

# KANT ON PERCEPTION: NAÏVE REALISM, NON- CONCEPTUALISM AND THE B-DEDUCTION

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According to non-conceptualist interpretations, Kant held that the application of concepts is not necessary for perceptual experience. Some have motivated non-conceptualism by noting the affinities between Kant's account of perception and contemporary relational theories of perception. In this paper I argue i) that non-conceptualism cannot provide an account of the Transcendental Deduction and thus ought to be rejected; and ii) that this has no bearing on the issue of whether Kant endorsed a relational account of perceptual experience.

## 1. Introduction

Recent debates in the philosophy of perception have focused on the contrast between *relational* and *representational* theories of perceptual experience. For initial purposes, the following rough characterisation will suffice: relational theories are those which hