purposes, the conception of the imagination as a third power has not played a significant role in the dispute over conceptualism in Kant's philosophy, therefore I will not discuss this thought presently.

theses: first the claim that the imagination implicates the subject's capacity for rational thought, in the form of the faculty of understanding, in perception; second the claim that *via* the imagination, the faculty of understanding implicates "concepts" in perception. These two theses are evidently closely linked: the involvement of concepts presumably entails the involvement of capacities for rational thought, and plausibly the perceptual exercise of capacities for thought takes conceptual form. Nevertheless, my suggestion in this chapter is that the complex relationship Kant envisages between the faculty of understanding and concepts merits distinguishing the two theses for the purpose of understanding Kant's account of the imagination.<sup>6</sup> In particular, I will claim that while Kant's account of the productive imagination provides compelling grounds for the first thesis, unwarranted assumptions about the second thesis have fueled non-conceptualist resistance.

I first briefly provide an understanding of conceptualism (§1), which subsequently I apply to Kant's view, introducing the question about the nature of the productive imagination (§2). Then I elucidate the distinction between the two main non-conceptualist theses (§3), after which I discuss initial textual appearances of non-conceptualism (§4). I suggest they are not as decisive as they seem (§5). On the contrary, Kant's invocation of hylomorphic themes counts heavily against the supposition that Kant would endorse either version of non-conceptualism (§6). I discuss the conceptualist implications that may be thought to follow from Kant's hylomorphic conception of intuitions (§7), and I show how carefully distinguishing between various conceptualist claims dismantles the non-conceptualist case (§8). Finally, I conclude (§9).<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>For work that draws attention to some of these same difficulties, see Williams 2012, McLear 2014.

<sup>7</sup>I should note two aspects of Kant's philosophy with which this paper will be concerned only in passing. First, there is Kant's generic use of the term 'representation.' In this paper, I will not go into what might bind together Kant's

## 1.1 CONCEPTUALISM

Conceptualism is the claim that perception is constitutively dependent, in some specified way, on the involvement of concepts. In particular, conceptualism has been discussed either as the thesis that for a subject to be in certain perceptual states she must possess certain conceptual capacities (“state conceptualism”), or as the thesis that the constituents of perceptual contents are of a conceptual nature, for example by being constituents of Fregean Thoughts (“content conceptualism”).<sup>8</sup> Conceptualism, further, is a thesis about the “intentional” or “world-directed” element of perception.<sup>9</sup> As such, the conceptualist claim is stronger than perception involving at least some conceptual element(s). As A.D. Smith writes,

Perception, for us, is typically “suffused with concepts” as it is often said. [...] it may be that *every* adult human perception is so suffused. Nor shall it be denied that possession of a concept, or of even a recognitional ability, may affect the way something perceptually appears to you. [...] even if [perceptual, concept-driven effects] are widespread and dramatic, such a fact would have no bearing on the issue of conceptualism.<sup>10</sup>

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use of the language of representation in his account of intuitions. In particular, we should not assume that Kant’s use of “representation” conforms to contemporary usage, involving states that set accuracy conditions. Accordingly, we should not take Kant’s use of ‘representation’ as prejudicing his position in the contemporary debate between representational versus anti-representational views of perception. For all we know, Kant’s theory of intuitions is best rendered as coming down on the anti-representational side of this debate (Allais 2009). Second, there is the matter of Kant’s idealism, and his use of ‘appearances’ to describe the objects of perception. This will not be a topic in this paper.

<sup>8</sup> For a helpful discussion of the distinction between state and content conceptualism, see Bengson, Grube, Korman 2011, and Speaks 2005.

<sup>9</sup> Note, again (fn. 4)), that this point is not intended to prejudge the debate between relational and representational views (as it might be thought to if “intentionality” is understood in representational terms).

<sup>10</sup> Smith 2002, p. 95. Compare also Allais 2009, p. 386: “while, according to [the relevant non-conceptualist] view, what perceptual states a subject might be in does not depend on what concepts she possesses, this need not mean denying that our perceptual states *are* brought under concepts, and that experience, for us, typically is ‘an actualization of conceptual capacities in sensory consciousness itself’” (McDowell 1998, pp. 365-68, 403-431).

On the other hand, conceptualism is a weaker thesis than perception involving exclusively conceptual elements. What is at issue is whether or not perception is a world-directed or world-revealing state due to its drawing on conceptual capacities or involving conceptual contents. As Smith continues the above passage, expressing a non-conceptualist view:

when I say that concepts are irrelevant to perception, what I mean is that they are irrelevant to *what it is that makes any sensory state a perception at all*: they are irrelevant to the intentionality of perception, to its basic world-directedness.<sup>11</sup>

Finally, for purposes of this chapter, it is an implication of conceptualism that, since on Kant's account concepts and conceptual capacities are constitutively dependent on the rational faculty of understanding, the sort of perception humans enjoy is restricted to us *qua* rational beings. By contrast, non-conceptualists hold that whereas our capacities for thought are unique to us *qua* rational beings, our perceptual capacities are generic between rational and non-rational beings.<sup>12</sup> Conceptualism, in this way, is a claim about the relation between thought and perception.

## 1.2 TWO STEMS OF COGNITION

The conceptualism controversy about Kant's view centers on the nature of a series of important distinctions Kant makes, and in particular, how to align these distinctions with Kant's

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid. Compare Bermudez 2003, p.1: "The central idea behind the theory of non-conceptual mental content is that some mental states can represent the world even though the bearer of those states does not possess the concepts required to specify their content." This way of putting the thesis bears some complexity that I will bring out in §7.

<sup>12</sup> To differentiate between non-conceptualism and conceptualism in this way is not merely straightforward, since in principle it should seem consistent to stipulate that non-conceptual capacities and/or contents are proprietary to rational beings, and conversely there have in fact been philosophers who have attributed conceptually contentful states to non-rational creatures. (For discussion see Speaks 2005). But in the Kantian context at issue in this paper we *can* equate the conceptualism/non-conceptualism discussion with the question whether distinctively rational capacities are implicated in perception, since the debate centers on the faculty of understanding, which is precisely associated with the specifically human, rational capacity to judge, while conversely, sensibility is the sort of ability to be affected by the external world that human beings and other animals share in common.

fundamental divide between sensibility and understanding. The controversy is: for those poles of Kant's various distinctions that are associated with Kant's account of intuitions, do they line up with sensibility alone (non-conceptualism), or must some be associated with the understanding (conceptualism)?

Initial impressions seem favorable for non-conceptualism. Kant introduces the sensibility/understanding distinction (A15/B29) as setting apart our capacities to perceive (or "get") objects from our capacities to think about them. Further, Kant seems to line up the sensibility-understanding divide with the distinction between receptivity and spontaneity (A51/B75), suggesting that as the faculty for "getting" objects, sensibility is a "receptive" capacity, while the understanding is "spontaneous," being the faculty for actively producing representations of objects. Finally, these two distinctions seem further complemented by Kant's distinction between intuition and concept, which Kant introduces as a distinction between representations that are immediate and singular and representations that are general and mediated, and which Kant subsequently seems to allocate to sensibility and understanding respectively (B75/A51). Thus sensibility and understanding, it seems, are divided according to their operations—"getting" objects versus thinking about them—according to the nature of the capacities they are—receptive versus spontaneous—and according to the kinds of representations they employ—intuitions versus concepts.

But the role of the imagination appears to confound simple classification.<sup>13</sup> Kant distinguishes intuitions from mere sensations. Sensations, for Kant, are mere alterations of a

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<sup>13</sup> As Hannah Ginsborg (Ginsborg 2008, p. 66) writes,

[The] apparently clear-cut distinction [between sensibility and understanding] is quickly complicated by Kant's introduction of the notion of synthesis, an act of combining or unifying the sensory manifold which he ascribes to the power of imagination. For imagination seems to have

subject's subjective state insofar as the subject is externally affected (A19-20/B34). The upshot of this characterization is that sensations do not have the object-presenting character of intuitions.<sup>14</sup> So what sets intuition apart from sensation? It is the "unity" characterizing intuitions as opposed to the mere "manifold" of sensation.<sup>15</sup> This is where Kant appears to envisage a role for the power of imagination.<sup>16</sup> For the mind to obtain intuitions, the "manifold" of sensation has to be "synthesized" by the productive imagination. It is from this "synthesis" that conceptualist readers of Kant take their cue. Imaginative synthesis has a spontaneous character. But Kant seems to locate passivity with sensibility and spontaneity with the understanding. Accordingly, conceptualists have suggested, imagination must belong to the understanding, and consequently the understanding is implicated in intuition.<sup>17</sup>

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affinities both with sensibility and with understanding, suggesting that their functions, of intuition and thought respectively, cannot after all be so neatly separated.

<sup>14</sup> That sensations for Kant are non-intentional has enjoyed broad agreement (George 1981, Westphal 2004, Aquila 1983, Kitcher 1980), but it has not been free from dispute (Falkenstein 1990, 1995), for discussion see Kapoor, 2014. In this paper, nothing should turn on this issue, insofar as all parties to the debate agree that object-perception should be located at the level of intuitions rather than sensations.

<sup>15</sup> For mental states  $x$  and  $y$ , Kant typically describes  $x$  as a "manifold" if, on the one hand,  $x$  somehow provides the material from which  $y$  can be obtained, but, on the other hand, *qua* being a manifold  $x$  is still too disorganized, disparately structured or disconnected to amount to  $y$ . We should not here make the mistake of assuming that the mind "produces" intuitions out of the manifold material. As we will see below, what is at issue, at least in the first instance, is "determination" of the manifold.

<sup>16</sup> Some non-conceptualists clearly do not hold that imagination is required to transition from the manifold of sensation to intuition. I discuss this in section 3 below.

<sup>17</sup> There are also conceptualists who deny that the imagination is involved in intuitions, and who instead attempt to vindicate conceptualism by arguing that for Kant, perceptually relevant states arise only in the form of conceptualized states (e.g., *Erfahrung* and *Wahrnehmung*) downstream from intuition. This seems, e.g., to be the preferred approach of Ginsborg 2006, 2008. These forms of conceptualism will not be at issue in this paper.

### 1.3 THE NON-CONCEPTUALIST THESES

The claim that the imagination belongs to the faculty of sensibility has been most emphatically defended by Robert Hanna and Lucy Allais.<sup>18</sup> The thought is that a type of synthesis not involving the understanding is required for perceptual awareness, as opposed to the synthesis that is required for conceptual thought. As Allais has put the point, “synthesizing is not the same as conceptualizing.”<sup>19</sup> In particular, it is held that the structures of space and time that Kant discusses in the Aesthetic allow for an independent synthesis on the part of sensibility that facilitates the intuitional presentation of objects, functioning without involvement of the understanding and the concepts associated with it. As Hanna has expressed the thought: “our capacities for spatial and temporal representation *constitutively explain* non-conceptual content: that is, non-conceptual content is *nothing but* cognitive content that is essentially structured by our a priori representations of phenomenal space and time. [...] the *representational* content of non-conceptual cognition is to be so explained.”<sup>20</sup> It follows that sensibility cannot be entirely passive, but must be in part spontaneous. As Hanna grants:

the sensibility [is] only *relatively* passive, but not *entirely* passive [...] by virtue of its expressing a mental power for spontaneous synthesis, or mental processing. This mental power is the ‘power of imagination’.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Allais and Hanna differ significantly in the non-conceptualism they develop. Allais’ view appears to bear similarities to contemporary relational views of perception, on which perceptual states do not involve content in the representational sense of the word but constitute direct relations to objects, while Hanna explicitly develops a theory of non-conceptual representational content. However, both are united in attributing imaginative synthesis to the faculty of sensibility, and therefore represent a common position as far as the conceptualism/non-conceptualism debate is concerned. As I note below (fn. 55) it is ultimately not clear that conceptualism is inconsistent with the motivations for either of Allais’ and Hanna’s preferred views.

<sup>19</sup> Allais 2009, p. 396.

<sup>20</sup> Hanna 2005, p. 278 (italics original). Compare also Allais 2009, p. 402, who holds that sensibility independently provides subjects with “an egocentric, oriented, three-dimensional frame of reference which enables us to locate particulars.”

<sup>21</sup> Hanna 2005, p. 249.



It also follows for these non-conceptualists that we can separate the conceptual cognition rational animals have of their environment from the less demanding perceptual awareness rational animals share in common with other creatures: “the unity of consciousness in this [conceptual] sense is a relatively sophisticated and fragile achievement of rational animals, but unnecessary for [perceptual] conscious animal cognition in general, whether the animal is rational or non-rational, and whether the animal is human or non-human.”<sup>22</sup>

The claim that imaginative synthesis is not implicated in perception has been forcefully argued by Clinton Tolley. On Tolley’s view, to include synthesis in intuitions leads inexorably to conceptualism: “at several points Kant [...] asserts that the spontaneity of imagination is ‘one and the same with’ that of understanding (cf. B162n), which would seem to block the escape route [Hanna and Allais suggest].”<sup>23</sup> Tolley thinks that it is a mistake to suppose that intuition requires any synthesis from the power of imagination. Tolley suggests that for Kant intuitions have a unity that is “absolute” and that “belongs to [intuition] *per se*”:

That some unity pertains to an intuition *per se* follows from Kant’s claim that a single intuition ‘as contained in one moment’ has ‘an *absolute* unity’ (A99) [Tolley’s emphasis]. What is more, Kant’s use of ‘absolute’ here points to the fact that *this* unity is one that has *no* further ground whatsoever, let alone one in any act of synthesis.<sup>24</sup>

For Tolley, the productive imagination does not play a role in intuition, but rather in synthesizing intuitions into what, as Tolley emphasizes, Kant himself calls “perception” or “experience” (B160). On Tolley’s gloss, this intuition-experience distinction amounts to “a clear distinction

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<sup>22</sup> Hanna 2005, p. 253.

<sup>23</sup> Tolley 2013, fn. 32. While I agree with Tolley’s conclusion, I doubt that B162n settles the failure of the view that imaginative synthesis belongs to sensibility, because while B162n suggests both imagination and understanding share their spontaneous character, the additional premise is needed that *only* the understanding, as opposed to sensibility, is spontaneous. I provide this premise in §5 below.

<sup>24</sup> Tolley 2013, p. 123. Tolley does allow that “absolute” intuitional unity results not from synthesis but from what Kant calls “*synopsis* of the manifold a priori through sense (A94)” (Tolley 2013, fn. 33. Italics mine). The difference between “synthesis” and “synopsis” as regards spontaneity is independently interesting, but it will not affect the point I am making below: that intuitional unity requires a form that can be provided only by synthesis.

between (a) an intuition's *being* a unity, and *containing* a manifold, and (b) that intuition's *being represented as* a unity, or *as* containing a manifold."<sup>25</sup> Or again,

What [Kant] is concerned with [in "experience" as opposed to intuition] are the conditions under which intuitions must stand 'in order to become an object for me' (B138) [...] This, however, is a concern distinct from the conditions that intuitions must meet in order to themselves already represent or relate to an object.<sup>26</sup>

Tolley further aligns the distinction between the "absolute" unity of intuitions and the "synthetic" unity of experience with Kant's distinction between intuition and concept, i.e., the distinction between representations that put the subject into immediate relations ("*Beziehungen*") to objects, and representations that provide merely mediate contact. In this way, Tolley suggests that intuitions require no synthesis in order to count as placing the mind in immediate relations to objects, and synthesis is only subsequently required to produce mediate awareness of the subject *as* standing in relations to objects. For Tolley, this distinction between two types of awareness-relations to objects can be glossed as a divide between two types of content. Accordingly, since perception for Kant is characterized by intuitional content, this means that conceptual content must be excluded. After all, it would seem implausible that perception simultaneously bears mediate and immediate relations to its objects.

It is worth observing here that despite their different conceptions of the imagination, proponents of both non-conceptualist theses largely share a common understanding of the conceptualist thesis about Kant's view. This point is illustrated by Tolley's opposition to the thought that intuitions represent items "*as* a unity." Tolley here emphasizes the same idea Allais expresses by distinguishing synthesizing from "conceptualizing." On both readings, the conceptualist view is understood as the claim that imaginative synthesis classifies items under

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<sup>25</sup> Tolley 2013, p. 122. Compare also Tolley's invocation of (A120) "intuitions are the material the imagination synthesizes to produce a certain awareness of ourselves *as* standing in a determinate relation to an object."

<sup>26</sup> Tolley 2013, p. 123.

concepts. This point is further reflected in the common non-conceptualist view of “determinacy” in Kant, which non-conceptualists associate with conceptual classification. As Hanna writes,

We learn in the first *Critique* that empirical intuitions must be combined with concepts in the context of judgments in order to be ‘determined’ and thus represent *determinate* objects of experience [...]. But empirical intuitions are, as such, very strongly non-conceptual [...]. The object of such a representation is not a determinate object of experience, but instead an undetermined or at best partially-determined object of the senses, that is, an appearance.<sup>27</sup>

Thus, on the common non-conceptualist picture, intuitions are themselves indeterminate relations to objects, which subsequently gain determination through conceptualization to produce states of awareness of the self *as* standing in relations to objections. Conversely, the disagreement merely concerns the role of the imagination: whether the synthesis of the imagination is implicated in intuitions but is not determinative (Hanna), or whether imaginative synthesis is coeval with conceptual synthesis, and therefore determinative (Tolley). In the view I will develop in this chapter and throughout this dissertation, the view non-conceptualists share in common commits the critical error of associating the operations of the understanding exclusively with the sort of determinate cognitions Kant associates with “concepts” (B105). This misses the alternative possibility that the understanding as a capacity for thought plays a more systemic, non-discursive role in intuition, viz. a role specified by the way the operations of the imagination imbue experience with a “synthetic unity.”

#### 1.4 THE TEXTUAL CASE FOR NON-CONCEPTUALISM

There are at least four types of passages in Kant’s text that non-conceptualists frequently cite to support their view. First, Kant makes a distinction between *kennen*—a form of perceptual

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<sup>27</sup> Hanna 2005, p. 273.

cognition that acquaints the subject with items—and *erkennen*—a form of cognition that constitutes knowledge of items through concepts. Further, Kant suggests that *kennen* is generic to rational and non-rational animals, while only *erkennen* is exclusive to thinking beings. As Kant writes: “Animals are *acquainted with (kennen)* objects too, but they do not *cognize (erkennen)* them.” (JL, VIII, AA 9: 65, p. 569). Kant further appears to illustrate the *kennen-erkennen* distinction through the example of cognition in a savage (“*Wilder*,” JL, Introd, V. AA 9: 33, p. 544-545):

If a savage <*Wilder*> sees a house from a distance, for example, with whose use he is not acquainted, he admittedly has before him in his representation the very same object as someone else who is acquainted with it determinately as a dwelling established for humans. But as to form, this cognition of one and the same object is different in the two. With one it is *mere intuition*, with the other it is *intuition and concept* at the same time.

For its brevity, this is a remarkably rich passage, some little observed aspects of which I will return to in §7 below. But on the non-conceptualist understanding, the upshot of the passage is reasonably straightforward. Kant’s *Wilder* does not have the concept of a house, but nonetheless he “has before him in his representation the very same object” as more cultured beings do. Moreover, Kant appears to endorse the above-described non-conceptualist reading of the conceptualist view. Kant ascribes to the *Wilder* “mere intuition” while the cultured person enjoys “intuition and concept” at the same time, suggesting that the role of concepts in perception is classificatory. Finally, Kant appears to characterize the added cognitive value of the conceptual involvement in perception in terms of allowing “determinate [acquaintance] with [the house] *as a dwelling*.” Accordingly, it seems Kant in general conforms to the non-conceptualist view of distinguishing conceptual capacities from capacities for intuition *simpliciter*.

The second source of support for non-conceptualism is a passage frequently cited by conceptualists, but which on reflection seems compellingly understood as supporting non-conceptualism (A51/B75):

Thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind. It is, therefore, just as necessary to make our concepts sensible, that is, to add the object to them in intuition, as to make our intuitions intelligible, that is, to bring them under concepts.

Conceptualists have read the above passage as explicitly asserting that intuitions must involve concepts, on pain of leaving intuitions “blind” or “unintelligible.” But as non-conceptualists understand the passage, Kant’s thesis is not that concepts must be involved in intuition itself. Rather, non-conceptualists point out that in the context in which the passage occurs, Kant is giving an account not of intuition *simpliciter*, but of full-blown cognition. As Kant directly continues on the dictum (A52/B76):

These two powers or capacities cannot exchange their functions. The understanding can intuit nothing, the senses can think nothing. Only through their union can knowledge arise. But that is no reason for confounding the contribution of either with that of the other; rather is it a strong reason for carefully separating and distinguishing the one from the other.

On this interpretation, Kant’s thought is that intuitions require concepts to constitute cognition or knowledge, but not *qua* being intuitional states. Indeed Kant seems emphatic that we should not take the necessary cooperation of understanding and sensibility in empirical knowledge as reason to think of their functions as anything but wholly distinct. Non-conceptualists point out that Kant says a lack of concepts renders intuitions “blind,” not that it renders them “nonexistent” or “deficient”.<sup>28</sup>

The third source of support for non-conceptualism stems from Kant’s famous discussion of “incongruent counterparts” (UG, p. 370): objects that are identical in their qualities, but have

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<sup>28</sup> As De Sa Pereira 2013, p. 234 writes:

Kant’s *dictum* has been misconstrued as reflecting the conceptualist assumption that, without conceptual capacities, sensible intuition refers to or represents nothing. Nonetheless, what Kant had in mind with this famous *dictum* was something quite different. Without general concepts, sensible intuitions are blind not in sense [sic] of referring to nothing (conceptualism), but rather in the sense of providing no *knowledge* of the objects to which sensible intuitions refer. For one thing, without the general concepts involved in the specification of what it is represented [sic], the subject cannot *understand* or know what her sensible intuitions actually represent. Thus blindness does not reflect a lack of reference, but rather a lack of understanding and of propositional knowledge about what is represented.

different spatial orientations towards the perceiving subject (e.g., paradigmatically an identical pair of left and right hands).<sup>29</sup> Non-conceptualists have taken the example of incongruent counterparts to militate against conceptualism. Incongruent counterparts are distinguished exclusively by spatial features, which for Kant seem associated with the structures of sensibility discussed in the *Aesthetic*, not the concepts of the understanding. Accordingly, it seems that only non-conceptual elements can distinguish intuitions of incongruent counterparts. So if conceptualism about intuitions were true, it might seem that Kant would lack the resources to accommodate his own incongruent counterparts example.

Fourth, and apparently most conclusively, there are passages in which Kant seems to explicitly set intuition apart from the influence of the understanding. As Kant writes (A89-91/B122-3; italics mine):

The categories of the understanding, on the contrary, do not represent to us the conditions under which objects are given in intuition at all, *hence objects can indeed appear to us without necessarily having to be related to functions of the understanding*, and therefore without the understanding containing their a priori conditions [...] Appearances would nonetheless offer objects to our intuition, for *intuition by no means requires the function of thinking*.

This passage seems explicit on the conceptualism question: *pace* conceptualists, objects can in fact appear in intuition without being related to the “categories” or “functions” of the understanding. Especially when considered in combination with the other passages discussed, this explicit disavowal of conceptualism may well seem to settle Kant’s position in the non- conceptualist camp.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> See e.g., Hanna 2008, who describes the case as concerning “Enantiomorphs [...] qualitatively identical but topologically non-identical.” (p 54). Hanna has argued the case transmutes to temporal differences as well (p. 57/58).

<sup>30</sup> Various recent commentators have found this evidence conclusive, e.g., McLear 2016a, p. 100. Indeed Pereira 2013 concludes that the conceptualism debate in Kant is altogether closed: “[e]ven though the conceptualist reading of Kant’s position is no longer questioned, what non-conceptualism amounts to in Kant’s philosophy remains an open question” (De Sa Pereira 2013, p. 236).

## 1.5 THE CONDITIONS OF THE UNDERSTANDING

But indications of Kant's non-conceptualism are less conclusive than they seem. I discuss the first three types of supposed non-conceptualist evidence in section 8 below, but it is worth rebutting straightaway Kant's most explicit apparent endorsement of non-conceptualism. It is important to consider the passage in full (A89-91/ B122-123):

That objects of sensible intuition must conform to the formal conditions of sensibility which lie a priori in the mind 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.

As the full passage makes clear, Kant's apparent expression of support for non-conceptualism comes during a programmatic exposition. In particular, Kant's concern is to present a *prima facie* consideration contrasting the ease with which he achieved the aims of the Aesthetic, viz. the way intuitions must be subject to the a priori conditions of sensibility, with the difficulty of establishing the conclusion in the Deduction, viz. that intuitions must be subject to the a priori conditions of the understanding as well. Accordingly, I suggest this passage offers the conceptualist two ways of resisting its apparent non-conceptualist thrust, a strong and a more modest conceptualist reading.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> As I will describe it, the strong reading plausibly conforms to Kant's approach in the Transcendental Deduction. However, the argument in the Deduction has also been read as consistent with *non*-conceptualism, and I will therefore not here assume Kant's commitment to the strong reading.

The strong conceptualist reading suggests that Kant's non-conceptualist comments are not made *in propria persona*, but rather constitute the lead-up to a *reductio*.<sup>32</sup> On this reading, Kant's apparent expression of support for non-conceptualism merely serves to illustrate the urgency of proving the opposite thesis.<sup>33</sup> That is, Kant's aim is not to establish that a category like causation "[is] altogether empty, null and meaningless," but rather that it "must [...] be grounded completely a priori in the understanding" (A91/B124). In this way, the strong reading understands Kant's comments as follows: *if* appearances were structured merely by sensibility and not by the understanding, *then* such appearances could fail to conform to the conditions of the understanding, and concepts such as cause and effect could be "null." But this outcome is not to be embraced, but rather constitutes motivation to establish the application of the categories of the understanding to appearances. Accordingly, when Kant writes that "appearances might very well be so constituted that the understanding should not find them to be in accordance with the conditions of its unity," this is not to be understood as a conclusion Kant endorses, but merely as a preamble to Kant going on to establish the necessary application to intuitional appearances of the conditions of the understanding.

But this strong reading may not seem compulsory. After all, it does not follow from Kant setting out to establish the a priori validity of the conditions of the understanding that he aims to do so by adopting the more specific strategy of showing their application to intuition itself. However, it is worth considering that Kant seems to follow a similar approach when considering another case of a possible radical divergence between appearance and understanding (A653/B681-A654/B682):

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<sup>32</sup> For this sort of reading, see Aaron Griffith 2012, and more recently Schafer 2016. As Griffith points out (fn. 17), this understanding is also shared by Ginsborg 2008, p. 70 / 2006 p. 63; Longuenesse 1998, p. 226; Allison 2004, p. 160-161.

<sup>33</sup> Griffith 2012, p. 199.



If among the appearances offering themselves there were such a great variety – I will not say of form (for they might be similar to one another in that) but of content, i.e regarding the manifoldness of existing beings – that even the most acute human, through comparison of one with another, could not detect the least similarity (a case which can at least be thought), then the logical law of genera would not obtain at all, no concept of a genus, nor any other universal concept, indeed no understanding at all would obtain, since it is the understanding that has to do with such concepts.

This is a case where nature's presentations are such that no general concept could get hold.<sup>34</sup>

Kant might seem to respond as predicted by the strong reading:

The logical principle of genera therefore presupposes a transcendental one if it is to be applied to nature (by which I here understand only objects that are given to us). According to that principle, sameness of kind is necessarily presupposed in the manifold of a possible experience (even though we cannot determine its degree a priori), because without it no empirical concepts and hence no experience would be possible.

As on the strong reading, Kant seems to take the problematic counterfactual not at face value, but as a *prima facie* consideration to extend the application of the conditions of the understanding beyond their most obvious context to a more basic level. Thus Kant suggests that beyond the “logical principle” of genera, the understanding is also presupposed in the “manifold of possible experience,” since, counterfactually, we would otherwise not have empirical concepts. Note here Kant's comment that we cannot a priori determine the *degree* of sameness that is necessarily presupposed, thus suggesting that the presupposition of *some* sameness can be known a priori.

Still, the strong reading may appear questionable. In A654/B682 Kant speaks of a “transcendental” application of the relevant principle, which would seem to relate questionably to the “figurative” application that is implicated in intuition. Relatedly, Kant speaks not of “intuition” but of “experience,” which as he makes clear involves “empirical concepts,” which are not obviously required for intuition. Accordingly, it may still seem that Kant's strategy for

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<sup>34</sup> There is variety of forms this might take: nature may be too pluriform and unstructured, but on the other hand it may also suffer from an excess of structural complexity.

the application of the conditions of the understanding does not obviously go as far down as the constitution of intuition itself.

Still, the conceptualist has a more modest defense available. On this more modest reading, the thought is that Kant is here working with a restricted conception of the understanding. That is, as I will explicate below, it is one of the main distinctive features of Kant's considered view of the understanding that it is a faculty that is not restricted to discursive activity of an explicitly conceptual nature. But this need not be the sense of understanding at issue in the above passages, where Kant may be working with a more traditional conception of the understanding, which, as Kant explicates, "is the understanding that has to do with [universal] concepts." For my current purposes, it does not matter whether the weak or the strong conceptualist reading of (A89/B122--A91/B123) is preferred. The availability of both readings clearly shows that the programmatic nature of this passage in the context of Kant's overall project is sufficiently complicated to shed doubt on straightforward non-conceptualist conclusions.

## **1.6 HYLOMORPHISM IN KANT: THE CASE FOR CONCEPTUALISM**

Prior to rebutting the remaining evidence for the non-conceptualist thesis, it is good to get the positive conceptualist case on the table. The most convincing case for conceptualism in Kant's text centers on a hylomorphic strand of thinking running through Kant's view of intuitions, which associates sensibility with mere matter, and understanding with determinative form.<sup>35</sup>

A critical passage in this regard is B152. The passage comes in the context of Kant's introduction of the productive imagination in terms of the distinction between *synthesis intellectualis* – “combination through the understanding” – and *synthesis speciosa* – “figurative synthesis” (B151). By “intellectual synthesis” Kant says he means a synthesis that amounts to “merely intellectual combination,” “which is carried out by the understanding alone.” In contrast, figurative synthesis arises for Kant because we are not creatures merely of understanding, but are also characterized by “a certain form of a priori sensible intuition, which depends on the receptivity of the faculty of representation (sensibility).” And it is this “figurative synthesis” that Kant ties to operations of the imagination. In other words, while for Kant there is a kind of synthesis that pertains to the understanding alone, there is also a kind of synthesis involving sensibility: and it is this synthesis that the imagination enacts. To this extent, the Kantian distinction may appear to fit the non-conceptualist view that associates the imagination with sensibility.

But B152 takes some decisive steps towards conceptualism:

Now since all our intuition is sensible, the imagination, owing to the subjective condition under which alone it can give to the concepts of understanding a corresponding intuition, belongs to *sensibility*. But inasmuch as its synthesis is an expression of spontaneity, which is determinative and not, like sense, determinable merely, and which is therefore able to determine sense a priori in respect of its form in accordance with the unity of apperception, imagination is to that extent a faculty which determines the sensibility a priori; and its synthesis of intuitions, conforming as it does to the *categories*, must be the transcendental synthesis of *imagination*. This synthesis is an action of the understanding on the sensibility.

This is a complex passage, in which Kant appears to introduce the following ideas. Kant's first sentence makes clear that (i) the imagination “belongs” to sensibility to the extent that sensibility is a necessary condition on the functioning of the imagination, since it only in this

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<sup>35</sup> In emphasizing Kant's hylomorphism, I take my cue from Engstrom 2006. In this context, however, I unfortunately have to abstract from some of the compelling sophistications of Engstrom's analysis, focusing instead on the upshot of Engstrom's analysis for non-conceptualist readings of the imagination.

way that the subjective condition of object-presentation is met.<sup>36</sup> However, even as imagination bears a necessary connection to sensibility, (ii) the imagination's spontaneous character entails that the role of the imagination is to determine sensibility. On the other hand, (iii) sensibility itself is merely determinable. Moreover, the imagination's determination is (iv) a priori, (v) in respect of its form, (vi) in accordance with the unity of apperception, (vii) conforming to the categories, and (viii) transcendental. Finally, it follows for Kant that imagination is an (ix) "action of the understanding on the sensibility."

The present context allows us to abstract from some of these complexities, and focus on elements (i)-(iii), (v), and (ix). The first point to note is that (i)-(iii) seem explicitly inconsistent with the reduction of the imagination to sensibility, and the view that sensibility is partially spontaneous. Kant explicitly contrasts spontaneity, which, Kant suggests, has the capacity to determine, with the "determinable only" nature of sense. Textually, therefore, it is simply not an open question whether Kant allows for spontaneity on the part of sensibility: he does not. But the primary point is not textual. As Kant's remark that the imagination determines sensibility in respect of its *form* illustrates, we should understand the opposition between determinative spontaneity and determinable sense in hylomorphic terms. Accordingly, for Kant, attributing active synthesis of sensation to sensibility amounts to conceiving of matter as informing itself. Kant explicitly denies thoughts of this kind (B130):

The combination (*conjunctio*) of a manifold in general can never come to us through the senses, and cannot, therefore, be already contained in the pure form of sensible intuition. For it is an act of spontaneity of the faculty of representation; and since this faculty, to distinguish it from sensibility, must be entitled understanding, all combination—be we conscious of it or not, be it a combination of the manifold of intuition, empirical or non-empirical, or of various concepts—is an act of the understanding. To this act the very general title 'synthesis' may be assigned.

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<sup>36</sup> In light of what follows, it is worth drawing attention to Kant's specific wording that it is *the imagination* which presents objects to the mind, albeit under a sensible condition. This counts strongly against the non-conceptualist suggestion of sensibility itself being a presentational faculty, and counts strongly in favor of Engstrom 2006's suggestion that sensibility should be conceived as a mere medium for the functioning of other capacities.

In contrast, Clinton Tolley's non-conceptualist claim that the imagination is not implicated in intuition may seem in a stronger position, both textually and philosophically. For example, when Kant characterizes imaginative synthesis as a "synthesis of intuitions," a "combination of the manifold of intuition," and "an action of the understanding *on the sensibility*," this may be read in terms of the imagination synthesizing independently provided intuitions.<sup>37</sup> Such a view would seem to respect the merely material character of sensibility by sharply distinguishing it from the spontaneity of imagination, and associating the latter with the understanding. Finally, as discussed above, Tolley could rely on his textual evidence that Kant, after all, seems to attribute to intuition "an absolute unity" (A99), which might seem to obviate any need for synthesis.

However, reflection shows that Kant's hylomorphism also tells against the idea that Kant ascribes intuitions a "basic" form of unity, not produced through synthesis. First, Tolley's reliance on A99 is profoundly misleading. The mention of "absolute unity" comes in a passage entitled "On the synthesis of apprehension in the intuition." In this passage, Kant is concerned to explain how representations at their most rudimentary, generic level constitute mere modifications of the mind, which require a synthesis in order to produce more significant representations, such as of external objects in space. In this way, Kant explicitly attributes "absolute unity" only to "impressions" (*Eindrücke*), basic representations that are not yet characterized by the dimension of time, and in this sense have a unity "contained in one moment." Kant clearly intends "one moment" here is as no period of time at all, but rather merely the very lack of any temporal dimension. *Pace* Tolley, then, "absolute unity" is in a sense no significant unity at all: it is

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<sup>37</sup> Emphasis mine. On the other hand, this position would seem hard pressed to account for Kant's affirmation at (i) that the imagination "belongs to *sensibility*," and thus could not be wholly post-perceptual.

merely the sort of absolute character that can be attributed to a representation *per se*, independent of any meaningful dimensions such as time and space. More specifically, it is certainly not intuitions—representations of objects—that are characterized by “absolute unity.” Rather, intuitional unity is precisely what is to be produced by the synthesis that is the topic of the passage. As Kant writes (A99):

Now in order for *unity* of intuition to come from this manifold [of *Eindrücke*] (as, say, in the representation of space), it is necessary first to run through and then to take together this manifoldness, which action I call the *synthesis of apprehension*.<sup>38</sup>

More fundamentally, we can note that, on reflection, Tolley’s view merely superficially respects the sense in which Kant approaches the relation between sensibility and spontaneity in hylomorphic terms. Tolley respects the hylomorphic conception insofar as his view acknowledges that informing synthesis for Kant would have to be associated with the spontaneity of understanding as opposed to the merely determinable character of sensibility. But Tolley misses the consequences this conclusion has for the status of unformed sensibility as merely material. On Tolley’s view, it would have to be the mere material of sensibility that independently allows for intuition. But as Kant’s discussion at A99 makes clear, the mere matter of sensibility concerns the role of impressions or sensations, not of intuitive representations of objects. It is implausible that intuitions, as opposed to sensations, should have their characteristic object-directedness while being no more informed than sensations. Indeed, Kant appears precisely to contrast intuitions with mere sensations in terms of the latter being merely the material aspect of a hylomorphic unity, as opposed to the way such unity characterizes intuitions. This point gains added urgency when we consider that in the early modern thinking about hylomorphic themes in the context

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<sup>38</sup> Kant’s discussion of the synthesis of apprehension here exhibits a distinction between the treatments of intuitional unity in the A and B editions. In this A-edition passage, Kant includes *pure* intuitions among those the unity of which is constituted through the relevant synthesis (as evidenced by Kant’s focus on the representation of space); in the B-edition this concerns rather the unity of specifically empirical intuition. This point was raised to me by Stephen Engstrom.

of which we should place Kant's view, it is paradigmatically doubtful whether unformed matter can have independent existence at all.<sup>39</sup> In the context of this type of worries about matter, it is precisely the unity provided by an active force that is taken to set genuinely independent, informed entities apart from mere aggregates.<sup>40</sup> Given these considerations, we can see that for Kant the idea of a "basic" intuitional form of unity, unproduced by an exercise of synthesis, would flout the important role of formative spontaneity in uniting mere aggregates.<sup>41</sup>

## 1.7 CONCEPTUALISM AND JUDGMENT

The above considerations make it compelling to ascribe to Kant *some* conceptualist thesis, but critically it has been unclear precisely what sort of conceptualism is at issue. Consider Robert Hanna's characterization of the conceptualist view as suggesting that "we always cognitively encounter [things] only within the framework of discursive rationality," where this "framework" involves concepts understood as "object-categorizing, object-classifying, object-discriminating, and object-identifying cognitive devices."<sup>42</sup> Hanna also suggests that it must "be possible to linguistically convey the content of a concept to someone else who is not directly acquainted with or confronted with the object or objects represented by that conceptual content," such that

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<sup>39</sup> Leibniz provides of course the paradigmatic argument to the effect that mere matter achieves at best mere contiguity between its parts (AG, p. 85). For more on the Leibnizian themes of Kant's thinking about sense and spontaneity, see Chapter 2.

<sup>40</sup> See e.g., M 300, 95-96; LOC 285-7; L 502. See also Garber and Rauzy 2004, p. 33.

<sup>41</sup> For places where Kant explicitly appears to condition unity on a form of synthesis, A79/B104-5, B143.

<sup>42</sup> Hanna 2011, p. 326; Hanna 2008, p. 51. Compare also Hanna 2005, p. 250 and Allais 2009, p. 386.

therefore we can “map the contrast between essentially non-conceptual content and conceptual content onto the classical contrast between knowledge by acquaintance, or immediate experience of the world and oneself, and knowledge by description, or mediated thought about the world and oneself.”<sup>43</sup>

Hanna’s characterization of the conceptualist thesis constitutes a strong endorsement of what Thomas Land has helpfully described as a “judgmentalist” conception of Kant’s view of synthesis.<sup>44</sup> On this conception, the conceptualist thesis that the synthesis of the understanding, the faculty exercised in judgment, is implicated in intuition entails that this synthesis must itself take the form of an exercise of judgment (or alternatively, a form that is in important respects akin to judgment). In particular, as Hanna’s above characterization of conceptualism illustrates, the judgmentalist interpretation of conceptualism assumes that conceptualists conceive of imaginative synthesis as possessing the discursive character of judgment, which on Kant’s understanding is associated with a predicative (or classificatory) nature (A69/B94).<sup>45</sup> Moreover, insofar as judgment is in principle unrestricted in the range of concepts it might implicate, the judgmentalist understands conceptualists not to impose restrictions on the conceptual content of intuitions.

But *pace* the judgmentalist, even as conceptualism for Kant amounts to the implication of the understanding in intuition, the relation Kant envisages between intuition and judgment (and

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<sup>43</sup> Hanna 2008, p. 52.

<sup>44</sup> Land 2015. Land’s version of the judgmentalist thesis is slightly different than the one I am considering in this paper. On Land’s rendering, judgmentalism is the thought that *concepts* can only be employed in judgment, which thesis Land disputes by suggesting that concepts can also be implicated non-discursively in intuition. In contrast, my anti-judgmentalism does not challenge the thought that concepts are proper only to judgment, but merely asserts that the understanding has an exercise independent of judgment. Indeed, I suggest this points up an important sense in which the relevant activity is independent not merely of judgment, but also of concepts.

<sup>45</sup> See also Land 2015, p. 61.



the way either relates to concepts) is anything but straightforward. Consider the way Kant paradigmatically expresses his conceptualism (A79/B104-5):

The same function which gives unity to the various representations *in a judgment* also gives unity to the mere synthesis of different representations *in an intuition*.

This passage does not posit a simple but rather a complex relation between the nature of intuitions and the nature of judgments. Kant's claim is that the same *function* endows intuition and judgment with unity, rather than the claim either that judgment and intuition have the very same unity, or the claim that judgment itself endows intuitions with unity.<sup>46</sup> It can seem hard to see what Kant has in mind with this talk of "function," and its upshot for the conceptualist view. I will provide a positive view only in the later chapters of this dissertation.<sup>47</sup>

For the immediate purposes of this chapter, however, it is most important to note what the dictum does *not* imply. In particular, it does not follow from the idea that intuitions bear a synthetic unity provided by the understanding that intuitions for Kant would have generic, empirical conceptual content. Accordingly, conceptualism—*pace* Hanna—need not adopt a "classificatory," "discursive," or "descriptive" view of intuitions. It is worth noting that this point extends even to the "categories." Categories capture the nature of synthesis. However, it is important that Kant describes them as capturing this imaginative synthesis "generally represented."<sup>48</sup> Accordingly, we need not think of the categories as themselves contents of intuitions, as these are

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<sup>46</sup> For similar language, B143 (italics mine): "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. Now the categories are just these functions of judgment, insofar as they are employed in determination of the manifold of a given intuition [...] Consequently, the manifold in a given intuition is necessarily subject to the categories."

<sup>47</sup> Esp. Chapter 6 below.

<sup>48</sup> Compare also the last segment of the dictum itself: "The same function that gives unity to the different representations in a judgment also gives unity to the mere synthesis of different representations in an intuition, which, *expressed generally*, is called the pure concept of the understanding" (italics changed).

synthesized by the understanding. Rather, the categories in some sense abstract from, and thus capture “generally,” the nature of this synthesis at a conceptual level.<sup>49</sup>

In sum, we can put this conclusion in two ways: (i) insofar as the disputed thesis about intuitions is “state conceptualism,” i.e., a view of the types of capacities required for perception, it is clear that intuitions require the *capacity* to understand and therefore to judge, but it is not clear that their *exercise* in intuition must equally take the form of judgment, e.g., in being discursive or involving classification; (ii) insofar as the disputed thesis is “content conceptualism,” i.e., a view of the contents of perception, we should note that Kant’s concern is most clearly with the categories of the understanding, as opposed to concepts generally, and even concerning the categories we should be careful about taking conceptualism to imply that perception has “categorical content.”<sup>50</sup>

## 1.8 NON-CONCEPTUALIST EVIDENCE REVISITED

Let’s now return to the non-conceptualist evidence discussed in section 4. Consider De Sa Pereira’s non-conceptualist reading of the *Wilder* example:

Non-conceptual content is defined typically as content that can be ascribed to a subject even when she lacks the concepts required to specify that content canonically. Thus, in the most famous Kantian example, a person can see a country house in the distance as the very same object as someone else who is acquainted with it determinately as a dwelling established for men, even though the first person lacks the relevant concept of a house and the partial concepts of roof, windows, etc., required to specify with authority what her visual experience represents (see *JL*: V, Ak 9: 33). Stated in these terms, it is hard to see how anyone could possibly deny that, from

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<sup>49</sup> They are, in other words, analytic in their form as concepts, even as they take as their content the nature of synthesis as such.

<sup>50</sup> Compare McDowell 2009b.

experience, we are always capable of representing something we do not understand. Put this way, the question of whether there are non-conceptual contents is hardly an interesting one.<sup>51</sup>

From our above discussion of Kant's conceptualism, we can now note that De Sa Pereira's unequivocal conclusion from the *Wilder* case seems premature. In particular, the conceptualist has two readings available to rebut non-conceptualist readings of the case.

First there's an important hylomorphic aspect in Kant's description of the case, which renders its upshot for conceptualism significantly more nuanced. For Kant, the *Wilder* "admittedly" represents the same object as does the cultured person. Kant's concessionary tone should alert us to the possibility that he will attempt to establish a conclusion that *prima facie* seems in tension with the stated point. This conclusion can be appreciated when we are appropriately attuned to the hylomorphic character of Kant's claim that "But as to form, this cognition of one and the same object is different in the two." On De Sa Pereira's understanding, this phrase is intended to allow two different varieties of cognition which differ in respect of whether they implicate concepts, but share a common nature in equally implicating intuitions. But given Kant's hylomorphism, the opposite conclusion might seem warranted. For Kant, the *form* of cognition is different depending on whether the subject has the concept "house" available, and accordingly, the presence of concepts (at least partially) determines the very nature of perception. To be sure, here the non-conceptualist will follow Tolley's line in objecting that what concepts inform is *cognition* not *intuition*, and suggest Kant makes this clear by describing the form of cognition as "intuition and concept." This reading would perhaps not seem ruled out by Kant's example, but neither does it seem forced. Note, for example, that Kant is discussing a case of

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<sup>51</sup> De Sa Pereira 2014, p. 1.

seeing, not one of conceptual knowledge.<sup>52</sup> Note also that Kant suggests that seeing can be “intuition and concept *at the same time*,” as opposed to intuition preceding conceptual classification. In sum, the *Wilder* case does not unequivocally rule out that concept-possession informs intuitions in cases where concepts are available.

Second, *pace* De Sa Pereira’s characterization of conceptualism as the view that the subject can “canonically specify the contents of perception,” the conceptualist question is rather whether the categories of the understanding are implicated in perception. Accordingly, even if Kant’s text is appropriately read as isolating the nature of intuition from possession of concepts like “house,” the *Wilder* is a rational human being with capacities for thought, and therefore the example would seem moot on the question of the way intuitions relate to the categorial concepts of the understanding. Finally, De Sa Pereira would seem wrong to conclude from the fact that the concept “house” is not implicated in the *Wilder*’s intuition that it must involve corresponding non-conceptual content. An alternative possibility is that Kant thinks perception does not represent the object’s house-nature at all. In any case, either alternative is *prima facie* consistent with intuition implicating categorial content.

Let’s turn to the incongruent counterpart case. Here the non-conceptualist reading similarly depends on an interpretation of conceptualism on which contents serve to conceptually specify intuited objects. Since the distinction between incongruent counterparts cannot be captured in the descriptive, communicable concepts that Hanna associates with conceptualism, Hanna concludes the case constitutes a counterexample to the conceptualist view. But once the more nuanced conceptualist idea is in view, the force of the non-conceptualist case disappears. It must not be

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<sup>52</sup> This is not in principle inconsistent with non-conceptualism, since the non-conceptualist might suggest that Kant distinguishes non-conceptual forms of seeing from conceptual forms seeing (seeing vs. seeing ‘as’), where intuitions correspond to non-conceptual seeing.

assumed that the categorial concepts Kant implicates in intuition are descriptive or communicable. To be sure, there is some independent reason to think that spatial differences between incongruent counterparts are non-conceptual, since for Kant spatio-temporal characteristics are associated with structures of sensibility. But this is inconsistent merely with the notion that intuitions implicate *exclusively* conceptual content, and not with the claim that intuitions necessarily implicate categorial conceptual content. More importantly, absent a more precise account of the character and role of the categories of the understanding in Kant's view of intuitional presentation, we should not, as Hanna does, assume a straightforward separation between sensibility and understanding, on which sensibility by itself imbues intuited objects with their spatial characteristics. That is, insofar as the intuitional role of the understanding is associated with intuitive presentation *simpliciter*, it plausibly also informs sensibility to produce spatial representations. This general reflection should shed doubt on the suggestion that there could be intuitional representation of attributes of objects, including spatial attributes, without implication of the understanding. So there is no simple argument from incongruent counterparts against conceptualism.

Kant's distinction between *kennen* and *erkennen*, finally, admits of structurally similar treatment. When Kant writes that "the understanding can intuit nothing, the senses can think nothing" and urges "carefully separating and distinguishing the one from the other," he affirms the important distinction between thinking about objects (and the specific application of conceptual capacities in doing so) and perceptually intuiting objects. But recognizing the distinct nature of thought is not at odds with acknowledging the involvement of the same faculty in intuition. Likewise, it is not problematic to distinguish between perception presenting objects for cognition (*kennen*), and the further cognition of classifying such objects under concepts (*erkennen*).

To be sure, this leaves the problem of Kant's attribution of perceptual *kennen* to non-rational animals, which would seem at odds with any form of conceptualism. But here, too, the conceptualist has resources available to question non-conceptualist interpretations. Recall the hylomorphic aspect of the *Wilder* case, on which the presence or absence of concepts arguably provides a distinct form to subjects' representations of a house, even as the object is in both cases intuited (in the case of the *Wilder*, "merely intuited"). A similar solution might be thought to apply to the case of animal cognition. There is an obvious sense in which non-rational animals do not traffic in full-blown cognition through concepts, but do represent objects in ways that go beyond mere sensations. In this sense, one might think *erkennen* is restricted to rational animals in a way that *kennen* is not. But taking Kant's hylomorphism seriously, it does not follow that *kennen* in rational and non-rational animals shares a common nature. Accordingly, the conceptualist can insist that in rational subjects *kennen* is informed by the spontaneity of the understanding, while the same is not true for creatures lacking a faculty of this rational nature, even if such creatures are capable of mental processes that are in important respects similar to human *kennen*.

## 1.9 CONCLUSION

Non-conceptualists have argued that for Kant the faculty of sensibility independently provides intuitions, since either synthesis by the imagination is an activity of the senses, or intuitions possess a basic unity that is not produced by mental activity. I have argued that both

views are inconsistent with Kant's hylomorphic conception of intuitions, and Kant's thought that the same function of cognition characterizes both intuition and judgment. But I have argued that it remains a nuanced question what forms of conceptualism can be ascribed to Kant on this basis. In particular, I have suggested that non-conceptualists have typically failed to acknowledge forms of conceptualism that respect the sophisticated relation Kant envisages between exercises of the understanding in judgment and in intuition. Accordingly, there are versions of conceptualism that are *prima facie* consistent with textual evidence frequently cited to support non-conceptualism, viz. Kant's distinction between *kennen* and *erkennen* and his example of the *Wilder*, the case of incongruent counterparts, and Kant's admonishment to distinguish intuition from thought.

## 2.0 SENSIBILITY: MATTER OF INTUITION

Recent readers of Kant have sharply disagreed on the question whether Kant should be considered as holding a “non-conceptualist” or a “conceptualist” view of the nature of perception. The disagreement concerns the relationship between sensibility and understanding (A15/B29), the two faculties whose cooperation amounts to cognition. Do sensibility and understanding constitute independent partners in the joint venture of cognition? Or is the relation more complicated in that the understanding plays an indispensable role even in states associated with sensibility? Contrast:

### **Dualism**

Kant’s account of cognition recognizes sensible and intellectual states that are independent in some important sense, the combination of which constitutes cognition full-blown.<sup>53</sup>

### **Monism**

For Kant the spontaneity of the understanding must play a role in anything that counts as a state of cognition, including sensible states.

Although the dialectic is not entirely straightforward, a commitment to Dualism will typically incline a reading towards non-conceptualism, while Monism fosters conceptualism.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> A naturally Kantian way of speaking here might be to suggest that both faculties independently contribute representations (*Vorstellungen*). But this would set the bar too high for the Dualist I consider in this paper, who might be content with sensible provisions that fall short of representations proper.

<sup>54</sup> Recall the complexity in Chapter 1. Some weaker varieties of conceptualist positions are consistent with Dualism (Allais 2015 and discussion by Schafer 2016). By contrast, Monism essentially entails at least *some* form of conceptualism. Note, however, that Monism does not entail commitments concerning the role or nature of conceptual contents in Kant’s view of perceptual contact with the world (for views that do, Ginsborg 2006, 2008; Abela 2002). Indeed, Monism does not entail even merely categorial conceptual involvement in perception (Griffith



In this context, much turns on Kant's characterization of the relation between understanding and sensibility as a relation between form and matter, and as the determination of a determinable (Engstrom 2006.) For Kant it seems to be the *spontaneity* of the understanding that accounts for its informing role. Consider, for example, Kant's comments on the role of "synthesis" in cognition (B152):

synthesis is an expression of spontaneity, which is determinative and not, like sense, determinable merely, and which is therefore able to determine sense a priori in respect of its form in accordance with the unity of apperception [...] This synthesis is an action of the understanding on the sensibility.

Note here the opposition Kant suggests between the determinative nature of spontaneity and the determinable character of sense, such that "therefore [spontaneity] is able to determine sense a priori in respect of its form."<sup>55</sup> Monists—but not Dualists—take it to follow that even cognitively "obscure" states such as intuitions (*Anschauungen*) (JL 9:33) must implicate the spontaneity of the understanding. In Ernst Cassirer's trenchant expression,

The matter is [...] as follows: the being of intuition as definite (and what would an existence be like which was completely undetermined?) depends upon the function of the understanding.<sup>56</sup>

An entity's form determines its nature. So the Monist holds that ultimately Kant takes all cognitive states to bear the nature of the single spontaneous faculty of understanding, even if this faculty functions under conditions of sensibility.<sup>57</sup>

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2012, Connolly 2013.) At bottom, the Monist thought merely is that perceptual cognition must be understood as the exercise of a single capacity.

<sup>55</sup> Clearly this passage does not provide conclusive evidence for an association between spontaneity and form. It might be held, for example, that the relevant connection is between spontaneity and the unity of apperception, rather than form *per se*. My aim in this paper is not to defend the Monist thesis itself. But I believe my discussion below makes compelling the thought that it is form *per se* that is associated with spontaneity, rather than form only in connection with apperception.

<sup>56</sup> Cassirer 1967, p. 141.

<sup>57</sup> There is an important distinction here between the understanding operating under conditions imposed by sensibility and conditions provided by sensibility. The former might imply that the understanding is itself unconstrained and limited merely by human sensibility, while the latter might imply that the understanding is itself a limited capacity, which requires sensibility for its functioning. In this paper it is the latter I have in mind (see my conclusion at §5 below).

In this chapter I will focus on a source for Dualism that is apparently unaffected by the Monist observation of Kant's association between spontaneity and form. The point concerns Kant's conception of sensations (*Empfindungen*).<sup>58</sup> In particular, the consideration is that Kant characterizes *Empfindungen* as providing the *material* of cognition (R619 AA 15: 268):

The first building block [*Grundstück*] of our cognition is *Empfindung*. One designates [*Empfindungen*] the representations in which the mind is viewed as merely passive, to the extent it is affected [*gewirkt*] by the presence of a thing. [The *Empfindungen*] constitute at the same time the material of all our cognition.<sup>59</sup>

This is a complicated passage, and my argument will turn on some of its details. But note Kant's characterization of sensation as “the first building block” and the “material” of cognition. The Dualist thought is this: it is perfectly consistent with conceding the Monist claim that for Kant the understanding provides cognition with its *form* to also recognize an independent contribution from sensibility as providing cognition with its *matter* (however more precisely this is conceived).

Indeed this seems to be just what Kant is saying in passages like the above, and so many interpreters have understood him.<sup>60</sup> In particular, this would make sense of sensibility providing genuinely independent deliverances, which nevertheless stand yet to be informed as states of cognition. Indeed, this may seem to be what Kant has in mind when he allocates to the understanding the exclusive function of “combining” the sensible manifold (B130):

The combination (*conjunctio*) of a manifold in general can never come to us through the senses [...] For it is an act of spontaneity of the faculty of representation; and since this faculty, to distinguish it from sensibility, must be entitled understanding, all combination—be we conscious of it or not, be it a combination of the manifold of intuition, empirical or non-empirical, or of various concepts—is an act of the understanding. To this act the very general title ‘synthesis’ may be assigned.

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<sup>58</sup> I will use the English ‘sensation’ and the German ‘*Empfindung*’ interchangeably.

<sup>59</sup> For similar language, consider Kant's characterization in A19-20/B34 (emphasis mine): “the effect of an object on the capacity for representation, *insofar as we are affected by it*.” I discuss this passage below.

<sup>60</sup> E.g., Allison 1989; Aquila 1983; Falkenstein 1990, 1995; George 1981.

It seems natural enough to think that if there is “combining” then there must be something “combined.” As such, it seems the understanding is tasked with “combining” and thereby providing form to cognition, while sensibility is tasked with delivering that which is “combined,” the matter.

This picture yields an interpretation of Kantian Dualism that ostensibly occupies a comfortable middle ground vis-à-vis Monism. Sensibility and understanding may not stand over against one another as producing independent, fully-formed cognitive representations, but they do stand over against another in a different sense: as providing a “manifold” of “sensory material” versus providing “determinative form.” Indeed this form of Dualism would seem difficult for the Monist to defuse.<sup>61</sup> Because insofar as the Monist thesis turns on recognizing Kant’s association of spontaneity with form, it seems powerless to oppose sensibility playing a merely material role.

But I will argue that the Dualist underestimates the radical character of the Monist conception of cognition. On the Monist understanding, Kant does not recognize the reality of *Empfindungen* apart from their existence as informed by the understanding. In particular, I argue the Dualist misses the specific notion of “matter” that Kant associates with *Empfindung*. This notion of “matter” does not carry connotations of constitution. Rather, I suggest Kant trades on a specific Leibnizian elaboration of the distinction between primary and secondary matter, i.e., the distinction between matter without form, and matter with form.<sup>62</sup> On the Leibnizian elaboration of this view, primary matter is associated not with *constitution* but with *passivity*. Moreover, matter in Leibniz’s sense does not constitute an independent metaphysical reality that might in

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<sup>61</sup> I will simply assume here a type of Monist that wants to resist this version of Dualism. I develop a more positive understanding of a Monist view of perceptual cognition in Chapter 5 and 6 below.

<sup>62</sup> For important recent discussion, Duarte 2015.

sense (logically or temporally) precede form. Rather, matter is merely an abstraction from informed reality. I suggest this is the sense of “material” Kant has in mind. If I am correct in this, we should take seriously that *Empfindungen*, as Kant writes in the above passage, are states “in which the mind *is viewed* as merely passive” (italics mine). I will suggest that such expressions flag a carefully inserted qualificatory and aspectual tone to Kant’s discussion of *Empfindungen* which points to the important sense in which for Kant (R177, AA 15:65) “*Empfindungen* are not representations, but are the material for them.” So the thesis I defend is:

### **Empfindungen**

For Kant sensations are the primary matter of cognition. Sensations do not constitute independent perceptual states, but abstractions from perceptual states intended to capture a passive aspect of such states.

I will proceed as follows. In §1 I introduce the state of debate about the character of Kant’s *Empfindungen*. In §2 I note the relevant aspects of Leibniz’s views on form and matter. In §3 I draw out the implications of Leibniz’s view for the way Kant considers *Empfindungen* as “material.” In §4 I briefly return to the rich (post-)Leibnizian background of Kant’s thought.

Since my argument turns on an affinity between Kant’s thinking and Leibnizian substance metaphysics, I should start on a brief historical note in support of this approach. The philosophical environment that shaped the interests and views of the young Kant was dominated by Leibniz expositors like Christian Wolff and Alexander Baumgarten. Much discussion in this period centered on the basic tenets of Leibniz’s metaphysics, including: the need for and nature of simple substances; the representational capacities of such substances; and the relation of such substances to space, time and causality. Kant’s earliest works constitute direct engagements with these Leibnizian debates. We need merely consider such titles of Kant’s works as *Living Forces* (1746) and *Physical Monadology* (1756) to see the centrality of Leibniz to Kant’s early

thinking.<sup>63</sup> But as Kant's contemporaries noted, Leibniz continues to loom large in the critical period as well.<sup>64</sup> To be sure, we need not go as far as Kant's correspondent Eberhard, who notoriously proclaimed that "there is nothing true in the [first] *Critique* that is not already to be found in Leibniz."<sup>65</sup> But as I hope to make compelling in this chapter, there is nevertheless a sense in which we should take seriously Kant's own claim, in reply to Eberhard, of providing "the true apology for Leibniz" (D, AA 8 250).<sup>66</sup>

## 2.1 THE NATURE OF SENSATION

In one important passage, Kant characterizes *Empfindungen* as (A19-20/B34): "the effect of an object on the capacity for representation, insofar as we are affected by it." This is an interesting passage since it combines two features that Kant repeatedly associates with sensation, but which may seem in some tension. On the one hand, sensations are "the effect of an object," i.e., their description makes reference to an external entity, namely as the object of affection. On the other hand, sensations seem intended to capture a distinctly subjective side of this process of affection. As Rolf George writes, "[t]he rider 'in so as far as we are affected by it' is crucial. It is to convey that if merely a sensation is present in the mind, no object is represented."<sup>67</sup> In interpretations of Kant's view of sensations, these two aspects have tended to pull apart.

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<sup>63</sup> For exposition of Kant's early thinking see Watkins 2006; see also Svare 2006. To be sure, Kant is known to have deplored some of his early Leibnizian works (Svare 2006). But this may have more to do with the (perceived) failure of their engagement with Leibnizian thought, rather than a repudiation of their subject matter *per se*.

<sup>64</sup> Leibniz is, in fact, the philosopher Kant cites most in the first *Critique* (Jauernig 2008).

<sup>65</sup> Eberhard 1968, p. 289. For discussion, see Allison 2012, p. 189.

<sup>66</sup> To some ears this cannot seem right, given Kant's well-known rebuke of Leibniz in the Amphiboly section of the *Critique* for having "intellectualized the appearances." I answer this objection in section 2.5 below.

<sup>67</sup> George 1981, p. 239.

Some philosophers (George 1981, Kumar 2014) have considered the subjective character of sensations to be their critical feature, focusing on other passages where Kant seems to make this explicit (A320/B376; R683, AA 15; italics mine):

That perception (*Perzeption*) [i.e., representation with consciousness] which relates *solely to the subject*, as the modification of its state, [is sensation].<sup>68</sup>

Appearance is a representation of the senses, to the extent it relates to an object; sensation: if it relates *merely to the subject*.

In particular, Rolf George (1981) has taken Kant's characterization of sensations as subjective as evidence of his adherence to the so-called "sensationalist" doctrine, i.e., the view that the most basic states produced through sense-affection are non-intentional sensations. George finds the *locus classicus* for this view in Malebranche:

It seems that Malebranche was the first to hold that external impingements upon the senses must initially result in sensations, merely subjective modifications of the mind. The important insight here is not that all knowledge of external things begins with sensory awareness—many others held this view—and that some elaboration of the sensory input by central functions of the mind is needed before one can properly speak of knowledge or perception. It was, rather, that the mental states initially induced are non-intentional or non-referential.<sup>69</sup>

George's attribution of "sensationalism" to Kant is supposed to gain further plausibility from its apparent endorsement by Johannes Nicolaus Tetens, whose work Kant allegedly consulted when writing.<sup>70</sup> Consider, for example, the following passage from Tetens, which seems along Kant's above-noted lines in characterizing *Empfindungen* as alterations of a subject's state:

In sensation [*Empfindung*] comes [*entsteht*] an alteration [*Veränderung*] of our state, a new modification [*Modification*] in the soul. I direct my eyes to the sun. Something happens here, and I feel something, sense [*empfinde*] it. The impression [*Eindruck*] comes in this case from the outside; [...] the felt alteration is the *Empfindung*.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Falkenstein argues that the *Stufenleiter* at (A320/B376) should not be taken at face value, since it comes in the context merely of Kant distancing his notion of "idea" from those of preceding empiricists (1990, p. 114). Kumar, for his part, disputes Falkenstein's contention (Kumar 2014, fn. 54).

<sup>69</sup> George 1981, p. 229. For similar views, see Kitcher 1993, Aquila 1983, Kumar 2014.

<sup>70</sup> For the claim that Kant looked at Tetens while writing, Hamann's letter to Herder (May 17, 1779): "Kant is working busily on his moral (sic.) of pure reason, and Tetens is always before him." Quoted in Manfred Kuehn 1987, p. 143. For discussion see Kumar 2014, p. 283; Kitcher 1993, p. 68.

<sup>71</sup> Tetens 1913, pp. 161-162. In turn, the source for Tetens' sensationalism seems to be Étienne Condillac (see Condillac 1971, 1930).

But understanding Kant's view of *Empfindungen* along sensationist lines is not uncontroversial. There are other passages in which Kant seems to emphasize the alternative aspect of sensations, i.e., their relation to objects of affection. As noted, Kant frequently speaks of sensations as the "material" of cognition of external objects. Kant at times identifies sensation as the material of intuition (A42/B60), and at other times Kant introduces sensation as "corresponding" to the matter of appearance, i.e., as corresponding to the *objects* of intuition (A723-B751; A581-B609). Grounded in these passages, Lorne Falkenstein provides a reading of sensations that emphasizes not their subjectivity, but their role in external object-cognition.<sup>72</sup> For Falkenstein, "the 'matter' of appearance, presumably, is [...] the stuff it is made of."<sup>73</sup> Accordingly, sensation cannot on pain of inconsistency be the material both of intuition and of appearance. Falkenstein resolves this conflict by taking seriously the idea that sensations *constitute* intuitions, but *correspond* to appearances. As such, "there is some sort of correlation between what exists as sensation and what is referred to as a component or property of the object." In particular, sensations "designate a particular content in appearances."<sup>74</sup> Indeed for Falkenstein, sensations are taken as *inferential grounds* for the nature of affecting objects:

the objects referred to through perception are taken to be distinct entities to which we ascribe a degree of influence or force based on the intensity of our sensations. Rather than being a relation of identity, the 'correspondence' represented between sensation in our perception and force in the object is a relation of effect to an inferred cause.<sup>75</sup>

*Pace* George, Falkenstein concludes that sensations are after all not wholly subjective, since their nature is explicitly tied to certain features of the objects of perception.

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<sup>72</sup> E.g., Falkenstein 1990. See also Falkenstein 1995.

<sup>73</sup> Falkenstein 1990, p. 66.

<sup>74</sup> Falkenstein 1990, pp. 67- 69.

<sup>75</sup> Falkenstein 1990, p. 70. Indeed, Falkenstein's view is not merely that sensations are effects with a certain intensity, but more specifically, that "sensations must be physical effects on the body of the subject." (Falkenstein 1990, p. 83).

The disagreement between George and Falkenstein about the subjective character of sensations leads to a second dispute concerning sensations' spatio-temporal properties. Again there seems to be tension in Kant's text. On the one hand, Kant seems to explicitly deny that sensations have spatial character in lacking "extensive magnitude" (B209), since "In mere succession existence is always vanishing and recommencing, and never has the least magnitude" (A183/B226).<sup>76</sup> George concludes that "it is evident that Kant took the spatial and extended nature of objects to be the result of an interpretation placed upon sequences of sensations."<sup>77</sup> On the other hand, Falkenstein suggests that sensations must themselves be spatio-temporally determinate in order to facilitate the cognition of objects in time and space. (I discuss Falkenstein's specific argument to this conclusion in §4 below.)<sup>78</sup>

Whatever interpreters' views on the above debates about the nature of *Empfindungen*, in general a focus on sensation has fostered the above-noted Dualist readings of Kant's view of cognition. These Dualist views are sometimes described as "constructivist."<sup>79</sup> Constructivists take a "bottom-up" perspective on Kant's conception of cognition. They see Kant as aiming to explain full-blown representational intentionality given a relatively austere basis of sensory input. As Richard Aquila writes, representing the approach: "Like George, I connect Kant's need to introduce an element of intentionality with the fact that 'sensation' as such does not constitute

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<sup>76</sup> George 1981, pp. 248-9. Longuenesse 1998 (pp. 299-300) agrees with the a-temporal characterization of sensation.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Falkenstein 1990, p. 64. Falkenstein recognizes that there are passages in which Kant appears to deny that sensations have spatial dimensions (A99; B208), but takes his argument to show that this cannot be Kant's considered view.

<sup>79</sup> Here I apply the term "constructivism" more broadly than sometimes done, when it is restricted to views that conceive of mental states as strictly constituted by more primitive ones. In my use of "constructivism," no such claim is implied.



mental ‘reference.’”<sup>80</sup> Further, constructivists see Kant’s view of representational intentionality as the result of a multi-tiered cognitive system in which successive processes of “synthesis” produce states that are more sophisticated than their predecessors.<sup>81</sup> Constructivist readings have differed as to the exact nature of the “bottom-up” synthesizing process, and in particular, the stage at which intentional reference is attained. The most common view is that intentionality arises with judgment. This view, for example, is presented by Allison:

What judgment ‘produces’ from itself is the representation of objects, that is to say, objectively valid judgments. The understanding is, therefore, spontaneous in the sense that it ‘constitutes’ objectivity or objective reference in and through the act of judgment, and it does this by synthesizing the manifold of sensible intuition.<sup>82</sup>

But this view is not universal, and other philosophers have suggested that Kant recognizes representational significance prior to judgment.<sup>83</sup> In particular, such philosophers recognize what Thomas Land has described as a “two-species view of the exercise of spontaneity,” on which Kant distinguishes between combination “of the manifold of intuition” and the combination of “several concepts in judgment” (A79/B104-5).<sup>84</sup> On this form of constructivism, it remains true that Kant takes a “bottom-up” view of representational intentionality, but such intentionality is not attained in a single way or at a single stage, but rather in different ways in intuition and in judgment.

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<sup>80</sup> Aquila 1983, p. 186n. Compare also descriptions of Kant’s project as concerning “how a mental state could be ‘intentional’” (Kitcher 1990, p. 66), and the way “The aggregation and coordination of sensory impressions produce objects, reference.” (George 1981, pp. 240-241).

<sup>81</sup> As Falkenstein details his view of the process (Falkenstein 1990, pp. 64-65):

The picture Kant draws of the cognitive process consists of three moments: the presentation of data, the processing of data, and the output of knowledge claims. The moment of data processing is referred to as synthesis and the original output of processing as concept. Concepts can in turn be subjected to higher level processing, yielding propositions or what Kant called judgments, and this state of processing is in fact referred to specifically as judgments. Judgments can in their own right be subject to a yet higher level of processing, yielding new judgments.

<sup>82</sup> Allison 1989, p. 94. For similar approaches, see also Paton 1936, Buroker 2006, Bird 2006, Bennet 1966. See Land 2006, fn. 10.

<sup>83</sup> Longuenesse 1998 constitutes a prominent example.

<sup>84</sup> Land 2006, p. 196.

## 2.2 LEIBNIZ ON PRIMARY AND SECONDARY MATTER

On my understanding, it is doubtful whether Kant's account of *Empfindungen* can support a "bottom-up" view of perceptual cognition. The sense in which Kant describes sensation as "material" implies that *Empfindungen* cannot exist independent of the informing influence of spontaneity. Therefore *Empfindung* cannot precede spontaneity either temporally or logically.<sup>85</sup> To see why, we should turn to Kant's Leibnizian heritage.

Leibniz is most familiar from his *Monadology*: the notoriously cryptic metaphysical program positing an infinite multitude of mind-like, atomistic simple substances. But for our purposes it is helpful to also consider Leibniz's views in some earlier works.<sup>86</sup> Instead, carving Leibniz's corpus at the joints requires recognizing an early mechanist phase as well as least two

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<sup>85</sup> Consider, for example, that in the Axioms of Intuition Kant does not treat *Empfindung* as a basis from which intuition is to be built up. To be sure, this does not rule out other senses in which for Kant sensation may be more primitive or basic than the informed representational states of which it is the material component.

<sup>86</sup> For some interpreters it is positively a mistake to view Leibniz's oeuvre through the prism of Leibniz's late work (e.g., Garber 1997, Garber and Rauzy 2004, Adams 1994, p. 308ff for discussion.) As Garber writes (Garber 2008, p. 65):

The 'Monadology' is a particularly unfortunate text on which to ground an understanding of Leibniz's philosophy [...] it is not clear why it was written or the status it had in Leibniz's own mind. The text was never published, and was probably not intended for publication, nor was it widely circulated. It sets Leibniz's view out in neat little packages and misses the richness of dialogue and discussion characteristic of Leibniz's letters and other writings. It also misses the way in which Leibniz's thought fits into the dialectic of different views at the end of the seventeenth century, and gives almost nothing of the motivation that drove Leibniz to introduce monads in the world.

But Garber's view of Leibniz's thinking as in constant development remains controversial, and need not be assumed for my purposes.

phases of neo-Aristotelian substance-metaphysics (divided e.g., by their stance on the reality of corporeal substance). Our present purposes allow us to abstract from some of these exegetical details, and focus instead on several broad themes motivating and running throughout Leibniz's Aristotelian thinking.<sup>87</sup> In particular, we need to get in view some basic aspects of Leibniz's development of an Aristotelian substance metaphysics in terms of a *hylomorphic taxonomy of intrinsic substantial forces*.

To illuminate Leibniz's account of substance in terms of forces, we need to appreciate its origins in Leibniz's rejection of Cartesian mechanism, both its metaphysics and its dynamics. The relevant Cartesian mechanism abandoned Aristotelian substances in favor of a material substance defined in terms of extension. In Eric Watkins' description of the view:

According to Descartes, bodies do not consist of substantial forms and primary matter, as scholastic Aristotelians had thought; nor, as Leibniz understands him, are they the seats of active causal powers by means of which they could cause changes of motion in each other; rather, as purely geometrical figures, they are simply extended in space.<sup>88</sup>

Leibniz's philosophy is best understood as a wholesale repudiation of this broadly Cartesian view in favor of a rehabilitation of (neo-)Aristotelian metaphysics. For our purposes, we can make do with a relatively simple-minded summary of the thrust of Leibniz's resistance to the Cartesian view. In particular, there are two points worth noting, one concerning Leibniz's rejection of Cartesian metaphysics and one concerning Leibniz's rejection of Cartesian dynamics.

Leibniz grounds his critique of the Cartesian metaphysics in an argument that a substance must have "a form of some kind" such as to provide it with "genuine unity," as opposed to being

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<sup>87</sup> A further difficulty in relating Kant to Leibniz is textual-historical. During Kant's life many of Leibniz's works remained unpublished, and among the published works it is not clear which Kant read (for discussion, Garber 2008, p. 65). I find these textual considerations not especially worrisome, because as Kant's early works attest, his philosophical environment was saturated with Leibnizian thought in a way that doubtless provided Kant access to Leibnizian themes in ways that transcend text.

<sup>88</sup> Watkins 2006, p. 266.

a “mere aggregate.”<sup>89</sup> Leibniz finds such genuine unities in the ‘soul,’ the ‘self,’ or ‘me’ (A 2: 72; AG 89):

each extended mass can be considered as composed of two or a thousand others; there exists only an extension achieved through contiguity. Thus one will never find a body of which one can say that it is truly a substance. It will always be an aggregate of many. Or rather, it will not be a real entity, since the parts making it up are subject to the same difficulty, and since one never arrives at any real entity, because entities made up by aggregation have only as much reality as their constituent parts.

A substantial unity requires a thoroughly indivisible and naturally indestructible being [...] which can be found in a soul or substantial form, on the model of what is called ‘me.’

As Leibniz makes clear in the first passage, extension does not meet his criteria for substance-hood because it fails to provide for metaphysical unity. Extended matter is indefinitely divisible, and lacks metaphysically basic constituents. Therefore, Leibniz concludes, extended material cannot qualify as metaphysically basic. As Leibniz famously formulates his criterion (G II 96-97/AG 85): “I consider as an axiom this identical proposition, which receives two meanings only through a change in accent; namely, that what is not truly *a* being is not truly a *being*.”

In the second above passage, Leibniz posits the way his metaphysics meets this criterion, i.e., by the (re-)introduction of Aristotelian souls. That it is an Aristotelian notion of soul Leibniz has in mind is clear from the way Leibniz divides ‘souls’ in broadly Aristotelian fashion according to their capacities, distinguishing the lowest class of self-sustaining souls (M 48) from souls with perception and memory (M 19) and from rational and apperceptive souls (M 82).

In turn, Leibniz’s rejection of Cartesian dynamics centers on the Cartesian abandonment of substances as seats of irreducible forces. Cartesian dynamics centers on a law of conservation of total *motion*, on which physical bodies, conceived as quantities of extended matter, are subject

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<sup>89</sup> The merits of this argument have been much discussed and critiqued, but for our interpretive purposes they need not concern us here.

to a constant amount of total force operating extrinsically on them. Leibniz thinks this view is untenable, and instead proposes a law of conservation of total *energy*, which concerns not the momentum of bodies but their capacities for exerting force on other bodies. For Leibniz, the Cartesian account is committed to either of two unacceptable accounts of substance-to-substance interaction. One option is for the Cartesian to adopt *influx theory*, on which momentum is “transferred” from body to body. For Leibniz, influx theory fails to acknowledge the fact that dynamic properties like momentum are accidental to substances, and therefore do not have the sort of independent existence that would allow them to transfer from one substance to another.<sup>90</sup> The second option is for the Cartesian to revert to *occasionalism*, on which changes in momentum are directly occasioned by God (whether through intervention or systematic laws).<sup>91</sup> For Leibniz the occasionalist undermines substances’ independence from the Divine, thereby collapsing the doctrine into incoherence (L 502).

The above two features of Leibniz’s thinking—the insistence on substantial form and the insistence on intrinsic substantial forces—come together in a forces-based development of Aristotelian metaphysics. Leibniz divides intrinsic substantial forces along two axes, distinguishing passive from active forces and primitive from derivative forces. The difference between a substance’s active and passive forces is between forces the substance exerts on other objects and forces that resist other objects. The difference between a substance’s primitive and derivative forces is the difference between its capacity to produce force and the actual force it

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<sup>90</sup> As Leibniz writes (DL 131),

Mass was looked upon the same way as water, and velocity in the same way as salt which was dissolved in water, or more confined in less water, and even withdrawn from one water and transferred to another. But I have already pointed out how this conflicts with the real metaphysics.

For discussion, see Miller 1988, p. 252ff.

<sup>91</sup> See Jolly 2005, pp. 57-58 for doubts whether Leibniz’s arguments are effective against a law-based development of occasionalism.

produces on a particular occasion. Putting these together, we have: primitive active forces; derivative active forces; primitive passive forces; and derivative passive forces.<sup>92</sup>

The hylomorphic dimensions of Leibniz's substance metaphysics, then, are built out of substances' primitive forces. Consider the following passage (LOC 285-7):

substances have parts and species. The parts are matter and form. Matter is the principle of passion, or primitive force of resisting, which is commonly called bulk or antitypy, from which flows the impenetrability of body. Substantial form is the principle of action, or primitive force of acting.

As this passage makes clear, Leibniz aligns the form of an entity with its primitive active force, while the substance's matter is provided by its primitive force of passivity or 'resistance.' As such, Leibniz holds that (L 365):

if anything is real, it is solely the force of acting and suffering, and hence [...] the substance of a body consists in this.

This exposition of Leibniz's hylomorphism puts us in a position to reflect on the material character of Kant's *Empfindungen*. Abstractly, we can note a structural affinity between Kant's views and Leibniz's metaphysics. Both share the association of activity (or in a term that Leibniz himself coins, 'spontaneity') with 'unity' and 'form.' Both also share the association of passivity with matter. But more specifically we can note a critical complication in Leibniz's material conception of passivity that directly sheds light on Kant's account of *Empfindungen*. The complicating point concerns Leibniz's above-discussed dismissal of the idea that "mere aggregates" without form and unity can have metaphysically fundamental status. This objection would seem to apply to matter, when considered apart from form, and thus to passive force. By Leibniz's own lights, how can passive force be metaphysically fundamental if it lacks form?

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<sup>92</sup> One may wonder how this taxonomy of forces finds expression in Leibniz's monadic period. The answer is that the forces appear to get reduced to fundamental capacities for perception and appetite. As such, Leibniz writes (G VI 615/AG 219. Italics original): "we attribute *action* to a monad insofar as it has distinct perceptions, and *passion*, insofar as it has confused perceptions." In turn, appetitions can seem to constitute the later Leibniz's equivalent of derivative active forces (see Rutherford 2005, p. 165, Adams 1994, p. 380, Bodelschweig Dissertation, p. 30).

To resolve this tension Leibniz avails himself of the Scholastic distinction between primary and secondary matter. As the late Scholastic Eustachius a Sancto Paulo explains the distinction:

[Matter] is distinguished into primary and secondary. Primary [matter] is said to be that which, before all else, we conceive as entering into the composition of any natural thing, regarded as lacking all forms. ... Secondary [matter] is said to be that very primary [matter], not, however, bare, but endowed with physical actuality [i.e., forms].<sup>93</sup>

In this way, the distinction between primary and secondary matter amounts to an opposition between matter without form and matter as informed. In a complicated passage, Leibniz applies the distinction between primary and secondary matter to his substance metaphysics (Disc. 300):

Extended mass, considered without a substantial form ... is not a corporeal substance, but an entirely pure phenomenon like the rainbow; therefore philosophers have recognized that it is form which gives determinate being to matter...But if one considers as matter of corporeal substance not mass without forms but a second matter which is the multiplicity of substances of which the mass is that of the total body, it may be said that these substances are parts of this matter, just as those which enter into our body form part of it, for as our body is the matter, and the soul is the form of our substance, it is the same with other corporeal substances. ...But if one were to understand by the term 'matter' something always essential to the same substance, one might in the sense of certain Scholastics understand thereby the primitive passive power of a substance.

In this long train of thought, Leibniz progresses through the following reasoning.<sup>94</sup> *Pace* the Cartesian, “extended mass” conceived as *primary* matter—lacking form—is not a substance but a “pure phenomenon like the rainbow.” By contrast, *secondary* matter—matter *with* form—is metaphysically real. Therefore, Leibniz suggests, we should account for a (corporeal) substance’s matter by positing a “multiplicity of substances” of which “the mass” is “that of the total body” (I come back to this phrase below). Thus far, then, Leibniz seems to merely dismiss primary matter in favor of secondary matter. But in the final sentence Leibniz sounds a concessionary note by wheeling back around to redeem a notion of primary matter.<sup>95</sup> In particular, Leibniz

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<sup>93</sup> Eustachius a Sancto Paulo 1648, p. 119.

<sup>94</sup> For a good discussion of this same passage, which informs my essay here, see Garber and Rauzy 2004, p. 33.

<sup>95</sup> This may not seem obvious from the sentence itself. Perhaps Leibniz has in mind a third sense of matter as “what is always essential to the same substance”? But as I note below, Leibniz explicitly equates primitive passive force with primary matter, closing this interpretative option.

equates this redeemed notion of primary matter with a substance's primitive passive power.

Here is how I think we should understand Leibniz's thinking. For Leibniz, primary matter cannot be fundamentally real, since only genuine substances pass metaphysical muster. Leibniz's choice of a rainbow to illustrate this point can seem unfortunate, since a rainbow is, in its own way, a real object, rather than "a pure phenomenon." But it is not difficult to see the analogy Leibniz has in mind. Just as a rainbow, at least intuitively, admits of a sense in which it is an illusory object depending on realities of light and atmospheric properties, so primary matter conceived by the Cartesian as "extended mass" *appears* metaphysically independent, but in reality requires more fundamental metaphysical analysis. As Leibniz writes (AG 171-172),

I don't think that extension can be conceived through itself, but I think it is a notion that is resolvable and relative ... Something must always be assumed which is either continued or diffused, as whiteness is in milk, color, ductility and weight are in gold.<sup>96</sup>

On Leibniz's reductive analysis of extended matter, then, it must itself already involve form, i.e., be "a multiplicity of substances." But as Leibniz notes, this provides no complete analysis, since it leaves unanalyzed the "mass" of such substances. In turn, this is what Leibniz vindicates as an acceptable use of primary matter (Disc. 95):

Primary matter is mass itself, in which there is nothing but extension and antitype or impenetrability. It has extension from the space which it fills.

Given that Leibniz identifies "antitype or impenetrability" with "primitive force of resisting" (LOC 285-87), we thus find that for Leibniz the primitive passive power of a substance is to be understood as its *primary* matter: something not metaphysically independent, and not to that degree "real," but which nevertheless is a characteristic of metaphysical reality that may be discussed in abstraction from its informed existence.

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<sup>96</sup> For similar passages, see AG 251; AG 261.



## 2.3 EMPFINDUNG AS PRIMARY MATERIAL

Recall my claim:

### **Empfindungen**

For Kant sensations are the primary matter of cognition. Sensations do not constitute independent mental states, but abstractions from mental states intended to capture a passive aspect of such states.

I can now provide a different gloss on this claim: in my view, *Empfindungen* constitute the mind's primitive passive force in Leibniz's sense.<sup>97</sup> That is, just as for Leibniz items can be described as "material" in a sense that equates to a passive aspect of informed reality rather than itself an independent level of existence, so, I suggest, Kant intends *Empfindung* to be understood as "material." To see the initial plausibility of this claim, reconsider the passage cited in the introduction in which Kant describes sensation as "material" (R619 AA 15: 268):

The first building block [*Grundstück*] of our cognition is *Empfindung*. One designates [*Empfindung*] the representations in which the mind is viewed as merely passive, to the extent it is affected [*gewirkt*] by the presence of a thing. [The *Empfindungen*] constitute at the same time the material of all our cognition.

From our reflections on Leibniz, we can now note two points concerning Kant's description of sensation as the "material" of cognition.

First, it is wrong to assume, as Falkenstein does, that "the 'matter' of appearance, presumably, is [...] the stuff it is made of."<sup>98</sup> Kant need not be understood as suggesting that sensation "constitutes" cognition. This would prejudice a reading in favor of *secondary* matter opposed to *primary* matter. In fact, it seems plausible that Kant does intend *Empfindung* as material in a primary rather than secondary sense. This is in part because of the apparent

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<sup>97</sup> One may doubt this analogy. Surely *Empfindung* is not for Kant a "force." But not implausibly Kant follows Leibniz in thinking that affection requires the meeting of two forces, one exerting force, another meeting it—in some sense—with resistance. That is, affection may seem to depend on a type of passivity that includes a certain "impenetrability" to the effect exerted upon the affected substance. Thanks to Stephen Engstrom for bringing this difficulty to my attention.

<sup>98</sup> Falkenstein 1990, p. 66.

association in Kant's thinking between the passivity of *Empfindungen* and their material character, which plausibly follows Leibniz's usage. In fact, Kant's emphasis on sensation as the product of *affection* seems in line with Leibniz's invocation of primitive passive power.

Second, reading Kant as having in mind a notion of primary material allows us to understand a characteristically qualificatory tone in Kant's description of *Empfindungen* as mental states.<sup>99</sup> Note Kant's above characterization of *Empfindungen* in which "the mind is *viewed* as merely passive." This expression is plausibly read as indicating that sensations are not in themselves mental states, but rather an element of the mind that we (or, perhaps, the mind itself) find when we *consider* the mind in its passive aspect. Recall some further places in which Kant sounds a similar note when describing *Empfindung*:

[*Empfindung* is] the effect of an object on the capacity for representation, insofar as we are affected by it. (A34)

That perception (*Perzeption*) [i.e., representation with consciousness] which relates solely to the subject, as the modification of its state, [is *Empfindung*]. (A320/B376)

Appearance is a representation of the senses, to the extent it relates to an object; sensation: if it relates merely to the subject. (R683; AA 15)

In each of these passages, Kant speaks as if to suggest that by *Empfindungen* we merely isolate an aspect of our cognition. Sensation is the effect of an object "insofar as we are affected by it." An appearance is sensation "to the extent that" it relates merely to the subject. In these various cases, I submit that Kant does not posit independent states of cognition which precede the activity of the understanding, but rather merely highlights the primary material component of hylomorphic compounds that are states of genuine cognition (e.g., *Anschauungen*).

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<sup>99</sup> I should here note a qualification concerning my reading of Kant's account of sensation in this paper. As in the *Stufenleiter*, Kant frequently associates sensation with consciousness, as opposed to representation (or aspects of it) *simpliciter*. This feature of Kant's view is not in any clear tension with my account. For example, the presence of consciousness may allow for the sort of perspective on the mind that allows for singling out *Empfindung* as the mind's passive aspect. But Kant's mention of consciousness nevertheless indicates that significant sophistications of Kant's account of sensation are beyond the purview of the relatively simple-minded Leibnizian theme presented in this paper.

Now turn to Kant's description of the spontaneous side of the equation, which underlies the above-discussed "constructivist" views (B130):

The combination (*conjunctio*) of a manifold in general can never come to us through the senses, and cannot, therefore, be already contained in the pure form of sensible intuition. For it is an act of spontaneity of the faculty of representation; and since this faculty, to distinguish it from sensibility, must be entitled understanding, all combination—be we conscious of it or not, be it a combination of the manifold of intuition, empirical or non-empirical, or of various concepts—is an act of the understanding. To this act the very general title 'synthesis' may be assigned...

Here my reading differs in two, I think plausible, respects from ordinary readings. First, by "manifold" I understand not an independently given quantity, but rather in Leibnizian vein a "mere" manifold—that which is infinitely divisible, and therefore does not possess the unity requisite for metaphysical existence.<sup>100</sup> If I am correct, this point applies to Kant's *Empfindungen* and the "manifold" in which for Kant they are presented. Since the "deliverances" of sensation are not already informed and therefore do not as such constitute "unities," there really is not a "manifold" of them either. As Leibniz captures the spirit of the point (G II 118; G II 267):

There are not several beings where there is not even one which may be truly a being.

For where there is not true unity, there is not true multiplicity.

Second, given this point, *pace* the constructivist, my reading suggests that there is an important sense in which Kant speaks metaphorically when he invokes spontaneity as "combining" the sensory manifold. Prior to the activity of the understanding, there are not really multiple *Empfindungen*, and *Empfindungen* therefore cannot be "combined." Rather, on my understanding, Kant's "combining" is like Leibniz's informing: giving first unity and existence to.

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<sup>100</sup> To be sure, this concerns existence at the relevant level. Of course there are aggregates of informed items, e.g., intuitions or concepts. But a) such aggregates will not have existence on some further level, i.e., without further form a mere manifold of concepts will not, say, amount to a judgment, and b) insofar as no unity is present at all, such as in the case of *Empfindungen*, there is no genuine aggregate either.

In further support of my reading, consider a few more passages in which Kant describes the role of *Empfindungen*. These are passages concerning the role of sensation in inner sense, e.g., (Anthr. AA 8: 153; italics original).

The senses can be divided into *outer* and *inner* sense. The first is that, where the human body is affected by corporeal things; the second that where it is affected by the mind.

There are various remarkable aspects to this passage, the most prominent perhaps its mention of “the human body.” This may seem to lend support to Falkenstein’s above-discussed view that sensation should be seen as a distinctly bodily phenomenon. But abstracting from Falkenstein’s specific commitment, the point I want to draw attention to is Kant’s methodology of introducing senses to accommodate types of affection. To be sure, this point may seem neutral since any account of *Empfindungen* will center on their role in affection. But I suggest my account lends particular salience to Kant’s individuation of senses according to the types of affection they accommodate. At any rate, Kant’s positing of “inner sense” may seem to lend particular urgency to conceiving *Empfindungen* in terms of *mere* affection, as on my account. Consider the following question: if sensations are themselves representations (or mental states of some independent sort), do they in turn affect the subject? If so, the result would seem a regress of *Empfindungen*. But if not, how do *Empfindungen* play a role in awareness? This difficulty is by no means obviously inescapable.<sup>101</sup> But it is nevertheless worth noting that on my account no such difficulty ensues, since *Empfindungen* are not mental states beyond their affective character. A further benefit of my account is that it gives a compelling reading of Kant’s repeated characterization of sensibility and its deliverances as apparently opposed to an unspecified

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<sup>101</sup> For example, Falkenstein’s view is unaffected by this worry, since for him *Empfindungen* are representational states of the body, thus stopping worries of a regress. But most readers of Kant do not hold the view that *Empfindungen* for Kant are bodily states.

“faculty of representations.” Reconsider elements from two passages that have been central to this chapter (A19-20/B34; B130. Italics mine):

[*Empfindung* is] the effect of an object on *the capacity for representation*, insofar as we are affected by it.

[Combination] is an act of spontaneity of the *faculty of representation*; and since this faculty, to distinguish it from sensibility, must be entitled understanding, all combination [...] is an act of the understanding.

In both of these passages Kant places sense in relation to a “faculty of representation.” By contrast, if sensibility were itself a cognitive faculty, we might have expected Kant’s above comments to single out the understanding specifically. But on my account Kant’s mention of sense as distinct from a single faculty of representations is unsurprising. Kant’s view is just that. Sensation is nothing further than the passive aspect of a single faculty capable of representation.

A final advantage of my account, I think, is the way it treats the disputes between George and Falkenstein. Recall that the dispute concerning the spatio-temporal character of *Empfindung* turns on passages in which Kant denies sensations spatio-temporal “magnitude,” such as (A183/B226): “In mere succession existence is always vanishing and recommencing, and never has the least magnitude.” For Falkenstein, passages such as these must be explained away since only if sensations are spatio-temporally organized can they account for the sense in which sensations allow for cognition by “corresponding” to the objects of intuition.<sup>102</sup> But on my account both features of Kant’s account can be combined coherently. On my reading, what Kant affirms

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<sup>102</sup> Falkenstein hopes to avoid the consequences of this passage by suggesting that the items coming in “mere succession” are not *Empfindungen*, but rather changes in the nature of apprehension (Falkenstein 1990, p. 83):

Even though the apprehension of the array of appearance is always successive and the parts follow upon one another, as Kant puts it at A89-B23, it may be that these ‘parts’ of the array are not *minima sensibilia* but just successive alterations in the (spatially articulated?) apprehension.

As will be clear from the Leibnizian theme suggested in this paper, I am sympathetic to the idea that for Kant “parts” are not *minima sensibilia*. But as I have suggested, without implication of the understanding, “sensible apprehension” generally is in no better standing.

by suggesting that in a succession of *Empfindungen* “existence is always vanishing and recommencing” is that, properly speaking, there is no existence at all in mere sense. It is because *Empfindungen* are not genuine mental entities that they cannot possess magnitudes. As Kant explicates, it is only in synthesis that we meet magnitude (B210): “Apprehension, merely by means of sensation, fills only an instant [...] As something in the appearance, the apprehension of which is not a successive synthesis, proceeding from the parts to the whole representation, it therefore has no extensive magnitude.”<sup>103</sup>

But *pace* Falkenstein, recognizing *Empfindungen*’s lack of magnitude is consistent with recognizing the role *Empfindungen* play in cognition by ‘corresponding’ to aspects of the object of intuition. Consider, for example, the following critical passages (B207-208; B209):

Appearances contain in addition to intuition the matter for some object in general [...] they contain, that is to say, the real of sensation as merely subjective representation, which gives us only the consciousness that the subject is affected, and which we relate to an object in general.

Corresponding to this intensity of sensation, an *intensive magnitude*, that is, a degree of influence on the sense [...] must be ascribed to all objects of perception, insofar as the perception contains sensation.

These passages contain some complicated elements, in particular (i) the notion that in addition to ‘intuition,’ appearances also contain “the matter for some object in general,” which Kant equates to (ii) “the real of sensation as merely subjective representation, which gives us only the consciousness that the subject is affected,” which in turn (iii) we relate to an object in general. More specifically, Kant suggests there is (iv) a certain “intensity” to this sensation, which (v) “corresponds” to “an intensive magnitude, that is, a degree of influence on the sense” that (vi) “can be ascribed to all objects of perception.”

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<sup>103</sup> Translated at Buroker 2006, p. 160. Note here Kant’s explicit association of magnitude with a move from “parts” to a “whole.” This is resonant with the Leibnizian theme I have been advocating as structuring Kant’s thinking.

I think these passages sketch out a path for my account to accommodate an appropriate role for *Empfindungen* in cognition. Consonant with my account, (i)-(iii) suggest that for Kant there is nothing to sensation but “the matter of some object” in the explicit sense of the role objects play in affecting the subject. But as (iv)-(vi) make clear, this is sufficient for sensations to, in some sense, contribute to cognition of objects, since the “intensity” of sensory affection can be correlated to an intensive magnitude that can be “ascribed to” objects. Insofar as I am correct in understanding Kant’s notion of sense along the lines of Leibniz’s “primitive passive power,” the upshot of the above passages is as follows. Even as *Empfindungen* are not themselves spatio-temporally determinate, nevertheless they constitute a form of “passivity” that cannot be understood without reference to external objects. To this extent I can side with Falkenstein against George in saying that *Empfindungen* are not wholly without referential character, even as I deny that they are any kind of representation in their own right.

But Falkenstein provides a dilemma argument for the stronger conclusion that *Empfindungen* must themselves be spatially organized. In particular Falkenstein suggests there are five possible ways that Kant might account for cognition of objects in space, the only acceptable option of which entails that sensations are spatial. On Falkenstein’s presentation, we can cognize objects in space:

- (a) through the “manner in which sensations are disposed in our intuitions.”<sup>104</sup>
- (b) through the manner in which the mind synthesizes sensations in imagination.
- (c) from the nature of sensations themselves.
- (d) from rules provided by the pure concepts of the intellect, or categories.
- (e) from some mode of knowledge outside either the senses or the intellect.

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<sup>104</sup> Falkenstein 1990, p. 72.

For Falkenstein, only (a) and (b) provide potentially acceptable accounts. Specifically: (c) would render cognition of space empirical, as opposed to a priori, for Kant<sup>105</sup>; (d) would render the relevant pure concept arbitrary, “for in what virtue of what rule would [sic] intellect array intuitions in space? It could not be because of any spatial characteristics of the experiences, if they have no such characteristics”<sup>106</sup>; and (e) conflicts with the fundamental constraints Kant places on the modes of human knowledge.<sup>107</sup> In turn, (b) represents the sort of solution that follows from George’s sensationist view, on which sensations constitute certain non-spatial signs which the intellect synthesizes to produce spatial ordering. For Falkenstein, however, this violates Kant’s precept that space is the form of intuition, rather than the product of intellectual synthesis.<sup>108</sup> Accordingly, for Falkenstein the only acceptable view is (a), on which sensations are already spatially organized as the material of intuition.

I cannot in this chapter fully address the difficulties associated with Kant’s account of cognition of (and in) space and time, notoriously encapsulated in Kant’s description of space and time as intuitions in the note at B160.<sup>109</sup> But I think my account can plausibly avoid the conclusion of Falkenstein’s argument. It is not clear what precisely Falkenstein has in mind distinguishing (b) and (d), as the synthesis of imagination is arguably guided by the categories. At any rate, Falkenstein’s arguments against (b) and (d) are hasty, especially his objection that spatial dimensions must already apply to *Empfindungen* at pains of leaving the grounds for spatial

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<sup>105</sup> That is, sensations would be the *objects* of cognition, a representation of such space being acquired in this empirical fashion.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>107</sup> Specifically, Kant’s division of the faculties, and the constraint that cognition is conditioned on sense-affection.

<sup>108</sup> A sophisticated version of this idea has been developed by Richard Aquila, for whom sensations are subject to the form of intuition, but the form of intuition isn’t itself spatial. Rather “there [is] *something* in intuitional states which [...] is responsible for our being ‘intentionally directed’ towards a certain very basic spatial structure in appearances” (Falkenstein 1990, p. 74). See Aquila 1983, p. 68; 1989, pp. 6-12. Falkenstein rejects this view for not taking sufficiently seriously Kant’s description of space as a form of intuition.

<sup>109</sup> For helpful recent discussion of the state of debate on this topic, see Schulting and Onof 2015.



synthesis “arbitrary.” For Kant empirical cognition depends on a series of conditions. One such condition is sense affection. Another is the role of the spatio-temporal forms of intuition. But it is not at all clear that the latter must be explained in terms of the former at pains of being “arbitrary.” Indeed it is not clear that the two conditions of sense affection in *Empfindung* and the spatio-temporal form of intuition must interact for Kant, such that *Empfindungen* gain spatio-temporal form as the matter of intuition. Again, this seems to assume a reading of *Empfindung* as material in a constitutive sense. As such, the question how and at what stage spatial structure comes to characterize the deliverances of receptivity is a subtle one. All my preferred form of Monism needs to claim is that *Empfindungen* do not as such possess extensive magnitude but that, as Kant himself writes (B210), such magnitude arises with synthesis, that is, with the sort of moving from parts to a whole that is distinctive of the unity of cognition.

## 2.4 “THE GRUNDSTÜCK OF OUR COGNITION”

But it may be objected that my argument in this chapter cannot be right, because Kant is a known critic of Leibniz precisely on the topic of sensation, famously accusing Leibniz of having “intellectualized the appearances” (A270/B326). I want to close my argument in this chapter by responding to this objection.

Consider Kant’s objection in detail (A270/B326):

sensibility was only a confused kind of representation for [Leibniz], and not a special source of representations; for him appearance was the representation of the thing in itself, although distinguished from cognition through the understanding in its logical form, since with its customary lack of analysis the former draws a certain mixture of subsidiary representations into the concept of the thing, from which the understanding knows how to abstract. In a word, Leibniz intellectualized the appearances.

In a similar passage, Kant writes (R 695, AA 15: 308-9):

Leibniz takes all sensations (deriving from) certain objects for representations of them. But beings who are not the cause of the object through their cognitive states must in the first instance be affected in a certain way so that they can arrive at a representation of the object's presence. Hence sensation must be the condition of outer cognitive states.<sup>110</sup>

The common tenor of Kant's critique of Leibniz in these two passages is that Leibniz fails to appropriately appreciate the conditioning role sensation plays on representation, as opposed to itself being a form of representation generically conceived.<sup>111</sup> As Kant writes in R 695, Leibniz takes all contact with objects to consist in representations, rather than recognizing that "sensation must be the condition of outer cognitive states" for "beings who are not the cause of the object through their cognitive states." A270/B326 elaborates this critique. For Leibniz, "sensibility was only a confused kind of representation": a representation of an imprecise, unrefined kind, but not fundamentally distinct from intellectual representation generally. Leibniz therefore "intellectualized the appearances" by treating them as of the nature of representations of the understanding. In particular, for Leibniz sensations are not a separable type of affection on which representation generally can be said to depend. This explains why Leibniz mistakes appearance for "the representation of the thing in itself." By Kantian lights, Leibniz fails to see that objects appear to us not in themselves, but only to the extent that they affect us through sense.

Kant's critique of Leibniz in these passages might be thought to contradict my argument in this chapter. Does Kant's critique of Leibniz not amount to a rejection of Monism in favor of a

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<sup>110</sup> Note here Kant's opposition between "sensation" and "representation" ("Leibniz takes all sensations (deriving from) objects to be representations of them."). This fits my argument for Monism.

<sup>111</sup> An interesting phrase in A270/B326 is Kant's mention of sensibility as "a special source of representations." The Dualist doubtless reads this as suggesting that sensibility provides independent representations. On the other hand, my reading emphasizes Kant's mention of a *source* of representations. As I continue to suggest, it is a sensible *source* for representations that Leibniz's account misses, as opposed to sensible representations *per se*.

form of Dualism? <sup>112</sup> I do not think it does. Indeed I suggest that it is my reading in this chapter of *Empfindung* as mere affection that illuminates the upshot of the above passages. The key lies once more in Kant's post-Leibnizian debates with Wolff and Baumgarten. One central topic of contention was Leibniz's commitment to a doctrine of 'pre-established harmony,' on which "substances are not only active but [...] are causally self-sufficient."<sup>113</sup> As Leibniz writes (AG 206):

I do not admit any action of substance upon each other in the proper sense, since no reason can be found for one monad influencing another.

[Two substances] act equally in the collision, so that half the effect comes from the action of one, the other half from the action of the other. And since half the effect or passion is also in one and half in the other, it suffices to derive the passion which is in one from the action which is in it, so that we need no influence of one on the other.

As these passages make clear, Leibniz attempts to account for the appearance of interaction between substances through forces proper to the substances themselves, thereby denying any genuine effect of one substance on another. This doctrine was widely rejected by Leibniz's followers, including the young Kant himself.<sup>114</sup>

As Helge Svare details, in early works like LF, PM and NE Kant remains committed to the broad outlines of Leibnizian metaphysics, including especially the fundamental notion of substantial forces, and the reduction of extended matter to such forces:

Leibniz is mentioned as a philosopher who understood more about the concept of force than others: Leibniz saw that a body possesses an essential force even prior to its extension. This he called its 'working force.' Unfortunately according to Kant Leibniz's followers misunderstood this concept and so his project may be understood as motivated by the intention to restore the theory of working force to its original state.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> Further question: how can my account of *Empfindungen* as Leibnizian passive force be accurate if Kant accuses Leibniz's view of altogether lacking sensation? The answer here lies in the distinction between Leibniz's early Aristotelian thought and *Monadology*. In *Monadology* Leibniz explicitly reduces passive force to a type of confused representation. It is this position Kant targets.

<sup>113</sup> Jolley 2005, p. 73.

<sup>114</sup> E.g., AzDM §602, Baumgarten 2014, §396-9. Kant PM, AA 1: 476.

<sup>115</sup> Svare 2006, p. 47.

But consider Kant's following critique of the Leibnizian commitment to pre-established harmony

(NE AA 1: 410; AA 1: 412):

In a world that was free from all motion [...], nothing at all in the nature of succession would be found even in the inner states of substances.

it follows immediately from what we have demonstrated that, if the human soul were free from real connection with external things, the internal state of the soul would be completely devoid of changes.

Kant's thought in these passages is that a commitment to pre-established harmony is in direct tension with the independence of substances that Leibniz aims to preserve. A causally self-sufficient substance would simply cycle through its putatively representational states. But as Kant points out, it is not at all clear how such a substance could genuinely represent without standing in any relations to worldly states of affairs. Indeed, it is not difficult to see the problem Kant raises for the Leibnizian view. For example, what is a passive force if there is no genuine interaction between substances? And what is a derivative force?

I suggest it is this same thought that motivates Kant's critical objection that Leibniz "intellectualized the appearances." On this understanding of Kant's objection, Leibniz "intellectualized" appearances in thinking that the representational character of substances is autonomous and self-sufficient, and is not conditioned by genuine affection. If this is right, Kant's critique of Leibniz is consistent with my reading of *Empfindungen* in this chapter. Indeed, Kant's objection sheds further light on my account. Recall a last time R619: "The first building block [*Grundstück*] of our cognition is *Empfindung*." I can now suggest that *Empfindung* is the *Grundstück* of cognition not in being the constitutive basis of cognition, but rather in the sense suggested by Kant's objection to Leibniz, in providing the affection on which representation depends.

Last, consider the way my account contrasts with the historical narrative of Kant's view typically offered by "constructivist" readers.<sup>116</sup> On this narrative, Kant departs from the Leibnizian/Wolffian tradition of assuming representational character as essential to the substances that possess it (expressed e.g., by Wolff's positing of a substantial *vis representiva*).<sup>117</sup> By contrast, the constructivist understands Kant as siding with the broadly Humean tradition of providing a positive explanation of intentional character on a basis of sensory stimulus. In particular, Kant is understood as replacing Hume's associationism with an account grounded in a priori intellectual resources.<sup>118</sup> But on my account Kant comes down on the rationalist side of the opposition between Leibniz and Hume.<sup>119</sup> Specifically, *Empfindung* is not foundational to a constructivist view of representational character grounded in sensory input. On the contrary, *Empfindung* serves as a condition on the proper rendering of a Leibnizian view, such that spontaneous representational character is understood to depend on affection, even as in Leibnizian fashion it is assumed as the form of the sort of substances subjects are.

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<sup>116</sup> E.g., Kitcher 1993, pp. 77-85.

<sup>117</sup> As Kitcher writes (1993, p. 67), for Kant, "operations of actual capacities could not be explained by appealing to definitions, even definitions purporting to capture essences." I dissent from this claim.

<sup>118</sup> Kitcher 1993, pp. 79-82.

<sup>119</sup> Consider, e.g., Kitcher's invocation of A121:

If cognitive states [*Vorstellungen*] reproduced one another in any order, just as they happen to come together, this would not lead to any determinate connection of them, but only to accidental heaps, and consequently would not give rise to any representation [*Erkenntnis*].

For Kitcher (1993, p. 79) this passage critiques Hume's associationism on grounds it is "too promiscuous," in that "the law of association operates in the same way in all cases, however, and so could not explain how we achieve different types of representation." But Kitcher here wholly misses Kant's overtly Leibnizian language: the point of an "accidental heap" is not that it gives rise to no representation in particular, but that it lacks (the relevant) unity altogether.

### 3.0 UNITY AND SUBSTANTIALITY IN KANT'S SUBJECT

In the B-edition of the first *Critique*, Kant appends a section (“Refutation of Mendelssohn’s Proof for the Permanence of the Soul” (B413-418)) specifically intended to dismantle an argument proposed in the Second Dialogue of Moses Mendelssohn’s *Phaedon* (1767), which seeks to establish the simplicity and incorruptibility of the soul. Kant famously characterizes this type of argument as (A351)

the Achilles of all dialectical inferences of the pure doctrine of the soul. It is no mere sophistical play, contrived by a dogmatist in order to impart to his assertions a superficial plausibility, but an inference which appears to withstand even the keenest scrutiny and the most scrupulously exact investigation.

Kant takes Mendelssohn’s argument to exemplify a foundational theme in the rationalist tradition of establishing the existence of a simple and unified human soul. In particular, the Achilles has since come to denote any argument that proceeds roughly from premises concerning the presence of a certain “unity” in mental goings-on—e.g., thoughts, inferences or visual or qualitative experiences—to the conclusion that there must exist a self that is in an important sense simple, unified or otherwise part-less.<sup>120</sup> Thus in J.P. Schachter’s description, an Achilles argument

[h]ypostasizes [...] a ‘simple’ or indivisible substance which, by virtue of being simple, is then further inferred to be immaterial. [...] it attempts to do this on the basis of experiential data consisting of various kinds of ‘unity’ discoverable in our experience, namely (a) the unity of multiple distinct perceptions in a single subject, (b) the unity of multiple ideas in a judgment, and

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<sup>120</sup> Achilles arguments are not prominent merely in early modern and rationalist literature, but have seen an upsurge in interest in contemporary philosophy of mind as well. See e.g., Rovane 1998, 2012 and Burge 1996 for the claim that inference requires an absolutely simple subject, and Barnett 2008 for the argument that an intuition of the Achilles form underlies several important contemporary thought experiments in the philosophy of mind (Searle’s Chinese Gym, e.g.). See also Barnett 2010 for a positive argument that consciousness must be simple.

(c) the unity present in and underlying self-awareness [...] For an argument to satisfy the Achilles template, it is not sufficient that it somehow make reference to the unity of consciousness; rather, it must use the unity of consciousness as the ground for an inference to a simple substance that is the subject of experience.<sup>121</sup>

Kant famously rejects the Achilles argument as a “paralogism”: an argument that is bound to compel us due to the structure of reason, but the appeal of which is ultimately illusory and which we can learn to resist (A341/B399).<sup>122</sup> As some commentators have noted, it can seem surprising that Kant rejects the Achilles. This is for two reasons.

First, a unified conscious subject plays an important role in Kant’s critical account of cognition. Consider, for example, Kant’s powerful suggestion of the importance of unity in subjectivity (A354; italics mine)

It is obvious that if one wants to represent a thinking being, one must put oneself in its place, and thus substitute one’s own subject for the object one wants to consider (which is not the case in any other species of investigation); and it is obvious that we demand *absolute unity of the subject of thought*.

After the initial suggestion in this passage of a relation between representing thought and one’s own subjectivity, Kant further seems to positively claim that an absolute unity of the subject is required for understanding another as a thinker. Just so, Stephen Engstrom’s interpretation of the Original Synthetic Unity of Apperception grounds “the generality of representation that all concepts share in common” in “the identity, or oneness-in-many, of the primitive act of consciousness itself.”<sup>123</sup> Of this “primitive act of consciousness” Engstrom further writes:

This act is also simple: Kant describes the subject’s “discursive consciousness” of this act, or the “pure apperception of its mental action” as “simple,” adding, “The I of reflection contains no manifold in itself and is in all judgments always one and the same, [...]” (Anthr. 141; cf. B135, B138).<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> Schachter 2008, p. 177 italics original.

<sup>122</sup> For discussion of Kant’s notion of a paralogism, see Harper 2008, pp. 235-237, pp. 244-245. For Kant’s belief that paralogisms stem from the nature of reason itself, Michelle Grier 2001. See also Grier 1993.

<sup>123</sup> Engstrom 2013, p. 7.

<sup>124</sup> Engstrom 2013, fn. 13. Compare also Sassen 2008 (p. 216, fn. 6): “Kant himself advanced at least a portion of an argument like the one we find in the Second Dialogue of the *Phaedon* in the Transcendental Deduction of the Categories in the second or B-edition of the Critique (B130-40).”

Second, Kant’s pre-critical metaphysical thinking—as attested by metaphysical lectures, *Reflexionen* and notes dated to the middle and late 1770s, i.e., close to the publication of the first edition of the *Critique* in 1781—seems to positively endorse ontologically substantial accounts of the “I” that Achilles arguments are typically intended to establish. So Kant writes in a note dated to the period 1775-1777 (R 4785, 17:707), “The understanding itself (a being that has understanding) is simple. It is substance.”<sup>125</sup> This apparent contrast with Kant’s critical view in the Paralogisms has led some commentators to suggest that Kant’s thinking undergoes a *volte-face* around 1780, accepting something like the Achilles until into the 1770s before rejecting it in the *Critique*. As Pierre Keller writes,

Kant did not free himself from commitment to the project of rational psychology until quite late in his career. Kant still thought of the subject of thought as theoretically knowable in the substantial terms suggested by the four basic paralogisms that he identifies in rational psychology into the middle of the 1770s. His discovery of the fallacies involved in inferences from self-consciousness to substantive claims about the nature of the self or the soul was the last important innovation in his thinking prior to the publication of the *Critique* in 1781.<sup>126</sup>

But against the consensus, in this chapter I will argue for the following claims:

**(1) The Continuity of the Paralogisms:** Appearances in the Paralogisms section notwithstanding, Kant’s critical philosophy is consistent with his late pre-critical work in holding to a conception of the self as a simple, noumenal substance.

**(2) The Specificity of the Paralogisms:** Kant’s criticisms in the Paralogisms of the Achilles are targeted at specific, identifiable versions of such arguments advanced by Kant’s rationalist predecessors, as opposed to arguments of the Achilles variety *simpliciter*.

Taken together, I suggest **(1)** and **(2)** provide room for a third claim that can seem surprising:

**(3) Kant’s Critical Achilles:** Kant’s critical thought offers a version of the Achilles argument.

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<sup>125</sup> Cited at Messina 2014, p. 36.

<sup>126</sup> Keller 1998, Chapter 8, n. 1. Similarly, Corey Dyck considers Kant’s metaphysical writings from the 1770s one of the main targets of Kant’s critical thinking (Dyck 2014, pp. 10-11). By contrast, recent work by Julian Wuerth (e.g., 2014) represents the opposite tendency, arguing for continuity between Kant’s metaphysical and critical thought.



If (1)-(3) are true, it reorients our understanding of Kant's relation to the German rationalist tradition criticized in the Paralogisms. On my suggested view, it is Kant's advocacy of a change in the nature of the Achilles argument as advanced by previous German rationalists that has confused commentators into thinking of Kant as dismissive of such arguments.<sup>127</sup> In particular (in terms that will become clear), Kant dismisses a *broad* and (for Kant, associatedly) *empirical* Achilles in favor of a *narrow* and *pure* Achilles.<sup>128</sup>

I will proceed as follows. In §1 I introduce Lennon and Stainton (2008)'s helpful distinction between "narrow" and "broad" Achilles arguments. In §2 I turn to Kant's critique of the Achilles in the Paralogisms section of the *Critique*. In §3 I raise a dilemma for the consensus understanding of the Paralogisms, suggesting the common reading cannot be held together with a plausible reading of Kant's metaphysical writings. In §4 I resolve this dilemma by suggesting a reading of the Paralogisms as tailored to address specific arguments proposed by Kant's predecessors Alexander Baumgarten and Christian Wolff. But my argument is not merely textual. In §5 I associate my reading of the Paralogisms with a positive philosophical understanding

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<sup>127</sup> For an excellent exposition that similarly sees important vestiges of rationalist views of the self in Kant's metaphysics of mind, see Tester Dissertation, e.g., p. 12:

The tendency to overlook the rationalist background of Kant's discussion and the profound influence of rationalism upon his thought have led interpreters to misunderstand the actual arguments that Kant is targeting in his discussion of rational psychology and more importantly to overlook aspects of Kant's discussion that reveal a commitment to positive metaphysical doctrines very similar to those proposed by the rational psychologists and continuous with the rationalism of his pre-critical writings.

For more work sympathetic to significant linkages between Kant's critical thinking and his rationalist predecessors, see Wunderlich 2001, 2005, Proops 2010, Watkins 2005, Wuerth 2010a, 2010b, 2014 Dyck 2008, 2011, 2014.

<sup>128</sup> In this regard my reading of Kant will depart markedly from the consensus (the *locus classicus* of which is at Strawson 1966, pp. 155-170). On the standard view the Paralogisms are read as a rejection of the sort of "dogmatic metaphysics" that proceeds in independence from experience. But I argue the opposite is true, and a form of *empiricism* is Kant's target.

of Kant's view of the relation between self and self-consciousness, which centers on a version of the Achilles. In §6 I discuss objections.

Before proceeding, I want to register a note on the philosophical substance at stake in defending claims **(1)-(3)**. Because it may seem of limited philosophical interest to know whether Kant endorses an Achilles argument, or whether Kant accepts an account of the self as metaphysically substantial and simple. But my suggestion is that this impression is wrong and that there are significant philosophical and explanatory benefits in appreciating substantial language in Kant's critical views.<sup>129</sup> Central to Kant's thinking is the claim that the apperception expressed by "I think" lies at the heart of the mind, and must be capable of accompanying all representations. In this context, Kant frequently speaks of the "form" and "unity" of representations. But it has not been clear how to understand this language, and what might justify the universal application of apperception to mental states. Here I will argue that apperception is central to Kant's Achilles argument, and more specifically, is constitutive of a type of substance. If this is correct, I suggest it gives us a new purchase on the strength of Kant's apperception claim. If apperception is constitutive of a substance, then it is intelligible how representations, as accidents inhering in this substance, must conform to the substance's apperceptive nature. Apperception, we might say, provides a new way for accidents to inhere in the substance it informs, thus demanding conformity of the accidents to the substance's apperceptive nature.<sup>130</sup> Moreover, this construal also adds an axis to the debate about the tenability of Kant's account of apperception, viz. the role of apperception in accounting for the unity or simplicity of the conscious mind. Whether unity and simplicity are important properties of consciousness, and whether apperception is plausibly

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<sup>129</sup> For an excellent exposition of the explanatory benefits of substantial language in understanding Kant's view of the intellect, see Boyle Forthcoming.

<sup>130</sup> Of course, this is not yet to justify thinking of apperception as fundamental to experience, a task I undertake in the next chapters.

constitutive of them, can accordingly be used to motivate arguments for and against Kant’s doctrine of apperception.

### 3.1 ACHILLES: NARROW AND BROAD

In their illuminating analysis of the structure of Achilles arguments, Lennon and Stainton (2008) distinguish “narrow” and “broad” versions of the argument.<sup>131</sup> Lennon and Stainton’s distinction turns on whether the Achilles seeks to establish the limited conclusion of the existence of a simple and unified soul (narrow) or whether this conclusion in turn serves as a premise for stronger claims about the nature of the soul, such as its immaterialism or immortality (broad).

**Table 1** The Narrow Achilles and the Broad Achilles

<i>Narrow Achilles</i>	<i>Broad Achilles</i>
P1: Unification of representations takes place.	P3: If the human soul/mind is a simple, unified substance, then it is not material.
P2: Only a simple, unified substance can unify representations.	P4: If the human soul/mind is a simple, unified substance, then it is immortal.
C1: The human soul or mind is a simple unified substance. <sup>132</sup>	C2: The human soul/mind is immaterial and immortal. <sup>133</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> Lennon and Stainton further note a “narrowest” Achilles argument characterized by one particular *reductio* to support P2, and a “broadest” Achilles argument that moves from C1 to conclusions beyond the nature of the soul (for example, contemporary philosophers of consciousness interested in feature-binding, non-modular mental unity or phenomenal integration might argue from premises about the unity of mental phenomena to a variety of conclusions, such as empirical hypotheses concerning the faculties that a developed cognitive science will posit). Here I will not be concerned with arguments of either the narrowest or broadest Achilles varieties.

<sup>132</sup> Lennon and Stainton 2008, p. 3.

<sup>133</sup> Lennon and Stainton 2008, p. 5.

It is not coincidental that Stainton and Lennon focus on immateriality and immortality as conclusions for the broad Achilles. For purposes of understanding Kant's criticism of the Achilles below, it is relevant that the Achilles was typically invoked to establish broadly theological conclusions about the incorporeality and imperishability of the soul.<sup>134</sup> It is helpful to very briefly sketch such arguments. The immateriality of the soul is frequently taken to follow from its indivisibility. On these arguments, spatiality is intrinsically tied to indefinite divisibility. In turn, material existence conforms to spatiality. It follows that if the soul is indivisible, it cannot be material. In turn, immateriality is thought to imply imperishability. Here the thought is that destruction must be a matter of dissolution. Accordingly, the broad Achilles concludes, the soul as simple substance is indestructible and persists after death.<sup>135</sup>

In addition to the distinction between narrow and broad forms of the Achilles it is also helpful to distinguish between two neoplatonic archetypes of the argument. One of the earliest Achilles arguments is arguably found in the work of the neoplatonist Plotinus (1992 IV 7.6):

If something is going to perceive anything, it must itself be one and must apprehend by the same [sense], both if several impressions are [perceived] through many sense organs, or many qualities [are perceived] in one object, or if one sense organ [perceives] a complex object, for example, a face. For there isn't one [perception] of the nose and another of the eyes, but one identical [perception] of all of them together. And if one [sense-object] enters through the eyes, and another through the hearing organ, there must be some one place which they both go. Otherwise, how could we state that they are different from each other, if the sense-objects did not all come together to one and the same place? Therefore, this place must be like a center point, and the perceptions coming from all places, like the lines coming from the circumstances of the circle, must terminate here. And the thing that apprehends these perceptions must be of this sort, really one.

Close reading reveals that in this brief paragraph Plotinus manages to raise three different grounds on which to mount an Achilles argument. The first takes as its experiential datum the unity of a perceived object, specifically a face. As Plotinus suggests, a perceiver is not separately aware of the eyes, the ears and the nose, but rather perceives them as aspects of a unified face.

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<sup>134</sup> This, for example, is the structure of the Mendelssohnian argument that is Kant's original example of an Achilles.

<sup>135</sup> For trenchant assertions of both the infinite divisibility of matter and the imperishability of substance, see Leibniz (AG 79).

The second of Plotinus’ arguments invokes the unity of sense information deriving from different modalities, such as seeing and hearing. Plotinus’ third argument expands on the argument from different modalities by drawing on the ability of subjects to compare and contrast the various representations issuing from them. As Plotinus writes, “how could we state that they are different from each other, if the sense-objects did not all come together to one and the same place?” For Plotinus, these three considerations serve the same conclusion that there must be a “thing” that is in an important sense simple.<sup>136</sup>

But as helpfully discussed by Coope (2013), Henry (2008) and Cory (2014), there is a different neoplatonist Achilles in the vicinity, which departs not from a unity found in experience, but rather a unity found in a distinctive type of reflection. The second neoplatonist version of the Achilles argument is provided by Proclus (the argument is also expressed in the neoplatonist work *Book of Causes*, which is in part based on Proclus’ work.)<sup>137</sup> As Ursula Coope writes, for example, “Proposition 7 in the *Book of Causes* (based on proposition 15 of Proclus’ (1963) asserts that since an intelligence ‘reverts upon its essence’ it must be an ‘undivided substance.’”<sup>138</sup>

**Table 2** The Plotinian Achilles and the Proclean Achilles

<p><i>Plotinian Achilles</i>  P1: Unification of representations takes place.  P2: Only a simple, unified substance can unify representations.  C1: The human soul or mind is a simple unified substance</p>	<p><i>Proclean Achilles</i>  P1:Unity characterizes reflective consciousness  P2: Only a simple, unified substance can possess this unity  C1: The human soul or mind is a simple unified substance.</p>
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<sup>136</sup> Plotinus does not use specifically substantial language, which is a feature of subsequent developments of the Achilles.

<sup>137</sup> For discussion, see Coope 2013, p. 8.

<sup>138</sup> Coope 2013, p. 8.

For my purposes, there are two major distinctions between these two arguments. The first distinction concerns P1. The Plotinian argument departs from a process of “unification” among representations. The productive character of this premise renders salient a grounding of the existence claim in a quasi-empirical epistemology on which the subject introspects the product of what is subsequently inferred to be a process of unification (as is the case, e.g., in Plotinus’ observations concerning the awareness of a face).<sup>139</sup> By contrast, the Proclean argument departs from a “unity” in reflective consciousness which carries no productive associations. This renders plausible that the claim of this unity is not grounded in introspection, but can be understood purely conceptually from the notion of reflection.<sup>140</sup>

The second distinction concerns the grounds for P2. The Plotinian argument seems to depend on an explanatory inference on which only a hypostasized simple substance can serve to explain the phenomenon recorded in P1. By contrast, the Proclean argument may be understood as giving a constitutive gloss on the grounds for P2. The simple substance is not inferred to explain the reflective unity recorded in P1. Rather, the claim is that a substance is constituted by the sort of unity implicated in reflective consciousness. This is indeed Proclus’ own intended development of the argument. In Coope’s characterization, “Proclus [...] claims that reversion to oneself is cognition of oneself ([CT], ii. 286. 32) and that in reverting on itself a thing constitutes itself as the kind thing it is (so that all and only those things that are revert on themselves are

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<sup>139</sup> To be sure, the connection is not compulsory. A Plotinian argument could, e.g., depart from a priori premises concerning a process of unification. But as I discuss below in regards the influential Wolffian variety of rational psychology, in fact the premise is typically understood as relying on empirical grounds.

<sup>140</sup> To be sure, if the unity of Proclean reflection is intended to be a priori this does not rule out the role of the cogito in arguments for the unity of reflective self-consciousness. Although I cannot here defend this as an analysis of the cogito, the suggestion is that the cogito merely constitutes thought acting out its own nature: displaying its unity to itself, rather than observing a unity in some further state of consciousness. This is in line with the structure of the “Merian” cogito in §4 discussed below.

*authupostata*.”<sup>141</sup> To be sure, at this point it is unclear what is supposed to motivate a constitutive conception of the relation between reflection and a simple subject, or in Proclean vocabulary, the relation between reflection and “self-constitution.” I address this issue in §5 below.

### 3.2 KANT’S CRITIQUE OF THE ACHILLES IN THE PARALOGISMS

The consensus on Kant’s rejection of the Achilles is grounded in the Paralogism section of the *Critique*, in which Kant seems to diagnose and disarm the sway of arguments close to the Achilles. Consider the First and Second Paralogisms as stated in the A-edition (A348; A351 emphasis original):<sup>142</sup>

I, as a thinking being, am the **absolute subject** of all my possible judgments, and this representation of myself cannot be used as predicate of any other thing.  
Therefore I, as thinking being (soul), am substance.

A thing whose action can never be regarded as the concurrence of many acting things is **simple**.  
Now the soul, or the thinking **I**, is such a thing. Therefore, etc.

Cursorily stated as they are, these two arguments are clearly intended to invoke the two conjuncts of the conclusion of an Achilles: the status of the self as substantial and simple.<sup>143</sup> In particular,

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<sup>141</sup> Coope 2013, fn. 34.

<sup>142</sup> In the A-edition, Kant provides distinct sections treating inferences to the status of the soul as a substance (First Paralogism); inferences to the simplicity or unity of this substance (Second Paralogism); inferences to the persistent identity or personality of the self (Third Paralogism); and a treatment of the ideality of the objects of experience (Fourth Paralogism). Likely due to its divergent subject matter as concerned with objects rather than the self, discussion of the Fourth Paralogism in the B-edition is moved to the Refutation of Idealism (although for discussion of its relevance to the Paralogisms, see Grier 2001).

<sup>143</sup> As several commentators have noted, Kant’s cursory statement of the Paralogisms is plausibly associated with the intention to capture extremely familiar forms of argument. (Plausibly indeed, given Kant’s association of the Paralogisms with inevitable forms of Transcendental Illusion, Kant takes the arguments to be familiar from the

the First Paralogism infers to the existence of the subject as substance on grounds of its peculiar nature as being essentially the subject of predication (I come back to this argument in detail below). The Second Paralogism comes close to the Plotinian paradigm of an Achilles argument, by arguing from an *explanandum* of an action—in this case, thinking—that brooks no multiple subjects to an *explanans* of a simple subject. Kant further illustrates this type of thought in the famous “verse argument” (MH 28:44)

A whole out of many simple substances that are thinking, thinks first when all the thoughts of each simple substance are unified in it. If each of 100 persons knew a verse from Virgil by heart, would they therefore know all of Virgil by heart?<sup>144</sup>

To appreciate Kant’s vivid example, consider my entertaining a verse. There seems to be a certain unity to my consideration of the various lines. This can seem to imply that consciousness must in an important sense be simple or unified. Otherwise, if my consciousness were relevantly divided into parts, should not each part entertain only some part of the verse, while the whole of the verse is lost in the disparity of its lines? As Kant likewise writes (A352),

Representations...distributed among different beings, never make up a whole thought...and it is therefore impossible that a thought should inhere in what is essentially composite.<sup>145</sup>

Kant characterizes a paralogism as an argument both the major and minor premises of which are (R 5552, 18: 218-219) “correct,” but which is false in virtue of its form, since the “middle term in both premises is taken in different meanings.” How does this formal characterization apply to the representation of the Achilles in the Paralogisms? Kant writes the following (B410-411)

The whole procedure of rational psychology is determined by a paralogism, which is exhibited in the following syllogism:

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structure of reason itself). But one central claim of this paper is that Kant’s ambitious presentation of the Paralogisms has blinded interpreters to the specific rationalist arguments they reference.

<sup>144</sup> For an extended development of this type of argument, see also (ML<sub>1</sub> 28: 266)

<sup>145</sup> Compare also Kant’s comment that (MVi 29:1034) “a composite as such simply cannot think.”



That which cannot be thought of otherwise than as subject does not exist otherwise than as subject, and is therefore substance.

A thinking being, considered merely as such, cannot be thought otherwise than as subject.

Therefore it exists only as subject, that is, a substance.

In the major premise we speak of a being that can be thought in general, in every relation, and therefore also as it may be given in intuition. But in the minor premise we speak of it only insofar as it regards itself, as subject, simply in relation to thought and the unity of consciousness, and not as likewise in relation to the intuitions through which it is given as object to thought. Thus the conclusion is arrived at fallaciously, *per sophisma figura dictionis*.

Kant's presentation focuses on the argument advanced in the First Paralogism, accusing the argument of a *sophisma figura dictionis*, i.e., a fallacy of equivocation. To see where the fallacy is supposed to lie, we should consider in some more detail the argument targeted in the First Paralogism. Take Kant's representation of the argument in his metaphysical lectures (ML<sub>1</sub>, 28:266):

The *I* means the subject so far as it is not predicate of another thing. What is not predicate of another thing is substance. The *I* is *the general subject* of all predicates, of all thinking, of all actions, of all possible judgments that we can pass of ourselves as a thinking being. I can only say: I am, I think, I act. Thus it is not at all feasible that the *I* would be a predicate of something else. [...] Consequently, the *I*, or the soul through which the *I* is expressed is a substance.

We can capture the argument advanced here as grounded in a distinction between merely accidental and essential ways in which a representation can occupy the subject position in a judgment. While representations of (e.g.) actions and thoughts can accidentally serve as the subject of a judgment, they also admit of a predicative role as accidents and determinations of a thinker or agent. By contrast, the "I" is essentially a subject: it grounds determinations, but cannot itself be predicated of a further substance. The argument concludes that the self must be an irreducible existent, i.e., a substance.

How is this argument a paralogism? Given the definition of a paralogism, it follows that the premises of the argument are "correct." That is, Kant must accept both the major premise asserting that if an item is essentially a subject then it must exist as a substance, and the minor premise discharging the antecedent by claiming that the self only exists as subject. Instead,

Kant's criticism is that the argument equivocates on the notion of a subject. The major premise treats the subject as "a being in general," i.e., at least potentially an *object*: something that, in Kant's view, must be amenable to being given in intuition. But the minor premise is grounded only in the *subjective* unity of thinking: it is the subject as she finds herself in self-conscious thought.<sup>146</sup> Therefore, even as the premises of the paralogical argument are correct, the conclusion is invalid since the minor premise fails to discharge the major premise.

But thus stated, Kant's critique can seem puzzling. What is wrong with the subject, as she encounters herself in relation to the unity of thought, taking herself as a "being in general"? Perhaps it is true that what the subject encounters in consciousness is not inherently a subject, but in that case the minor premise would be false—the argument would simply be unsound, rather than a paralogism.<sup>147</sup> But if it is correct that the thinking self must be a subject, then why is the rationalist wrong to infer the existence of this subject as "a being in general"? Here Kant adds a helpful note (B411, note  $\alpha$ ):

'Thought' is taken in the two premisses in totally different senses: in the major premiss, as relating to an object in general and therefore to an object as it may be given in intuition; in the minor premiss, only as it consists in relation to self-consciousness. In the latter sense, no object whatsoever is being thought; all that is being represented is simply the relation to self as subject (as the form of thought). In the former premiss we are speaking of *things* which cannot be thought otherwise than as subjects; but in the latter premiss we speak not of *things* but of thought (abstraction being made from all objects) in which the 'I' always serves as the subject of consciousness. The conclusion cannot, therefore, be 'I cannot exist otherwise than as subject,' but merely, 'In thinking my existence, I cannot employ myself save as subject of the judgment [therein involved]' This is an identical proposition, and casts no light whatsoever upon the mode of my existence.

This passage contains significant positive claims that shed light on the foregoing difficulties. It is not that Kant thinks there are merely insufficient grounds to posit "a being in general" from

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<sup>146</sup> As Kant also characterizes the fallacy behind the paralogism in a *Reflexion* (R5552 18: 218-9), both the minor and major premises are "correct" but the argument is "false in virtue of its form," since the "middle term in both premises is taken in different meanings".

<sup>147</sup> Note, relatedly, that the same point applies to Kant's rejection of the "verse argument." Kant does not deny that thought possesses a unity that requires a single thinking subject, on pain of the argument not being a paralogism. Rather, the complaint is merely that the thinking subject is not an objective entity. This observation will structure the modest reading of Kant's criticism of rationalism provided below.

encountering the subject in thought. Rather, it is positively that “no object whatsoever is being thought” when the subject of thought is considered; rather this is merely to attend to the “form of thought” in “abstraction [...] from all objects,” which is such that “‘I’ always serves as the subject of consciousness.” So the observation in the minor premise is merely that the “I” in thinking can formally be employed only as subject, a use of “subject” entirely different than the “subject” of the major premise, which is a thing or existent in general.

Unlike the A-edition’s four distinct Paralogisms, the B-edition contains merely the unified discussion quoted above. So how is the rationalist’s general *sophisma figura dictionis* supposed to bear on the simplicity established in the Second Paralogism? The answer is that (on Kant’s diagnosis) simplicity in the relevant sense is a spatial, experiential concept. As Kant writes, simplicity is the claim that the soul “does not consist of many subjects in space” (R 18:299).<sup>148</sup> But the application of this concept to the soul trades on the conception of the self as an object of intuition, which Kant has shown is not found in self-conscious reflection. Equally it follows that incorporeality and immortality cannot be established for the self, since these properties are established through inferences from simplicity.

### 3.3 A DILEMMA FOR FUNCTIONALISTS

Given the tenor of the Paralogisms, there is a broad interpretative consensus around the claim that Kant rules out a substantial conception of the self, and more specifically, arguments

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<sup>148</sup> On this definition the self is of course simple, but because it is not a “thing” at all: not because it is a simple thing. Indeed, Kant in fact rejects that the self has any actual location in space, describing its association with a body as involving the (ML<sub>1</sub>, 28:225) “analogue of location, but not its place.” See also (MMr 29: 879).

for such a conception along rationalist lines.<sup>149</sup> In particular, broadly functionalist interpretations (e.g., Kitcher 1993, 2011; Dyck 2014; Bird 2006; Brook 1994) take Kant to suggest that there is nothing to the self apart from relations between mental states.<sup>150</sup> On this view, Kant sees the self (and, potentially, its simplicity) as a merely formal property of the cognitive process. These interpretations rely on Kant's apparent comments in this direction, such as "the notion of the self serves only to introduce all thinking as belonging to consciousness" (A341/B399), or Kant's claim that the self "is only the formal condition, namely, the logical unity of every thought, in which I abstract from every object" (A398). As Graham Bird characterizes the Paralogisms, for example:

The primary objection to the paralogistic argument rests on the belief that merely from the logical or grammatical point that a logical subject of judging cannot be a predicate, we cannot infer that such a subject is a real substance.<sup>151</sup>

As Bird articulates the common functionalist reading, it is the existence of a substantial self that the paralogistic argument illicitly derives from the merely logical role the "I" plays in thought. On Kitcher's specific development of the functionalist view, Kant's conception of the positive self is best rendered as an "I"-rule, which provides a form of "synthesis" of the manifold of cognition, just as other rules do. As Patricia Kitcher has expressed the view fueled by these passages,

[Kant] does not have a metaphysically loaded account of a unified consciousness. He takes the 'unity of self-consciousness' to indicate only relations of necessary connection across mental states.<sup>152</sup>

Accordingly, Kitcher's explication of Kant's argument in the Paralogisms is that the

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<sup>149</sup> The latter claim is more precise: it is in principle consistent to take Kant to accept a substantial account of the self, while rejecting rationalist arguments for this conclusion.

<sup>150</sup> The approach seems true of Longuenesse as well, who writes (1998, pp. 7-8) "the Critique warns us [in the Paralogisms chapter] not to consider the Gemüt or mind, the whole of our representational capacities, as a substance." Cited at Boyle Forthcoming, n. 23.

<sup>151</sup> Bird 2006, p. 631

<sup>152</sup> Kitcher 2013 p. 6. See also Kitcher 1990, 2011, and for a sophisticated development of the view Brook 1994.

rationalist mistakes “I” for an independent representation, i.e., a representation of a substance, where in fact it is merely a condition on cognition, i.e., can only operate in the presence of cognition.<sup>153</sup> In particular, for Kant we can represent “I” only when abstracting from its role in ongoing object cognition. Accordingly, the “I” associated with the unity of the subject is a wholly “empty” representation (A341-2/B400, A345/B406, A346/B404).<sup>154</sup>

Proponents of the broadly functionalist sort are aware that at the very least until close to publication of the *Critique* Kant seems to accept an account of the self as simple, noumenal substance. Critical here are Kant’s pre-critical metaphysical lectures, and especially ML<sub>1</sub>, which are lecture notes thought to stem from the mid-to-late 1770s. As illustrated e.g., by passages like (ML<sub>1</sub> 28:266) and (MH 28:44) Kant’s metaphysical lectures seem strongly rationalist in bent, and portray arguments close to those in the First and Second Paralogisms. For example (ML<sub>1</sub> 28: 225-6):

The concept of I expresses: I. substantiality.—Substance is the first subject of all inhering accidents. But this I is an absolute subject, to which all accidents and predicates can belong, and which cannot at all be a predicate of another thing. Thus the I expresses the *substantiale*; for that substrate in which all accidents inhere is the *substantiale*. This is the only case where we can immediately intuit the substance.<sup>155</sup>

The voluminous nature of these texts and the temporal proximity of ML<sub>1</sub> to the *Critique* impose a burden on functionalist readers to explain their suggestion of a sharp break between Kant’s pre-

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<sup>153</sup> E.g., Kitcher 2011, p. 194; Kitcher 2003, p. 9

<sup>154</sup> Andrew Brook 1994 has a similar view, on which both the presence and the unity of the self are conditions on the possibility of representation of the subject, instead of amounting to awareness of a substance and its attributes (p. 171; p. 173)

(2) From the point of view of what it would be like to be a subject of representation, we must picture the subject a simple being and cannot picture it as a plurality of any sort

(3) If I am aware of myself as subject, I must appear to my self to be one and cannot picture myself as a plurality of any sort

<sup>155</sup> I return to Kant’s mention of “immediate intuition” in §3.5 below.

critical and critical thought. In this way, Patricia Kitcher (2011, pp. 186-188) has argued that ML<sub>1</sub> is not representative of Kant's later views since Kant's argument in the Paralogisms must be understood as relying on the Transcendental Deduction, which Kitcher argues did not figure in Kant's thinking in the mid-1770s (as allegedly exemplified in Kant's notes of the Duisburg Nachlaß (1775)).<sup>156</sup>

But Julian Wuerth (2010a; 2010b; 2014) has provided an impressive array of textual evidence to suggest that the dismissal of ML<sub>1</sub> and similar texts is unjustified.<sup>157</sup> In agreement with Wuerth, I hold

**The Continuity of the Paralogisms:** Appearances in the Paralogisms section notwithstanding, Kant's critical philosophy is consistent with his late pre-critical work in holding to a conception of the self as a simple, noumenal substance.

First, Wuerth shows that it is not true that the themes that Kitcher suggests mark Kant's departure from ML<sub>1</sub>—in particular relevant versions of the Transcendental Deduction—are exclusive to Kant's critical period. They occur equally in documents that plausibly precede ML<sub>1</sub>.<sup>158</sup> Second, Wuerth shows that the rationalist themes from ML<sub>1</sub> occur both in the *Critique* itself, and in the metaphysical lectures from long after the critique, such as MD, MMr and MVi.<sup>159</sup> For example, in a note taken from Kant's own copy of the *Critique* (and hence obviously post-critical), Kant notes the noumenal character of the self as substance (R CV, 23:34):

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<sup>156</sup> This approach is represented also by Dyck (2014, pp. 183-184), who, despite noting “little [initial] discontinuity” between the pre-critical and critical views, suggests we should nevertheless appreciate “the dramatic changes” in Kant's view in the metaphysics of the subject, to the effect that the critical Kant “now advances the *I think* considered apart from any claim of existence as the only viable basis for the proper subject of rational psychology.”

<sup>157</sup> Wuerth largely focuses on providing textual evidence against the functionalist view, but at one point also emphasizes the worry that functionalist accounts are insufficiently capable of accounting for personal identity, insofar as they seem to embrace a Parfitian account on which appropriate relations between mental states between different individuals should seem to be capable of allowing for existence of a single subject. In his discussion, Karl Ameriks (2000, pp. 261-2) sees this problem, but by Wuerth's lights Ameriks fails to take sufficiently seriously that the possibility of Kant accepting a substantial soul “can still be a natural solution” (Wuerth 2014, chapter 2, fn. 7).

<sup>158</sup> See Wuerth 2014 Chapter 3, section 8.

<sup>159</sup> For just some examples of the enormous array of critical and post-critical textual support Wuerth (e.g., 2014, p. 21) adduces: A350-1; A356; A365-6; A399-403; Prol 4: 334-5; R6001; MMr, 29: 770-1, 772, 904, 912; MvS, 28: 551; MFNS 4: 542-3; VSGE, 2: 359; ML<sub>2</sub> 28: 590-2; MD 28: 681-6; MK<sub>2</sub> 28: 754-6 759; MVi 29: 10125-7, 1032

“the I is noumenon; I as intelligence.” Just so (R6001 18:420-1): “The soul in transcendental apperception is noumenal substance.” And as Kant writes in the post-critical *Metaphysik Mrongovius* (MMr 179 29: 771) “If we leave aside all accidents, then substance remains, this is the pure subject in which everything inheres or is the substantial.”<sup>160</sup> Indeed, the *Critique* itself grants that (A350–1; A359),

one can quite well allow the proposition *The soul is substance* to be valid.

it is permitted to me to say, 'I am a simple substance,' i.e., a substance the representation of which never contains a synthesis of the manifold.

The evidence of Kant's substantial conception of the self engenders a dilemma. How can we take Kant's argument in the Paralogisms seriously if Kant elsewhere accepts a positive substantial conception of the self? How can we take Kant's positive substantial conception of the self seriously if he dismisses the rationalist arguments for it in the Paralogisms?

### 3.4 KANT'S CRITIQUE OF RATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

In this section I resolve the above dilemma by defending:

**(2) The Specificity of the Paralogisms:** Kant's criticisms in the Paralogisms of the Achilles are targeted at specific, identifiable versions of such

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<sup>160</sup> Kitcher is aware of this evidence, but her commitment to a purely functionalist account compels her to deny it expresses Kant's view. Referring to (MMr 179 29: 771), Kitcher writes (Kitcher 2011, chapter 11, fn. 3),

The 'Metaphysics Mongrovius' asserts exactly what [Kant] is denying in his published work [...] When presumed to be accurate and read on its own, this passage suggests that Kant believed the cognizers have some cognizance of a substantial 'I.' In the published work, he is clear that this hope of Rationalist metaphysics must remain unfulfilled

But Kitcher's attempt to isolate (MMr 179 29: 771) as unpublished material lacks plausibility given the sheer volume of Kant's remarks concerning a substantial conception of the self. It is more satisfying to cohere these remarks with the Paralogisms than to disregard them.

arguments advanced by Kant's rationalist predecessors, as opposed to arguments of the Achilles variety *simpliciter*.

If (2) is true it promises to resolve the tension between Kant's arguments in the Paralogisms and Kant's substantial conception of the self. The Paralogisms serve to diagnose particular (if profound) errors in the Achilles arguments proposed by Kant's rationalist predecessors, specifically Baumgarten and Wolff. On this Kant's concern is the form of an Achilles argument rather than the argument *per se*. This is the claim I defend.

As has recently been noted by several commentators, the arguments sketched in the Paralogisms bear a strong resemblance to lines of argument advanced by German rationalists.<sup>161</sup> Consider, for example, Steven Tester's recent focus on Alexander Baumgarten's *Metaphysics*—the textbook of Kant's metaphysics lectures—as a target of Kant's thinking in the First Paralogism.<sup>162</sup> Like the argument in the First Paralogism, Baumgarten explicitly proceeds from the principle that each accident must have sufficient grounds in a substance since any accident or determination must have a ground, which cannot ultimately in turn be an accident or determination, on pain of regress (§22). Baumgarten further fits Kant's target of a rational psychologist in inferring from the conclusion that the self must be a substance to various other attributes, including freedom (§755), personality (§641, §754), simplicity (§744) and immateriality (§757). If Kant's First Paralogism plausibly represents Baumgarten's thinking, Corey Dyck in his recent *Kant and Rational Psychology* (2014) has provided a plausible target of Kant's Second Paralogism in Christian Wolff. Wolff's argument for the existence of a simple soul strikingly recalls Kant's representation of the “verse argument.” Wolff argues that the activity of thinking must be a matter of motion (DM 738), and that the motion of different bodies could not explain the unified

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<sup>161</sup> Important here are Dyck 2011, 2014, Tester Dissertation.

<sup>162</sup> Tester Dissertation, p. 32. Citations from Baumgarten 2013, unless otherwise specified.



character of this particular motion (DM 739-742). Thinking must, consequently, be done by a unified subject.<sup>163</sup>

For presentational purposes I rely here on Tester's and Dyck's detailed discussions of Wolff and Baumgarten, and nothing in my cursory presentation can establish Wolff and Baumgarten as the main target of Kant's First and Second Paralogisms (much less the exclusive target).<sup>164</sup> But reflecting on Kant's responses to the specifics of Baumgarten's and Wolff's arguments helps locate the upshot of the Paralogisms as far more targeted than assumed by functionalist readers.

First consider Kant's diagnosis of Baumgarten's argument as an instance of Transcendental Illusion.<sup>165</sup> This concerns Baumgarten's employment of the principle of sufficient reason. Kant agrees with Baumgarten that it is natural to infer from the fact that the self does not seem to admit of use as a predicate, to the claim that the self must be a substance. Kant makes clear in the *Prolegomena* that even as ultimately this argument rests on a confusion, its motivating idea is natural (Prol. 4:334).

Now it does appear as if we have something substantial in the consciousness of ourselves (i.e., in the thinking subject), and indeed have it in an immediate intuition; for all the predicates of inner

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<sup>163</sup> For discussion, see Kitcher 2011, p. 48. As Richard Blackwell has made clear (Blackwell 1961, p. 346) Wolff's argument has elements that are closer to a Proclean than a Plotinian Achilles by focusing specifically on the activity of reflection:

Wolff indicates that one might argue that perception could occur in matter by means of the various parts of matter producing and sustaining the proper motions. However, there is no way in which apperception could occur in a material body. Hence the consequence is that since the soul does exercise cognition, it must be immaterial. [...] From the immateriality of the soul Wolff then concludes that it lacks part, extension, shape etc. In short, the soul is an immaterial simple substance.

In this sense Wolff's argument approaches the character of the Achilles I attribute to Kant in §5 below. However, as I show below Wolff's argument nevertheless retains the properties that place it in Kant's target area: (i) an empirical epistemology, (ii) a conclusion asserting empirical substantiality and (iii) a commitment to the claims of a broad Achilles.

<sup>164</sup> Nor is that my claim, which would contradict the clearly broad application of Kant's arguments.

<sup>165</sup> For detailed discussion of Kant's notion of a Transcendental Illusion see Michelle Grier 2001. See also Grier 1993.

sense are referred to the *I* as subject, and this *I* cannot again be thought as the predicate of some other subject. It therefore appears that in this case completeness in the referring of the given concepts to a subject as predicates is not a mere idea, but that the object, namely, the *absolute subject* itself, is given in experience. But this expectation is disappointed.

So why must the expectation of finding an absolute subject in experience be disappointed?

As Tester argues, Kant suggests Baumgarten's employment of the principle of sufficient reason constitutes a common conflation of a respectable "logical" use of the principle on which reason seeks to (A 307/B 364) "[f]ind the unconditioned for conditioned cognitions of the understanding, with which its unity will be completed," with a misguided "metaphysical" use of the principle that assumes (A 307–8/B 364) "when the conditioned is given, then so is the whole series of conditions subordinated one to another, which is itself unconditioned, also given." That is, when confronted with the nature of thinking, for Kant it is natural to seek the substantial grounds of this activity. As Kant writes (Prol. 4:333)

Pure reason demands that for each predicate of a thing we should seek its appropriate subject, but that for this subject, which is in turn necessarily only a predicate, we should seek its subject again, and so forth to infinity (or as far as we get).

However, "through misunderstanding" this legitimate principle has (A309/ B366)

been taken for a transcendental principle of reason, which overhastily postulates such an unlimited completeness in the series of conditions in the objects themselves.

Kant's last comment here is telling. The mistake in Baumgarten's illusion-driven application of the principle of sufficient reason is that it seeks the ultimate grounds in the objects given in experience. The Baumgartian Achilles rests on a natural if misguided objectification of the grounds of our thinking: the fact that reason naturally inquires after these grounds does not mean that when some accident of the self is given in experience, so is the self as its source.<sup>166</sup> As

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<sup>166</sup> Especially relevant here is Kant's notion of phenomenal substance or *substantia phaenomenon* (for discussion, see Wuerth 2014, pp. 97-100). For Kant the genuine grounds of all accidents must be a noumenal substance, but the mind is inclined to analogize a similar relation between accidents and substances in appearance, thus giving rise to *substantia phaenomenon* (ML1, 28: 1523; R4675, 17: 648; R4494: 17: 572). This notion of phenomenal substance plays a critical role for Kant's account of object cognition, since its perdurant character allows for the cognition of

Kant explicitly notes (Prol. 4: 333; emphasis removed),

human understanding is not to be blamed for its inability to know the substantiale of things [...] but rather for demanding to cognize it determinately as though it were a given object.<sup>167</sup>

Turn now to Kant's specific critique of Wolff's rational psychology. As Dyck's discussion emphasizes, Wolff's rationalism is distinctive in being partially grounded in empirically-informed premises.<sup>168</sup> Dyck notes that in this sense the common perception of Wolff as merely an expositor of Leibniz is false. That is, where Leibniz's rationalism seeks to ground metaphysical conclusions through reason alone, Wolff maintains a "mixed methodology" which, to be sure, can go beyond experience, but does not proceed in abstraction from it.<sup>169</sup> As Wolff himself writes (AzDM §261), his approach is to "derive that which is found to be in [the soul] by means of experience."<sup>170</sup> One telling example of Wolff's partially experiential approach to rationalism is the inferential characterization of Descartes' cogito (DM §504):

If there is something in a being that can be conscious of something, that thing is a soul. There exists in me something that can be conscious of something. Therefore a soul exists in me (I, a soul, exist).

As this passage illustrates, Wolff takes the cogito to infer from a premise concerning the existence of consciousness to the existence of a being capable of such consciousness. This raises the question how the minor premise is justified, which Wolff answers by appeal to an

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objects in time (B226-7). Accordingly, the Transcendental Illusion holding sway over Baumgarten's thinking is to confuse what is properly noumenal substance with *substantia phaenomenon*. As Steven Tester puts the point (Dissertation, p. 51):

[the] illusion consists in thinking that the application of the principle of sufficient reason will lead to an ultimate unconditioned ground of the attributes of thought that is an appearance to which spatial and temporal conception of substance applies. In contrast, Kant argues that the principle of sufficient reason will lead to a ground of the attributes of thought that is not an appearance but a thing in itself.

<sup>167</sup> I come back to Kant's mention of an "inability to know."

<sup>168</sup> As Dyck writes, "In contrast to the narrowly rationalistic approach to the soul which would proceed completely independently of experience, the rational psychology pioneered by the theorists of the German tradition relies essentially upon empirical psychology." (Dyck 2014, p. 9)

<sup>169</sup> Dyck 2014, p. 13.

<sup>170</sup> I use the translation of Dyck 2014. See Dyck 2009 and Dyck 2014, pp. 5-10 for discussion.

“indubitable experience” which, as an experience, is gained “when we attend to our sensations” (DL c. 5, par. 1).<sup>171</sup>

The reason it is important to point to Wolff’s “mixed,” i.e., significantly empirical, version of rational psychology is that it is this aspect of Wolff’s approach that Kant criticizes. For example, against Wolff Kant insists that properly understood rational psychology “is built on the single proposition *I think*” and does not contain “the least bit of anything empirical (A342/ B400).”<sup>172</sup>

Just so (ML<sub>1</sub>, 28:262; emphasis removed):

In rational psychology the human soul is cognized not from experience, as in empirical psychology, but a priori from concepts. Here we are to investigate how much of the human soul we can cognize through reason.

Likewise, Kant frequently frames his opposition to the paralogical arguments explicitly in terms of their reliance on a quasi-empirical epistemology of the self (A354-55; emphasis removed):

This proposition [the ‘I think’], however, is not itself an experience...We have no right to transpose it onto a ... concept of thinking being in general.

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<sup>171</sup> Wolff’s understanding of the cogito as an inference grounded on empirical experience of consciousness is not idiosyncratic. The Wolffian German rationalist Georg Friedrich Meier similarly makes explicit that (2007, §481)

Daily experience teaches us that we think. This is so undeniable that even if one wanted to doubt it, doubting consists in thinking and, therefore, convinces us all the more we think. We are, accordingly, thinking beings. Now the same undeniable experience tells us that we consist of a number of parts, many of which we do not experience that they think [...] Consequently, distinct experience tells us that our thoughts are to be encountered in a part of us. Consequently, there is in us a thinking being, [or] a part which thinks, and therefore can think. This part exists because otherwise it could not think and one can always infer the existence of the cause from the existence of the effect. It follows that we have a soul, or a soul exists in us

Similarly, it is this aspect of the cogito that the Piëtist philosopher Crusius criticizes Descartes for failing to make explicit:

[“I think”] should be: *I am conscious that I think, therefore I am*. If one wants, therefore, to infer our existence from the existence of our thoughts, one must at the outset establish the existence of our thoughts themselves by means of a sensation, namely, from inner sensation or consciousness.

For these passages and further discussion, see Dyck 2014, Chapter 6.

<sup>172</sup> For discussion see Tester Dissertation, p. 23

Indeed, close reading of Kant's unified B-edition exposition of the Paralogisms reveals the same explicit focus, taking the rationalist to conceive of the self as (B410-411): "a being that can be thought in general, in every relation, and therefore also as it may be given in intuition." Similarly, it is resistance to an empirically-grounded brand of rational psychology that informs Kant's rejection of the cogito as framed by Wolff.<sup>173</sup> Where the Wolffian cogito is an inference from empirical grounds, Kant holds that (AC 25: 14-15) "*I am*, that is [...] not an inference," (A354-55) "[n]or is the simplicity of myself (as soul) really inferred from the proposition [I think]." In this regard, Kant follows philosophers like Leibniz, Spinoza and, according to Thiel, especially the French philosopher Johann Bernhard Merian.<sup>174</sup> On the approach represented by these philosophers, thought does not provide empirical grounds for an inference to the existence of a thinker, but is itself already existence-involving by, in Thiel's terms, "[specifying] the manner in which I exist." As Merian writes (1751 §99; emphasis removed)

When one sets the verb alongside it, one finds that thinking means as much as to exist under a certain modification, and that the proposition I think, is the same as I exist thinking.

As Leibniz expresses the same thought (NE 411):

To say *I think therefore I am* is not really to prove existence from thought, since I think and to be thinking are one and the same, and to say I am thinking is already to say I am.<sup>175</sup>

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<sup>173</sup> See Thiel 1996, 1998, 2001, 2011

<sup>174</sup> Thiel 1996. Kitcher and Dyck both feel compelled to suggest that Kant accepts only the "I think," rejecting any use for "I am." As Dyck writes (2014; p. 174),

At the root of [the paralogical argument] is transcendental illusion, which Kant also characterizes in terms of conflating the formal *I think* with the empirical *I am*, a misidentification famously expressed in the Cartesian *cogito, ergo sum*.

It has been the aim of this paper to undermine the suggestion that the "I am" must be empirical, and that Kant consequently rejects it. There is also textual evidence Kant does not reject the "I am." As Kant writes, (R4676, 17: 656; emphasis original) "When something is apprehended, it is taken up into the function of apperception. **I am. I think. Thoughts are in me.**"

<sup>175</sup> Compare Spinoza on the same point: I think, therefore I am is a single proposition which is equivalent to this, I am thinking. (1987, 1: 234)

Thus Merian writes that the self (§95) “is immediately present to itself in the sense in which, without exception, its thoughts are.”<sup>176</sup>

The upshot of raising Kant’s resistance to Baumgarten’s and Wolff’s specific versions of rational psychology is that it sheds light on the nature of Kant’s arguments in the Paralogisms. Consider that for Kant, cognition (*Erkenntnis*) depends on the impact of objects on the senses. As Wuerth states the point,

In our relation to all other things [other than, for Wuerth, the self], Kant tells us, we deal only with the *effects* of these things on us, which as such are colored by our manner of actively receiving these effects, in the case of humans by imposing the pure forms of intuition on them.<sup>177</sup>

It follows that since—*pace* the rational psychologists—the “I” is not an object of sensory affection, we can have no cognition of the subject, much less of properties like its simplicity or its immortality. This invalidates the inferences of rational psychology. As Kant writes (MMr, 29:771) “[of the substantiale] we cannot make the least concept, i.e., we cognize nothing but accidents.” Similarly (A356), “I do not cognize the real simplicity of my subject (in extent of being empirically real).” Accordingly, this is the mistake of rational psychology: it takes the “I” as an object of intuition and therefore as an object of cognition, claiming knowledge of the various properties asserted in the Achilles. Such knowledge is the “expectation [which] is disappointed” (Prol 4:333).

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<sup>176</sup> In what sense the “I think” of the cogito is supposed to “specify” the existence of a thinker is not intended to be clear at this point. I hope to illuminate this difficult issue in §5 as well as the next chapter. Here the priority is Kant’s rejection of the distinctively empirical aspect of the Wolffian philosophy.

<sup>177</sup> Wuerth 2014, p. 127. For a book-size development of this aspect of Kant’s view, see Langton 1998. Wuerth helpfully relates (chapter 3, fn. 3) the effect-dependence of Kant’s cognition to Kant’s adherence to the *principium generale commercii*, i.e., the thought that—as Leibniz famously denies—substances not only *do* genuinely interact, but that moreover (R 4704, 17: 681) “all influence in the world is partly the effect of the active on the passive, partly the counter effect of the latter.” Adherence to this principle goes a significant way to motivating Kant’s view that objects can only be known through their effects on the knowing subject. Interestingly, Wuerth accepts that a substance suffering an effect itself involves not merely passivity, but a form of activity as well. From this Wuerth (2014, pp. 73-75) concludes that sensibility must itself be partially active, and moreover, that this activity itself produces the merely phenomenal character of appearances by placing objects in space and time. In this respect Wuerth’s view resembles that of Allais 2009, discussed above in Chapter 1. As I argued there (as well as more fully in Chapter 2), I think it is a mistake to think of Kant as positing two fundamental representational faculties.

### 3.5 KANT'S PURE ACHILLES

We should now return to the Achilles as discussed in §1. As Julian Wuerth writes, Kant's central target is the broad Achilles: the inferences from the existence of the soul as a substance to various other attributes.

[I]n attempting to make sense of Kant's argument against the rational psychologists, it should always be remembered that Kant repeatedly emphasizes that the sole purpose of the rationalists' ventures in psychology is to establish the immortality of the soul.<sup>178</sup>

As Kant himself explicitly notes, rationalist concern with the soul resides primarily in its supposed permanence, and especially its immortality (Prol. §47):

Though we may call this thinking self (the soul) substance, as being the ultimate subject of thinking which cannot be further represented as the predicate of another thing, it remains quite empty and inconsequential if permanence—the quality which renders the concept of substances in experiences fruitful—cannot be proved of it. But permanence can never be proved of the concept of a substance as a thing in itself, but only for the purposes of experience.<sup>179</sup>

For Kant the predicates of the broad Achilles fail because they lay claim to the status of cognition, and more specifically, since they are associated with an experiential concept of substance and depend on spatio-temporal structures applicable only to experience. As Kant writes (A356):

one by no means [...] cognizes anything about the soul that one really wants to know, for all these predicates are not valid of intuition at all, and therefore cannot have any consequence that could be applied to objects of experience; hence they are completely empty.<sup>180</sup>

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<sup>178</sup> Wuerth 2014, p. 116

<sup>179</sup> Just so in the post-critical (MMr 29:912; italics mine),

one believes to be done with [the question of immortality] since substance is perdurable. But since *the soul is recognized as substance only through the I*, we do not at all know whether it is substance *in the sense that* as such it could not perish.

Note the expressions I emphasize. Kant does not deny that the soul is recognized as substance, but merely notes that this is “only through the I.” And the conclusion is specifically limited to the claim that the soul is not known to be substance “in the sense that” it is imperishable. This fits my claims in this paper.

<sup>180</sup> This tenor of Kant's critique extends to Mendelssohn's Achilles argument for the immortality of the soul mentioned at the outset of this paper (the criticism is at MFNS 4:542-3).

As this last passage compellingly suggests, *this—pace* the functionalist reading—is the significance of Kant’s assertion (A356) that the “I think” is merely “empty,” of no “value,” and is of no “use *in concreto*.” As Kant stresses (A356),

everyone must admit that the assertion of the simple nature of the soul is of unique value only insofar as through it I distinguish this subject from all matter, and consequently except it from the perishability to which matter is always subjected. It is really only to this use that the above proposition is applied, hence it is often expressed like this: the soul is not corporeal.

In this section I will argue that it does not follow from the “emptiness” of rationalist discourse that Kant rejects a substantial account of the self (much less does the positive functionalist claim follow that the “I” must be understood merely in terms of functional relations between mental states.)<sup>181</sup> By contrast, I suggest Kant’s critique of the empirically-oriented Wolffian/Baumgartian approach makes room for a distinct, purely rationalist substance- metaphysics of the self. In particular, I will defend:

**(3) Kant’s Critical Achilles:** Kant’s critical thought offers a version of the Achilles argument.

Consider the following contrast Kant draws (A546/B574):

the human being, who is otherwise acquainted with the whole of nature solely through sense, is acquainted with himself also through pure apperception.

Consider similarly (SGE 20: 359),

[T]he simple is not given in outer intuition. In the inner there is the simple but only in the *subject* of consciousness...insofar as it *thinks* not insofar as it has an *intuition* of itself through the inner sense therefore it is also not given for *knowledge*.

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<sup>181</sup> Compare (A356; A350–1):

Now mere apperception (“I”) is substance in concept, simple in concept, etc., and thus all these psychological theorems are indisputably correct. Nevertheless, one by no means thereby cognizes anything about the soul that one really wants to know, for all these predicates are not valid of intuition at all, and therefore cannot have any consequence that could be applied to objects of experience; hence they are completely empty. For that concept of substance does not teach me that the soul endures for itself

one can quite well allow the proposition *The soul is substance* to be valid, if only one admits that this concept of ours leads no further, that it cannot teach us any of the usual conclusions of the rationalistic doctrine of the soul.



In both of these passages Kant explicitly opposes cognition through sense to the subject's relation to herself. For Kant the self is "acquainted" with herself through "pure apperception." Likewise, there is simplicity in the self "but only in the *subject* of consciousness...insofar as it *thinks* not insofar as it has an *intuition* of itself." Compare similarly (B429; B277 emphasis original):

In the consciousness of myself in mere thinking I am the **being itself**, about which, however, nothing yet is thereby given to me for thinking.

of course, the representation **I am**, which expresses the consciousness that can accompany all thinking, is that which immediately includes the existence of the subject in itself, but not yet any cognition of it, thus not empirical cognition, i.e., experience.

Here Kant seems still stronger in stating the above contrast. In self-consciousness "I am the being itself" and such consciousness "immediately includes the existence of the subject in itself"—but these are not experiences and therefore not cognitions.

Julian Wuerth has described Kant's epistemology of the self as "immediatism."<sup>182</sup> On Wuerth's view, Kant's consistent view throughout the pre-critical metaphysics lectures, the critical period and the post-critical lectures is that a subject has immediate access to herself as a noumenal substance *simply in virtue of being this substance*. As Wuerth characterizes his reading in an important passage (2014, p. 76):

Our relation to ourselves is the *one* instance in which we do not relate to a substance by virtue solely of its *effect* on us, but instead by virtue of *being* the substance, and, as *rational* substances, by necessarily being *conscious* of being a substance, and so of *having* powers by means of which we ground accidents. This view that we can have some form of epistemic access to *our own* noumenal selves but not to *other* noumenal substances is therefore not inconsistent, but is instead of a piece, with the guiding idea behind transcendental idealism. For in this lone instance can we be conscious of being the something that is active in addition to being conscious of any effects of this activity. Rather than reflecting an immature epistemology that fails to recognize the barriers precluding epistemic access to other things in themselves, Kant's immediatism therefore reflects the unique place of our relation to ourselves within this system of transcendental idealism.<sup>183</sup>

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<sup>182</sup> Wuerth 2006; 2010a; 2010b; 2014

<sup>183</sup> For Wuerth, the main shift in Kant's pre-critical and critical views—and the origins of the Paralogisms—is not the abandonment of a previous commitment to rational psychology, but rather a change in the shape of Kant's "immediatist" epistemology. In Kant's pre-critical metaphysics lectures, Kant conceives of the subject's access to

Wuerth's "immediatism" has strong textual support. Both in the pre-critical and critical writings Kant stresses the opposition between cognition of objects through sense and "immediate" access to the self.

But I suggest Wuerth does not succeed in fully clearing up the philosophical questions surrounding Kant's view. First, Wuerth does not explain what might motivate "immediate" self-access and why it should be non-sensuous. Second, nothing in Wuerth's account makes obvious why the subject accessed in apperception should be a substance.<sup>184</sup> This is where I suggest attributing to Kant an Achilles argument has explanatory value.<sup>185</sup>

**Table 3** Kant's Pure Achilles.

<p><i>Kant's Pure Achilles</i></p> <p>P1: There is a constitutive unity between the subject and the object of apperception.</p> <p>P2: The unity at P1 is metaphysically primitive in such a way as to be constitutive of a simple, unified substance.</p> <p>C1: The human soul or mind is a simple unified substance.</p>
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In the terms of §1, this is a narrow Proclean Achilles. The argument has two distinctive features. The Kantian Achilles fills out the "unity" or "simplicity" of P1 in terms of a constitutive identity between the subject and the object of an act of reflection. At P2 the argument moreover asserts this identity to be metaphysically primitive. I flesh out this argument below, but let me

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herself as an "immediate intuition." As Kant writes in the pre-critical metaphysics lectures (ML<sub>1</sub>, 28: 226),

[our access to the soul] is the only case where we can immediately intuit the substance. Of no thing can we intuit the substrate and the first subject; but in myself I intuit the substance immediately<sup>183</sup>

Kant pre-critical "immediate intuitions" are to be sure not properly experiential in not facilitating any cognition since they are wholly "indeterminate" and fail to reveal any attributes ((R4493 17: 572 "the predicates are missing.")). Nevertheless, the critical Kant moves away from mentioning intuition altogether in this context in favor of an apperceptive immediatism.

<sup>184</sup> To be sure, if access to the self is not through sense it is obvious the self cannot be phenomenal, and therefore might seem noumenal. But the question is why the self should be any "item" at all. Wuerth seems to argue simply from Kant's comments in this area, and not to aim to explain Kant's commitment.

<sup>185</sup> I should explicitly note that this is an interpretative claim. I defend the merits of this view of self-consciousness in the next chapter.

first indicate how the Achilles helps answer the questions left by Wuerth's account. Where Wuerth's account might seem to posit an unexplained non-sensuous epistemic relation a subject bears to herself, the Achilles explains this relation. A subject's self-consciousness is constitutive of her being. It follows that self-awareness is "immediately" provided by being the subject. It also follows this self-awareness could not be sense-mediated, since the object and subject of self-awareness are identical and sense mediates access of one item to another. Per P2 the Achilles also explains Kant's use of substantial language about the self.

In his discussion of Kitcher's *Kant's Thinker*, Sebastian Rödl (2013) suggests that Kitcher's progress notwithstanding, her work requires further development in the area of the way self-consciousness involves a "certain consciousness of unity: a consciousness of unity which is nothing other than this unity."<sup>186</sup> Rödl describes here a remarkable relation between (a form of) consciousness and (a form of) unity: a consciousness *of* a unity that is at the same time *itself* the unity in question. Rödl identifies this peculiar consciousness with the activity of synthesis, and the unity with synthetic unity.<sup>187</sup> As Rödl fills out Kant's characterization of synthesis (B130; translation Rödl added), "Combination [synthesis; S.R.] is a representation [consciousness; S.R.] of the synthetic unity of the manifold."<sup>188</sup> *Pace* Kitcher who argues that the identity of the "I" requires an account beyond the nature of apperceptive awareness, Rödl further identifies this synthetic unity with the identity of self-consciousness as expressed by the "I," noting that "The unity of the subject is its [reflective] act [...] Such is the unity of a thinker."<sup>189</sup>

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<sup>186</sup> Rödl 2013, p. 216.

<sup>187</sup> It follows that for Rödl synthesis is not an activity productive of unity, since (2013 p. 216) "synthesis were production, it could not be a consciousness of unity, for the unity produced would be different from the synthesis that produced it."

<sup>188</sup> One may take exception to Rödl's characterization of B130. It does not matter to my purposes.

<sup>189</sup> Rödl 2013, p. 216. Rödl's reading—to which I am sympathetic—is in some sense in agreement with Melnick 2009, in that both take the "I" to be constitutively related to some activity. But where Rödl takes the activity to be reflective, Melnick characterizes it as a "marshaling" that produces order from diversity. I think that Rödl's

Rödl's conception of a "consciousness of unity which is nothing other than this unity" provides the type of unity that lies at the heart of Kant's version of the Achilles. A first step in appreciating the way Rödl's view might support a form of the Achilles is to consider a view of self-awareness on which it is an activity that takes the "I" both as its subject and its object. The point is illustrated by the above-discussed Merian conception of the cogito. On this conception, the reflective awareness embodied in the subject's self-consciousness of her thinking finds not merely an act of thought, but in this same act a subject of thought—the "I" of the "I think." But this "I" is the very same "I" that is the subject of the original act of self-reflection. That is, this act of self-reflection is executed by the "I" and at the same time finds this "I" as the object of its awareness.

But pointing to an (alleged) identity of object and subject in self-consciousness is not sufficient to see how the reflective act bears a distinctive unity (much less a substantial unity). Any reflexive act bears the same subject and object. By contrast, the second step in appreciating Rödl's view is the suggestion that the reflexivity of the self-conscious act is *constitutive* of both its subject and its object. The "I" of reflection is constitutively related to the awareness it bears of itself. (By identity, so is the "I" that is the object of self-awareness.) It is popular to say that the "I" is an expression that refers *de jure* to the subject of the locution.<sup>190</sup> But this is to focus merely on the expression and miss that the "I" expresses the reality of a version of consciousness. That is, the "I" evinces (since it presupposes) a subject that would say "I." It is in this way that the "I" is constitutively associated with self-awareness: "I" is merely the articulation of the type of reflexive act displayed by the subject's awareness of herself. To put matters in a slogan, the "I"

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conception is required as the background against which to understand the "order" of thought, and I do not see how Melnick's suggestion of a mere creation of order can constitute a self.

<sup>190</sup> E.g., Peacocke 2014

is essentially “double”: its nature is such that it is always at once the subject and the object of an act of awareness.

These are various substantive commitments about the character of a thinking self, but it is worth stressing that the conception of the self as constitutively associated with self-awareness has a rich historical heritage. A *locus classicus* is Augustine’s conception of the perpetually self-knowing mind.<sup>191</sup> As Ursula Coope has suggested, a similar commitment may seem to be found in the Thomistic understanding of the intellect:

Reason (*ratio*), however, is not only able to direct the act of inferior parts, but is also the director of its own act (*actus sui directiva*). For the ability to reflect on itself is peculiar to the intellectual part. For intellect understands itself and similarly, reason can reason about its own act.<sup>192</sup>

Although the passage does not explicitly suggest a constitutive conception (merely stating that the “ability to reflect on itself is peculiar to the intellectual part”), it is plausible to understand Aquinas as endorsing the Proclean thought that “the intellectual part” is constitutively associated with its self-reflective character. Finally this line is famously expressed by Sartre when he writes “The Ego is an object apprehended but also an object *constituted* by reflective knowledge.”<sup>193</sup>

Still, even if the above three steps are granted, it is nevertheless a further question why the constitutively reflective “I” must be considered a substance.<sup>194</sup> Consider in this regard a

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<sup>191</sup> Augustine 2002, 10.5.7, 14.6.9, 15.15.25. See also 9.3.3, for a parallel to Kant’s conception of sense-independent apperception: “Just as the mind itself gathers knowledge of corporeal things through the senses of the body, so [it gathers knowledge] of incorporeals through its own self. Therefore it also knows itself through itself.” Cited and discussed at Cory 2014, pp. 19-21.

<sup>192</sup> Aquinas (2008: preface.) Discussed at Coope 2013, p. 8. For a treatment that places Aquinas in opposition to the neoplatonist tradition, see Cory 2014, chapter 1

<sup>193</sup> The present citation is from Sartre’s 1937 *The Transcendence of the Ego*, translated in Sartre 2004. Discussed at Peacocke 2014, pp. 220-221. There are complexities to Sartre’s account (such as a priority of consciousness to self-consciousness (Sartre 2004, p. 34)) that I am not here in a position to discuss. For much more discussion of Sartre’s view of self-consciousness, as well as its relation to Kant’s view, see Béatrice Longuenesse’s recent (2017), especially Chapter 3. Of course, the thesis also has a rich history in German Idealism, for example in Fichte (1845), who calls the “I” “unconditioned” and “self-grounded.” See Neuhaus 1990, p. 43.

<sup>194</sup> One might here recall the considerable evidence so far: (i) Kant repeatedly speaks of the “I” in substantial terms;

broad version of the Proclean Achilles provided by Aquinas (2014, II.49):

No body's action reflects on the agent, for it is proved in the *Physics* that no body reflects on itself except in respect of a part, so that, namely, one of its parts be mover and the other moved.<sup>195</sup>

Evidently this argument is not available to Kant since it relies on a spatial concept of part, and Kant's self is neither part-bearing nor part-less in this sense. But the argument displays a more abstract structure which may serve to illustrate why Kant would speak of the self in substantial terms.

In a more abstract sense, reflection might at first glance seem to be a "bipartite" activity: an activity in which one "part" reflects on another "part." But by Proclean lights this conception does not articulate genuine reflection, but rather maintains the logical structure of one item relating to another (specifically, the reflecting state relating to the reflected state). By contrast, genuine reflection requires one item relating to *itself*. I want to suggest this is an abstract sense in which reflection is "partless" that can support the above argument in a Kantian setting. If Kant accepts, in broadest outline, the Leibnizian view that a substance is defined in terms of an "activity" with a certain "unity" the question is whether reflection can be understood in light of some non-reflective activity or must be considered *sui generis*. It must be *sui generis*: no non-reflective activity relates to itself in the way reflection does. This self-relation is constitutive of reflection. Accordingly, reflection as an activity possesses a distinct "simplicity" or "unity" that marks it as a type of substance. Since reflection is constitutive of the "I," we can accordingly say that the

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(ii) once freed from empirical associations Kant has no obvious grounds for resistance to a substantial view (iii) Kant's usage of the terms "form" and "unity" as associated with the "I" tracks directly the Leibnizian conception of a substance, providing salient precedent. Moreover, resistance to attributing a substantial subject to Kant may in part derive from remaining "objective" associations with the realm of substances. But for Kant substances are emphatically not objective (neither are the substances of Leibniz's Idealism).

<sup>195</sup> As Coope notes, Aquinas supports this inference through a neoplatonist reading of Aristotle's conception of self-movement, discussed at (1999, VII, lecture 1.890). As Aquinas also writes (ST Ia 187 a3 ad3) "But it is not possible that anything material should change itself, rather one is changed by another."

subject is a substance.<sup>196</sup>

### 3.6 OBJECTIONS

But finding a substantial conception of the self in Kant is controversial. Here I want to discuss an especially subtle objection raised in a recent comment by Matthew Boyle on Longuenesse's treatment of the Paralogisms<sup>197</sup>:

Longuenesse notes the parallel between Kant's general remarks on substances, powers, and acts and his talk of mental acts and mental powers, but suggests that "one should approach this parallel with caution" since "the Critique warns us [in the Paralogisms chapter] not to consider the Gemüt or mind, the whole of our representational capacities, as a substance" (1998, pp. 7-8). [But] Kant himself – according to the lecture notes of one of his students, anyway – mentions the power of thinking in a general discussion of the relation between substance, power, and act. These lectures were given in 1783, shortly after the publication of the first edition of the First Critique, and in them he repeats essentially the same criticisms of Rational Psychology that he makes in the Paralogisms chapter. It seems, then, that he must not think there is a tension between bringing the framework of substances, powers and acts to bear on the mind in this way and his attack on the fallacious conclusions of the rational psychologists. Closer examination of the Paralogisms bears this out. What Kant denies in the Paralogisms is that we are entitled to infer that the "I" that thinks is really a substance in itself (which would entail its permanence, immutability, etc.) from the fact that it must be conceived in terms of the logical categories characteristic of substances. He does not deny that we must conceive of our mind as having the logical nature of a substance, and thus of our mental powers as having the kind of unity the powers of a substance have. On the contrary, he affirms this, although he denies that it entitles us to draw the conclusions of the Rational Psychologists: [E]veryone must necessarily regard Himself as substance, but regard his thinking only as accidents of his existence and determinations of his state... [O]ne can quite well allow that the proposition The soul is substance holds, if one only admits that this concept ... cannot teach us any of the usual conclusions of the doctrine of rational psychology, such as the everlasting duration of the soul through all alterations, even the person's death – [if only one admits, in other words] that it signifies a substance only in idea but not in reality. (A349-351) The connection I am drawing between Kant's remarks about our power of understanding and his thinking about the categories of substance, power, and act does not require any claim about the real nature of the subject to whom these powers belong; it simply brings out the consequences of regarding the mind as a substance

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<sup>196</sup> There is one more step that Kant takes here, which I do not defend here but explore in the next chapter. This to equate the apperceptive character of the "I" with the nature of the understanding. Provided this relation between reflection and thought, the above reasoning puts us in a position to appreciate Kant's 1775-1777 note ((HN, 17:707.18-28) cited in the introduction, that "The understanding itself (a being that has understanding) is simple. It is substance." There are two notable features in this passage: Kant's use of substantial language, and Kant's curious insouciance about the distinction between the understanding and a being with understanding. We are now in a position to understand both of these elements. The understanding is reflective and therefore simple and constitutive of a substance: that substance is the "being with understanding," or the "I."

<sup>197</sup> Thanks to Tyke Nuñez for reference to this passage.

“in idea,” as Kant says we must (cp. also A672/B700). The kind of unity our mental powers possess is logically speaking the kind of unity that the powers of a substance possess, even if we cannot conclude that this logical unity corresponds to the sort of real unity that rationalist metaphysicians sought to infer from it. This is a difficult topic, however, which deserves a fuller treatment than I can give it here.<sup>198</sup>

As Boyle himself remarks, this footnote clearly does not amount to a full reading of the Paralogisms. Nevertheless Boyle makes an extremely interesting suggestion, which displays significant sensitivity to the themes suggested in this chapter, but also diverges from my reading in a critical respect. Boyle shows sympathy to the suggestion that understanding Kant’s conception of the relation between the “I” of apperception and its representations involves taking seriously Kant’s talk of the self as substance. But nevertheless Boyle’s view reads the Paralogisms as denying “that we are entitled to infer that the “I” that thinks is really a substance in itself (which would entail its permanence, immutability, etc.),” and conversely holds that Kant gives a merely logical gloss on talking of the self as a substance. For Boyle, it is speaking *as though* the self were a substance that helps Kant articulate his view of apperception. In this way, Boyle’s view seems to occupy an attractive middle ground between the position defended here and the consensus functionalist view, which disavows substantial talk. In particular, Boyle’s alternative raises the question what could be gained by insisting that Kant holds a substantial conception of the self: the alternative seems to retain all the advantages, without any of the interpretative costs.

But I have several brief responses against Boyle’s suggestion, which in conjunction I take to suggest the superiority of my view over Boyle’s suggestion. First, if for Kant the “I” is not a substance, then there is a question why in a “logical” sense it should be regarded as such. To be sure, this question seems answerable, but it is an unexamined feature of Boyle’s suggestion that it is plausible or even intelligible to think the self must be considered “logically” substantial if it

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<sup>198</sup> Boyle Forthcoming, fn. 23



is metaphysically precisely not. By contrast, if Kant's self is substantial the answer is straightforward.

Second, Boyle's insistence on rejecting a substantial interpretation of Kant's view of the self is unmotivated. As I have argued, Boyle is wrong to take the Paralogisms to target the self as a "substance in itself." Kant's criticism in the Paralogisms centers explicitly on treating the self as an object. Specifically, the criticism centers on the idea of access to the self as mediated through sense affection. But for Kant to speak of an object (as potentially given in intuition) is emphatically not the same as speaking of a substance. And Kant's critique of the self as accessed through sensibility serves precisely to exempt and make room for access through pure apperception. So once the treatment of the self as objective has been rejected, it is unclear what further arguments are supposed to lead Kant to reject the self as substantial.<sup>199</sup>

Third—and perhaps most fundamentally—there is a second level on which Boyle fails to motivate his sharp distinction between attributing to Kant genuine and merely "as if" substantial language. My suggestion is that Boyle's distinction depends on an inflated and inappropriately demanding conception of "substance." On the monadic conception which served as the background for much of Kant's thinking, the foundational feature of a substance is its possession of a "true unity," a "form," all conceived on the model of (AG 89) "what is called 'me'." These are all features that characterize Kant's view of apperceptive consciousness, which moreover admits (as Boyle allows) of characterization in substantial terms. To be sure Kant might be

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<sup>199</sup> Indeed, Kant explicitly notes that the sense of "substance" at issue in the Paralogisms is the (A349) "empirically usable concept of a substance," since substance as it figures in pure thought cannot be found to ground the properties the rationalist is interested in.

thought to reject Leibnizian substance talk, but on what grounds?<sup>200</sup> What is to stop Kant from thinking of apperception in actual substantial terms, as opposed to merely “as if”? This question is especially salient in light of Kant’s specification of a bad notion of substance as empirical (A349). The fundamental point is that despite Boyle’s appreciating the relevance of substantial talk to Kant’s view of self-consciousness, he retains the functionalist commitment to sharply distinguishing Kant’s talk of a “logical” and a “substantial” characterization of the subject and its unity in thought. But if I have been correct in this chapter, this dichotomy is false: the “logical” unity of the subject can ground and indeed *be* its substantial unity.<sup>201</sup>

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<sup>200</sup> Indeed, there are significant independent grounds for thinking that Kant does *not* fundamentally abandon the presuppositions of the Leibnizian philosophy. For powerful arguments for this thought see the work of Anja Jauernig.

<sup>201</sup> An admitted remaining source of discomfort is Boyle’s citation of Kant’s comment that (A351) the “I” “signifies a substance only in idea but not in reality.” There are two responses, however. First it is to be granted that Kant’s consuming focus in the Paralogisms is the negative case against the substantial self of rational psychology: the confinement the “I” to the realm of ideas may seem a rhetorical flourish in this regard, not to be taken to rule out any substantial self in a sense different from that of rational psychology. More satisfyingly, however, I submit that Kant’s notions of “idea” and “reality” are sufficiently complicated to make room for my reading, as they would if “reality” could be understood in empirical terms, and “idea” in terms of self-consciousness. But clearly this passage requires further explication than I am giving it here.

## 4.0 EXPERIENTIAL SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS AND PERCEPTUAL LOOKS

[There is] something at the heart of the problem [of perception], something which is rarely made fully articulate in discussion of it [...] that the more fundamental problem here is one concerning our knowledge of our own minds.

MGF Martin (2000, p. 198)

[It] is also the same “I” who has sensory perceptions.

René Descartes (CSM ii. 20; AT vii. 29)

There has been significant recent attention to so-called self-representational theories of consciousness.<sup>202</sup> On the self-representational view, (certain) conscious mental states of mature human subjects represent not merely their objects, but also themselves and/or their subject.<sup>203</sup> One reason why philosophers have been attracted to self-representational accounts of consciousness is to explain the so-called “lucid” character of (certain) conscious states.<sup>204</sup> The lucid character of conscious states consists in their intimate connection to a form of “immediate knowledge.” That is, it seems the conscious character of (certain) mental states is intimately related to the

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<sup>202</sup> E.g., Kriegel and Williford 2006; Brook and Raymond 2006; Carruthers 1996; 2000 (Chapter 9); Caston 2002; Gennaro 1996, 2002; Hussack 2002, 2003; Kobes 1995; Kriegel, 2003a, 2003b, 2005; 1996a, 1996b, 1997 (Chapter 7); Smith 1986, 1989 (Chapter 2), 2004; Van Gulick 2001, 2004; Williford 2005.

<sup>203</sup> In Peter Carruthers’ terms (2006, p. 300; italics original) “it seems that conscious experiences, in their distinctive subjectivity, somehow present *themselves* to us, as well as presenting whatever it is that they are experiences *of*.” I say “certain” conscious states because there is controversy over whether self-representation extends to all conscious states or only to some, and over whether the paradigmatic examples are sensations or cognitive states. I will return to these issues below.

<sup>204</sup> The same phenomenon has been described in terms of the “luminous” nature of certain mental states (Williamson 2000, chapter 4), their “self-intimating” nature (Armstrong 1968) and their “transparency” (Boyle 2011.)

ability of the subject to know of their presence and their nature in some special, immediate way.<sup>205</sup> As Keith Lehrer writes,

The knowledge of the conscious state is somehow intrinsic to it. Such knowledge is unlike descriptive knowledge, where we might search for the representation of a state or object known. Representation of the conscious state is somehow contained in the conscious state itself yielding immediate knowledge of the state. [...] My reason for describing the representation as lucid is that the content of the representation of the state somehow incorporates the state itself. The representation is somehow contained in the state itself rather than being something extrinsic to it.<sup>206</sup>

Lehrer's characterization of lucidity is complicated and at places obscure, but the thought clearly involves (at a minimum) the idea that a conscious state being available for knowledge by the subject is somehow part of the state's conscious nature. Specifically, on Lehrer's self-representationalist thought the lucid character of consciousness is supposed to be explained by the state representing not merely its objects, but also itself.<sup>207</sup>

But there has been a relative neglect of self-representation in philosophical accounts of perceptual consciousness specifically.<sup>208</sup> Sometimes the idea is dismissed on grounds of unduly complicating the contents of experience.

If one seems to see a table, for instance, one does not seem to see the very subjective episode which is one's apparent seeing of a table; nor does one seem to see a subjective episode of any other sort. Is one's apparent seeing of the table posited by the visual episode itself in some other manner? An affirmative reply to that question is highly counter-intuitive. Anybody who always ascribes to visual episodes self-referential contents—ones which make those very visual episode somehow part of what the episodes themselves posit—seems to provide an overly complex account of the nature of visual experience in general.<sup>209</sup>

But more typically the concerns motivating self-representational accounts of consciousness are

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<sup>205</sup> Importantly, to point out the lucid character of conscious states is not to commit to the infallibility of our knowledge of such states: lucidity concerns the peculiar immediacy with which we access our own states, not our "infallibility" in doing so. I will return to the notion of infallibility in §5 below.

<sup>206</sup> Lehrer 2006, pp. 410-11

<sup>207</sup> Of course the explanation invoking self-representation need not (and perhaps cannot) be simple, but must be embedded in a more developed account securing that such self-representations are known or knowable.

<sup>208</sup> Although the idea goes back at least to Aristotle, "for, unless a man can perceive and see without being aware of it, the eye must see itself (*Sense and Sensibilia* 437<sup>a</sup>27-28). A more recent exception is John Searle 1983 for whom experience represents itself and its own causal antecedents: "Part of the conditions of satisfaction of the visual experience of seeing [...] is that the experience itself must be caused by what is seen" (1983, p. 48). For Searle's more recent commitment to a similar self-referential component in perceptual representation, see Searle 2014, p 58.

<sup>209</sup> Gregory 2013, p. 21

simply ignored. Consider for example the way philosophers of perception frequently employ the subject's immediate reflective access to experience to support one philosophical account of experience or another. In one example, a major motivation for so-called naïve realist conceptions of perceptual experience is that naïve realism supposedly captures the way experience seems reflectively to the subject (e.g., Martin 2006, p. 354). On this view, it seems from reflection that an experience  $e$  of an object  $o$  would not be the sort of experience it seems to be if  $e$  did not present the subject with  $o$ .<sup>210</sup> This form of argument turns on perceptual experience having a reflectively available conscious character, such that it (arguably, at least) lends pre-philosophical support to certain philosophical accounts of experience over others.<sup>211</sup> But while there has been debate over the methodological merits of using reflective access as a source for philosophical theorizing, less attention has been paid to what the reflectively available character of experience itself entails for accounts of perception.<sup>212</sup> For example, it is not commonly thought that debates about perceptual content are really debates about the subject's relation to her own mental states, but in this chapter I argue there are such important links.

In particular, I will argue that some version of a self-representational theory of perceptual consciousness is instrumental in defending theories that attribute representational contents to experience from potent anti-representationalist objections.<sup>213</sup> Specifically, self-

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<sup>210</sup> For a similar approach, Dorsch Forthcoming.

<sup>211</sup> It is notable that proposing arguments of this form does not depend on the debate about transparency of experience. The arguments do not need to depart from premises concerning qualitative characteristics of experience that are ruled out by transparency claims. All that is required for the relevant types of arguments is that they depart from any reflectively available characteristics of experience at all. In this way, transparency claims are themselves frequently grounded in the relevant type of argument. After all, transparency, if it is true of experience at all, is typically thought to itself be reflectively available as one of experience's hallmark features.

<sup>212</sup> For an insightful discussion of the role of introspection in the philosophy of perception, Soteriou 2013, pp. 18-22.

<sup>213</sup> I associate the view expressed in this paper with the self-representationalist class of views of consciousness, but strictly I reject a notion of self-representation (see §2). Accordingly, it is more appropriate to describe the present view as operating with a notion of self-consciousness rather than a notion of self-representation. However, contemporary popular views of self-representation come by far closest to the main claims suggested here, and since

representationalism can answer anti-representationalist worries to the effect that (i) representationalists have not provided a compelling positive argument for why experiences should be thought of as involving contents in any non-trivial way, and in particular, (ii) representationalists have failed to derive such contents from the way in experience things look (such objections can be found, e.g., in Travis 2004, 2013; Breckenridge 2007; Wilson forthcoming). Briefly, I will argue that these objections take insufficiently seriously that you are the subject to whom experience, in one way or another, makes objects manifest. Specifically no significance is attached to the way you, in addition to relating to objects, relate to yourself. But the suggestion I develop in this chapter is that you are a thinker, and you relate to yourself the way thinkers do. Specifically, the claim is that this is a critical feature of your subjective perceptual consciousness, and that it grounds a conception of perceptual content.<sup>214</sup>

In §1 I introduce two recent objections to the notion of representational perceptual content. In §2 I suggest that these objections turn fundamentally on how to conceive of the lucid character of phenomenal experience, and I reject two familiar conceptions of lucidity. In §3 I introduce an account of lucidity that I derive from Kant, on which lucidity is understood in light of the self-conscious nature of the subject, which is in turn associated with her capacity for thought. In §4 I detail the way the Kantian view provides a representationalist response to the objections discussed in §1, and I labor to explain how the Kantian account accommodates a suitable role for perceptual phenomenology in accounting for the subjective availability of perceptual content.

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the Kantian thesis in the background her is frequently understood in terms of self-representation, it is felicitous to place the current view in this context.

<sup>214</sup> Here it is noteworthy that it is commonly held against representational views that they too closely assimilate perceptual experience to the nature of thought. But as I have argued through this dissertation, thinking is not merely one more activity a subject may engage in (departing from the deliverances of perceptual experience, e.g.) but rather exhibits a character that is fundamental to the subject herself: her particular form of self-consciousness. Accordingly, the representationalist's assimilation—partial to be sure—of perceptual experience to thinking, far from counting against representationalism, expresses its fundamental insight.

In §5 I consider objections.

#### 4.1 TWO REQUIREMENTS ON THE ARGUMENT FROM LOOKS

It has been very common to attribute to perceptual experience representational contents (Tye 1995, 2000, 2009; Pautz 2010; Harman 1990; Siegel 2010; McDowell 1996; Peacocke 1992). This view is commonly called “representationalism” or the “content view.” But recently it has been pointed out that the positive motivation for representationalism is underdeveloped. Arguably, the rings on trees or the layers of sediment in a soil sample represent temporal properties. Arguably, a map represents the Venetian Lagoon. Presumably perceptual experience implicates representation in some further sense. But what specific sense, and why? In the absence of positive argumentation for representationalism, non-representational views of perception have been resurgent (Campbell 2002, 2014; Travis 2013; Brewer 2011; Fish 2009).

One popular way for representationalists to respond to the demand for a positive argument is to reason from the way in experience the environment looks.<sup>215</sup> So Wylie Breckenridge writes,

One reason that I sometimes hear in support of [the content] view (at least in conversation) is the following:

(1) When something looks a certain way, it makes sense to ask whether or not it is the way it looks.

[...] The claim is not always formulated in this way—sometimes it is formulated as follows:

(2) Visual experiences can be assessed as veridical or non-veridical, or as accurate or inaccurate, or as correct or incorrect.

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<sup>215</sup> E.g., Siegel 2010

When I ask what is meant by (2), I typically get (1) as a reply, so I take it that they express the same claim.<sup>216</sup>

As Breckenridge here illustrates, claims about visual looks have frequently been taken to support claims about visual contents. Looks can seem to be accuracy-evaluable, and contents are understood in terms of such evaluation. Accordingly, the latter seem perfectly placed to explain the former. One example of such an argument is Susanna Schellenberg's "Master Argument."<sup>217</sup> On this argument, if a subject is visually aware of her environment, then she is visually aware of it being some way. But if she is aware of her environment being some way, then her experience has a content to the effect that her environment is that way.<sup>218</sup> Accordingly, experience has content. Presumably for Schellenberg visual awareness of the environment as being some way is a matter of the environment looking that way in the relevant experience. Accordingly, Schellenberg's "Master Argument" is an argument from the nature of looks to a conclusion of experiential content.

But recently anti-representationalists have argued against the connection between visual looks and content. Here I discuss two such objections, provided by Breckenridge (2007) and Travis (2004; 2013). For Breckenridge, visual looks are not sufficient to ground a representational conception of experience. On Travis' stronger argument, there positively is no sense of looks appropriate to vision that can plausibly be associated with representational content. For Travis, far from providing an argument for representationalism, representationalists face a challenge how

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<sup>216</sup> Breckenridge 2007, p. 117

<sup>217</sup> Schellenberg 2011, pp. 719-20

<sup>218</sup> As critics have noted, Schellenberg's argument may in this respect merely seem to presuppose a distinctly representational understanding of the "way" in experience the environment is present: it is unclear why the relational presence of a property, or some merely phenomenal way of appearing, should be insufficient to capture the intuitive sense in which perception presents the environment being some way.



to make their account coherent with the way in experience the environment looks.

Breckenridge (2007) grants the claim that the sort of looks that characterize visual experience are plausibly associated with questions concerning their correctness or incorrectness (claim (1) above). However, for Breckenridge (1) fails to support the claim that experience has content (claim (2) above). In particular, Breckenridge considers assertions of e.g., walking or talking some way (e.g., “proud” or “American”).<sup>219</sup> In such examples Breckenridge suggests the question of correctness plausibly arises (“John talks American, but is he?”), but the presence of content in the sense intended for perceptual experience is deeply implausible. Moreover,

I take it that the move from (1) to the claim that visual experiences have representational content is supposed to be an inference to the best explanation [...]. I have just argued that this inference is too strong to be a good one. The similarity in form between the fact in (1) and [facts about the applicability of correctness to cases of walking some way, talking some way, etc.] suggests that they be given a uniform explanation. So if the explanation just given is the best explanation of the fact in (1), then corresponding explanations are the best explanations of [facts about the applicability of correctness to cases of walking some way, talking some way, etc.]

That is, Breckenridge provides a *reductio* of the move from (1) to (2) grounded in the assumption that the argument is supposed to be an inference to the best explanation. For Breckenridge, the applicability of correctness to “walks”-talk and “talks”-talk seems of the same kind as the applicability of correctness to looks-talk. Accordingly the former’s explanation must proceed along similar lines as it does for the latter. But the application of correctness to “walks”-talk and “talks”-talk does not ground an abductive inference to content. Accordingly, such an abductive inference cannot be sustained in the case of looks-talk either.

But thus stated Breckenridge’s argument begs the question against the

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<sup>219</sup> Breckenridge intentionally chooses the non-adverbial grammar of phrases like “John talks American,” but argues that such phrases are grammatical and that, moreover, using ungrammatical sentences in arguments is not problematic (Breckenridge 2007, p. 120). One way to approach my criticism of Breckenridge below is to suggest the grammar is not unproblematic, and serves to import representation where it isn’t present.

representationalist.<sup>220</sup> In sentences like “John walks proud,” John’s way of walking may be some indication that he is, in fact, proud, raising the question whether the sentence is true.<sup>221</sup> In effect, Breckenridge argues the same is true for the “looks”-sentences associated with visual experience.<sup>222</sup> But the representationalist holds that experience does more than indicate the presence of some environmental facts, and represents them to be the case in a stronger sense. That is, Breckenridge is wrong to assume that argument from looks to content is intended (in general, at least) to be an inference to the best explanation, and moreover, wrong to assume that “looks”-sentences are intended to fall in the same class as “walks”-sentences or “talks”-sentences.

But even if Breckenridge’s negative argument fails, in the vicinity there is a legitimate positive challenge to the content theorist. As several commentators have pointed out, assigning content to a state comes cheap.<sup>223</sup> For example, evaluation in terms of correctness is sufficient grounds to associate experience with some form of content, but such grounds cannot give a stronger association than applies to “walks”-talk or “talks”-talk. As such, Breckenridge’s challenge is that evaluation for correctness is by itself insufficient to ground an account of experiential content. As Schellenberg points out the difficulty (Schellenberg 2011, p. 720; italics original)

On the weakest way of understanding this relation [between the way things look to the subject and

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<sup>220</sup> I should qualify this point by noting that Breckenridge’s challenge seems aptly directed at Siegel 2010’s argument for perceptual content, which invokes abductive reasoning from visual looks.

<sup>221</sup> More precisely, there seem to be two possible readings: “John does a particular type of walking, i.e., walking proudly”; or “John walks like a proud person typically walks.” Neither is representational, and for the latter the question of accuracy arises, but only as constituting a possible expression of John’s pride.

<sup>222</sup> Breckenridge effectively accepts this characterization of his view, describing the upshot of visual experience in terms of evidential import, and suggesting that any intuitive differences between vision and the walking and talking cases can be explained by the fact that the evidential support they provide is weaker than it is in the visual case. If I am correct in this paper, it is wrong to characterize the sense of “looks” that grounds representationalism in terms of providing evidence for a proposition (i.e., so-called “evidential” looks, see Chisholm 1959 and discussion of Travis 2013 below).

<sup>223</sup> E.g., Vuletic Dissertation, pp. 8-12

content], it is simply one on which content is associated with the experience. This way of understanding the relation is too weak to give support to the content thesis: it does not give support to the thesis that experience is *fundamentally* a matter of representing the world.

Accordingly, the content theorist faces the following challenge,

**Strong Content:** The representationalist must show why the way things in experience look supports perceptual content in some at least more fundamental sense than looks merely being evaluable for correctness.

An important second challenge to the notion of experiential content has been provided by Charles Travis (2004, 2013). The nature of Travis' argument has attracted considerable controversy, and I here follow an understanding provided by Keith Wilson (Forthcoming).<sup>224</sup> Like Breckenridge, Travis questions the link between (1) and (2). But while Breckenridge questions the inference from looks to content, Travis makes the stronger claim that there is no sense of looks appropriate to visual experience that meets Strong Content. In particular, Travis distinguishes two different sorts of looks to which visual phenomenology may seem to give rise: evidentiary looks and comparative looks (or "thinkable looks" and "visual looks"), and argues neither can ground Strong Content.<sup>225</sup>

On the evidentiary sense of looks, the way some scene or object looks may be taken as evidence for some proposition: a painting may look to be a Van Gogh.<sup>226</sup> Correctness arises for this sense of looks the way it arises for "walks"-talk or "talks"-talk: visual experience provides some indication to believe some proposition (i.e., the way things, by the lights of that visual experience, look). But evidentiary looks are not distinctly visual: that the painting looks to be a Van Gogh is not a feature of my visual experience itself. Evidentiary looks therefore cannot meet Strong Content.

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<sup>224</sup> See Brogaard 2010.

<sup>225</sup> For classic discussions of the senses of looks, see Chisholm 1959, Jackson 1977. For discussion see Martin 2010, pp. 163-165.

<sup>226</sup> The relation between evidentiary looks and the propositions for which they provide support need not be strictly evidentiary. It is merely that the accuracy of the relevant content is somehow indicated by the relevant look.

On the comparative sense of looks, some scene or object presents a look that is comparable to the look of some other scene or object. These looks make explicit reference to the way things visually are for a subject, and are arguably properly experiential. But these looks cannot support Strong Content, because any look in this sense is ambiguous between any number of comparative looks: a wax imitation of a lemon looks as much like a wax imitation of a lemon as it does like a lemon. If this is correct, it is unclear what content is associated with a comparative look.<sup>227</sup> If a wax imitation looks like a lemon this is not because my experience represents the wax imitation as a lemon. The experience is not incorrect insofar as the wax imitation is not in fact a lemon. The experience presents the subject with the look of the wax imitation, which is comparable to the look of a lemon.

On Keith Wilson's detailed exposition of Travis' argument (Forthcoming, p. 10), Travis' reasoning is as follows (Wilson characterizes the type of representation required by Strong Content as "p-representation"):

**P1** If visual experiences were p-representational then their content would be recognisable in virtue of how, in experience, things perceptually appear, or look [...] (*Looks-indexing*)

**P2** Visual looks are incapable of making p-representational content recognisable since they are comparative and so equivocal between multiple contents.

**P3** Thinkable looks are incapable of making p-representational content recognisable since they are not wholly perceptual.

**P4** There is no further notion of looks that is both wholly perceptual and capable of making p-representational content recognisable.

**C1** (*From P2 through P4*) The content of visual experiences cannot be recognisable on the basis of how things look [...]

**C2** (*From P1 and C1*) Visual experiences are not p-representational.

In this argument, P2, P3 and P4 state Travis' above-discussed claims concerning the relation between looks-sentences and content. These claims are supplemented by the pivotal claim in P1 that the contents of experience must be subjectively available by being (in Wilson's terms)

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<sup>227</sup> As the focus on "recognition" in P1 below makes clear, the issue for Wilson is not that looks must determine or contribute the contents of experience (for this understanding of Travis, Burge 2010, p. 344; Siegel 2010, p. 62)), but rather how the subject becomes subjectively aware of the contents of her experience.

“recognizable” from the look of the experience. Wilson calls this commitment “looks-indexing,” and writes that it constitutes “the *pro tem* assumption that the most plausible way for the representationalist to satisfy [the subjective availability of perceptual content] is for experiential content to be recognisable to the subject — or “indexed” to use Travis’s term [...] — on the basis of how things visually appear, or look.”<sup>228</sup> So consider,

**Looks-Indexing:** If visual experiences have content then their content must be recognizable in virtue of how, in experience, things perceptually appear, or look.<sup>229</sup>

Does the representationalist need to accept “looks-indexing”? Do the contents of experience have to be recognizable from its looks? As Wilson notes, it may seem a salient target for opposition to Travis. For example, while it is true that some philosophers of perception take phenomenology to ground content (Horgan and Tienson 2002, Kriegel 2010), others take content to serve as a supervenience basis for phenomenology (Schellenberg 2011, Dretske 2003).<sup>230</sup> If Looks-Indexing were rejected, the representationalist would be free to motivate her account differently, and no difficulty would obviously ensue.

But as Wilson also notes, rejecting Looks-Indexing should not be considered so straightforward. There is a genuine theoretical question how a subject relates to her experience such that the contents of it are experientially available to her.<sup>231</sup> As Wilson situates the challenge to the representationalist, she faces a dilemma: either she can reject the subjectively available character of perceptual contents and provide some reason why experience should involve content

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<sup>228</sup> Wilson Forthcoming, p. 14

<sup>229</sup> Modified from Wilson’s P1

<sup>230</sup> An interesting third option is to deny that experiential looks and perceptual content can come apart in the way apparently required by Looks-Indexing (this arguably is the view expressed in McDowell’s response to Travis in (McDowell Manuscript<sup>1</sup>). Wilson briefly discusses this option (Wilson Forthcoming, p. 32), and below I will express sympathy for this view, but argue that it is not inconsistent with accepting Looks-Indexing.

<sup>231</sup> Indeed, for Wilson “[it is one] of Travis’s major contributions to the debate” to draw attention to this question, which has been ignored or glossed over by many other philosophers of perception.” (For discussion Wilson Forthcoming, pp. 25-26.)

in a way that does not rely on its subjective availability, or she can find some alternative, non-looks-indexed explanation for their subjectively availability. As Wilson frames the dilemma:

To give a decisive argument in favour of representationalism, then, its proponents must either (a) identify some unique role that the representational content of experience is supposed to play which cannot be adequately explained, or is superior to the explanation given, by their anti-representationalist opponents, or (b) identify some distinctive mechanism by which experiential contents are tokened such that they are cognitively available to the perceiver, but which cannot in turn be co-opted by the anti-representationalist to explain the content of the resulting perceptual judgements or beliefs.<sup>232</sup>

In either (a) and (b) Wilson takes the representationalist to face an uphill battle establishing her view over non-representationalist alternatives. If representational contents do not capture what is subjectively available to a subject in experience, then the representationalist faces the task of providing an account of what renders her account explanatorily superior to non-representational accounts. This task is complicated by the fact that representationalism is an account of conscious experience, thereby making it dubiously useful to invoke e.g., representational characterizations of cognitive processes that fall short of subjective consciousness. On the other hand, if representational contents are subjectively available but not looks-indexed, then the representationalist must explain how this form of subjective availability fits a representational view specifically, rather than being generic between representational and non-representational accounts.<sup>233</sup> After all, it is typically the association between looks and correctness that is supposed to motivate the content view of conscious experience.

My argument in this chapter is that the representationalist does not need to fall into either (a) or (b), since she should reject P4. Here is the way I think she should do so:

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<sup>232</sup> Wilson Forthcoming, p. 36

<sup>233</sup> The problem may not seem entirely straightforward, but the dilemma is essentially this: either the representationalist abandons grounding her account in the conscious character of experience, or she grounds her account in some other feature of conscious experience than the way things look—but it seems hard to see what this feature would be such that representationalism would be better positioned to explain the conscious character of experience than anti-representationalism.

## Argument from Self-Conscious Looks

SL1: In experience, things self-consciously look some way to the subject.

SL2: If things self-consciously look some way to the subject, then the way things look is expressible as  $p$ , where  $p$  expresses a representational content.<sup>234</sup>

C: Experience has representational content.

Dialectically, the upshot of the Argument from Self-Conscious Looks is that there is a properly visual sense of looks that is not captured by Travis' division between evidentiary and comparative looks.<sup>235</sup> When a subject suffers conscious phenomenal experience, then there is a way things self-consciously look to her. How for example? If I am visually confronted with a red cube, then I may be self-conscious of it looking to me that there is a red cube in front of me. The suggestion is that this is a sense of looks not captured by either evidentiary or comparative looks. The look of my experience is not some evidence for there being a red cube in front of me, in the way that some painting may look to be a Van Gogh. Likewise I am not registering some look that the red cube shares in common with other items. It looks to me *that there is* a red cube in front of me. The look is a fact apparently made manifest to me. Accordingly, P4 is false.

I think that many philosophers will grant something on which SL1 depends, i.e., that mature human perceptual experience has a self-conscious character. For example, a philosopher who does without perceptual content like John Campbell nevertheless describes perception as integrating the environment “into the subjective life of the thinker” (Campbell 2002, p. 6).

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<sup>234</sup> I think it ultimately follows from an appreciation of the self-conscious grounds of positing representational contents that these contents must be conceptual, but I argue this in Chapter 6.

<sup>235</sup> I should make clear what type of response I am not intending to make on behalf of the content theorist. Some philosophers (Byrne 2009, Schellenberg 2011, Glüer 2014) have responded to Travis by arguing that there is a distinctly phenomenal sense of looks, which is properly visual but not comparative. For example, the way my coat looks grey to me: it may be thought that it phenomenally looks to me to be grey. But Travis' point is precisely that it

seems hard to isolate such a sense of looks. The grey coat phenomenally presents a look that is typical of grey things, but that can in fact be presented by objects of any number of sorts, including e.g., blue or beige coats in dim light. Accordingly, to insist on a non-comparative but nevertheless distinctly phenomenal sense of looks may seem to beg the question against Travis. I will not rely on the phenomenal non-comparative sense of looks in this paper. For discussion of this response to Travis and its inadequacy, see Wilson Forthcoming, §4.3.



Likewise, relationalist Mike Martin grants that reflection on animal experience involves reflection on the merely conscious enjoyment of states we enjoy self-consciously (Martin 2006, p. 379; Martin 1998, p. 99).<sup>236</sup> On the contrary, I take it that philosophers will resist the claim that there is some relevant sense of looks associated with the self-conscious character of experience, and specifically will reject the association between perceptual self-consciousness and perceptual content. These claims will be the burden of the rest of this chapter.

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<sup>236</sup> One illustration of the self-conscious character of experience is through the familiar observation that perception contains a certain orientation to the self (Carruthers 2006, p. 300.)

it is plausible that the contents of perceptual experience contain an implicit reference to the self (Bermudez 1998). Objects are seen as being closer or further away, for example, or as being above or below. Closer to or further from what? The only available answer is: oneself. Equally, when one moves through the world there is a distinctive sort of “visual flow” as objects approach, loom larger, and then disappear out of the periphery of the visual field. The experience of visual flow is normally apprehended as—that is, has as part of its intentional content—motion through a stationary (or independently moving) environment. Motion of what? Again the only available answer is: oneself.

As Peter Carruthers notes, it is very plausible that the subject is in some sense implicated in the nature of perceptual experience. Perception has an egocentric character, on which things appear in various positions vis-à-vis the perceiver, e.g., to their right or left, far away or nearby.

One might merely grant that owing to the specifics of the visual senses (the way the eyes are placed in the face, e.g.) perception involves a certain egocentric geometric orientation on the environment. Some philosophers have argued that this is the only relevant way the self-referential character of perceptual orientation should be thought to figure in the specification of perceptual content (e.g., Gregory 2013, chapter 2.)

But it is plausible that there is more to the standpoint from which experience is enjoyed than its geometric properties. Compare Christopher Peacocke writing about visual imagination (*italics original*)

[visualizing] always involves imagining from the inside a certain (type of) viewpoint, and someone with that viewpoint could, in the imagined world, knowledgeably judge “*I’m thus-and- so,*” where the *thus-and-so* gives details of the viewpoint. (Peacocke 1985, p. 21. *Emphasis original.*)

I cannot argue for this claim here, but I think Peacocke’s emphasis on the subject-referring aspect of a visual viewpoint illustrates that for human subjects the viewpoint of experience transcends geometry to include a more robust sense of self-awareness. One’s perceptual orientation seems to be seamlessly integrated with the perceiver’s experience of time and their movements: things do not seem to disappear when they are out of view, and the limits of one’s visual field arguably do not strike one as proper limits of what is visible but as already integrated in one’s capacity to enjoy the broader visual world by reorienting one’s focus, one’s face and one’s whole body. More deeply, we may think that a perceptual perspective understood simply in objective geometric terms would not as such be intelligible to the subject as providing a realm of visible reality in the way perceptual experience does. It is not at all obvious that some geometrically apportioned space populated by objects is *simpliciter* intelligible as a realm of the visible: a stretch of the three-dimensional world presented to the subject for visually accessing.

## 4.2 EXPLAINING LUCIDITY

My suggestion is that at this point the dialectic between representationalist and anti-representationalist views on the nature of “looks” comes to turn fundamentally on how to conceive of the “lucidity” that is paradigmatic of certain mental states.<sup>237</sup>

At least some of our mental states are lucid or in some way immediately available (or “self-intimating”) to their subject. The example is often pain, but take a thought. How do you know what you are presently thinking? Both the presence of the thought and some aspect of its nature—its content—are perspicuous or lucid to you. Just so, it seems part of the nature of phenomenal conscious experience to make itself available to its subject in this lucid way. How do you know the character of your phenomenally conscious experience? It is perspicuous to you. You somehow possess these states as lucidly yours. What is this?

One response is that there is nothing to be said in this area, and that the phenomenal character of consciousness is primitively lucid in a way that defies exposition. Perhaps there are accounts to be given of subjective access to thoughts, beliefs or desires, but not so for phenomenally conscious experience. Insofar as my argument below is from an account of lucidity to a notion of perceptual content, this response may be dialectically appealing to anti-representationalists. But I do not think this response is satisfactory, and I think it is unavailable to anti-representationalists.

Even if the lucid character of phenomenal consciousness is in an important sense primitive, it is nevertheless uncontroversial that lucidity concerns some relation between a

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<sup>237</sup> My purposes in this paper do not require me to give a precise account of mental lucidity. For example, I do not need to settle whether lucid states are by their nature known or whether they are merely available for knowledge. Likewise, I do not need to settle whether lucidity is an essential feature of conscious states *per se*, or whether merely certain (types of) conscious states are lucid. It suffices for my purposes to put in place a broad picture of the relation between the subject and her lucid conscious states that can abstract from these more particular questions.

conscious state and its subject, thus meriting an exposition of this relation. Perceptual phenomenology implicates a subject, insofar as a notion of “what it is like” presupposes a subject for whom there are ways things can be. As Matthew Soteriou writes, “conscious sensory experiences have phenomenal properties that determine what it is like for one to be the subject of them.”<sup>238</sup> Accordingly, it should be legitimate to investigate the relation between the subject and her lucidly conscious mental states, and to argue on this basis where appropriate. Moreover, anti-representationalists frequently hold that the phenomenal character of experience is constituted by objects and properties located in the distal environment (Fish 2009). But features of the environment are not primitively lucid. Lucidity concerns the way the subject has those features available in her experience. Accordingly, anti-representationalists are poorly positioned to rely on lucidity as primitive.

Why did I suggest that the debate over “looks” concerns at least in part the “lucid” aspect of perceptual experience? Consider that the lucidity of phenomenal experience plausibly underlies Looks-Indexing. An investigation of conscious experience bottoms out in what the subject has immediately available to her. And I take it that this is how things visually are to her, i.e., how things look. That is, I take it as safe to accept

**Lucid Looks:** What the subject has lucidly available in conscious visual experience can be described as a way things look to her.

Accordingly, if experience has content, such content had better be available to the subject from the way things look.<sup>239</sup> As such, the debate between representationalists and anti-

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<sup>238</sup> Soteriou 2013, p. 1

<sup>239</sup> Relatedly there is a natural understanding of looks-talk on which it seems practically definitional for the representationalist to accept that the question of the subjective availability of experiential content must be answerable through a form of looks-talk. For example, how—if at all—is it available from my experience that my coat seems to be grey (where this is supposed to express some content)? Because that is how the coat looks to me. This answer seems so innocuous that it seems hard to conceive what other relation might obtain between experience and subjectively available content.

representationalists about the nature of “looks” comes to turn on this question: when things are visually lucid to the subject such as to look some way, are there grounds for associating this looking with content? The aim in the following is to mount an argument for the claim that there are.

To prepare the ground for my preferred Kantian view, let me set aside two well-established alternative accounts that explain lucidity in terms of representational content.<sup>240</sup> The point of discussing these views is to note a common mistake among them, and to distinguish them from the Kantian thesis being advanced here. Representation is irrevocably a form of intentionality: it is in the nature of representation to take an object (Lycan 2001, p. 4; Drummond 2006, p. 208). But I will suggest that the type of self-awareness that makes a state lucid is not a matter of such intentionality. Now, clearly anti-representationalists will likely not be attracted to representational views of lucidity. But discussion will suggest that explaining lucidity requires a view of the subject that grounds the Argument from Self-Conscious Looks.

Perhaps some mental state  $M$  is lucid because  $M$  is the object of a reflecting state  $M^*$ .

**Higher Order Theory (HOT):** a mature human state  $M$  is lucidly conscious if it is represented by a higher-order (or “reflecting”) state  $M^*$ .<sup>241</sup>

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<sup>240</sup> Before I continue, I should note that my aim is not to say anything conclusive about the debate between self-representational views and their competitors like the well-known Higher-Order Theory (HOT) (Rosenthal 1986) or Higher-Order Perception (HOP) (Armstrong 1968) views, or about the various debates about self-consciousness more broadly. For the former debate, e.g., Gennaro 2004. On the latter, the debate is largely between “epistemic” and “constitutive” accounts (Peacocke 2014) or “reasons” and “no reasons” accounts (Martin 1998) or accounts that are “credulous” versus “incredulous” over the need to provide a transition from first-order to higher-order conscious states (Boyle 2011). Broadly, the debate is over whether there is a metaphysical, constitutive relation between first-order and higher-order conscious states, or whether there is an epistemic, reasons-based relation between conscious states and our knowledge of them. While my account in this paper belongs to the metaphysical, constitutivist tradition, I cannot here provide a full defense of such views. For important contributions to the debate, Evans 1982, Moran 2001, Shoemaker 1994, Setiya 2012, Cassam 2015, Boyle 2009; 2011, Byrne 2005; 2009, Peacocke 1998; 2014. For a very helpful exposition of some of the important considerations in the debate, Martin (1998, pp. 108–111).

<sup>241</sup> *Locus classicus* Rosenthal 1986. Both HOT and PSR (below) are familiar as accounts of consciousness. But it seems safe to think they intend to explain consciousness as a lucid phenomenon. Certainly for self-representational views this is uncontroversial. At any rate, they are easily adapted.

This is how Kant's view has sometimes been understood, e.g., by Rocco Gennaro who suggests that some part of a first-order conscious state constitutes an unconscious higher-order representation of the state itself (which Gennaro calls a metapsychological representation (MET)):

From the first-person point of view, we cannot expect to be consciously aware of all that is "presupposed," to use a Kantian term, in a conscious state. [...] we can understand the situation as follows: we passively receive information via our senses in what Kant calls our "faculty of sensibility," some of which rises to the level of unconscious mental states. But such mental states do not become conscious until the more cognitive "faculty of understanding" operates on them via the application of higher-order concepts in the METs. [...] however, the MET itself is not conscious; thus METs and their concepts are "presupposed" in conscious experience.<sup>242</sup>

As this passage details, Gennaro takes Kant's account to involve the unconscious involvement of high-order representation of the self as having conscious states in order for the subject to have conscious visual states.<sup>243</sup> On the assumption that Gennaro associates consciousness with lucidity, this is a HOT theory of lucidity.

But HOT engenders a regress.<sup>244</sup> More importantly, HOT presupposes that first-order states have a self-conscious character where it should explain this character. A reflecting state  $M^*$  is supposed to explain lucidity by representing a state  $M$ , allowing for a lucid self-awareness of  $M$  as a state of mine. But how does  $M^*$  single out  $M$ ? It already presupposes that  $M$  is mine. In other

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<sup>242</sup> Gennaro 2006, p. 237

<sup>243</sup> As I develop my account in Chapter 6, it will turn out especially unfortunate for Gennaro to associate concepts and the spontaneity of the understanding with unconscious representations. As I understand Kant, the basis for considering experience conceptual is its self-conscious character.

<sup>244</sup> As Drummond notes (2006, p. 202),

[If] the subject is aware of the reflecting experience [...] then the subject is aware of it only in another reflecting experience [...] extrinsic to the reflecting experience [...] and so on ad infinitum. If, on the other hand, the subject is unaware of the reflecting experience [...] (or some other reflecting experience in the chain), the reflecting experience is itself unconscious.

It is not wholly clear why the latter option is problematic, and various higher-order (or partially higher-order) theorists have embraced this option (Gennaro 2006, pp. 227-228). On this type of view, we *can* become conscious of higher-order states but only when we introspect them, thus rendering the higher-order conscious through a still-higher order state. But this seems to me not to work: in introspection we are presumably intentionally conscious of our introspecting, and it does not seem plausible to posit an unconscious higher-order state to explain our consciousness of the introspecting higher-order state. Nothing in this paper will hinge on the regress objection to HOT.

words, the reflecting state  $M^*$  already presupposes some self-awareness of  $M$ .

It is impossible to conceive how one could be explicitly aware of [...] experiences as one's own without being aware in some way of these experiences as belonging to the same self directing its attention to them, that is, without being aware of the reflecting experience as belonging to the same self. This is impossible if the reflected experience is not self-aware.

A sophisticated version of this objection has been raised by Martin (1998). Christopher Peacocke (1998; 2014) explains lucid first-personal awareness of  $M$  in terms of an intellectual second-order conscious state  $M^*$  which is immediately justified by a non-conceptual, first-personal state  $M$  through a *sui generis*, non-observational rule of rationality  $R$ .<sup>245</sup> But not all mental states fall under  $R$  (e.g., self-deceived states, unconscious beliefs, etc.) How is  $M$  distinctive? The only answer is that  $M$  is such as to be available for lucid awareness under  $R$ . Accordingly, Peacocke's theory does not explain lucidity, but presupposes it.<sup>246</sup>

Perhaps mental states are lucid not because they are represented by higher-order states, but because they represent themselves.

**Pure Self-Representationalism (PSR):** a mature human state  $M$  is lucidly conscious if it is represented by  $M^*$ , where  $M^*$  is identical to  $M$ .<sup>247</sup>

The idea that conscious human states represent themselves famously goes back to Brentano (1995) and Reid (1785), with Reid holding that experiences are “signs” both of their objects and of themselves, and Brentano often described as suggesting that conscious representations have a “double object.”<sup>248</sup> So Brentano writes concerning the perception of a tone (1995, p. 129):

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<sup>245</sup> Peacocke 2016 describes  $R$  as “predicative transfer,” giving the example of moving from “this body is next to a ravine” to “I am next to a ravine”.

<sup>246</sup> Of course this need not be a problem, depending on the ambitions of an introspective theory. The point here is that introspection does not explain lucidity.

<sup>247</sup> Kriegel 2003. Why “pure” self-representationalism? On the one hand, philosophers have introduced versions of the idea that mix elements of self-representational and higher-order views. On the other hand, I think the view advocated in this paper is a form of self-representationalism, even as it does not explain lucidity through representation of the state or its subject.

<sup>248</sup> See Lehrer 2006

The consciousness that accompanies the presentation of the tone is a consciousness [...] of the whole mental act in which the tone is presented and in which it is itself also given. Apart from the fact that it presents the mental phenomenon of the tone, the mental act of hearing becomes at the same time in its totality its own object and content.<sup>249</sup>

We can distinguish between various more detailed versions of the self-representational idea, e.g., the claim that any conscious state represents wholly both its object and itself (Kriegel 2003) or the claim that some part of a conscious state represents its object and some part of the state represents itself (Gennaro 2006). In turn, either view can be distinguished from views on which conscious states represent not (merely) themselves but (also) their subject (Brook 2006).

Self-representationalism is frequently considered as a way of fleshing out a Kantian view.

Stripped down to its bare minimum, [Kant] held the view that common or garden representations present not just what they are about, not just their object. They also present themselves and they present oneself, their subject, that is to say, the thing that has them.<sup>250</sup>

But PSR does not work either. What is it for a state to represent itself? Representational states are (at least in part) individuated by their content. Say *M* has content *C*. So for *M* to represent itself to the subject, it presumably needs to represent *C*. But for *M* to *have C* is presumably already to represent that content to the subject. Either this representation is lucid or it is not. If it is lucid, then *M* does not need to represent itself.<sup>251</sup> But if *M*'s representing *C* to the subject does not

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<sup>249</sup> As Drummond 2006 notes, it is an interesting aspect of Brentano's view that the self-representational aspect of *M* represents the whole state, including the self-representational aspect itself (which in turn represents the whole state, etc.). Drummond objects that Brentano seems to explain awareness of awareness of seeing, rather than self-awareness of seeing, but I find the recursive character of Brentano's view much less obvious to interpret. Here I will not pursue ways it may be developed.

<sup>250</sup> Brook 2006, p. 89

<sup>251</sup> Consider here an objection. Presumably the proponent of PSR might reply: *C* is lucid, and this is so precisely in virtue of representing itself. That is, *C* can be a distinct sort of content: a content that represents itself, and accordingly is lucid. By not considering this option, I may appear to simply beg the question against PSR. There are two responses.

First, my objection to PSR assumes a certain interpretation of its program: namely to account for lucidity by using the resources provided by garden variety, non-lucid intentional contents. This is in fact typically the intended interpretation for proponents of PSR. Kriegel (2009) explicitly rejects interpreting *C* as a distinct type of lucid, self-representing content. On Kriegel's "partial self-representationalism," contents cannot represent *themselves*, but only other contents. Accordingly, for Kriegel a self-representing state *M* will have two contents *C* and *C\**, where *C* represents some environmental reality, and *C\** represents *C*, but not itself. Kriegel then argues that "partial self-representation" can be sufficient for self-representation *simpliciter*. Kriegel's rejection of distinctly lucid contents fits a more general way PSR is typically motivated by naturalist concerns: the aim is to reduce lucid

render *M*'s representing *C* lucid to the subject, then it is not clear why *M*'s representing *M* representing *C* to the subject would do so. If representation is not lucid, it is not clear why representation of representation is lucid. Self-representation is just more representation.

The response on behalf of PSR is that content makes immediately available what it is content of, such that *C* makes available what it represents, and *M* representing *M* representing *C* makes available *M* representing *C*. But this is to misconstrue the explanandum of lucidity. Lucid awareness is not merely the ability to know one is in *M*, but a peculiarly first-personal immediate consciousness of being in *M* (signaled by the way the state “self-intimates”). A cognitive system might allow for knowledge of the subject possessing *M* without this being a matter of a subject's lucid consciousness of *M*. Accordingly, a representation of *M* representing *C* does not account for a subject's lucid awareness of being in *M*.

The common failing of HOT and PSR is that representational intentionality fails to explain lucidity: that lucid states are immediately available to the subject as theirs. HOT presupposes that the states are lucidly theirs, and PSR presupposes that the states are lucidly available in the right way. To see the heart of the mistake, it is helpful to reflect more deeply on the point that lucid states are “mine.”<sup>252</sup> Consider Sebastian Rödl's reflection on the type of self-consciousness expressed in a first-person thought,

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consciousness to garden variety, naturalistically acceptable representational states. But distinctly lucid contents are not garden variety in this way: they do not explain lucidity through representational relations between ordinary contents.

Second, it is far from clear that the idea of a content *C* that is lucid in virtue of representing itself works. *C* must represent *C*. What is the content of *C*? It includes representing *C*, which... And so on. A regress ensues. This may not in itself be problematic. But it jeopardizes the idea of *C* bearing a *representational* relation to itself. How can a state represent a content that is indefinitely regressive in this way? I leave this worry here.

Thanks to Wayne Wu for bringing raising this objection to me.

<sup>252</sup> Prompting HOT theorists to respond by denying the existence of such an obvious phenomenological fact (Gennaro 2006, pp. 222-223).



When someone thinks in the manner expressed by a first person pronoun [...] the identity of her who thinks with her of whom she thinks defines the manner of thinking, it is apprehended not in a separate act, in which the subject recognizes someone whom she thinks to be herself. Rather, the identity is comprehended in the first person thought itself.<sup>253</sup>

Rödl here denies that self-referring thought—thought involving “I” —should be thought of as picking out its object (the self) through a form of recognition, e.g., that this subject is “me.” Rather, no recognition is involved at all, and the self-consciousness expressed by “I”-thoughts itself already embraces the identity of the thinker and its object.

A similar point applies to the “mine-ness” of lucid states. When a subject enjoys a conscious state as lucidly hers, the identity of the subject lucidly enjoying the state and the possessor of the conscious state are not established through some intentional attitude or act of representation, but are rather a *sui generis* constitutive aspect of a form of consciously enjoying a state, namely lucidly. That is, lucid states do not single out themselves as “mine,” and are not singled out as “mine” by other states (including through representation of the self “as” subject (Kriegel 2003)).<sup>254</sup> HOT’s problem is not really that it fails to account for the “mineness” of the

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<sup>253</sup> Rödl Manuscript, p. 2.

<sup>254</sup> One illustration of this problem is the objection frequently raised against PSR to the effect that it over-distributes attentional focus between the objects of the representation and its subject or the state itself. Self-representationalists have responded to this objection by positing that self-representation is a form of peripheral attention (Kriegel 2003, p. 14; Gurwitsch 1985, p. 4). But the reference to peripheral attention is especially unfortunate, since it explicitly casts self-consciousness as a particular variety of object awareness. As John Drummond writes (2006, p. 209),

The theme-margin distinction [...] cannot serve to underlie an account of self-awareness. Both the margin and the periphery belong to the objective content of experience. But what characterizes self-awareness and differentiates it from object-awareness is precisely that the self is given as subject not as something that belongs to the objective field.

As Drummond notes, self-consciousness does not involve (peripheral) attention since self-consciousness is not a form of object-awareness, and the self is not represented in such consciousness. Christopher Peacocke is in sympathy with this point (Peacocke 2014, p. 45ff.) As Peacocke writes (p. 55) “Attention seems in its very nature to be directed to what the consciousness of, not the consciousness itself”; and more specifically pertaining to the subject, (p. 48), “to be an object of attention, the object or event must be given in perception, sensation or perhaps in certain kinds of sensory imagination or memory; and to be given in one of those ways is not to be given as oneself.” On the other hand, see Martin (1998) for a sophisticated discussion of the ways attention may be involved in self-consciousness, even if it is not a form of object-awareness. I am not committed here to denying the relevance of forms of attention to self-conscious states, but only to diagnosing the concern over attention with respect to PSR as stemming from its representationalist commitments.

first-order state as though this would be required for the second-order state to appropriately single it out. Instead, it signals that we should follow John Drummond (2006) in taking seriously the “dative” or “genitive” surface grammar of expressions of lucid states, in which objects appear lucidly “to me” or experiences are “mine”—as opposed to the “accusative” grammar of object-oriented intentionality.<sup>255</sup> What is needed is an account of lucid states that is *sui generis* grounded in the nature of the awareness a subject possesses of her states, rather than reductively grounded in intentionality.

### 4.3 LUCIDITY AS SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS

In the lectures known as the *Anthropology* Kant provides a stirring description of consciousness of the “I” as a sea change in the development of mature human mentality (Anthr. 7:127; emphasis original):

The fact that the human being can have the “I” in his representations raises him infinitely above all other living beings on earth. Because of this he is a **person** and by virtue of the unity of consciousness through all changes that happen to him, one and the same person [...] This holds even when he cannot yet say “I,” because he still has it in thoughts, just as all languages must think it when they speak in the first person, even if they do not have a special word to express this concept of “I.” For this faculty (namely to think) is **understanding**. [...] When [a child] starts to speak by means of “I” a light seems to dawn on him, as it were, and from that day on he never again returns to his former way of speaking. –Before he merely **felt** himself; now he **thinks** himself.

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<sup>255</sup> Conversely, we might—following Drummond—think that it is fundamental to the nature of intentionality that it presents the intentional object “as other.” But some philosophers associate this phenomenology rather with experiential intentionality specifically (Kriegel 2010; Rödl 2007; Frey 2010; Peacocke 2014, Chapter 2). However this issue is decided, I think the “mineness” of self-consciousness seems plausibly indicative of the non-intentional character of self-consciousness.

This passage contains several significant claims including, e.g., the claims that the “I” is constitutive of personhood and the unity of consciousness.<sup>256</sup> But for my purposes, I want to abstract from some of these particulars to focus on two central aspects of the above passage: (i) Kant’s fundamental observation that “the human being [is such that he] can have the “I” in his representations”; and (ii) Kant’s association of this point with the faculty of the understanding, as expressed in the ability to think. My suggestion in this chapter is Kantian in explaining lucidity in terms of (i) and (ii). A mental state is lucid or available for immediate knowledge because it is self-consciously possessed, which in turn is associated with the subject’s capacity for thinking. This I argue grounds the **Argument from Self-Conscious Looks** as an argument for perceptual content.

Kant frequently emphasizes that self-consciousness—pure apperception—must be sharply distinguished from intentional awareness (including “inner sense”).<sup>257</sup> Self-consciousness is (B161) “not indeed in, but with [...] intuitions”; just so (Anthr. 7: 141-142) “the “I” of reflection contains no manifold”; and likewise, (B155) “[T]he I that I think is distinct from the I that intuits itself [in inner sense]; I am given to myself beyond that which is given in intuition.” I understand pure apperception for Kant as determining the form of a subject.<sup>258</sup> Accordingly, let me state a Kantian account of lucidity as a claim about the subject of consciousness.

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<sup>256</sup> There are no doubt interesting associations between the role of the “I” in consciousness and the unity and continuance of consciousness, but here is not the place to follow up on these leads.

<sup>257</sup> For some helpful discussion, Brook 2006 pp. 95-96.

<sup>258</sup> See Chapter 3 above. There I developed a reading of Kant on which the “I” contains a *sui generis* type of unity, on which the “I” is essentially reflexive in always being both the subject and object of a form of self-awareness. Although I do not need to directly rely on the further claim here, I argued that for Kant the *sui generis* reflexive unity of the “I” is a reason to think of the subject as a substance, and that its accidents (i.e., representations) inhere in it in a way that conforms to this distinct unity. It is uncontroversial that Kant at least conceives of the “I” as significantly *like* a substance. That is more than sufficient for my purposes in this chapter.

**Self-Consciousness:** for certain mental states  $M$ , if  $M$  is a conscious state, then it is the form or nature of being the mature human subject of  $M$  to be self-conscious of  $M$ , where self-consciousness is a *sui generis* form of subjective consciousness.<sup>259</sup>

Or to specify the thesis for the present purposes of understanding the nature of perceptual experience:

**Self-Conscious Experience:** the form or nature of being a mature human subject of conscious perceptual experience is to be self-conscious of the experience, where self-consciousness is a *sui generis* form of subjective consciousness.<sup>260</sup>

The upshot of Self-Consciousness is that Kant is not speaking loosely when he suggests that the “human being [has] the “I” in his representations.” In an example, if a judgment  $J$  that  $p$  is a representation of a subject  $S$ , then the form of  $J$  conforms to the self-conscious nature of  $S$  including the “I.”  $J$  would be expressible as, “I think that  $p$ .”<sup>261</sup> It is important to note that the suggestion is not that the self-referential form of  $J$  is part of its content, which is  $p$ . Rather,  $J$  is self-conscious. The “I think” is part of the form of  $J$  as a conscious state: the way it represents, not what it represents.

How does Self-Consciousness relate to the questions of lucidity and self-representation discussed above? In brief, I suggest we can explain lucidity in terms of self-consciousness. In mature human beings, a state  $M$  is lucid because it is self-consciously possessed. The presence and (some aspects of) the nature of  $M$  are lucid or perspicuous to me because the form of  $M$  *includes*

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<sup>259</sup> Self-Consciousness is intended to underwrite Matthew Boyle’s suggestion that rationality should be conceived as “transformative” of the mind in which it is present (Boyle 2016). Boyle’s claim has sparked significant interest, but at least two points have remained unclear. First, what grounds the transformative conception of rationality? How are we supposed to understand the thesis that rationality “transforms” other mental states? Second, what is the exact extent of the transformative nature of rationality? Does rationality transform the nature of any mental state, or is it specific aspects of the mind that are affected? The development of Self-Consciousness below is intended to gain some initial ground on these questions.

<sup>260</sup> I consider below whether it is legitimate to extend Self-Consciousness in this way.

<sup>261</sup> Should  $J$  not be expressible merely as “ $p$ ”? I take it as Kant’s main claim to deny that this properly expresses the form of mature human consciousness, which is inherently self-conscious. Now of course, a subject can simply judge “ $p$ .” But for Kant she would do so self-consciously in a way expressible as “I think that  $p$ .” As Rödl puts this point (Manuscript, p. 4) “being conscious of thinking a thought is not a different act from thinking this thought, the act of the mind expressed by  $p$  is the same as the one expressed by *I think p*.”

the subject's possession of *M*, without incorporating this element into the *M*'s content *C*.

Kant associates Self-Consciousness with thought. As Kant writes (Anthr. 7: 161):

Inner sense is not pure apperception, consciousness of what we are doing; for this belongs to the power of thinking.<sup>262</sup>

But for Self-Conscious Experience the association between self-consciousness and thought can seem problematic. Lucidity applies more widely than thought, but self-consciousness for Kant may seem associated merely with this activity. As Kant explicitly writes, self-consciousness is “consciousness of what we are doing,” but arguably experience is not something we do.<sup>263</sup> Just so, Kant's precise claim is (Anthr. 7:127; italics mine) “that the human being *can* have the “I” in his representations.” The modal characterization of this claim would seem suitable precisely to distinguish conscious thought (or even strictly self-referring thought) from experience.

To see our way out of this dilemma I think we should see Kant's association between self-consciousness and the capacity for thought as expressing a fundamental insight from the rationalist tradition. In this light, the thought is most crisply articulated by briefly considering Kant's view in light of a thought from Descartes.<sup>264</sup>

On Katalin Farkas' recent account of Descartes' argument in the *Meditations*, the upshot of Descartes' skeptical procedure—and the Cartesian discovery of the thinking self—is to provide a distinctly epistemological conception of the mind, such that when a skeptical scenario rules out access to the external world, the cognizer is nevertheless left with a distinct subjective form

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<sup>262</sup> Likewise, Kant writes (B153) that “synthesis [...] as an act [...] is conscious to itself, even without sensibility,” where the activity of synthesis for Kant is associated with the capacity for thought. See my argument in chapter 1 above.

<sup>263</sup> This is consistent

<sup>264</sup> I am in this discussion helped by Katalin Farkas's recent book *The Subject's Point of View* (2008), the central thesis of which is that a helpful conception of the mind can still be found in Descartes.

of access to her mind. Specifically, Farkas takes Descartes to employ this distinctive subjective accessibility to delineate the realm of the mental as a realm of phenomena knowable to the subject in a way that they are not knowable to any other cognizer:<sup>265</sup>

My proposal is that the mental realm is nothing but the subject matter of the cognitive capacity that endows me with special access: that is, the area that is known by me in a way that it is known by no one else. [...] We can conceive this thesis as creating a notion analogous to the notion of observable properties, which are also understood relative to a cognitive capacity: observable properties are those properties we can get to know through unaided perception. The thesis is that mental properties are the specially accessible properties.<sup>266</sup>

Accordingly, on Farkas' reading the Cartesian view in effect settles on lucidity as distinctive of the mental.<sup>267</sup>

Farkas' characterization of the Cartesian view offers a strategy for understanding Kant's association of self-consciousness with the capacity to think. In particular, Farkas' reading foregrounds the prominence of thought in Descartes' conception of subjective mental life in general, as opposed to merely constituting one of its aspects. Consider that Farkas understands Descartes as giving a distinctly epistemic account of the mind, on which it is the nature of the mental to be knowable in a unique way. But to characterize the nature of the mental in terms of certain types of knowledge is to understand its nature in light of the subject's capacity to think or judge. After all, it is states or acts of thought which are knowledgeable.<sup>268</sup> Accordingly, on the Cartesian conception the mind as such must be understood in light of judgment.

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<sup>265</sup> I am in this paper not committed to Farkas' project of delineating the mental as such, and for my purposes Farkas' claims can be reformulated *mutatis mutandis* as concerning the nature of (certain) conscious states.

<sup>266</sup> Farkas 2008, p. 22-24. Of course this does not mean that these facts are not knowable to other cognizers *simpliciter*. Rather they are not knowable not in a distinctly first-personal way.

<sup>267</sup> Farkas's aim is not to give an account of lucidity, e.g., not ruling out introspectability on the model of object perception. But if we understand the Cartesian conception of lucidity along the above-suggested Kantian lines of the *sui generis* self-conscious nature of the subject, it helps explain why Descartes might exempt self-consciousness from skeptical threat: self-consciousness is not a form of object-awareness, and one might think this leaves no room for a skeptical scenario to interpose itself between subject and object such as to undermine knowledge. This might explain why "internal" skepticism about access to our states seems much less worrisome than "external" skepticism about access to distal objects (Horgan, Tienson and Graham 2006).

<sup>268</sup> This may be denied by reference to acquaintance, which might be thought to constitute a form of knowledge that is not constituted in judgment. But even proponents of acquaintance might grant that knowledge by acquaintance

But the real value in considering Descartes' view is the way Descartes' subject comes to understand herself—as a self-conscious subject of mental states—in terms of thought. Consider Descartes' famous characterization of the self as a thinker (CSM ii. 19: AT vii. 28), “But what, then, am I? A thinking thing, it has been said.” In Chapter 3 above, I have argued that the “I” is possessed of a distinctive unity constituted by an immediate type of reflection. I further suggested this immediate reflective character is associated with thought. As such, it is not coincidental that Descartes' fellow rationalists emphasized that “I think, therefore I am” is not properly an inference, but better rendered as “I think, I am.”<sup>269</sup> Thought itself includes the self-conscious being of the subject as encapsulated in the “I.”<sup>270</sup> Kant himself agrees, writing (B157a):

The “I think” expresses the act of determining my existence. Existence is already given thereby.

It is very a difficult question how precisely the self-conscious nature of thought relates to the existence and nature of the subject expressed by “I,” but here it is sufficient to merely sketch the rationalist thought. The “I” essentially reflects on itself, which (itself) in turn is nothing other beyond the subject that reflects on itself. The “I” in this sense possesses a constitutive reflective character. But such reflective character exists in the act of thinking. In thinking I am aware of myself as the self-conscious “I.” Reflective unity is attained in thought. As such, the existence of the self-conscious “I” is primarily associated with the subject's thoughtful activity. The “I” is the “I” of thought first. The “I” is a thinker.

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should—in the human case—be understood in light of a further capacity for propositional knowledge. That is, even if first-personal access to the self is thought of as a form of acquaintance (Duncan 2015), then plausibly Farkas' account still indexes the mental to the distinctively human capacity for knowledge through judgment in a way unavailable to animals. For more on the relation between the present view and animals, see §5 section (4) below.

<sup>269</sup> See my discussion of the so-called “Merian” cogito in Chapter 3 above.

<sup>270</sup> Notoriously Leibniz seems to hold that it follows that for any time  $t$  the subject depends for its existence on thinking at  $t$  (L p. 645; G VI 610), and there are places where Kant seems to assert the same. The deeper significance of this topic I cannot here approach.

Now consider the way Descartes expands on his characterization of the nature of the self-conscious subject (CSM ii. 19: AT vii. 28):

But what, then, am I? A thinking thing, it has been said. But what is a thinking thing? It is a thing that doubts, understands, affirms, denies, is willing, is unwilling and also imagines and has sensory perceptions.<sup>271</sup>

As Farkas (2008, p. 10) notes, there seems a hesitant tone in Descartes' inclusion of imagination and sense perception as activities of the "I." But Farkas fails to register this hesitation in terms of the fundamental thinking nature of Descartes' self-conscious subject.<sup>272</sup> Insofar as Farkas is right to suggest that lucidity is not merely distinctive of thought, but extends to the mind more generally—including, e.g., sensation—then on the Cartesian conception the question is how such states are integrated into a self-conscious nature that has its home in the subject's thinking nature. *Pace* Farkas, *this* is what explains the qualified tone of Descartes suggestion that the thinker "also imagines and has sensory perceptions." Imagination and sensory perception have an imagistic quality, which is not associated with the capacity for thought as such. Accordingly, the hesitation stems from the fact that the thinking subject—the "I"—self-consciously possesses states that, unlike acts of affirmation, doubt and understanding, are not themselves (at least in their entirety) acts of her thinking capacity.<sup>273</sup>

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<sup>271</sup> Cited at Farkas 2008, p. 10.

<sup>272</sup> Farkas explains the point in terms of Descartes' distinction between the subjectively available aspects of sense experience and the actuality of operations of the sense organs (Farkas 2008, p. 10).

<sup>273</sup> Farkas' failure to appreciate the Cartesian association between lucidity and thought serves to explain several interpretive problems that Farkas' reading faces (by her own admission, Farkas 2008, p. 22).

Prominent among these is the fact that, in marked contrast with Descartes himself, Farkas finds herself compelled to sharply distinguish "lucid" self-knowledge from knowledge of propositions such as "I exist" (Farkas 2008, p. 26). For Farkas (2008, p. 27) these propositions express not an exercise of self-consciousness but of our recognition of the "contextually self-verifying" nature of certain propositions (e.g., the fact that "I exist" is true whenever uttered). But if the self-conscious nature of thought is constitutive of the "I," then this validates Descartes' focus on propositions like "I exist" in his account of self-consciousness. (Here it is indicative that Farkas attributes "I exist" and "I am here" the same status, where on my analysis it seems not coincidental that Descartes focuses merely on "I exist" (or "I am") rather than an assertion of spatial location such as "I am here.")

Another example is Descartes' connection between self-consciousness and a priori reason, which Farkas feels forced to deny. As Farkas admits, severing this connection is problematic for her understanding of Descartes' view. For Farkas, the demon scenario is intended to isolate the subject's view of her own mind as the capacity that



#### 4.4 THE ARGUMENT FROM SELF-CONSCIOUS LOOKS

If there is a constitutive relation between the subject's self-conscious nature and her capacity for thought, then here is the way to support SL2 of the Argument from Self-Conscious Looks.

Self-consciousness is not merely an additional feature of experience, but has an important role in shaping its nature. Recall Kant's suggestive remarks on the transformative power of the "I," such that through self-consciousness "a light seems to dawn" on the subject and "from that day [the subject] never again returns to his former way," such that "now he *thinks* himself." If it is correct that perceptual experience is self-consciously enjoyed by the subject, then experience is in its nature wholly integrated into the self-conscious life of the subject. Perception presents things as available for the subject's self-conscious life as a whole. Accordingly, the suggestion is that once self-consciousness is in play for perceptual experience, things appear in experience as "standing under" the structure of the subject's self-conscious life. As such, the self-conscious nature of experience indexes experience to the broader nature of the self-consciously existing subject in a whole-to-parts order of explanation. If this is correct, then Kant's conception of self-

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survives the skeptic's challenge. But as Farkas notes, the cogency of any anti-skepticism relies also on reasoning, and consequently a capacity for introspection is not the only capacity exempted from Cartesian skepticism. Reason must survive as well. Farkas calls this unfortunate and unavoidable, and concludes that (2008, p. 22), "the demon is only a suggestive device, because it helps us to focus on the subject's point of view." But if I am correct in this paper, Farkas' concession is unnecessary: to focus on self-consciousness as free from skepticism just is to focus on the subject's capacity for thought.

consciousness results in two interestingly interrelated claims about the relation between the subject and her experience. On the one hand, it is the nature of experience to be self-conscious so as to implicate its subject in the way self-conscious mental states do. On the other hand, the self-conscious aspect of experience in turn renders its nature as dependent on the nature of its subject.

Now, imagine that I am self-consciously possessed of an experience of a red cube. My experience presents the red cube as available to my self-consciously lived life: the nature of the experience is to be understood in light of my self-consciousness. But the nature of my self-conscious life is grounded in my capacity to think. Accordingly, my experience involves the red cube specifically for my thinking about it. But the best way to express the idea that the environment becomes available for my thinking is that there is, from experience, some way to think the environment to be. Because thinking is thinking things to be some way. Finally, a way things can be thought to be is expressed in terms of content.<sup>274</sup>

If this right, then the Argument from Self-Conscious Looks meets Strong Content. Self-conscious experience represents things as some way or another because such is the way a thinker can take them to be, and the notion of a subject enjoying experience self-consciously can be understood only in light of her capacity to think about things. To be sure, these claims may be false, but if acceptable at all, the account clearly meets Strong Content. Experience fundamentally involves content because it is fundamentally self-conscious.

But would this account meet Looks-Indexing? Arguably not. If perception has contents self-consciously, it would not be difficult to see how such contents were subjectively available: it would be in the nature of experience to make its content available to the subject. But this might not meet Looks-Indexing. In his discussion of options (a) and (b) as detailed above, Wilson (p.

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<sup>274</sup> I think in fact the representationalist is at considerable liberty in giving an account of perceptual contents while preserving the core of her view. See my discussion in Chapter 6.

32) briefly notes an alternative to (a) and (b)—call it (c)—on which the representationalist rejects looks-indexing but insists on the subjective availability of contents, arguing that positing perceptual content *eo ipso* implies the subjective availability of such content and that consequently there is no task of explaining availability by reference to looks. But Wilson rejects (c) since, it seems to him, it (i) reduces perceptual phenomenology to what Mark Johnston (2006, p. 260) has called “The Wallpaper View,” i.e., a view on which phenomenology is epiphenomenal, and plays no independent role in the subjective availability of experiential content; and moreover, (ii) it fails to accommodate the sense in which, supposedly, it is intuitive to think that visual phenomenology ‘shows’ the subject the contents of experience, as opposed to those contents being immediately known (as e.g., in the case of judgment).

I think it is fair to describe the Argument from Self-Conscious Looks as a version of (c), but I think it is a mistake to suggest that it does not meet Looks-Indexing. Specifically, I think it is a mistake to suggest that a self-conscious view of experience does not appreciate the role of phenomenology in experience, or the role of experience in “showing” the subject the way it portrays the world as being. On the self-conscious view phenomenology is not supposed to be an empty wheel to an account of experience, nor does the view deny that experience in some way “shows” the subject how things are in her environment (i.e., what is the content of her experience). Rather, the point is that the phenomenal character of experience is itself self-conscious: in the experience of a mature human subject, the way things are phenomenally in experience is the way things look from a self-conscious point of view. Things look some way to the subject self-consciously—this is the “look” to which the content of experience is indexed. Likewise, the self-conscious look of the experience is what “shows” the subject how things stand in her environment, a state-of-affairs which can be expressed in terms of a content.

Does this meet Looks-Indexing? I believe it does. The anti-representationalist objection as voiced by Wilson (and originated by Travis) seems to presuppose that Looks-Indexing can be met only on a conception of phenomenology on which it is somehow available independently of and prior to content being available, but the present view denies this commitment. Consider reflections on the same topic from Matthew Soteriou:

an assumption [...] that is sometimes made in representationalist accounts of experience is that [...] if we specify the particular time, subject, and perceptual modality we have in mind, we can then ask after *the* content of *the* perceptual experience of the subject, within that perceptual modality, at that time—e.g., ‘what is the content of the visual experience you are having now?.’ This, I think, is symptomatic of a more general tendency to assume that it is possible to learn something about the experience one is having by first attending to it and then determining its nature. [...] the assumption is that one can introspectively pick out, and home in on, some experiential state or event and then come to some judgment about the representational content of that experiential event or state. [...] We can contrast this sort of assumption about experience with the sort of assumptions we tend to make about belief. [...] We specify beliefs in terms of their contents, and the question, ‘what is the content of your belief that *p*.’ answers itself. [...] In other words, it doesn’t seem right to think that a subject can check what the content of a particular belief of hers is, by introspectively homing in on that target belief and *then* determining its content.<sup>275</sup>

Soteriou here draws a putative contrast between beliefs and perceptual experiences, such that it is common to take the former to be identified in terms of their contents while, supposedly, representationalists assume that perceptual experiences can be isolated prior to determining their contents through introspection. Soteriou goes on to deny this contrast, and suggest that the contents of neither belief nor experience should be considered independent of our judgments of them. But on the present understanding of representationalism, both Soteriou’s diagnosis and his solution are misguided. Representationalists need not hold that perceptual experiences are introspectively available prior to the availability of their contents. Their introspectively available character is constituted by their presenting contents to the subject. Moreover, the contents of neither beliefs nor perceptual experiences are determined (or accessed) through an act of introspective judgment, but are rather self-conscious.

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<sup>275</sup> Soteriou 2013, p. 183

Compare further D.W. Smith's idea (Smith 1986, 1989, 2004) that self-consciousness modifies the modality (or fundamental character) of sense perception. For Smith it follows that mature human experience is phenomenal in a way inextricably bound up with subjective consciousness' self-referential character. As Smith characterizes such phenomenal character, "it [embodies] the 'raw feel' of an experience, its subjective quality, what it is like to have the experience, the way it is experienced or lived through."<sup>276</sup> The key aspect of Smith's view is that the phenomenal character of experience includes its self-conscious character: to characterize experience phenomenally is to capture, in part, what it is like as self-consciously lived through.<sup>277</sup>

In this way, on a self-conscious conception of perceptual experience, the phenomenology of experience becomes available through the self-conscious character of experience—and this is itself supposed to be associated with the experience having content. This is not to deny that the way in experience things are phenomenally (at least in the sense relevant to self-conscious looks) plays a role in the subjective availability of contents: it denies that phenomenology plays an independent role in such a way that it can be characterized in terms of the subject "recognizing" or "reading off" the content of her experience from a phenomenology somehow available independently from her self-consciousness. Perceptual contents are "looks-indexed" but not "phenomenal character-indexed" (insofar as the latter is understood independent of content).<sup>278</sup>

Here it is telling that Wilson puts his criticism of option (c) in terms of a contrast between judgment and experience. As Wilson notes in line with Soteriou's above comments, the contents of thoughts might seem readily available to self-consciousness without any need for being "read

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<sup>276</sup> Smith 2004, p. 99

<sup>277</sup> Drummond 2006, p. 211

<sup>278</sup> It may be doubted that this satisfactorily addresses Travis' claim that phenomenology can be common between various ways the environment may be. I further discuss this worry in §4.5 below.

off” or “shown” to the subject in any way, but this might seem different with regard to the way experience makes available to the subject the way the environment is purported to be (and accordingly, what content the experience is supposed to possess). But from the perspective of the self-conscious conception of experience, Wilson misplaces the source of the distinction between experience and judgment. It is true that there is a unified explanation of the subject’s access to the contents of her states of thinking and her experiential states: both are states of self-consciousness. But where thinking is entirely active, or “spontaneous,” perceptual experience contains a passive, or “receptive,” element: perceptual experience involves self-consciousness not of what one is actively thinking, but of how things strike one. It is this passivity that grounds the fact that experience “shows us” how things are in a way that thought does not. The distinction between thought and experience need not lie in the relation between content and subjective availability.<sup>279</sup>

#### 4.5 OBJECTIONS

(1) But for all the above, my argument may still seem to underappreciate considerations concerning the nature of phenomenology. In particular, self-conscious looks may seem to fail to specify a genuinely phenomenal sense of looks such as to be appropriately responsive to the anti-representationalist considerations offered by Travis. Travis’ observation is that the phenomenal character of experience seems best captured by comparative looks. These are plausibly

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<sup>279</sup> This of course concerns merely the contents of certain conscious states, not contents generally.

indeterminate between different ways the environment might be: the coat can be grey or it can be beige in poorly or unusually illuminated conditions. If this is correct, how can any type of looks—including self-conscious looks—hope to isolate a particular representational content associated with the phenomenal character of experience? Insofar as experience admits of a sufficiently strong sense of comparative looks, the question is raised again how phenomenal experience is supposed to make available one self-conscious look over another.<sup>280</sup>

But the response is that while perceptual content needs to be indexed to the way the environment looks in experience, it does not need to be indexed to comparative looks. The look of the grey coat may be comparable to a look of a beige coat in dim light, but self-consciously it looks to be grey. Nor is this to deny a distinctly phenomenal sense of looks. Self-conscious looks are phenomenal. Say I see a flipped coin tracing its arch through the air. Comparatively the coin at *t* may look like an ellipse, and there is a phenomenal character to that look. But self-consciously the flipped coin at *t* may look like a flipped coin, and there is a phenomenal character to that. But how does experience have a self-conscious look given the nature of comparative looks? Given that experience is self-conscious, relatively sophisticated aspects of the subject's self-conscious position in the world can be exploited to account for how things self-consciously look to be. For example, it may be that what experience presents self-consciously for thought is governed by some assumption of the way ordinary three-dimensional objects appear in appropriate illumination, thereby resolving the case of the grey coat and the coin.<sup>281</sup>

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<sup>280</sup> To be sure, the topic here is not (as it never was) how phenomenology might determine or give rise to one content or another, but rather how it might contribute to making such a content subjectively available.

<sup>281</sup> To be sure, the point is not a commitment to any conception of “conditions of appropriate illumination,” or even to the relevance of the particular notion of “appropriate illumination.” The point is that an account of self-conscious experience is capable of placing the contents of experience against a background of various sophisticated conditions that shape a subject's self-conscious presence in the world as a thinker (and a thinker informed by sight, specifically). The subject takes herself to be able to tell how things are by sight, and that inevitably depends on a

But this may not seem to fully address the problem of comparative looks. I have suggested that insofar as the way things experientially look is self-consciously available, there is reason to associate it with content. But comparative looks are available to the subject, even as they are not plausibly associated with content. This seems to engender a dilemma: either my view is unable to account for the subjective availability of comparative looks, or Travis' objection returns in the form of the question how contents may be grounded in comparative looks, which have been granted to be subjectively available but not be associated with content. But I think the dilemma can be avoided by denying that comparative looks are genuinely self-consciously available in the sense that self-conscious looks are. On this response, comparative looks are parasitic on self-conscious looks. Suppose it self-consciously looks to me that there is a grey coat in front of me. Experience is self-consciously making available that the coat is to be thought to be grey. I can subsequently reflect that some phenomenal aspect of this self-conscious state might be indistinguishable from the situation in which I face not a grey coat, but a beige coat in bad lighting. I can thus attribute to my experience a comparative look as of a beige coat in bad lighting. But this phenomenal aspect is derived from the self-conscious availability of the scene in my experience, on which it looks to me that there is a grey coat in front of me.<sup>282</sup>

(2) Another objection has been provided by Christopher Peacocke (2014). Consider Sebastian Rödl's endorsement of the connection between thought and self-consciousness (Rödl 2007, p. 11):

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sophisticated background of assumed conditions. "Conditions of appropriate illumination" serves merely as shorthand for an aspect of this background.

<sup>282</sup> Of course suitable reflection on aspects of my experience can lead me to question my experience, and even (given the self-conscious character of perception) change how things can self-consciously look to me. For example, I may not merely realize that a beige coat in bad lighting would look just like a grey coat, but I may remember that I do, in fact, own a beige coat, and that lighting in my wardrobe has been unpredictable recently. But this does not undermine the suggestion that, absent such reflections on illumination, the coat self-consciously looks grey to me.



Reflection on the nature of sensation cannot reveal how it is that sensation is represented in first person thought, because sensation is present in animals that are not self-conscious. If, in animals with thought, sensation is represented first personally, then this is because, first, the power of thought includes a power of first person knowledge and, secondly, sensation is caught up in thought in such a way as to be brought within the purview of this power. Therefore, the first thing we must consider in order to understand self-consciousness is thought, not sensation.

As Rödl here notes, even recognizing that in creatures with the capacity for thought sensations are integrated into subjective self-consciousness, it does not follow that sensation is a primary focus for understanding self-consciousness, as opposed to merely something “caught up in thought in such a way as to be brought within the purview of this power.” But as Peacocke notes, it is not clear why this argument might not simply be repeated *mutatis mutandis* for perception (Peacocke 2014, p. 97):

Reflection on the nature of perceptual content cannot reveal anything about first person conceptual content, because perception is present in animals that are not self-conscious. If, in animals with thought, perception does have a first person content, then this is because, first, the power of thought includes a power of first person knowledge and secondly, the content of perception is caught up in thought in such a way as to be brought within the purview of this power. Therefore, the first thing we must consider in order to understand self-consciousness is thought, not perception.

Peacocke’s objection is suggestive: if sensation as a capacity shared with non-rational animals can stand apart from the self-conscious character of thought, it may not seem obvious why the same could not be said for perception.<sup>283</sup>

But this is to mistake the upshot of Rödl’s remarks, both when it comes to the way sensation is shared in common between rational and non-rational animals, and what it means, respectively, for sensation and perception to be “caught up in thought in such a way as to be brought within the purview of this [active] power.”<sup>284</sup> The answer lies in what has sometimes been called the

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<sup>283</sup> For a forceful expression of this objection from the so-called “continuity” between rational and non-rational animals, see Burge 2010. For discussion of this objection, see also Boyle 2012, p. 420.

<sup>284</sup> Is there really a separable notion of “sensation” independent of perception, such that the two may come apart in how they relate to self-consciousness (once it is present in a being)? It is important to note that I am not committed to there being such a distinction. My argument is merely against Peacocke’s appropriation of Rödl’s argument. On Rödl’s (Kantian) conception, there is a distinct way to speak of a faculty sensibility. My point is that claims made

“divide and conquer” strategy for dealing with self-consciousness, i.e., the idea of accounting differently for self-consciousness of mental states like thought and states like sensation (e.g., Moran 2001; Boyle 2009).

Sensation is the capacity to be affected. It does not involve the spontaneous capacity for thought because it *is* the passive capacity that stands over against the spontaneity of thought. Consider being afflicted by a pain, or struck by the blinding sensation of a bright light shone in one’s eyes. These are intentionally chosen examples of abrasive sensations but they illustrate that in sensation (not one’s awareness of it, but the state itself) one does not occupy a “standpoint”: one is struck by something that impacts one’s viewpoint, but the viewpoint is not included in sensation itself. Contrast perception. In a perceptual state, one occupies a viewpoint: a state of perception itself *includes* oneself—a perceptual state does not simply strike one, but rather it is a state in which one’s subjectivity is itself implicated. This is related to the fact that perception takes an object. Perception has a world, which in turn includes oneself, and the point of view from which one access it.<sup>285</sup>

This contrast between sensation and perception yields two different ways in which sensation and pain are brought under self-consciousness (when it is present in a being with capacities for thought). Sensation, too, is integrated in self-consciousness, but as a state of which the subject can become aware, but which is not thought-involving in its nature. When self-conscious of a sensation, one’s self-consciousness subsumes a type of state that does not involve

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about that faculty do not carry over to perception. I am not committed to sensibility being a distinct faculty in a correct metaphysics of mind.

<sup>285</sup> As I have suggested, the orientation that one finds in perception is intelligible precisely because perception does include one’s subjective view against which orientation can be understood.

the activity of the subject. It is different with perception. Self-consciousness changes the nature of perception since perception includes the subject itself.<sup>286</sup>

Accordingly, this is the sense in which sensation is common to non-rational animals in and perception is not. That is, this is the sense in which self-consciousness “subsumes” sensation and perception in different ways. Animals, too, are creatures capable of affection. Passivity is a feature of their mental make-up as much as it is a feature of ours. Of course, perception, too, is something non-rational animals are capable of, but since it includes the self-consciousness of the subject in the human case, not in the way humans are. To be sure, perception for animals is equally shaped by a form of activity and is not exhausted by passivity, but this activity is not the understanding. Perception for them too “stands under” important features of their nature, but such features are not rational.

(3) But does Self-conscious Experience imply that the subject has infallible access to the phenomenology of her mental states? If so, this would seem problematic in two ways. First, it seems compelling views in the philosophy of mind and the philosophy of perception depend on the claim that we can, at least in certain cases, be mistaken about the phenomenology of experience.<sup>287</sup> Second, insofar as the broader view of self-consciousness invoked in this chapter implies subjective infallibility, this seems to conflict with obvious cases of self-deception and

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<sup>286</sup> To appreciate the contrast between sensation and perception in this regard, it is helpful to consider the transparency of experience. The transparency of experience is the phenomenon that in experience we do not access sensory qualities in experience, but that experience is rather transparent to its objects: it is inherently turned outwards. This is the sense in which in occupying a self-conscious perceptual standpoint, one occupies a state determined by the nature of one’s activity, viz. thought’s relation to objects. The sensory passivity of one’s experience does not exhaust one’s experience, and as transparency shows, is indeed relegated to (relative) inaccessibility.

<sup>287</sup> One example is Martin’s sophisticated suggestion that the apparent phenomenology of non-veridical experiences be explained negatively in terms of a failure of self-insight, rather than positively by accepting that such experiences have phenomenology (Martin 2006).

blindness towards one's own mental states. But Self-conscious Experience does not imply infallibility. The two problems can be treated slightly differently.

On the first version of the objection, the point is not to confuse self-consciousness with introspection. Introspection is, arguably, a matter of judgment concerning one's own states. Self-consciousness (as it occurs in experience) is not itself a matter of judgment. This distinction is captured by Kant's distinction between pure apperception and inner sense. Only in the latter case is self-awareness a matter of judging—based on some “inner evidence”—matters to be some way with oneself. This distinction opens up space for fallibility. It is with judgment that the possibility of error arises, and accordingly, introspection can be understood to be fallible. Self-consciousness does not err, but neither is it infallible, since it does not judge.

On the second version the objection takes the account to universally predicate the property of self-consciousness  $s$  over members of some mental state kind  $M$ , while it is open to the account to propose  $s$  as a categorical generalization over  $M$  or as predicating  $s$  as a teleological essence claim concerning  $M$ . That is,  $M$  may categorically instantiate  $s$ , or it may be part of the nature of properly formed members of  $M$  to instantiate  $s$ .<sup>288</sup> Arguably either claim would establish the self-conscious nature of experience without conflicting with cases of self-deception and self-blindness.

(4) Finally it may seem that my defense of self-conscious looks cannot be right, since my account overintellectualizes lucidity. Whatever the correct account, surely non-rational animals share phenomenal consciousness, which is presumably “lucidly” available to the relevant animal. But either (a) animals are not self-conscious and therefore “lucidity” cannot be explained in those terms, or at least (b) animals are not rational, and therefore even insofar as “lucidity”

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<sup>288</sup> Clearly anything along these lines vastly underappreciates what might be involved in Kant's famous claim (B131-32) “The *I think* must be able to accompany all my representations”.

implicates a form of self-consciousness, this cannot be associated with thought. But I do not think this follows from what we must grant of animal consciousness. Animal consciousness is phenomenal, and this involves a form of “lucidity.” There is a sense in which non-rational animals have “immediate access” to their conscious states like rational subjects do. But non-rational beings do not have knowledge in the way rational beings do. Accordingly, the character of lucidity is different. Consider further that on the view developed, it is partly constitutive of (certain) conscious states to be lucid. Accordingly, there is no need to grant a uniform way in which the relevant conscious states are common to rational and non-rational animals. It can be allowed that the nature of self-consciousness makes a difference that penetrates the nature of states self-consciously possessed.

## 5.0 EXPERIENTIAL SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS AND PERCEPTUAL PRESENCE

Let's assume that subjects are, by and large, justified in their perceptual judgments. While reliabilists ground this type of epistemic warrant in the reliability of perceptual judgment, experientialists hold that subjective conscious experience makes a critical independent contribution to perceptual justification and knowledge.<sup>289</sup> In Michael Tye's vocabulary (2009, p. 98), experientialists hold that experiential consciousness is "undeniably epistemically enabling." Call this experience's "epistemic value." In this sense, experience's epistemic value is at the heart of internalist approaches to perceptual justification and knowledge, since while perception's reliability is not typically considered as subjectively available, conscious experience is or can be.<sup>290</sup>

Consider the way, mundanely, experiences include "good cases" and "bad cases": cases in which the subject is actually perceptually confronted with her environment, and cases where she is not, though indiscriminably so. What does this fact mean for experience's epistemic value?

For the disjunctivist, less than one might have thought. Specifically, following Duncan

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<sup>289</sup> I will take the questions in this paper to arise specifically for conscious visual experience (Genone 2014, p. 16). Tyler Burge (2003) makes important distinctions between "perceptual justification" and "perceptual entitlement" as describing types of epistemic standing vis-à-vis perceptual judgment. Here I will not follow Burge.

<sup>290</sup> This leaves open a wide range of internalist positions. A demanding version might take experience's character to be "reflectively available" in a robust sense, e.g., such as to be potentially articulable by its subject. A more modest version may take conscious experience to be available to the subject in a more attenuated sense (for example, as in Jim Pryor's dogmatism (Pryor 2000, 2004)). Thanks to Adrian Haddock and Jim Pryor for discussion of this point at a conference on perceptual experience and empirical rationality at the University of Pittsburgh, Oct. 21-24 2016.

Pritchard's influential exposition (Pritchard 2007, 2012), the disjunctivist is not deterred from claiming that in the good case experience's epistemic value: (1) guarantees the truth of propositions that can be believed on its basis, and accordingly ensures the subject an opportunity to form beliefs that are knowledgeable; (2) is "reflectively accessible," such that the subject is or can become, in some suitable sense, aware of being in a position to knowledgeably judge on the basis of experience.<sup>291</sup>

My interest in this chapter is how to understand the first claim: i.e., how to structure experience's epistemic value so to reveal it as bearing the intimate connection to knowledge posited by (1). As I will make plain, Pritchard's version of disjunctivism depends on understanding (1) as a claim about the strength or status of experience's epistemic value. By contrast, I will suggest disjunctivism is best understood as a claim about the structure of experience's epistemic value *per se*. Experience bears an intimate connection to knowledge because of the way experience bears epistemic value at all, not because of the strength or status of experience's epistemic value (where this is more generically conceived). As such, disjunctivism is a claim about what makes experientialism true, not a position within a more widely accepted conception of why conscious experience is epistemically valuable. If I am right, much about disjunctivism as a view of experience is illuminated by appreciating this point.

But before elaborating (1), let me say something about (2).

Pritchard himself, like much subsequent literature on disjunctivism, spends relatively little attention developing (2).<sup>292</sup> By contrast, it will be critical to my understanding of disjunctivism that the "reflective access" mentioned in (2) is understood along the lines I have elaborated

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<sup>291</sup> I will come to question Pritchard's way of dividing up disjunctivist commitments in this fashion.

<sup>292</sup> Pritchard does not detail his conception of (2), and French 2016 explicitly sets it aside (p. 90, p. 100). Haddock 2011 and Stuchlik 2015 are exceptions, but neither correctly appreciates the role of (2).

elsewhere, namely in terms of a variety of first-order self-awareness.<sup>293</sup> On this view, possessing a relevant first-order conscious experience amounts to being self-aware of having the experience. In the places where I discussed this view, I noted that this variety of consciousness is a feature of our capacity to think: it is the nature of subjects as thinkers that allows for the existence of first-order states that are at once self-conscious states. Accordingly, it is not external to this type of self-consciousness that it is enjoyed by the subject as a thinker specifically.

What I want to start with here is to address one way (2) has seemed problematic. In a recent paper, Adrian Haddock (2011) has suggested an argument complicating the disjunctivist's commitment to (2), which Haddock formulates as the idea that "if I perceive that P, then I am in a position to know that I perceive that P."<sup>294</sup> For Haddock, there are two ways the disjunctivist might arrive at (2): a weaker view on which a perceptual state ensures that the subject is in a position to gain the relevant self-knowledge, and a stronger view on which self-knowledge of a perceptual state is "the same reality" as the perceptual state itself.<sup>295</sup> Haddock (2011, p. 28) rejects the stronger view by counter-example, viz. the occurrence of so-called "reflectively bad" cases, i.e., cases in which a subject ostensibly suffers a perceptual experience but does not enjoy

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<sup>293</sup> The main idea here is clearly developed in Rödl 2007, 2013. Some story must be told about how "self-awareness" relates to "self-knowledge" full-blown. But that story is not important here. Self-awareness secures reflective access.

<sup>294</sup> Haddock 2011, p. 26. The upshot of Haddock's objection is a variety of Williamson's influential "anti-luminosity" argument. Compare Williamson's formulation of luminosity (Williamson 2000, p. 95):

For every case  $\alpha$ , if in  $\alpha$  C obtains, then in  $\alpha$  one is in a position to know that C obtains.

My response to Haddock here is intended to cover objections of this type generally. For one reply to Williamson's argument, see Weatherson 2004.

<sup>295</sup> The phrase "the same reality" coming from Rödl 2007, p. 140. I do not think Rödl's position needs to be identified with Haddock's "strong claim," since first-order self-consciousness need not be a full-fledged form of knowledge. For my purposes nothing will turn on the distinction between Haddock's strong and weak readings of (2).



knowledge that she does.<sup>296</sup> But Haddock rejects the weaker view, and thereby (2) generally, on philosophically deeper grounds, and those I want to address right away.

Consider the suggestion that if a mental state is to count as knowledge, it must be subject to some reliability constraint (Haddock 2011, p. 30):

Let us assume a certain sort of reliability principle for knowledge: for any times  $t$  and  $t + 1$ , where  $t$  and  $t + 1$  are any two times spaced only fractionally – say, one millisecond – apart, if at  $t$  one knows that something is the case, then at  $t + 1$  this very thing is the case.

The intuitive idea here, I take it, is that knowledge requires suitable responsiveness to its objects, such that, e.g., knowledge that  $p$  is responsive to  $p$  being true. Moreover, a capacity for such responsiveness must in some sense be limited in its sensitivity.<sup>297</sup> Accordingly, it follows that where  $t$  and  $t + 1$  are some infinitesimally small fraction apart, if a subject knows  $p$  at  $t$ , then  $p$  is true at  $t + 1$ , and if she knows  $p$  at  $t + 1$ , then  $p$  is still true at  $t + 2$ , etc.

Assume now that  $p$  is the subject being in a perceptual state. Then, in an example (ibid.):

If at  $t$  I know that I see that your sweater is brown, then at  $t + 1$  I see that your sweater is brown.

But,

Now imagine a stretch of time between two intervals, at the beginning of which I see that your sweater is brown, but at the end of which I do not (perhaps this is a stretch of time during which your sweater is slowly starting to look a different colour, because the lights which make it impossible to tell the colours of things are slowly turning on).

Accordingly, we imagine a time span from  $t$  through  $t + n$  over which the subject gradually stops seeing something (in this case, that a sweater is brown). So at  $t + n$  the subject is no longer seeing

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<sup>296</sup> Kern 2017, p. 104ff for similar terminology. I do not think Haddock's objection here is convincing, and I discuss disjunctivist treatments of "reflectively bad" cases below (5.8).

<sup>297</sup> To make this idea a bit more plausible, consider that Williamson's argument derives from the assumption of what is commonly called a type of "safety condition" on knowledge. A subject only counts as having knowledge of some proposition  $p$  if in nearby possible worlds she also knows  $p$ . True belief in  $p$  only counts as knowledge if it is not "lucky." One way to think about the subject having knowledge in this way is her having a certain "expertise" or "reliability" in judging whether  $p$ . This would ensure her having knowledge of  $p$  in nearby possible worlds. But such "expertise" or "reliability" is typically limited in its sensitivity. The subject has "expertise" on the question whether  $p$ , but she cannot detect temporally miniscule fluctuations in the truth value of  $p$ . Accordingly, the subject cannot enjoy the relevant "expertise" vis-à-vis  $p$ , if  $p$  did change truth-values in this way. Hence it can seem to follow that if the subject knows  $p$  at  $t$  by exercising her "expertise," then this entails  $p$  still obtaining (and the subject knowing it

do so) at  $t+1$ . This, at any rate, seems along the lines of Williamson's suggestion.

that the sweater is brown. From the foregoing it follows that if at  $t$  the subject knows she is seeing that the sweater is brown, then at  $t + 1$  it is still true that she is seeing that the sweater is brown. Just so, if at  $t + 1$  the subject knows that she is seeing that the sweater is brown, then at  $t + 2$  it is still true that she is seeing that the sweater is brown. And so on. But now assume that at  $t + n - 1$  the subject is seeing that the sweater is brown. Then, per claim (2), the subject at  $t + n - 1$  is in a position to know that she is seeing that the sweater is brown. From this it follows that the subject at  $t + n$  is seeing that the sweater is brown. But we have stipulated that at  $t + n$  the subject is no longer seeing that the sweater is brown. Contradiction. Claim (2) seems false.

Arguments along Haddock's lines have caused significant skepticism about claims like (2). But to appreciate my reading of disjunctivism's commitment to (2), consider that the disjunctivist, as I understand her, rejects the argument by rejecting its starting-point: the idea that self-knowledge is attended by a reliability condition of the sort specified. This is not part of the disjunctivist conception of (2). The reason for this lies in what I noted, namely that self-consciousness is a feature of the first-order consciousness of thinkers. Indeed Haddock has this point within his grasp when he concedes (Haddock 2011, p. 29; emphasis altered) that "unlike my perceptual knowledge that P, my knowledge that I perceive that P is, for [the disjunctivist], in some sense *spontaneous*."<sup>298</sup> As Haddock notes,

whereas the object of spontaneous knowledge (e.g., the fact that I perceive that P) suffices to put me in a position to know itself (e.g., to know that I perceive that P), the object of receptive knowledge (e.g., the fact that your sweater is brown) does not suffice to put me in a position to know itself; to know the latter, I need to bear a receptive nexus to the object (e.g., I need to perceive that it is brown).

As Haddock here outlines, for receptive knowledge (of which perceptual knowledge is a species) the object is not sufficient for knowledge. Instead, the subject must bear a "receptive nexus" to the object. By contrast, for spontaneous knowledge (of which (the relevant type of) self-

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<sup>298</sup> "Spontaneity" is more of Rödl's vocabulary.

knowledge is a species) this is not true: the object of such knowledge suffices for knowledge. Having a conscious perceptual state *eo ipso* allows for knowledge of the state.<sup>299</sup>

But then this opens space for the following disjunctivist reply to Haddock's argument: the idea of a limited reliability condition applies specifically to receptive knowledge. Limited reliability characterizes, for example, the sort of tracking capacities that are required for the subject to bear the appropriate "receptive nexus" to the objects of her receptive knowledge. I cannot count as possessing receptive knowledge of *p* if I am not within an appropriate range of sensitivity to the obtaining of *p*. This does not bear on the sort of self-knowledge implicated in claim (2), which is afforded not by my sensitivity to first-order conscious states, but simply by the first-order conscious states as such.

For my discussion of disjunctivism to follow, it will be important to keep in mind this elaboration of (2).

Let me now turn to how to understand claim (1). For the disjunctivist, what is the structure of experience's epistemic value such that it ensures the subject an opportunity for knowledge? The heart of this chapter will be my suggestion that the claims of disjunctivists are best understood in terms of a "presentational" conception of epistemic value: a conception on which perceptual experience contributes to knowledge by presenting the subject, in a suitable sense, with the very items of which she is thereby in a position to obtain knowledge. It is an attractive idea that the subject is aware of being in a position to gain perceptual knowledge in virtue of experiential consciousness in which objects are simply *there* for her, manifestly available for knowledge.<sup>300</sup>

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<sup>299</sup> Whether in act or in potential.

<sup>300</sup> As Stuchlik notes (2015, p. 2648), one of the interests in exploring the disjunctivist's conception of epistemic value is that it may be applicable to other domains of grounding knowledge in conscious experience, e.g., in

Specifically, I will suggest that such a presentational conception of experience's epistemic value helps the disjunctivist answer two *prima facie* challenges that philosophers have recently raised for the disjunctivist's combination of commitments. First (Dennis 2014; Madison 2010; Soteriou 2016; Silins 2005) disjunctivism can seem to face what I will call a "dialectical infelicity problem" in its posture vis-à-vis skeptical scenarios.<sup>301</sup> By (1), experience's epistemic value guarantees the truth of perceptual beliefs. By (2), the subject is (or can be) aware of experience's epistemic value in this sense. But then the subject can rule out that she is in a skeptical scenario. This seems inconsistent with the way skeptical scenarios are constructed.<sup>302</sup> Second (Pritchard 2011; French 2016; Ghijsen 2015) disjunctivism faces the so-called "basis problem," which suggests that if perceptual experience is a state in which the subject "sees that" some fact obtains (which is one way of spelling out the idea that perception guarantees truthful belief), it is not clear how the subject might "base" her belief on experience, since "seeing that" is frequently taken to itself imply (knowledgeable) belief.<sup>303</sup> I will suggest that the idea of perceptual presence resolves both the "dialectical infelicity problem" and the "basis problem."

From this point I will proceed as follows. §1 introduces what is meant, and particularly what is not meant, by a presentational paradigm of epistemic value. §2 and §3 turn to epistemological disjunctivism, discussing the parameters set by Pritchard. §4 introduces my presentational alternative. §§5-6 then apply my view to worries raised for disjunctivism. §5 discusses the "dialectical infelicity problem." §6 deals with the "basis problem." In §7 I reflect on the way disjunctivism amounts to a compelling view of internalism about experiential

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memory. Some of these claims have been made, for example, for dogmatism (e.g., Chudnoff 2013). I cannot address this idea here.

<sup>301</sup> Soteriou ultimately defends the disjunctivist from this scenario. For similar worries without specifically discussing disjunctivism, see Cohen 2002. See also Stuchlik 2015, p. 2653ff.

<sup>302</sup> Pritchard 2012 discusses this as the "distinguishability problem." See §5 below.

<sup>303</sup> E.g., Cassam 2007, Williamson, Chapter 1. Brewer Manuscript.

consciousness. Finally, §8 concludes by briefly considering the way disjunctivists can deal with cases of “reflective badness.”

## 5.1 PERCEPTUAL PRESENCE

Perception famously has a presentational character. As Scott Sturgeon puts the point,

your visual experience [of a moving rock] will place a moving rock before the mind in a uniquely vivid way. Its phenomenology will be as if a scene is made manifest to you. This is the most striking aspect of visual consciousness. It’s the signal feature of visual phenomenology.<sup>304</sup>

Clearly perception’s presentational character is not that it presents one’s environment in a “uniquely vivid way.” While it is true that perception stands apart from thought in its qualitative character, the point is not that perception is a particularly striking show of color- and object-experiences. Rather, the central point is that perception does *present* its objects; that, unlike in thought, the objects of perceptual experience appear quite literally present to one.

If presentational character is an important feature of perceptual experience, C.D. Broad has noted an interesting aspect of the phenomenon:

It is a natural, if paradoxical, way of speaking to say that seeing seems to ‘bring one into direct contact with *remote* objects’ and to reveal their shapes and colours.<sup>305</sup>

As Broad notes, the presentational character of experience may seem in some sense “paradoxical.” Objects are *external* to us, yet in experience they seem “right *there*, available to us” (Valberg 1992, p. 4).

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<sup>304</sup> Sturgeon 2000, p. 9.

<sup>305</sup> Broad 1965, pp. 32-3 (italics original).

The version of presentationalism at issue in this chapter amounts to the idea of taking Broad's paradox at face value. Perceptual awareness *appears* to present environmental items precisely because perceptual awareness *is* the presentation of such items. Experience consists, at least partly, of awareness in which the subject is presented with aspects of the environment, i.e., objects and (arguably) their properties, such that the relevant features are present to the subject.

For present purposes, I should note that presentation is a conception of experience's epistemic value: presented aspects of the environment are what experience contributes for perceptual rationality specifically. I will have a lot to say about what such a conception involves, but first I should right away contrast this suggestion with three alternative, recently popular approaches to perceptual presentation.

(i) If we are justified in believing propositions based on experience, in virtue of what is this the case?<sup>306</sup> Several recent philosophers have answered by reference to presentation specifically as an aspect of perceptual phenomenology.<sup>307</sup> Consider Elijah Chudnoff's formulation of the following principle (Chudnoff 2012, p. 25):

If an experience [...] justifies you in believing that *p*, it does so in virtue of realizing the property of having presentational phenomenology with respect to *p*.

On Chudnoff's specific development of "realizing the property of having presentational phenomenology," perception both implicates propositional contents modeled on *p* and appears to present truth-makers for *p*. Say I experience a tiger pouncing: for Chudnoff my experience bears

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<sup>306</sup> For John Foster, there is a "[*p*]resentational *feel* of phenomenal experience—the subjective impression that an instance of the relevant type of environmental situation is directly presented" (Foster 2000, p.112. italics original). For Michael Huemer experience bears a "forcefulness," such that "[w]hen you have a visual experience of a tomato, it thereby seems to you as if a tomato is actually present, then and there" (2001, p. 77). For Jim Pryor experience provides "the feeling of seeming to ascertain that a given proposition is true" (2004, p. 357). This common focus on presentational "feeling" seems to me misplaced. For discussion, Ghijssen 2014.

<sup>307</sup> On one version of the question, this is the "distinctiveness problem" (Ghijssen 2014), i.e., the question why perceptual experience provides grounds for belief where, say, imagination does not. I doubt this question merits a simple phenomenal answer. For subtle discussion, Martin Manuscript.

the content that the tiger is pouncing and, moreover, I appear to be presented with the very tiger (and its pouncing, perhaps) that make my experiential content true. For our purposes, the important point is that for Chudnoff it is experience's *appearing* to present truth-makers for representational contents that provides the subject with justification for belief. On Chudnoff's suggestion (2013, p. 180), it is "in virtue of" this type of presentational phenomenology that experience equips the subject with justification.<sup>308</sup>

The present approach to presentation diverges from approaches like Chudnoff's since it follows from Chudnoff's view that (2013, p. 92)

if a perceptual experience puts you in a position to know something about your environment, it does so because of something other than or in addition to its [presentational] phenomenology.

That is, while for Chudnoff presentation plays a role in providing the subject with perceptual justification, it cannot be the explanation of the way perception provides the subject with perceptual knowledge. After all, presentational phenomenology is not unique to cases of perception, but also can be true of cases like hallucinatory experience. Accordingly presentational phenomenology inevitably falls short of furnishing an opportunity for knowledge.<sup>309</sup> By contrast, the aim in the current chapter is to understand presence as it plays a role in illuminating (1), on which experience's epistemic value guarantees the truth of perceptual belief, and accordingly on which experience does not stop short of explaining knowledge. Accordingly, for present purposes to speak of the perceptual "presence" of aspects of the environment in visual experience is not to single out a phenomenal feature of experience, but to mark their availability for knowledge,

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<sup>308</sup> See Chudnoff's discussion of the "in virtue of" relation at Chudnoff 2013, pp. 180-194.

<sup>309</sup> Some philosophers deny non-perceptual experiences have phenomenology (Martin 2002, 2004; Fish 2009). Chudnoff (2013, p. 174) suggests that these philosophers might exploit presentational phenomenology as sufficient for knowledge. But this seems to me wrong. Opportunities for knowledge must by nature trade on the actual presence of items to the mind: nothing in the notion of phenomenology as such seems to secure this. (That is, the mere fact that phenomenology *might* (in some relevant sense) have extended beyond perception disqualifies phenomenology from grounding knowledge.)



not merely justification (if this falls short). “Presence” precisely marks the critical difference between perceptual experience and other states like hallucinations.

(ii) Presence also does not mark a “naïve realist” position, which is the idea that objects are presented in a way that makes them part of what metaphysically constitutes the experience in which they are presented. Characterizing the epistemic value of experience in presentational terms is a different issue. As has recently been pointed out (Genone 2014), naïve realism is at least partly to be understood in terms of the idea that perception is not fundamentally a representational state.<sup>310</sup> By contrast, I will suggest that quite plausibly a presentational construal of epistemic value is best understood in terms of a type of representational content.<sup>311</sup> Coming at the distinction from the opposite end, “naïve realism” is also not committed to thinking of the *epistemic* character of experience in terms of the presence of objects (though this may be a natural choice, e.g., Fish 2009). For example, it is open to the naïve realist to hold that subjectively indistinguishable experiences have the same epistemic value, even as metaphysically only perceptions involve the presence of objects.<sup>312</sup>

(iii) The position at issue in this chapter must also be distinguished, though less substantially, from the epistemological view that the objects of experience constitute so-called “objectual reasons” which perception provides the subject (Cunningham 2017; Kalderon 2011; Brewer 2011, Manuscript).<sup>313</sup> The idea of an “objectual reason,” on which this view centers, is that presented objects might constitute reasons for judgment in the specific sense that they are

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<sup>310</sup> “Not fundamentally” because there are many less fundamental senses in which naïve realists can accept representational contents.

<sup>311</sup> E.g., McDowell 2013.

<sup>312</sup> For example, some naïve realists seem intent to forestall the impression of their view as entailing a form of epistemological disjunctivism, such as e.g. might aim to address skeptical worries. The motivation is rather merely to allow perception to be object-involving (see e.g., Martin 2006).

<sup>313</sup> For a good discussion of such views, invoked by Brewer Manuscript, see Cunningham 2017.

truth-makers for perceptual beliefs. Accordingly, a presented object *o* is an “objectual reason” in that *o* makes “*o* is *F*” true, and accordingly, if *o* is appropriately presented to the perceiver, *o* can in this sense serve as an “objectual reason” for the subject to judge “*o* is *F*.” This view is more specific than the presentationalism at issue here. “Objectual reasons” constitute one way of cashing out the idea that the epistemic value of experience consists in the presence of objects, but a presentational conception of epistemic value is consistent with a “factual” conception of perceptual reasons. For example, a subject’s perceptual reason for judging “*o* is *F*” might be, e.g., the *fact* that some items are perceptually present to her. Moreover, the idea of perception providing the subject with perceptual “reasons” is as such downstream from a presentational conception of epistemic value. The heart of the latter idea is that the epistemic significance of experience can be understood through the notion of presentation, whether or not it is *reasons* that perception thus presents.<sup>314</sup> As I will suggest, in this context the idea of perception as presentation is more significant than that of a reason because, as I will explain, presentation constitutes a *sui generis* gloss on the nature of the link between experience and knowledge, which is something not captured by the notion of a reason as such.<sup>315</sup>

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<sup>314</sup> Consider, e.g., Joe Cunningham’s consideration of representational conceptions of experience’s epistemic value, i.e., the idea that the epistemic value of experience can reside in the way experiences bear representational contents (Cunningham 2017). On the current conception, these views can take a presentational approach to epistemic value, but for Cunningham they constitute a competitor for the “reasons” view.

<sup>315</sup> The idea of “objectual reasons” itself can serve to express just this point: the idea that in perception the very truth-makers for propositions can be the subject’s reasons. But as I will make clear, it is more helpful to focus on the idea of presentation that makes this possible, rather than on the notion of reasons itself.

## 5.2 DISJUNCTIVISM: EVIDENCE OR PRESENCE?

I will now turn to disjunctivism.

The usual assumption among internalist conceptions of perceptual epistemology is that experience equips the subject with a type of “evidence” for belief. Clearly a subject does not infer beliefs from her experiential evidence, nor does evidential support need to be “quasi- inferential.” But nevertheless it is supposed that conscious experience supports judgment by providing the subject with a relevant type of evidence.

An evidential conception of experience’s epistemic value provides a natural treatment of the way experience comes in good and bad varieties.<sup>316</sup> Specifically, the operative idea is that evidential support can fall short of guaranteeing the truth of the proposition it supports. Consider, for example,

**Dogmatism:** if it seems to *S* that *p*, then *S* has immediate *prima facie* justification for the belief that *p*.<sup>317</sup>

For the dogmatist, perception provides justification that is “immediate” and *prima facie*, in being defeasible.<sup>318</sup> While in principle dogmatism can be developed on reliabilist grounds, an evidentialist version of experience’s epistemic value provides a natural rendering of the dogmatist conception of perceptual justification. For dogmatists, experience provides some evidence for belief sufficient for the subject to be justified in forming beliefs based on how things seem to her

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<sup>316</sup> To be sure, the opposition between good and bad cases is far from the only source for an evidential approach to experience’s epistemic value, and not an essential part of it. As I will note, most disjunctivists maintain an evidentialist approach. But I will suggest that the existence of bad cases *has* tended to obscure the very idea of a presentational alternative, i.e., a conception on which, as I will develop, the connection between experience’s epistemic value and knowledge is more intimate than evidence could be, specifically such as to rule out error in virtue of the very nature of the type of support it provides.

<sup>317</sup> I modify this statement from Ghijsen 2014, p. 196. Dogmatist views have been advocated by Pryor 2000, 2004; Huemer 2001, 2007; Chudhoff 2011, Tucker 2010, Brogaard 2013.

<sup>318</sup> “Immediate” as opposed to only in virtue of support from further beliefs. See Pryor 2005.

in experience. In the good case, if things are as her evidence would make them seem, then the subject gains perceptual knowledge.<sup>319</sup> But if things are not as they seem, as in the bad case, the subject was no less justified in responding to her experiential evidence. Nevertheless, since the justification provided by her experiential evidence was *prima facie* and therefore defeasible, she merely fails to gain knowledge.

Disjunctivism famously dissents from the dogmatist idea that perceptual justification is merely *prima facie*. Specifically, disjunctivism combines a positive and a negative claim. The familiar disjunctivist strategy starts from disjunctivism's negative claim.

**Highest Common Factor:** the epistemic value of experience (understood as subjectively accessible) in the good case cannot exceed the epistemic value of experience in the bad case.

The negative disjunctivist claim is to deny this thesis, by rejecting the idea that an account of epistemic value in the good case must accommodate, as an equal, an account of the bad case. For example, while in the bad case the epistemic value of experience may be that it *appears* that *p*, in the good case the epistemic value of experience may be that the subject *sees* that *p*.<sup>320</sup> In turn, the disjunctivist's negative claim makes room for the positive claim that the epistemic value in the good case does not "stop anywhere short of the fact" (McDowell 1994, p. 29).

But this schematic gloss of the disjunctivist outlook does not by itself determine a single way of conceiving of experience's value, and in particular makes no mention of presentation.

Consider that while dogmatists and disjunctivists are opposed on the treatment of good and bad cases, disjunctivism is nevertheless frequently understood from within an evidentialist conception of experience's epistemic value.<sup>321</sup> On this type of rendering, while dogmatists hold

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<sup>319</sup> This is somewhat simplified, the case must for example not be Gettierized, etc.

<sup>320</sup> See Stuchlik 2015 for discussion.

<sup>321</sup> This is explicit in the *locus classicus* of recent disjunctivism exposition, Pritchard 2012.

that the type of support experience provides for belief is “*prima facie*” or “defeasible,” for disjunctivists it is “indefeasible” or “conclusive.” Being “conclusive” and “indefeasible” are predicated of evidence: these qualifications characterize the way particular pieces of evidence locate on a spectrum of evidential support, specifically as located beyond a point where the obtaining of the evidential support entails the truth of the proposition supported. In this way, the disjunctivist’s dispute with the dogmatist is taken to lie in the strength or status of experiential evidence. By contrast, the dispute is not taken to lie with the more fundamental idea that the form of internalism at issue in the idea of experience’s epistemic value is to be understood, in relevant ways, within the evidentialist paradigm. I will now go on, in the next two sections, to explain how this assumption is at work in most recent readings of disjunctivism, and how we can see disjunctivism differently.

### 5.3 PRITCHARD-STYLE DISJUNCTIVISM

Let’s be more precise. In the sketch of disjunctivism, we so far have seen a negative claim and a positive claim. We will see that both of these claims have a different structure than commonly understood, but in this section I will focus on the positive claim.<sup>322</sup>

The statement of disjunctivism in terms of (1) and (2), from which I started this chapter, I derived from Duncan Pritchard’s influential exposition (in Pritchard’s terminology, experience’s epistemic value is the “rational support” it provides).

In paradigmatic cases of perceptual knowledge an agent, S, has perceptual knowledge that *p* in virtue of being in possession of rational support, R, for her belief that *p* which is both (1) factive (i.e., R’s obtaining entails *p*), and (2) reflectively accessible to S.<sup>323</sup>

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<sup>322</sup> For reflection on the structure of the negative claim, §5.

From this passage, it is clear that Pritchard envisages a certain division of labor in the way the disjunctivist conceives of experience’s epistemic value as ensuring the subject an opportunity for knowledge. Specifically, the knowledge-guaranteeing character of a disjunctivist conception of experience’s epistemic value centers in (1).<sup>324</sup> If it is a slogan that, for the disjunctivist, the value of experience does not “stop short of the facts,” then for Pritchard this points to a more literal place that facts hold in a disjunctivist conception of experience’s epistemic value. Specifically, experience is a factive state, which therefore entails the truth of a relevant proposition  $p$ . For example, a factive state pertaining to a tiger pouncing at me entails that there is a tiger pouncing at me. Now for Pritchard it is because experience’s epistemic value *entails* the truth of perceptual beliefs that experience’s epistemic value *guarantees* the subject an opportunity for knowledgeable belief (whether or not the subject manages to avail herself of this opportunity.) On Pritchard’s view the type of “reflective accessibility” articulated by (2) specifies merely the way the subject is in a subjective position to exploit the epistemic value of her experience for knowledge. On this account, the subject reflectively appreciates her possession of entailing grounds for  $p$ , and therefore appreciates her being in a secure position to knowledgeably judge that  $p$ . Accordingly, the heart of Pritchard’s rendering of disjunctivism centers on a specific explanatory connection between the epistemic value of experience and the beliefs it grounds, viz. a connection grounded in entailment.

**Table 4** The Entailment Model (1)

<b>Product</b>	<b>Epistemic Value</b>	<b>Mode of Support</b>
Position to know that $p$	Perception is factive	Entailment of $p$

<sup>323</sup> Pritchard 2012, p. 13; variables altered, numbering added.

<sup>324</sup> Understanding Pritchard this way also makes sense of Pritchard’s relative neglect of the theoretical development of (2).

Below I will suggest this is not the right way to understand the disjunctivist's view, but first consider an alternative proposal, suggested by Craig French and Adrian Haddock in several recent papers (esp. Haddock 2011; French 2012, 2016).

If experience's epistemic value consists in a type of "factive support" for beliefs, in virtue of what is this so? Here the disjunctivist must provide what Craig French (2016) calls a "specification" of her view. One natural candidate is the idea that experience amounts to a relation to the fact that *p* specifiable as "seeing that *p*," and that for this reason experience factively supports a belief that *p*.<sup>325</sup> As French notes (2016, p. 88; emphasis original):

the epistemological disjunctivist holds that the visual perceptual states which ground perceptual knowledge [...] are states of seeing that *p*. I take it the idea is that we are to view such states as *constituting* the rational support for belief had in paradigm cases of perceptual knowledge.

This is the path Pritchard himself chooses as well (Pritchard 2012, p. 14; emphasis original):

The particular kind of rational support that the epistemological disjunctivist claims that our beliefs enjoy in paradigm cases of perceptual knowledge is that provided by *seeing that* the target proposition obtains. So when one has paradigmatic perceptual knowledge of a proposition, *p*, one's reflectively accessible rational support for believing that *p* is that one *sees that p*.<sup>326</sup>

Essentially, then, a Pritchard-style rendering of the disjunctivist account of epistemic value trades on a twofold explanatory connection. First, the epistemic value of experience *guarantees* the knowledgeable character of perceptual beliefs because it *entails* the propositions believed. Second, experience *entails* of the truth the propositions believed because in experience the subject *sees that* the relevant propositions obtain.

By contrast, for reasons associated with the "basis problem" discussed below (§6), Haddock and French reject the "specification" of disjunctivism in terms of "seeing that." By

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<sup>325</sup> See also Madison 2010, pp. 847-848

<sup>326</sup> Cf Pritchard 2011, p. 435. French (2016, p. 91) attributes Pritchard's view to John McDowell, and certainly McDowell frequently characterizes experience in terms of "seeing that" (e.g., McDowell (Manuscript<sup>2</sup>, p. 2), McDowell 2011, p. 13, McDowell 1994, p. 29 and McDowell 2002, p. 277, McDowell 2003, p. 680). But on balance, this attribution seems to me incorrect, as e.g., shown by McDowell's articulation of object-centered Kantian intuitions in McDowell 2009, 2013, as well as McDowell's formulation of disjunctivism in terms of perceptual presence (McDowell 2011, pp. 30/31; discussed below).

contrast, Haddock and French suggest disjunctivism can be grounded in a different “specification” of experience, on which experience involves not “seeing that  $p$ ,” but “seeing  $o \dots o_n$ ,” where  $o \dots o_n$  are truth-makers for propositions like  $p$ . In this way, Craig French (2016) has advocated cashing out disjunctivism in a form of “thing seeing,” and Adrian Haddock (2011) has suggested a disjunctivist account of “seeing such-and-such.”<sup>327</sup> As French illustrates (French 2016, p. 95; italics removed):

There is a lemon before me. [...] rational support for beliefs about the lemon before me can come from my plainly seeing it. Suppose I know, by vision, that the lemon before me is yellow. We can think of the visual basis of this knowledge in terms of my seeing the yellow lemon. How do I know that the lemon is yellow? Because I see it.<sup>328</sup>

But how might experience’s epistemic value be “factive” if not grounded in perceptual access to facts, but rather to truth-makers, i.e., objects? The central idea, in Craig French’s terms, is that while seeing objects is not factive, it bears a relation to propositions like  $p$  that amounts to a form of “quasi-factivity” (2016, pp. 100-101). Seeing  $o \dots o_n$  entails the existence of  $o \dots o_n$ . In turn, given that  $o \dots o_n$  are truth-makers for propositions like  $p$ , the existence of  $o \dots o_n$  entails the truth of propositions like  $p$ .<sup>329</sup> Accordingly, even while seeing  $o \dots o_n$  is not a factive state since it does not take facts as its objects, it nevertheless entails the truth of  $p$ . Accordingly, French’s and Haddock’s object-centered versions of disjunctivism are at merely limited remove from Pritchard’s interpretation. Specifically, the object-centered view denies the second stage of Pritchard’s two-fold explanatory connection, viz. the connection between experience’s factive epistemic character and episodes of “seeing that.” But this leaves the first stage: the idea that experience’s epistemic

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<sup>327</sup> The account can be liberal about the character of  $o \dots o_n$ , (allowing objects to include e.g., events,) as well as on the question whether properties are among the truth-makers seen. French 2016, p. 95.

<sup>328</sup> Compare Adrian Haddock 2011, p. 36.

<sup>329</sup> French suggests that a more complete account involves the subject being responsive to  $o$  looking  $F$ . If the subject is seeing the lemon, and the lemon looks  $F$ , then the subject’s perceptual experience provides quasi-factive rational support for the lemon being  $F$ . I have already discussed the role of “looks” in debates about content (Chapter 5), and will not discuss it here.



connection to knowledge resides in entailing  $p$ .

**Table 5** The Entailment Model (2)

<b>Product</b>	<b>Epistemic Value</b>	<b>Mode of Support</b>
Position to know that $p$	Perception is quasi-factive	Entailment of $p$

The upshot of my reading of disjunctivism below is that, *pace* Haddock and French, an object-centered reading of disjunctivism should reject not merely the second of Pritchard’s explanatory steps, but both steps. But before moving to my account, let me make explicit the way Pritchard-style disjunctivism, including Haddock’s and French’s object-centered versions, remains within the evidentialist paradigm.

Internalism about perceptual experience is sometimes articulated in the context of the idea that the acquisition of perceptual knowledge is a case of “rationality at work.” In this sense, internalism captures the type of rationality the subject displays in forming knowledgeable judgments grounded in the experiential resources subjectively available to her. Now, responsiveness to evidence is clearly a paradigm of rationality. In emphasizing the “factive” or “entailing” character of epistemic value, this is the paradigm of rationality that the Pritchard-style disjunctivist employs to understand the disjunctivist view of perceptual epistemology. For the Pritchard-style disjunctivist, the subject’s “reflective access” to the character of experience serves her to gain access to “factive” or “entailing” support for  $p$  (whether this consists in a fact or a truth-maker). In turn, the subject’s responsiveness to this evidence characterizes the type of rationality operative in her acquisition of knowledge that  $p$ .

But by lights of my argument to come, the idea of responsiveness to evidence misconstrues the form of rationality that, for the disjunctivist, is in act in the acquisition of perceptual knowledge. Consider the way the evidential view of what it can mean for rationality to be “at work” in perceptual knowledge engenders some of the most striking *prima facie* questions about

disjunctivism. It is part of the nature of evidence that evidence, both individual pieces and general sources, can fall short of ensuring knowledge. Equally, both individual pieces and general sources of evidence are naturally in competition with other individual pieces and general sources of evidence. Etc. Accordingly, the type of rationality exemplified in responsiveness to evidence is not *as such* a type of rationality operative in knowledge-guaranteeing conditions. On the contrary, responsiveness to evidence is naturally a type of rationality operative in less conclusive conditions.<sup>330</sup> As such, the evidentialist disjunctivist will face questions how exactly it can be that experience's evidential status can be indefeasible, questions of what this means for the way perceptual evidence interacts with apparently conflicting evidence from other sources, and so on.<sup>331</sup> I raise some specific questions of this kind below.

The suggestion for the rest of this chapter is that questions of this broad variety arise primarily because the proper shape of disjunctivism cannot be appreciated within an evidential paradigm of what it means for rationality to “be at work” in experience. Instead, *perceptual presence* is itself a paradigm of rationality “at work,” and one that is free from the problematic properties of evidential support. In this way, I will suggest disjunctivism, as I have developed it, proposes a revision from views like dogmatism not concerning the strength or status of perceptual evidence, but more profoundly of internalism about perceptual epistemology as such, shifting its animating paradigm away from evidence, and towards presence.<sup>332</sup>

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<sup>330</sup> Which, of course, is not to say there can be no knowledge-guaranteeing evidential conditions. Pritchard's disjunctivism is precisely the view that perception is such a condition.

<sup>331</sup> See e.g., the cases of “reflective badness” discussed at §5.8.

<sup>332</sup> Below, in referring to “the disjunctivist,” I intend this specific form of disjunctivism.

## 5.4 DISJUNCTIVISM: EVIDENCE OR PRESENCE?

The upshot of my interpretation of disjunctivism is that, *pace* the Pritchard-style reading, the structure of experience’s epistemic value is not determined primarily by Pritchard’s condition (1), viz. experience’s “factive” nature. Rather, the heart of the disjunctivist conception of experience’s epistemic value is condition (2), viz. the way experience is reflectively available to the subject.<sup>333</sup> That is, the explanatory connection experience’s epistemic value bears to perceptual knowledge does not run through perception providing entailing grounds for proposition *p*, which are in turn reflectively accessible. Rather it runs directly through the reflectively accessible character of experience, which encompasses the presence of items in experience. So consider

**Table 6** The Access Model

<b>Product</b>	<b>Epistemic Value</b>	<b>Mode of Support</b>
Position to know that <i>p</i>	Presence of $o \dots o_n$ <sup>334</sup>	Reflective Access to $o \dots o_n$

To see how this abstract structure might allow for a reading of disjunctivism, consider the way John McDowell frames the position (McDowell 2011, pp. 30-31; emphasis original).

When all goes well in the operation of a perceptual capacity of a sort that belongs to its possessor’s rationality, a perceiver enjoys a perceptual state in which some feature of her environment is *there* for her, perceptually *present* to her rationally self-conscious awareness. If a perceptual state can consist in a subject’s having a feature of her environment perceptually present to her, that gives lie to the assumption that a perceptual state cannot warrant a belief in a way that guarantees its truth. If a perceptual state makes a feature of the environment present to a perceiver’s rationally self-conscious awareness, there is no possibility, compatibly with someone’s being in that state, that things are not as the state would warrant her in believing that they are, in a

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<sup>333</sup> I need to qualify the way I proceed here. Properly, my point is not a focus on (2), as opposed to (1). Instead, a more accurate presentation of the point would be to collapse the distinction between (1) and (2). (2) is not to be understood as a mode of reflective *access* to an independent experiential reality; nor can (1) be understood independently of a suitably corrected version of (2). Nevertheless, I take it that emphasizing my approach here in terms (2) is felicitous. The reason is that while (1) has figured prominently in analyses of disjunctivism, the significance of (2) has not been appreciated.

<sup>334</sup> We may, of course, ask for a more detailed view of *what* it is that experience presents: is it merely objects (Brewer 2011), is it objects and properties, or facts? But it is precisely the point of my discussion that *presence* is the deeper notion than *what* it is that is presented. See my discussion below.

belief that would simply register the presence of that feature of the environment.

In this passage, McDowell avails himself of the idea of perceptual presence, such that in a successful case of perception “some feature of [the subject’s] environment is *there* for her, perceptually *present*.” My interest here is to contrast two ways in which presence might seem to play a role in McDowell’s thinking.

On the one hand, McDowell notes that the fact that aspects of the environment can be present in experience shows that, contrary to e.g., dogmatist views, perception can “guarantee” the truth of beliefs, since “there is no possibility, compatibly with someone’s being in that state, that things are not as the state would warrant her in believe that they are.” Emphasizing this aspect of McDowell’s point is in line with an explanatory focus on the idea that experience’s epistemic value is “(quasi-)factive.”<sup>335</sup>

But McDowell also mentions specifically that aspects of the environment can be perceptually “present to a perceiver’s *rational self-conscious awareness*” (emphasis mine). What is the upshot of McDowell’s specific focus on rationality and self-consciousness here? My suggestion is that taken together, this spelling out of (2)—with which I started this chapter—amounts not merely to a way experience’s epistemic value can be “reflectively accessible” to the subject, but rather a *sui generis* way of structuring experience’s epistemic value.

On the disjunctivist view, as I have understood it, experience *self-consciously* presents the subject with environmental items. The very presence of the items renders them internalistically available to the subject—that is a feature internal to the character of her conscious experiential state itself. Moreover, this is a feature specifically of the subject’s rationality.<sup>336</sup> This now

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<sup>335</sup> Indeed French develops his notion of “quasi-factivity” based on this passage, French 2016, pp. 99-101.

clears the path for the following idea: once items are present in experience, it is not a further question how the relevant experience places the subject in a position that ensures her knowledge—confronted with the objects she is self-consciously in a position to form a knowledgeable belief that, as McDowell puts it, “merely registers the presence of that feature of the environment.” That is, presence as such yields a basic description of perceptual consciousness as a *sui generis* mode of acquiring knowledge: the subject is self-consciously presented with items, and since this is self-consciously a feature of rationality (i.e., her being a rational judger), she can rationally exploit the presence of the relevant items for judgment.<sup>337</sup> To be sure, this is a way of forming beliefs that “guarantees” their truth, etc. But the rationality operative in the subject’s acquisition of knowledge does not reside in her “reflective access” to “factive,” “quasi-factive” or otherwise entailing evidential support. Self-consciousness *as such*, extending as it does to the very experiential *presence* of the items, furnishes a context in which the subject can rationally transition from experience to knowledgeable belief.<sup>338</sup>

Below I will suggest the way my presentational understanding of disjunctivism is operative in addressing some of its most pressing *prima facie* difficulties.

But first let me briefly elaborate on what understanding presence through self-consciousness means for presence as a way of understanding experience’s epistemic value. If I am correct that presence furnishes one way of spelling out the disjunctivist thought, then the primary upshot is that perceptual presence trades essentially on the way experience is self-consciously available to a rational subject. Presence is not a characterization of experience that can be

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<sup>336</sup> Or as McDowell specifies, of her rational capacity for knowledge through perception (McDowell Manuscript<sup>2</sup>).

<sup>337</sup> Of course this is only a basic description of the epistemic value of experience. Much more is to be said about what types of knowledge specifically presence can afford, and what capacities the subject must possess to transition from being presented with items to knowledge of them. See my Chapter 6 below.

<sup>338</sup> The full significance of understanding internalism along these lines may not at this point be clear. See §5.7 conclusion below for further discussion.

understood independently from the way self-consciousness furnishes a subject with opportunities for knowledge. In this sense, presence reflects the “double” structure of the sort of awareness that characterizes rational consciousness. In a state of “presence,” the subject finds herself confronted with items in a way that involves intrinsically her being aware of herself as confronted that way. In experience, an item is presented *to the subject*, and it is central to the experiential state that its description is just that: in having the experience, the subject’s awareness is of *her being presented* with the relevant items.

I should note that I mean presentational consciousness to be special in this way (that is, part of a special class of states). Consider that for a being capable of self-knowledge, there are plausibly general connections between her mental states and her capacity for self-knowledge.<sup>339</sup> Compare a case of fear. There might seem something wrong with a state of fear that is not suitably integrated into the subject’s self-consciousness. But this is a general wrongness. Nothing about fear specifically trades on this fact. Intelligibly, the nature of fear is independent of the subject’s subjective access to her states. The suggestion is this is not true for a presentational state: if in experience items are present to the mind, this trades essentially on the subject’s experiential self-consciousness. Presence, in this sense, articulates a specifically rational variety of consciousness.

Let me also note that my presentational version of disjunctivism must not be confused with the suggestion, recently offered by Joe Cunningham (2017, fn. 13) as an interpretation of John McDowell’s disjunctivism, that for the disjunctivist the subject’s “reason” for perceptual belief is

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<sup>339</sup> Consider, for example, broadly constitutivist accounts of the relation between consciousness and self-consciousness (Shoemaker 1996; 2004). For Shoemaker, there is something wrong in a general sense with a rational subject who is “self-blind,” i.e., fails to be knowledgeable about her own mental states. Relatedly, Shoemaker thinks that in rational cognitive systems first-order consciousness can be constitutive of second-order consciousness. For present purposes, the point is that my account of presence is stronger than Shoemaker’s claim: presence essentially involves the subject’s rational self-consciousness, even if Shoemaker is also correct that there is a general relation between rationality and self-knowledge.

that she is in a perceptual state. Putting matters this way makes it seem as though the subject's grounds for perceptual belief lie in her appreciating facts about her own state. But this misses the way self-consciousness characterizes presence as a rational type of first-order experiential consciousness. For the disjunctivist, the subject forms perceptual beliefs based on the object's *presence* to her, where presence characterizes an irreducible way of explaining knowledge. To be sure, conceiving of presence as grounding a mode of knowledge is not intelligible without noting the fact that presence is a modification of the subject's rational self-consciousness. But this is not to picture the subject forming beliefs based on facts about her own mental condition, as opposed to the items present to her in experience.

## 5.5 THE DIALECTICAL INFELICITY PROBLEM

I have so far used perceptual presence to articulate disjunctivism's positive claim, viz. its conception of epistemic value in the good case. I will now turn to the way presence figures in the disjunctivist's negative claim, i.e., her treatment of the bad case.

We begin with a *prima facie* problem. Recall:

**Highest Common Factor:** the epistemic value of experience (understood as subjectively accessible) in the good case cannot exceed the epistemic value of experience in the bad case.

Owing to the recently voluminous and impressive literature on disjunctivism, denying claims along the lines of the Highest Common Factor thesis has become a familiar fixture of disjunctivist thinking. But it would be misleading to think that epistemological disjunctivists's negative claim can be easily assimilated to its relatively more anodyne cousins (such as, for example, views

distinguishing the metaphysical constitution of bad experience from the metaphysical constitution of good experience.)<sup>340</sup> Consider that on the above formulation the “highest common factor” concerns specifically the epistemic value of experience as it is accessible to the subject. For the disjunctivist, not only does experience’s epistemic value ensure an opportunity for knowledge, it also ensures the subject’s own access to this opportunity.<sup>341</sup>

This produces a problem. Consider the way disjunctivism, like dogmatism, can seem to amount to a “neo-Moorean” position in the face of skeptical scenarios.<sup>342</sup> On such a position, experience puts the subject in a subjectively accessible position to gain some perceptual knowledge that *p*, and thereby in a position to gain inferential knowledge of the falsity of skeptical scenarios (“anti-skeptical knowledge”). Neo-Moorean views raise questions generally, but my point merely requires seeing the different ways dogmatism and disjunctivism fill out the view. For the dogmatist the subject is in a position to gain anti-skeptical knowledge but the type of justification that this position involves explicitly accepts the parameters set out by skeptical scenarios. Accordingly, for the dogmatist the subject’s position to gain anti-skeptical knowledge is always *prima facie*, given that the subject cannot discriminate her condition from a skeptical scenario.<sup>343</sup> By contrast, for the disjunctivist the subject’s justification for anti-skeptical knowledge is indefeasible. But then it seems the subject must be able to discriminate her condition from the obtaining of

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<sup>340</sup> Of course these views are controversial in their own right. For a view that might seem properly anodyne, compare an epistemically externalist view: the epistemic value of the good case naturally exceeds that of the bad case since it can be individuated by environmental factors beyond the subjectively common character of good and bad cases. The epistemological disjunctivist cannot be conciliatory to the commonality of good and bad cases in this way.

<sup>341</sup> For the role of this aspect of the disjunctivist’s internalism, Pritchard 2011, pp. 435-9.

<sup>342</sup> For an emphasis on disjunctivism’s neo-Moorean character, Pritchard 2008. I actually think disjunctivism is poorly cast as providing this type of response to skepticism. See §5.7 below.

<sup>343</sup> But then what *knowledge* is anti-skeptical knowledge? This is a question frequently taken to motivate disjunctivism (e.g., McDowell Manuscript<sup>2</sup>; for discussion Setiya 2009). The subtle dialectic here goes beyond my purposes. Suffice to say I think the question is best understood as motivating the *particular* connection between experience and knowledge proposed in this paper, rather than questioning the dogmatist’s title to knowledge on *any* conception.



skeptical scenarios. But skeptical scenarios are construed in such a way that the good and bad cases are stipulated to be subjectively indiscriminable.<sup>344</sup>

This is not yet the disjunctivist's "dialectical infelicity problem," since the disjunctivist has a response available. The disjunctivist response resides in the point that the common description of good and bad cases as "indiscriminable" relies on an implicit argument.<sup>345</sup> The subject in the bad case cannot know, based on her experience, that she is in the bad case. By contrast, the disjunctivist claims that in the good case the subject can know, based on her experience, that she is in the good case. How exactly do these claims seem in tension? The thought must be that if the subject in the bad case cannot know, based on experience, that she is in the bad case, then the subject in the good case cannot know, based on experience, that she is in the good case. Or again, if the subject in the bad case cannot rule out that she is in the bad case, then the subject in the good case cannot rule out that she is in the bad case, either.

This is where the implicit argument operates. The argument introduces an auxiliary premise to the effect that the subject's knowledge of the nature of her experience must be due to a general ability for self-knowledge, such that the capacity is operative in the good case as it is in the bad case. Accordingly, insofar as experience in the good case allows the subject to know some type

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<sup>344</sup> Pritchard (2012, Part Two) introduces a distinction between "favoring" and "discriminating" epistemic support. Rational support may favor believing that  $p$  without allowing the subject to be able to discriminate her position from cases where  $p$  is false. I do not think this solution fits the disjunctivist. For Pritchard, knowledge can seem to require the ability to "discriminate" between its objects and relevant alternatives. For Pritchard, the type of "introspection" involved in (2) does not allow for such discrimination between good and bad cases. Nevertheless, (2) can be defended on grounds of evidence that "favors" knowledge of being in the good case, without requiring "discriminating" support. On my construal, we can perhaps say that the subject cannot "introspectively discriminate" between good and bad cases, but this is because (2) is understood in first-order terms, and does not take first-order states as its objects. By contrast, by the same token this does not yield a need for "favoring" support (which can outstrip "discriminating" support). Instead, as I go on to discuss the disjunctivist treatment of the bad case centers on the Defectiveness Claim. (Pritchard also applies the "favoring"/"discriminating" to Dretskean "ringer" scenarios. Here it may well be correct, but this is because the defectiveness of the bad case is fundamentally different than the environmental presence of "ringers.")

<sup>345</sup> See John McDowell Manuscript<sup>2</sup> for another helpful discussion of the same point, McDowell 2010, p. 246ff; Soteriou 2016, Chapter 5.

of facts *F* about the character of her experience, experience in the bad case must also put the subject in a position to know facts of type *F* about the character of her experience. But the bad case shows that *F* cannot extend to whether or not an experience is perceptual. Therefore, the subject in the good case cannot, on grounds of her experience, know that she is perceiving.<sup>346</sup>

Consider accordingly,

**Auxiliary Premise:** If experience in the good case puts the subject in a position to know that she is perceiving, then this must be part of a general capacity for self-knowledge such as, contrary to fact, would apply to the bad case.

It is in denying the Auxiliary Premise that I will suggest disjunctivists face the “dialectical infelicity problem” I have announced.

Consider that in denying the Auxiliary Premise, the disjunctivist will have to mark a distinction between the way the subject’s capacity for self-knowledge operates in the good and bad cases. Specifically, the disjunctivist will have to suggest that what the subject in the good case can know about her experience is different (and “more,” so to say) than the subject in the bad case. So the disjunctivist is committed to the following:

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<sup>346</sup> For McDowell’s exposition of this idea (McDowell Manuscript<sup>2</sup>, p. 7):

How does the familiar fact [that the subject in the bad case faultlessly mistakes her state for a state of seeing] seem to establish that one cannot know, in one’s self-consciousness in making a judgment on the ground of an experience, that the experience is one of perceiving that things are as one judges them to be; and, more generally, that the potential for knowing that an experience is one of perceiving that things are some way cannot be contained in the experience itself? The implicit argument has an extra premise, to this effect: if the potential for knowing that an experience is one of perceiving were contained in the experience itself, the knowledge that actualizes that potential would have to be an act of a capacity that would enable one to know of *any* of one’s experiences whether it is an experience of perceiving or not, providing that one exercised the capacity with care and attention. The familiar fact shows that there is no such capacity. If there were, it would not be possible to take an experience to be one of perceiving when it is not, except through lack of care or in attention. But the familiar fact is that does happen. And now the argument is that since there is no such capacity, there can be no such knowledge.

For another helpful discussion of this line of thought, Soteriou 2016, Chapter 5.

**Asymmetry Claim:** the subject in a bad case is not in a position to know that she is in the bad case, but the subject in the good case is in a position to know she is in the good case.

But here the disjunctivist faces the “dialectical infelicity problem.”

As a first pass at defending the Asymmetry Claim, the disjunctivist may simply hope to exploit the general shape of her view. Specifically, the disjunctivist may hope to transpose her negative claim from perception to self-knowledge. In the good case, experience ensures an opportunity for perceptual knowledge, even as in the bad case it does not. Just so, in the good case experience ensures an opportunity for self-knowledge, even as in the bad case it does not. Accordingly, the dialectical position for the disjunctivist might appear as follows. The Asymmetry Claim appears to flout the indiscriminability of the good and bad cases. However, this appearance merely trades on the same illicit assimilation of the good case to the bad case that the disjunctivist is in general concerned to deny, this time as experience supports self-knowledge. As John McDowell suggests (2010, p. 246; cited at Soteriou 2016, p. 15), the illicit equation arises

[n]ot only in connection with [perception’s] guise as a capacity for knowledge about one’s environment, but also in connection with its guise as a capacity for self-knowledge – knowledge that one’s experience is revealing an aspect of objective reality to one.<sup>347</sup>

But this is too quick. The reason is that where in the perceptual case the disjunctivist’s negative claim picks up on a natural distinction between the good and the bad case, this is not

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<sup>347</sup> This is also the shape of the solution suggested by Stuchlik 2015. For Stuchlik, experiential mental states, in addition to presenting their contents, present themselves to the subject (for my discussion of “self-(re)presentational” views, Chapter 4 above). This allows Stuchlik to draw the suggested parallel. In experience, the subject either *sees* that *p* or it merely *appears* that *p*. Just so, for Stuchlik, experience either *presents* itself to the subject or merely *appears* to present itself to the subject. The reason I do not think this works is that there is an intimate connection between “appearance-talk” and the subject’s point of view on her own states. That is, what is meant by a state *appearing* to be a case of  $\phi$ -ing would, at least plausibly, seem to draw on a commonality, from the subject’s point of view, between a state that *appears* to be a case of  $\phi$ -ing and a state of  $\phi$ -ing. Schematically, if states A and B are indiscriminable then A and B may well be different (“seeing” and “appearing,” e.g.)—but their indiscriminability would seem to imply *some* commonality, namely precisely at the level of what the subject can discern. Accordingly, the disjunctivist maneuver cannot obviously be run at the level of self-knowledge.

obviously true in the case of self-knowledge. Consider some set of environmental properties  $G$ , like redness and so on. It is entirely natural to think that perception is a capacity to pick up properties belonging to  $G$ , and that in the good case properties belonging to  $G$  are plausibly available for knowledge, where in the bad case they are not. But contrast the set of mental properties  $F$ . The question concerning the nature of perceptual self-knowledge is precisely whether “is a perceptual experience” is a member of  $F$ . Indeed, the upshot of the bad case can plausibly make it seem that it is not. But then the disjunctivist seems to lack natural grounds for the Asymmetry Claim.

To further illustrate, consider two ways in which disjunctivists might conceive of something like the Asymmetry Claim:

a) *Asymmetry Specified:*

You cannot tell that you are dead when you are dead, but from this it doesn't follow that you cannot tell that you are not dead when you are not dead. You cannot tell that you are in dreamless sleep when you are in dreamless sleep, but from this it doesn't follow that you cannot tell that you are not in dreamless sleep when you are not in dreamless sleep.<sup>348</sup>

Grounded in these examples, let a bad case be one of death or dreamless sleep, while a good case is one of ordinary waking consciousness. As these cases show, there is no *general* symmetry of self-knowledge in good and bad cases. Death and sleep are examples for which bad cases are situations such that you cannot know that you are in them, but good cases are such that you *can* tell that that you are in them, and that therefore you are not in a bad case. On reflection, however, these cases do not help the disjunctivist, since within their description they contain grounds for rendering the asymmetry intelligible. For example, being asleep is not in fact like being awake. Self-knowledge is plausibly a capacity for detecting properties that are distinct for these sorts of good and bad cases.

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<sup>348</sup> Soteriou 2016, p. 3

b) *Asymmetry Unspecified*: By contrast, it is not intuitively part of the description of the way good and bad cases arise for perceptual experience that there are discrepancies between the cases to which the subject in the bad case is failing to be suitably sensitive—indeed the opposite seems true.<sup>349</sup> The subject in the bad case is stipulated to be rational, and as thus far developed, the bad case is not described so as to include a failure of self-knowledge.

Accordingly, this is the disjunctivist’s “dialectical infelicity problem.” Disjunctivism requires the idea that self-knowledge is asymmetrical between the good and bad cases, but we have not been given grounds to favor this view over the view that self-knowledge in two cases is symmetrical. Specifically, the very aspect of experience that is supposed to be subjectively accessible in the good case, i.e., that a state is *perceptual*, is the aspect that the bad case seems to show is not obviously within a subject’s capacity to detect (based on experience alone).<sup>350</sup> Accordingly, the disjunctivist’s best result seems a stalemate.<sup>351</sup>

But a presentational conception of epistemic value illuminates the resolution of this “dialectical infelicity problem” for the disjunctivist. The central idea is that it is a subtle misreading to take the disjunctivist to *repeat* or *transpose* her core strategy of denying inferences from the bad to the good case, now concerning the way experience grounds self-knowledge. Rather, the disjunctivist’s strategy *at once* distinguishes bad from good cases both as grounds for perceptual

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<sup>349</sup> As Soteriou puts the point (Soteriou 2016, p. 12),

it is not built into the description of these good and bad [perceptual experiential] situations that there is a significant psychological difference between the subjects occupying each: [...] it is by no means obvious that there are psychological features that are present in the case of the subject in the good situation, and absent in the case of the subject in the bad situation, to which the subject in the good situation has *introspective* access.

<sup>350</sup> Consider here that the subject having a capacity to detect features of her own experiences is in question in a way that the subject having a capacity to visually detect features of her environment is not in question. This complicates the disjunctivist’s strategy as applied to self-knowledge.

<sup>351</sup> Indeed, *ceteris paribus* symmetry would seem *prima facie* more parsimonious than asymmetry, so the disjunctivist would seem at a disadvantage.

knowledge and as grounds for self-knowledge. The reason is that on the presentational paradigm experience's epistemic value is conceived as intrinsically self-conscious, i.e., a single state intelligible only insofar as it provides grounds for perceptual knowledge and as grounds for self-knowledge. That is, the way a presentational state serves as a ground for perceptual knowledge itself resides in its nature as a ground for a relevant type of self-knowledge. Consider, accordingly, McDowell's characterization of experiential grounds for self-knowledge and experiential grounds for perceptual knowledge as aspects of the exercise of a "single capacity" (McDowell Manuscript<sup>2</sup>, p. 8), such that "the potential for knowledge that the experience is one of perceiving [is] contained in the experience itself" (McDowell Manuscript<sup>2</sup>, p. 7).

Appreciating the "dual character" of a single state of perceptual presence allows the disjunctivist to provide the following more specific version of the Asymmetry Claim:

**Defectiveness claim:** The badness of the bad case consists not merely in a defective condition with respect to the subject's capacity to gain knowledge of her environment through perception. It also consists in a defective condition with respect to the subject's capacity to gain self-awareness of her state. That is, the subject in a bad case is not in a position to know that she is in the bad case because her state exhibits a specific type of defectiveness vis-à-vis the subject's self-knowledge. By contrast, the subject in the good case does not exhibit this type of defectiveness, and accordingly the subject is in a position to know she is in the good case.

What the Defectiveness Claim provides is a particular grounding of the Asymmetry Claim that allows the disjunctivist to overcome her dialectical infelicity problem. The grounding is that, given the foregoing, just as the bad case constitutes a malfunction of perception, so it constitutes a malfunction of self-knowledge. Consider a case where the subject appears to be presented with some item, but is not. This is uncontroversially a defective exercise of the subject's perceptual capacities. But now if the subject's capacity for self-knowledge is implicated in the very same

aspect of this state, it must also be a defective exercise of the subject's capacity for self-knowledge.<sup>352</sup> That is, it goes to the very heart of the disjunctivist view to see it as a mistake that we can picture the bad case as involving a subject's functioning capacity for self-awareness in abstraction from a functioning perceptual capacity. A subject cannot merely appear to be in a state of presence where this is a failure of perception but not of self-knowledge, since being in a state of presence is a single modification of a subject's self-consciousness. In the register of self-knowledge, the bad case will make it seem to the perceiving subject that she is in the same type of state as she would be in the good case. But this no different than that it seems to her that she is confronted with environmental realities, when she is not. The environmental realities are not there, and neither is she in a position that is like the good case.

This now allows us to appreciate the way the disjunctivist's original argumentative move can be "transposed" to the case of self-knowledge. Just as in the case of ground level perceptual knowledge there is no inference from the defective nature of the bad case to the nature of the good case, so the same inference fails insofar as it relates to self-knowledge. For the disjunctivist, the epistemic value of experience in the good case is such that, by the subject's own self-conscious lights, experience puts her in a position to gain knowledge of the environment. The existence of defective states of this type does not bear on the description of the good case, neither in its perceptual-knowledge-granting nor in its self-knowledge-granting aspects. Accordingly, indiscriminability is fundamentally asymmetrical between the good and bad cases, since the

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<sup>352</sup> Several people have alerted to me to the possibility of an opponent "wriggling" herself out of my argument. Granting the idea of defectiveness as attaching to a single, first-order self-conscious presentational state, it does not follow that a defect in the state's presentational aspect must constitute a defect in its guise as a form of self-awareness. But what I intend is that the defect concerns the same *property* of the state: the state's presentational aspect is a *modification* of the self-awareness the state includes. Consequently, if the state's presentational aspect is defective, then *eo ipso* it is defective as a form of self-awareness: namely insofar as the subject seems self-aware of having a presentational state. Perhaps this point requires further argument. If so, for now it can merely seem *promising* to support the disjunctivist's Asymmetry Claim by rendering it as the Defectiveness Claim.

Thanks to Wayne Wu, Stephen Engstrom and Ori Beck for direction on this score.

indiscriminability involves a failure of self-knowledge in the bad case.<sup>353</sup>

## 5.6 THE BASIS PROBLEM

It has recently been argued that a conception of experience as “seeing that” a proposition  $p$  obtains amounts to a cognitively overly-demanding or “over-intellectualized” conception of experience, and more specifically leads to the much-discussed “basis problem.”<sup>354</sup> For some philosophers “seeing that” is taken to imply cognitive commitment to  $p$ , specifically knowledge that  $p$ .<sup>355</sup>

Perceptual knowledge or belief should be *based on* what perception provides. Indeed, this is the very heart of Pritchard-style factive disjunctivism: the point of characterizing perception in terms of “seeing that” is that it provides the subject with a fact that  $p$  that constitutes its epistemic value, and accordingly the *grounds* for the subject’s perceptual knowledge that  $p$ . But if I “see that” there is butter in the fridge, then this might seem to imply that I know there is butter in the fridge. Accordingly, it might seem that experience places the subject in a position to know that  $p$

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<sup>353</sup> What the foregoing underscores is the central place held in the disjunctivist conception of experience’s epistemic value by the elaboration of (2) in terms of a first-order variety of consciousness. Consider the way the disjunctivist’s “dialectical infelicity problem” in effect stems from the same source as Haddock’s “anti-luminosity” argument, from which I briefly defended the disjunctivist in the introduction. In both cases, the source of puzzlement at the disjunctivist view is the idea of self-knowledge as a form of receptive knowledge, in which independent experiential realities are accessed (realities independent from the capacity to gain such knowledge itself). In Haddock’s “anti-luminosity” argument this idea is expressed in the assumption that self-knowledge must be subject to a (limited) reliability condition. In the “dialectical infelicity problem” the same idea expresses itself in the assumption that good and bad cases must be indiscriminable due to sharing a common reality accessed by a common capacity for self-knowledge. But as I hope to have been making plausible, puzzlement at these features of the disjunctivist commitment to (2) is tantamount to puzzlement at the disjunctivist’s commitment to (1), and thereby at the view in general. Failure to appreciate the way experiential self-knowledge is a form of rationality is, for the disjunctivist, failure to appreciate experiential rationality itself.

<sup>354</sup> For discussion, Ghijssen 2015, Cassam 2007. French 2016 specifically makes lot of this latter problem. For a statement of the problem, Pritchard 2012, p. 21.

<sup>355</sup> Cassam 2007, Williamson 2000, Ch. 1.



only if experience itself already involves a cognitive commitment to  $p$  (e.g., knowledge that  $p$ .) But then it is hard to see how a belief that  $p$  could be *based* on the grounds perception provides.

It is this difficulty that, as I flagged, provides a major reason for disjunctivists to abandon a Pritchard-style conception of “seeing that” in favor of an object-centered conception of “seeing o...o<sub>n</sub>.” Now, on my understanding of disjunctivism, experience presents the subject with aspects of her environment, including, e.g., objects. I therefore agree that a disjunctivist conception of experience can be characterized in the object-centered terms of “seeing o...o<sub>n</sub>.” Moreover, I agree that disjunctivism does not depend on the idea that experience guarantees the truth of perceptual beliefs in virtue of relating to facts. But critically this does not mean I agree with Haddock and French’s adoption of an object-centered view in the face of the “basis problem.”

Traditionally, the disjunctivist’s response to the “basis problem” has been to suggest that “seeing that” does not imply knowledge, but merely a good position for knowledge (Pritchard 2012, p. 26ff):

A crucial distinction that we need to draw is between being in a state that guarantees knowledge and being in a state that guarantees that one is in a good position to gain knowledge, even if one is unable to properly exploit this opportunity. I want to suggest that seeing that  $p$  is factive and robustly epistemic in the weaker latter sense rather than in the more robust former sense.<sup>356</sup>

For my purposes, it does not matter whether Pritchard’s response is ultimately effective against the “basis problem.”<sup>357</sup> What matters is Pritchard’s suggestion that “seeing that” is supposed to specify a “good position for knowledge.” From the perspective of the version of disjunctivism I have been advocating, the point is that describing an experience in terms of the subject “seeing that  $p$ ” implies that the subject is, in her experience, aware of experience as providing grounds for  $p$ . Accordingly if a subject “sees that  $p$ ,” this ensures that the subject’s subjectively available

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<sup>356</sup> Pritchard grounds this distinction in the existence of “reflectively bad” cases in which the subject supposedly “sees that  $p$ ,” but is not in a position to judge that  $p$  (see also McDowell 2003, p. 680). French 2016 explicitly questions this way of arguing. For discussion of these cases, see below at §8.

<sup>357</sup> Unlike Pritchard I have no commitment to the expression “seeing that.”

grounds are sufficient for knowing that *p*. In this sense, what Pritchard's above passage correctly captures is that idea that while "seeing that" cannot, on pain of the "basis problem," imply the subject's cognitive commitment to *p*, experience must imply so to say the subject's "reflective commitment" to experience providing grounds for knowing that *p*.<sup>358</sup>

This is where my version of an object-centered disjunctivism diverges from French and Haddock's.<sup>359</sup> French explicitly sets aside attempting to account for disjunctivism's internalism within his view (French 2016, p. 90; p. 100). French suggests that disjunctivists might be able to spell out a good position for knowledge in broadly Dretskean terms on which perceptual experience is "simple" and "cognitively and conceptually primitive" (French 2014, p. 6).<sup>360</sup> French moreover claims that the availability of a Dretskean account obviates the need for attributing propositional content to perception:

[traditional epistemological disjunctivists] are committed to the view that there are some states of perception—that is, those involved in paradigmatic perceptual knowledge—which constitutively involve propositional representational content. The perceptual states in question are a species of representational state. Taking on such metaphysical commitments in formulating one's epistemology of perception is perfectly acceptable if the commitments are obvious, or uncontentious, or unavoidable. But [perception bearing propositional content] is none of the above. It is not obvious or uncontentious, it is a theoretical commitment which is denied by many.

Accordingly, for French the "basis" problem can be avoided because for the disjunctivist experience need not be understood in terms of "seeing that," but can instead be Dretskean presentation of objects: indeed experience need not be contentful to capture the disjunctivist suggestion.

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<sup>358</sup> Properly this is not cashed out as a cognitive commitment: e.g., self-awareness is not a belief the subject forms on the basis of experience. Nevertheless, it is important that in experience the subject's cognitive condition is not neutral on the status of her experience—for the disjunctivist, this is the point to stress.

<sup>359</sup> Haddock does not make French's claims concerning the cognitively primitive character of object-seeing. Nevertheless, Haddock's claims about the problems the disjunctivist faces in accounting for "reflective access" show that his object-centered account cannot take the form I have suggested in this paper.

<sup>360</sup> For a recent articulation of such an approach, Travis 2013. Also see Dretske 1969, 2000.

On my understanding of disjunctivism, however, while experience is presentational, this cannot imply that it is “simple” – nor, plausibly, can the account do without content. The subject’s reflective awareness is a feature of her rationality, and as such it is intellectually demanding.<sup>361</sup> Accordingly, while experience can be a form of object-centered “seeing o...on,” it cannot be a form of Dretskean “simple seeing.” Very plausibly the attribution of propositional contents to experience is associated with the distinctly rational character of experience.<sup>362</sup> Moreover, it is clear that, understood in the relevant sense, describing experience in terms of “seeing that” does not lead to a “basis problem.” The subject’s reflective commitment to the character of her experience in no way contradicts her acquisition of a belief that *p* on the basis of experience. On the contrary, it *explains* how the subject acquires belief on the basis of experience by explaining the subject’s subjective access to the epistemic value of experience.<sup>363</sup>

## 5.7 CONCLUSION

Duncan Pritchard (2012, p. 1) characterizes disjunctivism as the “holy grail” of perceptual epistemology, viz. a conception on which subjective rationality can reach “to the facts.” But if I have been correct in this chapter, Pritchard’s conception of this “holy grail” spoils his characterization of disjunctivism as its achievement. *Pace* recent attempts to reconstruct

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<sup>361</sup> Contrast Dretske’s characterization of seeing objects as “a primitive visual ability which is common to a great variety of sentient beings, an ability which we, as human beings, share with our cocker spaniel and pet cat.” Compare also Johnston 2006, p. 270, “non-fact-directed sensing seems a basic form of sensing that we share with infants and animals.”

<sup>362</sup> Chapter 6 below.

<sup>363</sup> In this sense, I think it is unhelpful for disjunctivists to deny (Pritchard 2011, p. 442; McDowell 2003, p. 680) that “seeing that *p*” in a certain sense implies a cognitive commitment to *p*. As far as I can tell, the disjunctivist can allow that “seeing that *p*” describes the acquisition of perceptual knowledge as a whole, including knowledgeable belief. What matters is that this process involves, in experience itself, the subject’s awareness of her grounds.

disjunctivism from object-centered materials, it is a natural consequence of Pritchard's discussion that the critical evaluation of disjunctivism has centered on locutions like "seeing that" and on the related claim that experience can take facts as its objects.<sup>364</sup> The point is that Pritchard's disjunctivism requires fact-centered discourse to anchor experience's epistemic value to knowledge, since nothing about the evidentialist context within which Pritchard conceives experience's epistemic value ensures such a connection *per se*.

I have suggested a significant revision of disjunctivism in this aspect. I began this chapter by suggesting disjunctivism is best understood as a claim about the truth of experientialism, not a view about the strength or status of experience's value conceived more generically. We can now see this. Experience's epistemic value is anchored to knowledge just in virtue of what it *is*, i.e., a manifestation of the self-consciousness that belongs to a subject's rationality. As we might put it, experience carries epistemic value because of the way the imagery of conscious experience is "ordered under" the subject's rationality. Characterizing experience this way displays on the surface the connection to knowledge that is critical for the disjunctivist, so that the idea of rationally formed but nevertheless non-knowledgeable beliefs is off the table. That option is ruled out by the way experience and judgment are both expressions of the subject's rational nature.<sup>365</sup>

Along with reconceiving disjunctivism's positive claim I have suggested we arrive at a significant reconception of disjunctivism's negative claim. If I have been correct, the disjunctivist strategy for addressing the bad case is not properly rendered (as is common) merely in the negative terms of denying the (fundamental) commonality of the good and bad cases. The

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<sup>364</sup> Notice how, in effect, it reappears in French's notion of "quasi-factivity."

<sup>365</sup> This provides one gloss on the Kantian characterization of sensible experience in terms of "receptivity." Along these lines, experience is receptive to items specifically as a feature of her capacity to subsequently know them through judgment.

gives a significantly deeper analysis of the bad case from *within* the disjunctivist's positive claim. If perception is a *fallible* capacity to be self-consciously presented with items, then (a) it is unsurprising that there will be bad or defective cases in which it will indiscriminably seem to the subject that she is in a relevant perceptual condition<sup>366</sup>; (b) it is equally obvious that as bad or defective, these cases do not represent perception as a mode of knowledge itself, since by definition defective exercises of a capacity are not good candidates for understanding the capacity's nature.

Finally, my revised understanding of disjunctivism's negative claim provides a gloss on its anti-skeptical stance, which I have suggested is not accurately rendered as "neo-Moorean." For the "neo-Moorean," anti-skeptical knowledge is inferential knowledge gained on grounds of empirical perceptual knowledge. But this is not the disjunctivist's solution. Consider that for the disjunctivist it follows from the self-consciousness that attends experience that philosophical study of perceptual rationality must, in a certain sense, coincide with a subjective sorting of self-consciousness, an enterprise first-personally accessible by rational subjects of experience in general. That is, the true shape of perceptual knowledge is something already included within the self-consciousness rational subjects enjoy. This provides a gloss on the disjunctivist's understanding of skepticism and the nature of disjunctivism's corrective project. For the disjunctivist, the fallible character of experiential self-consciousness can render obscure what in fact ordinary experience makes self-consciously available: namely that in experience objects are present for knowledge. In turn, disjunctivism promises to offer the apparatus that resolves this quandary of self-consciousness.

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<sup>366</sup> Again, indiscriminability being unsurprising since the defect applies to self-consciousness no less than to perception.

What does this mean for anti-skeptical knowledge? It means that such knowledge is directly included in a suitably corrected self-consciousness, rather than being knowledge that requires inferential reasoning from empirical grounds. Once disabused of overreactions to her fallibility, the subject can once again recognize ordinary experience for what it manifestly is: the presence of the world in experience. Such self-consciousness includes in itself the negation of skepticism, which purported that the subject lacked capacities for knowledge through experience.<sup>367</sup>

## 5.8 REFLECTIVE BADNESS

Consider three *prima facie* problematic cases for my version of disjunctivism.<sup>368</sup>

**Barn (i):** Unbeknownst to her, a subject is in barn façade country when she happens to see a barn, and judges she is seeing a barn.

**Barn (ii):** A subject is seeing a barn but is falsely told by an otherwise reliable source that she is in barn façade country.

**Experiment:** A subject in an experiment has been told that there is a .50 likelihood of facing undetectably unsuitable lighting conditions for color perception. At a moment *t* however, she faces ordinary conditions as she observes colored objects.

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<sup>367</sup> Accordingly, I take it as deeply perceptive when Michael Martin's "On Being Alienated" analyzes the disjunctivist approach to skepticism fundamentally in terms of a subject's "alienation" from the way she naturally took perception to constitute a mode of knowledge (Martin 2006, p. 354):

If the conception one has of how one knows something is falsified, then one's claim to that knowledge can seem to be undermined. We seem to be cut off from the world through lacking the kind of contact with it that we supposed ourselves to have.

<sup>368</sup> For the second type of barn case, see Pritchard 2011 p. 443, 2012, p. 26ff; McDowell 2003, p. 680. See also a critical discussion at French 2016, pp. 91-95. For the third type of case McDowell 2011, p. 46.

In Andrea Kern's terms (Kern 2017, p. 97), these are cases that are in some aspect "reflectively unfavorable." Structurally, all these cases involve both (a) an ordinary aspect in that the subject seems to be enjoying an ordinary perceptual experience (the result of ordinary sensory functioning in broadly ordinary conditions), and (b) a complication pertaining to the subject's being in a position to know whether her perception provides grounds for knowledge.

The three develop (b) in subtly different ways. In Barn (i) many philosophers think the subject's perception of the barn is, unbeknownst to her, not a suitable basis for knowledge. Barn (ii), by contrast, is a case where the subject *is* in principle in a position to gain knowledge from experience, but will not avail herself of this opportunity because of a false belief. In Experiment, the subject is again not in a position to gain knowledge, but now for reasons known to her through an authoritative source.

The problem cases of "reflective badness" raise is due to the fact that disjunctivism seems to entail a strong connection between aspects (a) and (b). The disjunctivist faces the following question: insofar as the subject lacks access to her experience's epistemic value, what does this mean for the status of her experience, given that it otherwise seems an ordinary visual experience? Specifically, are aspects of the environment *present* in cases of reflective badness?

I here want to sketch two ways for the disjunctivist to deal with these cases, and express a possible ground for dissent from the way I understand the established disjunctivist approach.<sup>369</sup> On the established disjunctivist treatment, the character of experience, specifically the role of presence, goes with opportunities for knowledge. So conceived, neither cases like Barn (i) (McDowell 1982, p. 390 fn. 37) nor cases like Experiment (McDowell 2011, p. 46) are cases in which aspects of the environment are perceptually present in the relevant sense. By contrast,

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<sup>369</sup> I take the authoritative sources for the disjunctivist treatment of the cases to be in McDowell 1982, 2003, 2011; Pritchard 2011; and with a special focus, Kern 2017 (part III, section VI).

cases like Barn (ii) *do* provide the subject an opportunity for knowledge, and accordingly are cases in which items are present to the subject, even if due to her false belief she fails to judge accordingly (McDowell 2003, p. 680). Accordingly, the conventional treatment of cases of “reflective badness” takes the following shape:

**Table 7** Reflective Badness (1)

Perceptual Presence	Yes	No
Barn (i)		X
Barn (ii)	X	
Experiment		X

But this way of employing the fallibility of perceptual capacities seems to me *prima facie* infelicitous for the disjunctivist, and to contrast unfavorably with non-disjunctivist positions. For the non-disjunctivist, “reflectively bad” cases allow for a clean read: in ordinary cases of visual functioning, perceived objects are presented to the subject. Such states constituting an opportunity for perceptual knowledge requires a responsiveness to rational norms extraneous to the states as such. By contrast, the heart of the disjunctivist strategy (Kern 2017, pp. 96-97) must turn on the idea that the self-conscious character of experience (e.g., the presence of items to self-consciousness) is a feature of the subject’s rationality.<sup>370</sup> Accordingly, perceptual experience *itself* is open to deficiencies that specifically concern the subject’s rational responsibilities. In Barn (i) and Experiment it is not rationally responsible for the subject to acquire belief, and accordingly experience does not present the relevant items. In turn, Barn (ii)

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<sup>370</sup> Specifically, as Kern notes in agreement with McDowell, this is due to perception’s character as part of a rational capacity for knowledge through perception.



is a *deficient exercise* of one's capacity for perceptual knowledge. It is deficient insofar as the perception is not recognized by the subject as it would be if the capacity were exercised perfectly.<sup>371</sup>

That is, in Barn (ii) the subject suffers an opposing type of deficiency: a failure to follow rational norms insofar as the subject fails to recognize an opportunity to know due to a conflicting belief.

But this integration of rational responsibility into experience's character seems problematic. Start with Barn (ii). For the disjunctivist the self-consciously available epistemic value of experience resides in experiential presence as such. Now in Barn (ii), the subject does not "recognize" her experience as an opportunity for knowledge. But what is this further stage of "recognition," if not self-consciousness as such? In what sense is the subject's epistemic position good in in the disjunctivist sense, if the subject does not have this epistemic value internalistically available (or does she?).<sup>372</sup> Contrast Barn (i), in which the subject seems to have a barn self-consciously present in what is a wholly ordinary experience, but for the disjunctivist no barn is present due to the subject's failure by a rational norm (say, safety.) But subjectively, what rational comportment might the subject have undertaken to allow her experience to be what it seems to her to be: a case in which a barn is presented?

The problem for the disjunctivist seems this. By disjunctivist lights, experience's epistemic value should by itself provide the subject with an internalistically accessible opportunity for knowledge. But Barn (i) and Barn (ii) show there are cases where in order for experience have that epistemic value, or for the subject to have that value available in a suitable sense, further rational norms must be followed in addition to simple experiencing. The subject must "recognize" her state as valuable, and must position herself vis-à-vis her environment such as to, for example, meet

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<sup>371</sup> Kern 2017, p. 96 (emphasis original).

<sup>372</sup> Of course an epistemically "good position" may be cashed out in objective terms, viz. a suitable arrangement of the subject's perceptual functioning in her environment. But for the disjunctivist, this is manifestly not sufficient for a "good position"—disjunctivism is precisely defined in this sense through its internalism.

a safety condition.<sup>373</sup> But then the disjunctivist has simply *defined* experience’s epistemic value in terms of an opportunity to know: it is not clear this is the straightforward value delivered by simply experiencing the environment as this is a state in the subject’s self-consciousness. In particular, what seemed attractive about disjunctivism, on its current understanding, was to ground secure, internalistically opportunities for knowledge in the heart of experience’s presentational character as such. But having now simply defined presence to accommodate disjunctivism’s desiderata, it seems the position has distanced itself from this natural notion of presence.<sup>374</sup>

Accordingly, I want to tentatively suggest there is a better disjunctivist treatment of “reflective badness” available that renders the following:

**Table 8** Reflective Badness (2)

Perceptual Presence	Yes	No
Barn (i)	X	
Barn (ii)		X
Experiment		X

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<sup>373</sup> By disjunctivist lights objections along these lines must seem point-missing, since as defective exercises of perception as a capacity to know, these cases can only be understood in light of a perfect exercise of this capacity (Kern 2017, pp. 93-94). For example, we can say that the subject in Barn (ii) is in a “good epistemic position” that she “fails to recognize” because we can appreciate in what respects she falls short of a perfect exercise of her capacity to know through perception. These are not independently intelligible descriptions of the subject’s position in Barn (ii), and accordingly, they do not carry over to perfect exercises of the capacity. Two problems remain, however: a) it is nevertheless not obvious how “unrecognized but self-consciously available” specifies a coherent state of mind; b) more generally, it assumes perception as a capacity for knowledge as posited by the disjunctivist—the goal should seem rather to ground this claim in a more neutrally compelling view of experience.

<sup>374</sup> McDowell 2011, p. 48 grants that his notion of presence may not track more common notions:

For different purposes, we might work with a different conception of what it would be for things to be present to subjects in their perceptual states, a conception that can be understood in abstraction from whether the perceptual states are acts of rational capacities for knowledge.

But it seems to me one of the attractions of working with a notion of presence in the first place is its close ties to the familiar character of perceptual experience.

On my preferred development, the capacity that results in perceptual presence can suffer from two types of defects. The most striking is that, since this is a self-conscious capacity, it can be affected by the subject's higher-order beliefs: a subject cannot be self-consciously presented with an item if she believes that her situation rules this out. Accordingly, I think in Barn (ii) and Experiment the subject is not presented with items in front of her: the items do not play a suitable role in the subject's self-consciousness.<sup>375</sup> On the other hand, in some objective conditions one simply cannot perceive things in the ordinary way, for example if one's sensory organs work only on an insufficient percentage of occasions, or the lighting conditions are very regularly unsuited for sight. In those situations objects cannot in properly be perceptually present by looking at them, since objective conditions simply do not allow for perception as we understand it (on my view, this is true even if on some occasion both one's sensory organs function and lighting conditions are normal). I do not think either of these verdicts distance disjunctivism from the ordinary notion of presence.<sup>376</sup>

By contrast, Barn (i) does not involve either deficiency: it is a normal case of exercising the subject's perceptual capacities.<sup>377</sup> In this case I think the item is self-consciously present. But what about the role of presence in perceptual knowledge? I think the disjunctivist has three

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<sup>375</sup> Of course the items do play *some* role in her self-consciousness, e.g., in making items in some sense seem present. But presence to self-consciousness implies internalist access—the subject does not have such access. But what about the idea that the subject in Barn (ii) enjoys an opportunity for perceptual knowledge, even if she does not avail herself of this? I think the disjunctivist can deny this—for example, I disagree with Pritchard (2011 p. 443). I do not think it is clear that the subject in the barn case appropriately describes herself as having “seen that” there was a barn before her (cf. French 2016, pp. 91-95). Imagine the misleading source, curious to see whether their prank succeeded, asking whether the subject saw that actually there *was* a real barn there. Could the subject respond affirmatively? This seems pretense.

<sup>376</sup> See e.g., the empirical results in Perky 2010, which suggest interaction between presence and self-awareness of perception. See Ghijsen 2014 for discussion.

<sup>377</sup> But is Barn (i) not an objectively bad situation for a capacity to know barns based on perception? It is, but this cannot be what decides whether an item is present to the subject. Situations are constantly bad for telling what precisely items are: this is not a matter of the object being present to the subject. In this respect, there is a structural difference between the way perceptual capacities depend on the objective functioning of sense organs and lighting conditions and the way they relate to the configuration of objects in the environment.

possible answers. The disjunctivist might bite the bullet: it is true the subject might easily have seen a barn façade, but in fact she saw a barn, and accordingly the subject can know there is barn before her. Alternatively the disjunctivist might deny that being a barn is a properly visually available quality of objects: the barn is present in experience as it would ordinarily be, but “being a barn” is not part of what is thus securely knowable. Finally, the disjunctivist might deny being committed to ruling out “ringer” scenarios like Barn (i). In perception a subject presented with an aspect of her environment in a way that self-consciously constitutes a case of perceiving. This core disjunctivist idea might seem consistent with the idea that on occasion a judgment based in experience fails to be knowledgeable due to the presence of “ringers.” Any of these options seems to me preferable to denying the presence of the barn.<sup>378</sup>

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<sup>378</sup> Of course the disjunctivist might say that some aspects of the barn are presented in the experience, but not the property of being a barn. But by my lights this does not solve the intuitive problem. The problem is that an environmental factor outside the subject’s perceptual functioning and her self-consciousness influences the character of her perceptual state. This seems at odds with the familiar way in which items can be (or fail to be) present to a perceiving subject.

## 6.0 CONTENT AND THE UNITY OF EXPERIENCE

A concept should thus be understood as *consciousness of an act*, and more precisely of an act of *combining and grasping together*.

Béatrice Longuenesse 1998, p. 46

How should we understand the idea that perception represents: that perceptual experience bears representational content?<sup>379</sup> For the type of representationalist views in which I am here interested, the operative idea is that experience and thought share a type of intentionality: in some relevant sense, experience and thought involve their objects in the same way. For this representationalist, experience can accordingly be said to be “conceptual.”<sup>380</sup>

In this last chapter I will provide a non-standard way of thinking about this representationalist idea, which centers on a connection between perceptual content and a type of

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<sup>379</sup> I will speak interchangeably about perceptual representation and “representationalism,” and about perceptual content and “the content view.”

<sup>380</sup> I will turn to the relevant characterization of “concept,” but as the basic elements of thought, or distinctly rational representations, the point of departure should be the constituent of a Fregean Thought, i.e., a Fregean sense (McDowell 1994, p. 107.) Contrast views on which concepts are associated specifically with predicate-like structures (Byrne 2005, p. 231):

Concepts are certain kinds of Fregean senses, specifically Fregean senses of predicates (e.g., “is a horse”). They are supposed to be constituents, together with other kinds of senses (e.g., senses of singular terms like “Seabiscuit”) of the senses of sentences (e.g., “Seabiscuit is a horse”), otherwise known as Fregean Thoughts.

This identifies concepts only as *certain* Fregean senses. But this cannot capture the idea of an element of thought *per se*: a sense as understood under Frege’s context principle, its significance as understood against the unity of a full Thought.

experiential unity.<sup>381</sup> Moreover, I will suggest that this view of experiential content in turn provides for a non-standard way in which representation can be understood to figure in explanations of perceptual justification. While my aims here are systematic and not interpretative, the gloss I give on content is supposed to capture themes in Kant's discussion of the character of intuitional representations. Accordingly, I effectively try to articulate one way of answering questions like how intuitions contribute to judgment; how intuitions bear content; and how intuitions qualify as specifically conceptual representations.<sup>382</sup>

We can approach my non-standard view of content by starting from a contemporary invocation of the basic Kantian idea that we ought to explain perceptual cognition as—in one sense or another—the cooperation of two fundamentally different faculties, an intellectual faculty, and a faculty for a distinct type of sensory awareness. In this light, consider Mark Johnston's following remark, directed against the idea that perception bears content:

For more than a decade I have been quietly complaining that contemporary epistemology lacks an adequate answer to this question: What is the epistemic contribution of sensory awareness as opposed to immediate (or non-inferential) perceptual judgment? It still seems to me a good complaint.<sup>383</sup>

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<sup>381</sup> There is sometimes a connection made between mental unity and the representational content of conscious states, but rarely do we get a grounding explanation of this connection (see e.g., discussion of Tye 2003 and Hurley 2003 below). For a contribution closer to the present treatment of unity and self-awareness, see Charles Siewert who argues for "an account of first-person knowledge of experience" based on a certain conception of "[the] unity of experience" (2001, p. 544).

<sup>382</sup> Recall from Chapter 1,

**Non-Judgmentalism:** the capacity to think provides intuitions with a particular representational character (specifically a conceptual character), even as this does not render intuition similar to judgment.

In Chapter 1, I introduced this as a negative claim. Broadly, the present aim is to provide a positive gloss.

<sup>383</sup> Johnston 2011, p. 165. It is clear that the content view is Johnston's target from the contrast with his own view, on which sensory awareness non-representationally discloses truth-makers for judgment. As Johnston writes (Johnston 2006, p. 285),

items [are] selectively made present, but not synthesized, by our "sensibility," our distinctive capacities for sensory awareness.

The upshot of this paper is essentially to challenge Johnston's invocation of Kant: even on a view on which experience merely *presents*, there is nevertheless also a role for what Johnston calls "synthesis."

At first blush, Johnston’s “complaint” can seem imprecisely targeted. It is not common to conceive of the epistemology of sensory experience in terms of “non-inferential perceptual judgment,” nor is this the representationalist view. To be sure, perceptual *judgment* is non-inferential. But perceptual judgment is not identical with visual experience, or with its contents. Instead, the non-inferential character of perceptual judgment is intended to be *grounded* in the character of visual experience—e.g., in the way experience bears content. For representationalists, it is *in virtue of* experience bearing content as it does that perceptual judgment can be non-inferential, i.e., the affirmation of what has been called experience’s “face value.”<sup>384</sup>

But if our focus is on the idea that perceptual cognition should comprise the work of two distinct faculties, then we can appreciate the way representationalism can seem a proper target for Johnston’s worry. For the views I have in mind, perceptual representation is a distinctly intellectual phenomenon. Accordingly, representationalists seem committed to

**Intellectualism:** in a suitably fundamental sense, experience implicates the subject’s capacity for thought.<sup>385</sup>

Plausibly, something close to Intellectualism is at the heart of Johnston’s objection to a content view. Consider that for many representationalists, even if experience does not judge, the heart of a content view is nevertheless a type of judgment-*like* structure. Consider for example,

**Representation-As:** Perceptual representation is always representation *as*, insofar as the representing state presents some item *o* as some way *F*, in such a way that the representing state, simply in virtue of possessing this structure, sets accuracy conditions for the way *o* may or may not be (namely *F*).<sup>386</sup>

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<sup>384</sup> For the relation between content and experience having a “face value,” see Travis 2004.

<sup>385</sup> I assume, as before, that perceptual representation is supposed to provide a “fundamental” gloss on the character of experience.

<sup>386</sup> A commitment of this sort is common, e.g., Boyle Manuscript, p. 10:

Representation-As captures the way judgment can seem to bear a certain *structure*, which structure moreover can seem essential to representationalists' explanatory aims.<sup>387</sup> For example, consider the following representationalist thought about the explanatory relation between experience and judgment,

1. Experience represents (some object in) the environment to the subject as some way *F*.
2. The subject accepts experience at "face value."
3. The subject non-inferentially judges that (some object in) the environment is *F*.<sup>388</sup>

On this way of understanding perceptual rationality, the critical work is done by a common structure between judgment and experience, both of which involve *F*. As such, I take it that Johnston's more particular point is that, for the Intellectualist at least, it is the intellectual faculty—and the distinctive judgmental structure associated with it—that does the significant epistemic work in a view of experience.<sup>389</sup> The epistemically significant character of experience

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The notion of perceptual content [...] is the idea that perception presents objects *as* being certain ways (or equivalently: as having certain properties or features.) [...] the idea is that perceptual content involves a referential element (marked by "things"), on the one hand, and a classificatory element (marked by "thus-and-so"), on the other hand.

Indeed, a similar conception prevalent among non-conceptualists (Ned Block 2012, p. 1)

every percept is constituted by a "perceptual attributive" (that represents an attribute) and a singular element (that represents an individual).

As Block's mention of an "attributive" indicates, a non-conceptual representation must still specify some *way* for the environment to be (even if not expressible as *F*.) For representationalists this is simply an implication of understanding representations as accuracy conditions.

<sup>387</sup> One such aim is perceptual justification, which I discuss below. A second is perceptual error. *F* spells out a possible way things can be believed to be, but may yet not be, and it is the analogy between experience and belief that is supposed to be central to the content view (Siegel 2010, p. 30; Byrne 2009, p. 437). But as I have argued, representationalists need not treat perceptual error this way: the *fallibility* of a self-conscious perceptual capacity for knowledge is an alternative. (Nor, *pace* recent work by Michael Tye, does this mean representationalists must posit *de re* contents. See McDowell 2013, p. 155.)

<sup>388</sup> This explanatory order need of course not be sequential: (2) and (3) may e.g., be identical.

<sup>389</sup> I here single out the Intellectualist, but insofar as the idea of content depends on an analogy with belief (Siegel 2010, Byrne 2009), the point generalizes to representation *simpliciter*. Travis 2013 emphasizes the Intellectualist origins of a concept of representation more generally.



resides in its judgment-like structure, while the sensory faculty plays what can seem an epiphenomenal role.<sup>390</sup>

For Johnston's worry to be gripping, we must of course believe that sensory awareness *should* be given an independent, positive role in a view of perceptual rationality. Why? In recent work Anil Gupta has captured what I take to be a profound source for this suggestion.<sup>391</sup> For Gupta, thought and experience must be seen not merely as distinct states, as on views on which experience does not itself involve judgment. Instead, experience and thought must be seen as two fundamentally different postures of mind—specifically such that *experience* could not be said to bear the *structure* proper to thought. As Gupta writes,

We should recognize two kinds of directedness of the cognizing subject—the mind, in brief—toward the world. The first kind is the directedness of experience, which I have called *presentation*; the other kind is *intentionality*, the directedness of thought. [...] Presentation is characterized by a certain blending; intentionality, by a certain separation. Each conscious experience presents the subject with a particular presentational complex without, however, articulating the complex for the subject. [...] With thought, the situation is the very opposite. You cannot think a complex (e.g., the peach's being sweet) without the capacity to articulate its constituent parts (e.g., the peach and sweetness.) Experience and thought are, thus, two radically different, indeed opposite movements of the conscious mind. One passively blends elements together, while the other actively separates them—or at least strives to do so.

As Gupta here puts it, “Experience and thought are [...] two radically different, indeed opposite movements of the conscious minds.” Specifically, for Gupta “[o]ne passively blends elements together, while the other actively separates them.” Accordingly, for Gupta only thought implicates a type of articulate *structure*. By contrast, sensory awareness has an independent and opposite role to play, presenting in a *united* way what thought may subsequently *articulate*.<sup>392</sup>

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<sup>390</sup> Johnston criticizes this as the “Wallpaper View” of sensory character (2006, p. 260).

<sup>391</sup> Gupta indeed raises a number of relevant discrepancies between thought and experience: Gupta 2012, p. 18ff. To be sure, Gupta's view must not be identified with Johnston's. For Gupta, but not for Johnston, experience is not only opposed to judgment and knowledge; it must not even be understood as directly acquainting the subject with items, or providing them for knowledge. The role of experience is to mandate transitions between views, a logical role that lies outside the common spectrum of views on which experience provides direct knowledge-affording awareness.

<sup>392</sup> That this suggestion need not be foreign to representationalism is evinced by John McDowell's focus on the role of “articulation” in a conception of judgment paired with a content view of experience (McDowell 2009b).

The claim of this last chapter is that—*pace* Gupta—representationalism can stand for a position on which the intellect not merely “actively separates [elements]” as it does in judgment, but also *unites* or *combines* them—including in experience. Accordingly, there is at least one type of unity in experience that is not a “passive blending”: it is an active combining, owed to the capacity for thought.<sup>393</sup> More specifically, for the Kantian position I have in mind the relevant unity concerns a particular unified way in which a self-aware rational subject conducts her mental life.<sup>394</sup> For Kant, all thought—and all experience—requires such self-conscious unification, as expressed in Kant’s “unity of apperception.” Further, I will argue that, on this understanding of representationalism, it is this unity of experience—and not a structure associated with judgment—that is critical to appreciating the role of content in experience. Accordingly, Gupta and Johnston are correct that sensory awareness is to be sharply distinguished from judgment, but the role of sensory awareness is not intelligible without the activity of the Intellect more generally. I moreover suggest this view yields a distinct sense of “concept” as it applies to experience, a sense not captured by Evans’ familiar Generality Constraint for concepts.

I proceed as follows. §1 refers to a brief, late paper by Susan Hurley (Hurley 2003) to introduce a claim about the relation between experiential unity and content. §2 then introduces the idea of the intellect as giving rise to a self-conscious unity. §3 describes a Kantian view of the

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<sup>393</sup> To be sure, in Gupta’s case the relevant experiential ‘blending’ “[generates] phenomenology.” The present experiential unity I do not take to be phenomenal.

<sup>394</sup> I refer here to Kant’s view of the operation of “synthesis,” which Kant characterizes as (A77/B103)

[the] action of putting different representations together with each other and comprehending their manifoldness in one cognition.

As this characterization makes clear, for Kant the “togetherness” of representations depends on “comprehending” them in a unity. This self-awareness of unity will play a significant role in my argument below.

role of a “concept” in experience. §4 then turns to develop the sort of representationalism that follows, and specifically its treatment of the rational or justificatory role of content. §5 concludes by returning to the theme on which I started: a non-standard way of reconciling the idea that experience is distinctly sensory, with the idea that it involves a contribution from the intellect.

Before proceeding to the body of this chapter, I should register a qualifying note. In exploring the idea of a “unity” proper to thought, I will, in broadly Kantian terms, spend some time exploring views that characterize the intellect in terms of an activity, and specifically the idea that that such acts “combine.” Just so there will be reason, both concerning thought and concerning experience, to speak of the “elements” of such combination. But in neither case should we attach much significance to this vocabulary specifically. The central suggestion ought not turn on commitments in the metaphysics of mind.<sup>395</sup> The point is that both thought and experience partake in a self-conscious unity distinctive of the thinker, and that the idea of an intentionality common to both can be understood this way.

## **6.1 EXPERIENTIAL UNITY**

The unity of conscious experience is a much-discussed and clearly multifarious phenomenon. There are such things as a single spatial visual field and a unified temporal experiential “flow.” Moreover, insofar as conscious experience can be said to have different elements or aspects, these “parts” can seem to exist against the background of a unified “whole” of conscious experience. In Michael Tye’s words,

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<sup>395</sup> In keeping with the abstract topic of concern, “element” is intended to be less metaphysically committal than e.g., “constituent.”

The simplest hypothesis compatible with what is revealed by introspection is that, for each period of consciousness, there is only a single experience – an experience that represents everything experienced within the period of consciousness as a whole.<sup>396</sup>

For each type of unity philosophers have specified, it is controversial to what extent it must be granted; what explains it; and how it relates to other types of unity.<sup>397</sup>

In this paper I will not engage these various disputes directly. For example, I will not isolate a type of supposedly phenomenally accessible unity, and engage the introspection-based dispute whether experience bears that unity, whether it does so contingently or necessarily, etc.

Instead, I will take a more theoretical approach to experiential unity. Specifically, I will propose thinking of experiential unity in terms of a subject's self-awareness in having a unified experience, the parts or aspects of which are enjoyed in just that way—as self-consciously parts or aspects of an experiential unity.

To appreciate my approach to the relation between experiential unity and content, consider the following:

**Access Question:** To what extent can a subject know of or access the unity of her experiential state? Could a state be (dis)unified in ways that exceed the subject's ability to access that aspect of the state?

This is an epistemological question of a sort: in order to suitably delimit a subject's ability to access the unity of her experience, we must have some sense of what grounds the relevant access. In this area, consider:

**Content Thesis:** One mode of subjective access to the unity of an experience *E* is constituted (and consequently delimited) by the representational content of *E*.<sup>398</sup>

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<sup>396</sup> Tye 2003, p. 97. I will in effect be giving an account of why it is that what Tye calls “introspection” yields a “single” experience. By contrast, I will not be committed to Tye's view that there is only a single experience he identifies as “each period of consciousness” that time “between one state of unconsciousness and the next.” For discussion, see Bayne 2005.

<sup>397</sup> For some interesting disagreements in this area, see e.g., the work of Tim Bayne and Farid Masrour.

<sup>398</sup> Below I specify what sort of content this concerns. For the relevance of this being “one” mode of access to experiential, see my comments on “transparency” below.

My development of the Content Thesis will be the work of the sections below. But as a first impression of how to understand the claim, consider a version proposed by Susan Hurley (Hurley 2003). For Hurley, where the metaphysical facts concerning a state's (dis)unity outstrip its representational content, consciousness could not make these facts available to the subject.<sup>399</sup> In an example offered by Hurley, consider two ways in which contents constituted of elements P, R and Q may be metaphysically unified: either the elements are "fully unified" in such a way that any element is unified with any other element (P&R, R&Q, P&Q, etc.), or the contents are merely "partially unified" in such a way that two elements may not be unified with each other, even as they are unified with a common third element (P&R, R&Q, ~P&Q, etc.).<sup>400</sup> For Hurley, the distinction between these two metaphysical structures is not subjectively accessible: in either case the subject's consciousness bears a unity determined by its representational contents consisting of P, R and Q.<sup>401</sup>

Hurley's claim has a certain intuitive plausibility. The representational content of a state is in some sense supposed to capture what a state *makes available* or *conveys* to the subject. Just so, one might think that a state's content delimits the subject's access to her state as a subjective unity. Now, this might suggest that representational content represents a state *as* unified. This is not Hurley's claim: the state's *bearing* content as it does is itself constitutive of the subject's access to the state's unity. This will also be the approach in this chapter: I will suggest that a

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<sup>399</sup> Hurley puts the point in terms of the subject's inability to discriminate states with different metaphysical unity structures. But Hurley's argument cannot turn on distinguishability strictly, since as disjunctivists have shown, a subject's incapacity to discriminate between states is consistent with the states' metaphysical differences being relevant in subjective experience. Presumably Hurley has in mind subjective inaccessibility: where identical contents are concerned, (relevant) metaphysical differences could not amount to subjective differences.

<sup>400</sup> In Hurley's definition, "Full unity requires that if two conscious states are co-conscious at a time, then each is also co-conscious with all the states the other is co-conscious with at that time." (Hurley 2003, p. 72).

<sup>401</sup> In one way Hurley expresses the idea (2003, p. 74), "there is nothing it is like for experiences with the same content to be identical or different." As this sentence shows, Hurley's claim is not precisely the one I have in mind here, insofar as Hurley seems to understand subjective access in terms of phenomenal character.

state bearing representational content in a certain way is *itself* associated with the subject's awareness of her state as a unity of a kind.

I take the Content Thesis to fit one way of developing a “transparency” framework for the subject's knowledge of her experiential states.<sup>402</sup> In general, the “transparency” idea trades on the idea that the subject can access the character of her states not by a distinct “introspective” capacity, but simply by exploiting her experiences in a first-order way. Applied to perceptual experience, the idea is that acquiring knowledge of the character of experience requires the subject to merely “look outward.” As Gareth Evans expresses the suggestion (1982, p. 227): “[The subject] goes through exactly the same procedure as he would go through if he were trying to make a judgment about how it is at this place now, but excluding any knowledge he has of an extraneous kind.” This idea makes natural room for a view of perceptual content. Plausibly it is the *content* of experience that is isolated when the subject “tries to make a judgment about how it is at this place now, but excluding any [extraneous] knowledge.”<sup>403</sup> Just so, it is plausibly the *content* of experience that captures the dual character of experience on the transparency view, i.e., the way experience at once serves as a basis for judgment and as a basis for a type of self-knowledge. But *how* this should be so has not been much explored. In this sense my present argument is intended to contribute to the transparency framework for self-knowledge. In my view, perceptual content is constitutively associated with the subject's self-awareness of her experience as a unity. Self-awareness is accordingly inalienable to the idea of experience as (in the relevant way) content-bearing,

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<sup>402</sup> See especially the work of Matthew Boyle, esp. 2009, 2011. In this sense I should note that I am not committed to a strong version of Hurley's idea. As understood through the “transparency” framework, the Content Thesis merely delimits a type of knowledge of a type of unity. In this sense, the Content Thesis is also consistent with some “transparency” views that self-knowledge is bifurcated between knowledge of such rational states as belief and intentional action and knowledge of other states, e.g., sensory states. (E.g., Boyle 2009.) Perceptual content delimits knowledge of experiential unity in the former sense, leaving open unity as an object for other modes of self-knowing.)

<sup>403</sup> That is, for views on which experience carries content, which is Evans' approach, and that of many supporters of “transparency.”

thereby providing one way of grounding the transparency approach.

## 6.2 INTELLECTUAL COMBINATION

I am here focused on conceptual perceptual representation. For sake of my exposition below, let's accordingly focus on the most basic model of this idea, the idea that experience bears propositional contents (e.g., Searle 1983, p. 40). How should we understand this idea?

On most traditional approaches, conscious states bear an act-object structure. Accordingly, many philosophers have found it natural to assume that experiences must in some sense be attitudes or relations to propositions. But recent literature has renewed interest in a classic alternative way of thinking about states that bear propositions as their contents.<sup>404</sup>

Propositional contents are distinctly intellectual: they are associated with a capacity for thought. But what is a capacity for thought? On the classic alternative, such a capacity is not associated with a relation to an item: rather it is associated with a specific type of mental *act* that *constitutes* a representational structure. Call this idea

**Activism:** Propositional representation is constitutively associated with certain mental acts, i.e., the exercises of certain representational capacities.<sup>405</sup>

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<sup>404</sup> Hanks 2011, 2013, 2015, Soames 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015. See also Susanna Schellenberg's recent work: "perceptual consciousness is constituted by a mental activity. [...] this view is in fact a version of representationalism." (Schellenberg Manuscript, p. 16. To be sure, Schellenberg does not think of perceptual representation as propositional, but instead as constituted by the pre-conceptual exercise of "basic" or "simple" discriminatory capacities.

<sup>405</sup> For similar views, Locke 1975, IV and the logical work of G.F Meier. Arguably a more recent example is Russell's multiple relation theory of judgment (Russell 1913, p. 116.). For a defense of early modern activist views, Marušić 2014.

There are number of ways to construe an “activist” position, but on a classic development representational structures are understood as constituted through a type of mental operation that grounds a type of relation among various elements of a mental representation. For example, this is the view presented in the standard textbook of early modern logic, Arnauld and Nicole’s *Port-Royal Logic* of 1662. As that work states (Arnauld and Nicole 1996, p. 82)

we unite or separate [ideas]. This is called *affirming* or *denying*, and in general *judging*. This judgment is also called a *proposition* [...] It is not enough to conceive [the terms of the proposition], but the mind must connect or separate them.

As the *Logic* here makes clear, on this view thought contents—propositions—are constituted by the subject’s introduction of either of two relations among its element, “connection” by affirmation, and “separation” by denial.<sup>406</sup>

“Activist” views of propositional contents have been long dismissed for at least three reasons: (1) they seem to violate a reasonable context principle by construing full thoughts from more basic elements; (2) they seem to violate the content-force distinction by taking the application of a predicate to a subject term to involve an assertive element; (3) they seem guilty of a problematic psychologism in identifying representational contents with mental acts. Recently, however, these criticisms have been either rebutted, or in the case of the content-force

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<sup>406</sup> As will become clear, the Kantian version of the “activist” view must be distinguished from the description given by Arnauld by supposing that the intellect must always first *combine*. Consider Kant’s characterization of judgment as “comparing” various representations (R 4634, 17: 616),

In every judgment, therefore, there are two predicates we compare to one another. One, which constitutes the given cognition of the object, is the logical subject, the other, which is compared with it, is called the logical predicate.

Kant’s characterization of the judgmental act as involving “comparison” prefigures the demand for conscious *unity* discussed below (see further A260-1/B316-7). It is a central thought of German Rationalism, especially prominent in Wolff, that comparison requires a type of unified consciousness comprising the relevant representation: only against the background of representations united in a single consciousness is the appropriate sort of comparative act intelligible (Dyck 2014). For further discussion of Kant’s use of “comparison,” see Longuenesse 1998, p. 111ff.



distinction, positively accepted.<sup>407</sup> Specifically, Peter Hanks (2011, 2013, 2015) and Scott Soames (2012, 2013, 2014, 2015) have popularized what are effectively neo-activist views of propositions, including the idea that propositions are constituted by certain mental acts. As Peter Hanks has characterized this view (Hanks 2015, p. 4),

[I reject] a picture of the relation between content and thought on which the contents of judgments have their representational features in a way that is explanatorily prior to the representational features of particular acts of judgment. [...] Representations and truth conditions begin with acts of predication, and propositions inherit their representational features from these acts.<sup>408</sup>

I am not here concerned to defend Hanks' or Soames' versions of the "activist" view. For example, the view is clearly not appropriate to an account of perceptual representation: perception does not judge. Rather, my aim is to highlight a problem these views face in order to bring out a specifically Kantian version of activism, on which the relevant act is associated with a type of self-conscious mental unity. To this end, I will present a few more details of Hanks' program specifically.<sup>409</sup>

For Hanks' development of the activist view it is critical that propositions are constituted by mental acts that are (A) *types* and (B) *complex*, and which have as their tokens individual mental judgments or their verbal expression, assertions. Consider the following example Hanks introduces (Hanks 2011, p. 12):

Suppose Ann asserts that George is clever. Ann's assertion is a composite action; it is composed out of more basic actions. In asserting that George is clever, Ann *refers* to George and she *predicates* the property of being clever of him.

Taking this example, we can understand Hanks' view as follows.

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<sup>407</sup> All three criticisms are familiar from Frege, while (2) specifically raises the Frege-Geach problem: propositions cannot be intrinsically assertive because they can be employed in non-assertive roles. But see Hanks 2011, 2015 for a view that positively accepts (2). Hanks proposes to avoid the Frege-Geach problem by introducing *force-canceling contexts*, as opposed to *force-neutral contents*. For discussion, Brigham 2017.

<sup>408</sup> It is significant that Hanks conceives of this act as "predication": this will differ from the view of propositional acts expressed below, on which a grasp on the elements of thoughts (e.g., predicates) requires a prior grasp on a unified thought.

<sup>409</sup> I should qualify the discussion below: it brings in view what I take to be one aspect of a Kantian "activism," but clearly stops well short of a proper account—I do not, for example, touch on the relation for Kant between self-consciousness and knowledge specifically.

(A) Propositions are *types* of actions because individual assertions can constitute tokens of the same propositional action-type. For example, Ann might assert that George is clever, but so might Betty. Indeed, the relevant type of action can be specified without being tokened.

(B) Second, propositions are *complex* because they are composed out of more basic acts. Specifically, as Hanks continues to develop the view, propositions are actions consisting of a referential act and a predicative act, where predicative acts are in turn composites of more basic acts: acts in which a property is singled out (Hanks calls this “expressing” a property), and acts in which the relevant property is applied to an object.<sup>410</sup> Accordingly, the proposition in the example consists of three basic elements: (i) a referential act singling out George; (ii) an “expressive” act picking out the property “clever”; (iii) an attributive or “applicative” act of applying “clever” to George.

Clearly this brief sketch is insufficient to evaluate the general merits of Hanks’ account of content. Instead, my purpose here is to raise a specific worry introduced by Jeff Speaks (Manuscript.)

The worry concerns Hanks’ account of the “unity of the proposition.”<sup>411</sup> If for Hanks a proposition is a complex act, then the various “basic” acts must cohere suitably. In an example, consider that it is a feature of Hanks’ view that propositions can be individuated by different ways of referring to the same item: say through the distinct types of referential acts *A* and *B*.<sup>412</sup> Now, suppose I single out an item *o* by an instance of *A*. Suppose further that I, as part of the same propositional act, predicate *F* of *o*. Now, as Jeff Speaks helpfully observes, whatever else goes

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<sup>410</sup> I take here the paradigmatic example of a singular proposition. Clearly different types of account are required for different types of propositions.

<sup>411</sup> As Speaks notes, this is supposed to be a problem particular to “activist” approaches to propositions, rather than simply the problem of the “unity of the proposition” in its general shape.

<sup>412</sup> The upshot of this feature of Hanks’ account is to provide a solution to Frege’s puzzle that does not posit modes of presentation. I do not here share Hanks’ opposition to Fregean semantics.

under “the unity of the proposition,” it includes the following: my propositional act is unified in such a way that in predicating  $F$  of  $o$ , I do so of  $o$  as singled out in way  $A$ . One way to put this point is that propositional unity rules out a certain identity question: that the predicative act concerns  $o$ , but leaves open whether it concerns  $o$  as singled out by the referential act. In other words: the referential act and the predicative act are executed *together* in such a way that the character of the referential act “carries over” into the predicative act. In what follows I will refer to this relation between the elements of a propositional act as follows:

**Identity Condition (IC):** Propositional unity includes a common identity between the elements of the proposition, such that the identity of the referential and predicative acts necessarily coheres.

Speaks does not himself provide a way of addressing (IC), instead noting that no straightforward account of (IC) seems forthcoming.<sup>413</sup> Consider,

(i) *Co-exercise*: The mere co-exercise of referential and predicative capacities does not ground (IC). Merely simultaneously engaging in  $A$  and predicating  $F$  of  $o$  does not meet ensure the act meets (IC).

(ii) *Causation*: It is not clear that a referential act  $A$  causing the predicative act  $F$  of  $o$  suffices to meet (IC). But a causal relation does not obviously accommodate (IC.) After all, there may be a causal relation between  $A$  and predicating  $F$  of  $o$  while nevertheless the predicative act does not retain the identity of  $A$ .<sup>414</sup>

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<sup>413</sup> The options (i) – (iii) below are those Speaks discusses.

<sup>414</sup> Hanks raises several more complicated problems for the causal view, including suitably rendering distinctions between complexes in which both  $A$  and  $B$  occur (e.g., , as uttered by Jeff Speaks, “I am chasing Jeff Speaks” and “Jeff Speaks is chasing me.”).

(iii) *Intention*: It would be problematic to introduce an intention to meet (IC) (e.g., the intention to predicate *F* of *o* as singled out by *A*.) Intentions are themselves states with propositional contents, and accordingly an infinite regress ensues.<sup>415</sup>

I will here set aside attempts to accommodate (IC) on versions of (i)-(iii). Instead, I want to introduce a fourth alternative which will help illuminate a Kantian “activism,” and which seems to me plausible as an account of (IC):

(iv) *Constitution*: In the relevant respect, the “unity of the proposition” is *constituted* by the subject’s self-awareness of engaging in a unified act that encompasses the full proposition, viz. thinking a thought. Specifically, (IC) is grounded in the fact that the identity of the referential act (*A*, say) is retained in the predicative act in virtue of both acts being aspects of a single self-consciously unified propositional act.

This way of approaching (IC) can seem difficult to parse, so let me develop the constitutivist suggestion in a few steps.

First (iv) suggests, as seems to me natural, that the solution to the suitable coherence of sub-propositional acts lies in a *further* act, which spans the full propositional act. Hanks opts to render propositional acts as composites of sub-propositional acts. But there seems to me nothing counting against taking propositions to involve a distinct capacity for the relevant unity, which

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<sup>415</sup> Speaks and Hanks do not themselves propose accounts of (IC), but both briefly consider the idea that propositions are “simple” or “primitive” acts, both concluding that this is effectively to abandon the explanatory benefits of the “activist” view (e.g., Hanks 2015, Ch. 2). In this sense, I take my suggestion of propositional acts as “unified” to be preferable.

has sub-propositional acts as its elements.<sup>416</sup> Indeed, it is natural to associate *thinking a thought* with the exercise of a single capacity, even as this capacity subsumes referential and predicative capacities.

Second, the suggestion is that this single act is associated with an *awareness of its own unity*. This awareness is intended to be neither prehensive nor productive: the awareness does not grasp an independent unity, nor does it produce such a unity. The awareness *is* the unity. This phrasing may seem obscure, but consider that it delivers a natural account of (IC). The relevant “unity of the proposition” consists in the coherence of the subject’s referential and predicative acts. On the present view, this coherence is nothing other than the subject’s self-awareness of the coherence: the way when the subject predicates *F* of *o*, she predicates *F* of *o* as singled out by *A*. Accordingly, the type of unity captured by (IC) consists in the subject’s self-conscious “holding together” of the relevant elements as elements in a single act.<sup>417</sup>

Third, (iv) spells out a distinct way in which the full propositional act bears the sub-propositional acts as its elements. Specifically, this relation requires recognizing a type of priority of the full propositional act over its elements.<sup>418</sup> Consider that for Hanks sub-

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<sup>416</sup> Hanks considers the view that propositions are “primitive,” but rejects the idea that such an account might provide genuine explanation of propositional unity (Hanks 2015, Ch. 2). But constitutivism at once takes the capacity for thought as primitive, and gives an explanation of propositional unity. (E.g.: Hanks casts the issue of propositional unity as the question how propositions are truth-evaluable unities. This may well be within an the capacity of an account of self-conscious judgment to explain.)

<sup>417</sup> Here it is also worth noting that the point here is not temporal, as if being self-aware of the relevant unity is an act of memory. In predicating *F* of *o*, the point is not that the subject recalls *A*. That is, I take it thinking a thought does not involve the temporally prior isolation of a referent and a subsequent predicative act. Instead, the order is logical.

<sup>418</sup> I was helped here by Stephen Engstrom’s compelling characterization of the part-whole relations distinctive to a self-conscious unity (Engstrom 2009, p. 99)

So far as [self-consciousness] contains distinguishable components within it, they are originally related as components belonging to a single whole. We may call this unity the unity of thought. [...] The consciousness of the whole must accordingly precede the specific consciousness of the components, as the consciousness of the form of relation in which the latter stand to one another in the whole; and this consciousness in the form of relation, or form of the whole, must be *in* each of

propositional acts are “basic,” and full propositional acts are composites of such basic acts. On this picture, the idea of an act that suitably unifies the relevant “basic acts” to accommodate (IC) takes a broadly relational form, forging a suitable coherence-relation between its elements. But this is not consistent with (iv). The sub-propositional elements are “unified” because within their character is included a self-awareness of the unity of the full propositional act. That is, in her referential act the subject is self-conscious of engaging in one part of a single act, just as in her predicative act she is self-conscious of engaging in another part of the same single act. These properties of the sub-propositional acts accordingly presuppose the subject’s consciousness of the full propositional act. Accordingly, there is a significant sense in which the capacity for the full propositional act is “basic,” and sub-propositional acts are derivative as its elements.

Developed in this way, my suggestion is that the constitutivist approach to (IC) specifies one broadly Kantian way in we might understand the idea of a unity of thought, and of an intellect that “combines”: a thought content is self-consciously unified in a subject’s act of thinking. In the next paragraph I will note a qualification here, but here the account is sufficient to shed light on the association between a type of content and a type of conscious unity. Above I spelled out this connection specifically for conscious experience as follows:

**Access Question:** To what extent can a subject know of or access the unity of her experiential state? Could a state be (dis)unified in ways that exceed the subject’s ability to access that aspect of the state?

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the conscious thinkings that make up the components, as what enables the latter to be conscious of themselves *as* component of the whole and indeed as components of the *same* whole.

Engstrom here makes the point I try to articulate in the remainder of this paragraph: that for a self-conscious unity, parts inhere in the whole by including a self-consciousness being part of this whole. The parts of a self-conscious unity are accordingly not more “basic” than the whole. For more of Engstrom’s rich discussion see (2009, pp. 99-102; 2006, p. 10, and the discussion at 2013).

**Content Thesis:** One mode of subjective access to the unity of an experience *E* is constituted (and consequently delimited) by the representational content of *E*.<sup>419</sup>

I will turn to experience below, but discussion so far illuminates the general association between content and unity I have been concerned to bring out. For contents of an intellectual sort, the attribution of the relevant contents to a conscious state itself specifies the subject as self-aware of the state as a unity of that sort. To that extent, the content of a conscious state is constitutive of the subject's awareness of the unity of her state (that is, awareness in that specific way).

The qualification is that (IC) at best isolates one aspect of Kant's view of the self-conscious unity of thought. More specifically, it does not provide the reason for Kant's insistence on the significance of "apperception" in the rational mind: the point of Kant's association between self-consciousness and thought does not turn on (IC).<sup>420</sup> Critically, for Kant the unity of the propositional act—judgment—is not merely a matter of self-consciously stringing together sub-propositional elements. Instead, the act is *judgment*, a putative act of cognition, and accordingly predicate and subject are self-consciously united by the subject under that aspect: as self-consciously cognition. This will be relevant below, when considering Kant's view of the role of self-consciousness in intuition: there, too, the unity of intuition must not be seen as *merely* uniting sensory elements, but rather uniting under the aspect of self-conscious cognition.

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<sup>419</sup> Below I specify what sort of content this concerns. For the relevance of this being "one" mode of access to experiential, see my comments on "transparency" below.

<sup>420</sup> Consider, for example, the way Kant specifies self-consciousness ("consciousness of myself as original apperception") as a condition on empirical cognition (A117n):

all empirical consciousness has a necessary reference to [...] the consciousness of myself as original apperception. It is therefore absolutely necessary that in my cognition all consciousness belongs to one consciousness (that of myself). [...] that all the varied **empirical consciousness** must be combined in one single self-consciousness is the absolutely first synthetic principle of all our thought as such.

What Kant has in mind here is is not the unity of various representations as spelled out in (IC), but instead with "thought" in the form of acts of *knowledge* – the way empirical judgment is self-consciously based in experience.

### 6.3 KANT ON THE PERCEPTUAL CONCEPT

My discussion so far has not spelled out a view of experience or its content: my focus has been on propositions as the contents of thought specifically.<sup>421</sup> However, the centerpiece of Kant's view of experience is precisely the relevant type of parallel. As Kant writes in two significant passages (B103/A79; B130):

Thus the same understanding, and, to be sure, by just the same transactions by means of which, in the case of concepts, through analytical unity, it created the logical form of judgment, also, by means of the synthetic unity it brings overall to an intuition's multiplicity, brings a transcendental unity to its representations.

The combination (*conjunctio*) of a manifold in general can never come to us through the senses, and cannot, therefore, be already contained in the pure form of sensible intuition. For it is an act of spontaneity of the faculty of representation; and since this faculty, to distinguish it from sensibility, must be entitled understanding, all combination—[...] be it a combination of the manifold of intuition, empirical or non-empirical, or of various concepts—is an act of the understanding. To this act the very general title 'synthesis' may be assigned.

The first of these passages contains a complexity with which I will not here be concerned, viz. Kant's description of the way the "same understanding" that "through *analytic* unity [...] created the logical form of judgment" is also responsible for the

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<sup>421</sup> Consider, for example, Colin McLear's recent line of argument in this regard that Kantian intuitions should *not* be seen as content-involving (McLear 2016a, p. 108; more generally: 2016b, 2015.) As McLear writes,

the senses [...] are incapable of bringing together ideas in the manner requisite to form a proposition—the vehicle of correctness—and thus cannot err.

McLear's argument here trades on two ideas: (a) for Kant the senses are passive; and (b) for Kant, content is the result of a self-conscious combinational act. McLear concludes that, in attributing unity to experience, Kant cannot mean the unity of thought, but must mean a distinctly non-intellectual, spatio-temporal type of unity (McLear 2015).

However McLear's argument fails on two grounds. It is true that for Kant the *senses* are passive, but this does not countenance the role of imaginative synthesis in experience (*pace* McLear's non-conceptualism 2016a, 98ff.) Moreover, experiential synthesis need not itself be judgment for it to be significantly representational. A clue lies in the textual evidence McLear himself cites (Prol. §22 4: 304).

The unification of representations in a consciousness is judging...thinking is the same as judging or as relating representations to judgments in general.

While it is true that Kant places judgment center-stage in the idea of conscious unification, Kant explicitly allows this need not take the form of judgment, but can also be relating representations *to* judgment. This is a role a representational view of experience can play.



“*synthetic* unity it brings overall to an intuition’s multiplicity.”<sup>422</sup> Instead, the important point is the common unifying function: “all combination—[...] be it a combination of the manifold of intuition, empirical or non-empirical, or of various concepts—is an act of the understanding. To this act the very general title ‘synthesis’ may be assigned.”<sup>423</sup> Note specifically that this combination does not concern the richer, arguably judgment-like notions Kant uses for experience (e.g., “experience” (*Erfahrung*) and “perception” (*Wahrnehmung*)), but instead explicitly concerns “an *intuition*’s multiplicity.” Accordingly, Kant’s suggestion is that the same self-conscious unity the understanding brings to contents in thought, it also contributes to Kant’s ground level notion for perceptual confrontations with objects: intuitions. The aim of the rest of this paper is to explore the consequences of this idea.

The central idea is that Kant reserves a distinct notion of “concept” for the relevant “synthetic unity” of an intuition. As Longuenesse notes, Kant’s standard use of the notion of a concept is as a distinctively discursive representation: a concept is a “universal and reflected” representation (JL n2; A304/B360-61), which can serve as a “predicate of possible judgments” (A68-9/B93-4). But for Longuenesse, Kant’s discussion of the unity of experience introduces a second, distinctly experiential use of “concept,” which Kant identifies not with a reflected representation or a predicate, but with “consciousness of [the] unity of the synthesis [in

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<sup>422</sup> For a compelling discussion of both types of unity in Kant’s view of concepts and judgment, Newton Dissertation, Chapter 2 and 3. Note also here Kant’s opposition between “concept” and “synthetic unity,” which might seem problematic for my view—this is resolved by Kant’s twofold use of “concept” that I note below.

<sup>423</sup> To see that Kant appears to intend something like the account developed at (iv), recall Kant’s characterization of “synthesis” (A77/B103).

[the] action of putting different representations together with each other and comprehending their manifoldness in one cognition.

As this characterization makes clear, for Kant the “togetherness” of representations depends on “comprehending” them in a unity. This self-awareness of unity will play a significant role in my argument below.

intuition]” (A103-104). As Kant writes in the latter passage, referring a sense of concept to a preceding passage discussing the uniting of a series of sequential representations<sup>424</sup>:

[this sense of] concept consists solely in the consciousness of [the] unity of the synthesis. The word “concept” itself could already lead us to this remark. For it is this one consciousness that unifies the manifold that has been successively intuited, and then also reproduced into one representation. This consciousness may often only be weak [...]; but regardless of these differences one consciousness must always be found, even if it lacks conspicuous clarity, and without that concepts, and with them cognition of objects, would be entirely impossible.

The basis for Longuenesse’s positing of a “second concept” in Kant’s thinking is that the concepts mentioned in the passage’s last line (“concepts [that constitute] cognition of objects”) appear *conditioned* on the concept mentioned in the first line (“concept [consisting] in the consciousness of [the] unity of the synthesis”).<sup>425</sup> For Kant, without “concept” as it figures in the first line, “concepts [...] would be entirely impossible.”

What then is the sort of concept that denotes a “consciousness of the unity of the synthesis”? Consider Thomas Land’s adaptation of an example Kant uses, concerning the type of unity of consciousness required in a mental representation of a line:

To illustrate what Longuenesse has in mind [in her discussion of the second concept] consider one of the geometrical examples Kant mentions, viz. the act of ‘describing a circle’: In drawing a circle, to apprehend what is before my mind as the representation of a single object, I must conceive of my act of drawing as a single act, in the sense that all the phases of this act belong to the generation of a single representation. I must not, for instance, forget that this is what I am doing as I move e.g., from the top right quadrant of the circle to the bottom right quadrant. More generally, during each phase of my activity I must think of this phase as being part of a more encompassing process; the process, namely, of generation the representation of a circle.<sup>426</sup>

On Land’s presentation of Kant’s example here, two features stand out. First, in drawing an analogy with successive “phases” of drawing a circle, it seems supposed that Kant’s holds a view of experience as a temporal succession of impressions (or as Kant describes it “the generation of

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<sup>424</sup> Kant’s specific case here concerns the uniting of the sequence under a concept of “number.” The specific application of this example is beyond my scope here, though I below point out the abstract use Kant appears to have for the concept of number as it applies to the very idea of a “consciousness of an act of synthesis.”

<sup>425</sup> There is interpretative disagreement over whether Kant’s text genuinely requires identifying the consciousness of synthesis with a notion of concept (Newton Dissertation fn. 22). But for present purposes that disagreement is merely verbal.

<sup>426</sup> Land 2015, p. 24.

the multitude [in intuition] through this successive addition of one to the other” (A103-4)). Second, so conceived, Land presents the “consciousness of the unity of a synthesis” as the idea that “I must not [...] forget what I am doing [...] during each phase of my activity.”<sup>427</sup> That is, for Land it can seem that the creation of a “unity” from experience’s “succession” requires an awareness of on the part of the subject of herself as engaged in a single experiential act.

But for present purposes I take it we can approach the Kantian thought as significantly more abstract. Critically, the point need not turn on attributing to Kant a view of experience as temporally successive.<sup>428</sup> The point is that experience has a structure such that its “elements” – without here carrying a commitment to such elements being temporally successive – are characterized by a certain *homogeneity*: viz. as being elements of the subject’s experience. Consider the way Kant appears to express this idea by associating the relevant form of self-awareness with a notion of “number.” As Kant writes directly preceding the introduction of the “second concept” (A103-4):

If, in counting, I forget that the units that now hover before my senses were successively added to each other by me, then I would not cognize the generation of the multitude through this successive addition of one to the other, and consequently I would not cognize the number; for this concept consists solely in the consciousness of this unity of the synthesis.

In turn, as Kant specifies elsewhere (A142-3/B182):

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<sup>427</sup> It seems to me that the temporal aspect of Land’s view is misplaced, *Forgetting* describes a failing in a distinctly temporally extended act, but the proper point is logical: any element of an intuition must be included within the same self-consciousness.

<sup>428</sup> Which would seem independently problematic, as e.g., the attribution to Kant of a type of sensory “atomism” (Golob 2011). See also Lewis White Beck’s critique (1978, p. 144):

Kant assumes that the manifold of representations is always successive. This is certainly wrong. When I open my eyes I do not scan the visual field as if my eyes or my attention worked like the electron ejector in a television tube, aiming first at one point and then at an adjacent point. But as a consequence of his sensational atomism, Kant assumes that my apprehension does work in this way.

If I have been right in describing the distinct character of a type of self-conscious unity, it is clear that this is inconsistent with “atomism.”

[number] is [...] simply the unity of the synthesis of the manifold of a homogeneous intuition in general.

Kant's precise thoughts about succession and "number" are beyond my view here. But the abstract point, if my suggestion is right, is that the homogeneity of an intuition—its being constituted of parts belonging to a single whole, which accordingly are *countable*—consists in nothing other than the subject's self-awareness in engaging in a single experiential act. That is, what grounds the unity of an experience is nothing other than the subject's self-awareness of engaging in a unified experiential act—what Kant describes as "consciousness of the unity of the synthesis."<sup>429</sup>

Accordingly, my suggestion is that for Kant experience is conceptual in a distinct way: (i) the *unity* of experience is associated with "concept" as an expression of the self-conscious intellect; (ii) on the other hand, for Kant intuitions do not involve empirical concepts in a more standard sense—i.e., the type of "universal" representation that can serve as the "predicate of possible judgments" (A68-9/B93-4).

## 6.4 PERCEPTUAL SELF-COMPREHENSION

For the Intellectualist representationalist views on which I have focused, the motivation for representationalism is supposed to reside in some relevant commonality between thought and experience as states of subjective consciousness. Thought and experience are in some sense

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<sup>429</sup> *Pace* Golob (2011, p. 516) who understands awareness of homogeneity in terms of a "second-order capacity" allowing the subject to form "representations of our representations' based on their shared properties." On my view, consciousness of "homogeneity" does not concern an awareness of awareness-independent properties: homogeneity is nothing other than the unity of first-order self-consciousness.

expressions of the same capacity. I have sketched so far one way of thinking about this commonality. However, I have so far said little about experiential content. For example, consider the following concern about the view I have so far advanced,

Suppose we accept that experience involves a type of intellectual self-awareness, or the “combination” of elements in a unified experiential act. Why should this entail that experience bears content? More specifically, even if it is granted that intuition involves a type of self-consciousness, this concerns a “manifold” of sensory experience, rather than the elements of a proposition. Accordingly, what is the association between self-consciousness and content?

The worry here is the following. The idea of perceptual representation is supposed to attribute to experience a type of intentionality. But appreciating the role of self-consciousness in experience—if this much is granted—appears to stop short of specifying a mode of intentionality. What does self-consciousness mean for content?<sup>430</sup>

The answer I give in this last section turns on appreciating the way experiential intentionality expresses perceptual rationality, on the conception that I have developed. That is: at least for relevant types of content views, the theoretical grounding of perceptual representation lies in a conception of the way experience supports rational perceptual judgment.<sup>431</sup> The aim of this section is to suggest that the above account of experiential self-consciousness provides such a conception: a way in which talking of experiential content can be part of an explication of perceptual rationality.

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<sup>430</sup> Consider a related way to express the worry concerning my discussion of Kant:

Perhaps it is plausible that self-consciousness is an aspect of a distinctly intellectual capacity. However, this does not display the connection between self-consciousness and the understanding’s *representational* function in thought. Accordingly, both experience and thought may be self-conscious. But it does not follow both bear representational content

<sup>431</sup> I maintain here my focus on specifically conceptualist views. For such views, it seems to me there has been a lack of clarity concerning whether anything *further* needs to be implied than an account of perceptual rationality. In one interpretation, characterizing experience as contentful *just is* to display experience in its rational role. In another interpretation, experience bearing content is a more substantial characterization of the metaphysics of experience—and can accordingly seem problematic on these independent grounds. The former is my preferred understanding.

To introduce the way content figures in my view, consider first two variants (A) and (B) that articulate a more standard understanding—I will then introduce (C) as my preferred alternative. As my discussion will make clear, (A) and (B) share a common way of conceiving of perceptual content, viz. as imposing a certain stricture or constraint on perceptual rationality: the justificatory power of some experience *e* is supposed to depend on representational content insofar as such content allows *e* to meet the relevant constraint. By contrast, in line with the view I developed in Chapter 5 above, on my suggestion an account of perceptual content serves to capture a distinct type of rationality which the subject displays in perceptual judgment: a rationality that centers on her perceptual self-comprehension.<sup>432</sup>

(A) “Premise Principle”:

Every perceptual experience that a subject enjoys is poised to justify perceptual beliefs. In order for them to play this role, (a) perceptual experiences must be the sorts of things that can stand in justificatory relation to beliefs, and (b) the subject must grasp the contents of perceptual experiences. Condition (a) is satisfied only if perceptual experiences (like beliefs themselves) have Fregean propositions as contents [...] Condition (b) is satisfied only if the subject has a concept for each item represented by her perceptual experiences.<sup>433</sup>

This passage presents the idea that perceptual justification depends on strong “content” and “state” conceptualist claims: perception must (a) bear propositional contents, and the subject must (b) possess concepts to articulate such contents. Many philosophers have found (a) and (b) overly strong as demands on perceptual justification, so what justifies them? One option is,

**Strong Premise Principle:** In order to epistemically support a belief that *o* is *F*, a visual experience needs to bear the structure of a premise supporting the conclusion that *o* as *F*.<sup>434</sup>

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<sup>432</sup> Compare Travis 2013 for a treatment of the idea of content in terms of a “constraint,” one putatively restricting the simple idea that experience presents the subject with her environment. It is the idea of a distance between these two notions that I am currently attempting to dispel.

<sup>433</sup> Bengson, Korman, Grube 2011, p. 168 (capitalization, italics, numbering altered). Bengson, Korman and Grube hold a fundamentally *bifurcated* view of experience: perceptual relations to objects account for the phenomenal character of experience, while content accounts for perception’s justificatory character. This is fundamentally at odds with my approach, on which the *unity* of experience is central to its justificatory character. For the association of perceptual rationality and experiential unity, Chudnoff and Didomenico 2015.

<sup>434</sup> See Pryor 2003 for this interpretation. For explicit adoption of this idea, Brewer 1999, p. 149.

But this seems uncharitable: experiential justification is not inferential. Alternatively,

**Weak Premise Principle:** In order to epistemically support a belief representing *o* is *F*, a visual experience needs to conceptually represent *o* as being *some* way(s), where these are understood on the model of *F*.

This may seem more modest, insofar as it merely demands rendering perceptual justification intelligible in terms of perception representing *o* as *some way* like *F*, which makes no reference to inference, and indeed does not require even perceptual representation of *F* (for example, a table may be presented as “brown” and as “rectangular,” but not as a table.). Nevertheless, many philosophers have continued to find even the modest principle unnecessarily demanding.<sup>435</sup>

(B) “Reasons Principle”:

- (1) Perception supplies rational subjects with reasons for judgment. (Judgment is ‘rationally constrained by perception.’)
  - (2) A rational subject’s reason for judgment must be a reason available to the reflection of the subject.
  - (3) A representation with nonconceptual content would not present a reason available to the reflection of the judging subject.
- So (4) Perception cannot have nonconceptual content (not insofar as it is to supply with reasons for judgment, at any rate.)<sup>436</sup>

This argument, presented by Matthew Boyle, is not to be identified with (A). What is relevant in this proposal is not any constraint on a supposedly “logical” role of experiential content as required for justification, but on its “reflective availability.” Accordingly,

**Reasons Principle:** only conceptual contents can provide reasons available to the reflection of the judging subject.

Nevertheless, to many philosophers (B), too, will seem overly demanding. Specifically, the argument requires a strong version of (2). Consider that a reason for belief can, in principle,

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<sup>435</sup> Principally because other models of perceptual justification can be imagined. In this way, non-conceptualists conceive of entitlement the subject need not be able to comprehend conceptually (Hanna 2011, Burge 2003); relationalists often suppose that “conceptual recognition” of objects is sufficient (versions at Travis 2013, Brewer 2011); and Gupta (2006) conceives of experience as altogether contributing in a different way to empirical rationality, viz. as on the model of an argument licensing transitions between “views.”

<sup>436</sup> Boyle 2016, p. 27 (numbering altered.) Boyle presents this as an argument against non-conceptual content, but I take it as an argument for conceptualism more generally.

simply be the conscious presentation of an object (Brewer Manuscript, Cunningham 2017). Is the conscious presentation of an object “available to the reflection of the judging subject”? On a weak reading of (2) the answer is yes, but then is not clear why (3) is true. Why could a non- conceptual presentation of an object not meet (2)?<sup>437</sup> On a strong reading of (2), a conscious presentation of an object is not *eo ipso* available to the subject. Instead, only conceptual structures (belief-like, e.g.) are “reflectively available.” But then it can seem overly demanding to require this type of “reflective access” from perceptual justification.<sup>438</sup>

(C) “Self-comprehension”

As opposed to varieties of (A) and (B), the view of content I prefer is less frequently made explicit.<sup>439</sup> But consider,

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<sup>437</sup> Boyle explicates (3) by writing that (2016, p. 28) “a representation with conceptual content is just a representation that actualizes conceptual capacities, where “conceptual capacities” are stipulatively defined as those capacities as those capacities that enable us to reflect on reasons.” But this risks rendering the debate vacuous: if conscious presentation of objects presents us with reasons, then this is a “conceptual capacity”—and therefore the consciousness bears conceptual content. But then why dispute conceptualism?

<sup>438</sup> One expression of the demanding character of Boyle’s conception of a perceptual reason is apparent from his response to the idea that that such reasons could be reflectively available through a process of ‘conceptualizing’ (Boyle 2016, p. 29):

consider this supposed act or event of ‘conceptualizing.’ [...] Can I, who conceptualize my perception in a certain way, reflect on this act and see a reason for so conceptualizing, or can I not? It does not seem that I *can* see a reason for conceptualizing as I do, for what could this reason be? It cannot be the very reason the perceptual state itself was supposed to supply, for my ability to reflect on that reason was supposed to be the upshot of my conceptualizing, and so cannot be available to me as something I can see as my ground for this very act. [...] But if my act of conceptualizing for which I *cannot* see a reason, then how can I regard the reflective thought that is the upshot of this supposed to be the upshot of my conceptualizing, and so cannot be available to me as something I can see as my ground for this very act.

For Boyle, if a perceptual reason R is the result of ‘conceptualizing,’ then this process of generating R must itself be grounded in some reason R\*. But the above dilemma recurs. Either R\* can consist in a consciously presented object, or such presentation would not qualify—but then it would seem overly demanding to require that conceptualization be grounded in perceptually-presented “reasons.” That is, where perhaps it is natural to suppose that perceptual judgment requires reasons of a robustly reflectively accessible sort, the same would not seem obviously true for a process of conceptualization.

<sup>439</sup> See McDowell 2013 for what I take as a content view developed in part along these lines. Consider also McDowell’s more recent remark, which does not explicitly specify a content view, but expresses the Kantian rationale for which Self-Comprehension stands (McDowell 2016, 314; italics original.)



**Self-Comprehension Principle:** a conscious experience bears a unity that is constitutively associated with the subject's self-comprehending of her state as an experience.

In effect, Self-Comprehension expresses the idea that the subject's experience is self-consciously unified as I have described Kant as holding: just as a thinker is self-aware in thinking a unified thought, so her experiential consciousness includes a self-awareness of her unified experiencing. My suggestion is that this principle supports thinking of experience as contentful.

As I have noted, attributing contents to experience expresses a view of the way experience rationally contributes to judgment—the way experience can serve to justify belief. The Self-Comprehension Principle specifies such a view. To illustrate, consider a feature distinctive of John Searle's view of the contents of experience. Searle distinguishes experience from belief by describing the way “experience has a kind of directness, immediacy [...] it gives us direct access to [the scene perceived]” (Searle 1983, p. 45). Searle then expresses this point by attributing to experience a distinct type of content (Searle 1983, p. 48):

the Intentional content of the visual experience requires as part of the conditions of satisfaction that the visual experience be caused by the rest of its conditions of satisfaction, that is, by the state of affairs perceived. The content of the visual experience is therefore self-referential.<sup>440</sup>

Accordingly, for Searle experiential contents are as we might say “causally self-referential”: experience represents a certain state of affairs, but it also represents the experience itself as

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the role of determination by the function of judgment, in the conception of intuitions [Kant] is putting into place, is to provide for the manifold given in an intuition to be *brought into one consciousness*. An empirical intuition as Kant is conceiving it here is, we might say by definition, something in which multiple sensibly given “representations”—elements in a sensory manifold—figure not as a mere multiplicity, an aggregate or heap, but as a unity self-consciously experienced as such.

My suggestion here is that “a unity self-consciously experienced as such” spells out a way of thinking about experience as contentful, viz. by associating the rational contribution of experience with the capacity for thought.

<sup>440</sup> Searle explicitly takes his causally self-referential contents to explicate the presentational conscious character of experience, i.e., the distinct way according to Searle “experience has a kind of directness, immediacy [...] it gives us direct access to [the scene perceived]” (Searle 1983, p. 45).

by the relevant state of affairs. Searle's suggestion has been roundly criticized (McCullough 1984). But my interest here is just to note the following: (a) Searle's contents in effect express a version of Self-Comprehension; and (b) understood this way, Searle's contents spell out a distinct way in which experience can support judgment. For (a) consider that Searle's contents effectively spell out an awareness included within the experience itself as an *experiential confrontation* with the environment: it is part of the experience itself that it (or its subject) comprehends the experience to be in effect a *revealing* of the environment. This is just to spell out the idea that the experience includes an awareness of itself as brought on by the environmental state of affairs it represents.<sup>441</sup> Now this provides a version of (b). Namely, if it is within the subject's experiential awareness that her experience is a revealing of her environment, i.e., if experience is a form of self-understood "direct access to [the scene perceived]," then the subject is thereby in a position to make suitable judgments concerning her environment: the scene is self-consciously presented to the subject's ability to know. That is, the Self-Comprehension Principle presents a mode of perceptual rationality.

But how does Self-Comprehension express a version of perceptual representation? The core suggestion is that the rational significance of experience resides in a unified experiential awareness of a type that is "conceptual" in Kant's distinctive, second sense. Experience relates to the objects in the environment in a way it fundamentally shares with thought. Experience *reveals* the environment, and the heart of this type of relation to the environment is a distinctively intellectual form of self-consciousness. Experience could not *reveal* the environment if it were not a mode of self-consciousness. Accordingly, experience and thought share a form of

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<sup>441</sup> To be sure, Searle's inclusion of causal language to express this point would not seem quite sufficient to accommodate his thought. The fact that a mental event with a specific content is caused by items specified by the content does not secure that the event is "presentational" in the way that figures in Searle's explanandum; nor does it secure that that the state involves the environment in the right way, as shown by cases of "veridical illusion."

intentionality: experience relates to the environment in a way it shares with thought, namely self-consciously.

What does this mean for the idea of content? Recall:

**Representation-As:** Perceptual representation is always representation *as*, insofar as the representing state presents some item *o* as some way *F*, in such a way that the representing state, simply in virtue of possessing this structure, sets accuracy conditions for the way *o* may or may not be (namely *F*).

At the start of this chapter, I noted that the idea that experience bears this type of structure is typically considered essential to the idea that perception represents, and especially its explanatory aims concerning perceptual justification and perceptual error.<sup>442</sup> For example, I presented the commonly held representationalist view of perceptual justification as follows,

1. Experience represents (some object in) the environment to the subject as some way *F*.
2. The subject accepts experience at “face value.”
3. The subject non-inferentially judges that (some object in) the environment is *F*.

However, nothing I have said about perceptual intentionality turns on experience bearing this type of articulate, judgment-like structure. Moreover, nothing turns on experience involving empirical concepts like *F*. If attributing content to experience is supposed to express a view of the way experience contributes rationally to belief, then the rationality captured by Self-Comprehension does not fundamentally turn on the idea that a judgment involving *F* matches an experience involving *F*. What matters is that experience reveals the environment to the subject in a distinctly conceptual way, not that it *articulates* what is there to be found.

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<sup>442</sup> I have noted that it does not seem to me the content view’s explanation of perceptual error need turn on Representation-As. What matters is that an experience in which the world seems self-consciously revealed can be defective. Now, clearly if experience does represent an *F*, and the experience is defective, then the experience erroneously represents the environment as including an *F*. But this is not to say that such a structure plays a fundamental role in explaining perceptual error.

But if not as on Representation-As, how might we express perceptual representation on my conceptualist view? It seems to me that within the conceptualist position I have sketched, there is room for significant flexibility. Consider some options:

- (i) The *F* is *G*.
- (ii) There is an *F* there before me.
- (iii) “this-such”
- (iv) “this”

(i) – (iv) divide among significant debates about the character of perceptual epistemology. (i) and (ii) accept that experience represents using empirical concepts, while (ii) bears an ego-centric spatial structure as well as being existentially quantified. By contrast, (iii) requires the subject to bring her empirical concepts to what experience provides her proper. Finally, (iv) is a position in which *any* empirical concept use is a matter of exercising post-perceptual capacities on what experience provides. By my lights, however, any of these positions can capture a conceptualist view of the sort I have described: in each case the ascription of content to experience specifies the experience as enjoying a distinct type of rational status, namely as a state in which the subject is self-consciously confronted with her environment. Just in *having* content of a conceptual sort, the experiences are placed within the fold of the unity of self-consciousness, and accordingly, the character of the Intellect. Disagreements about the structure of content can be placed downstream from this more basic idea.

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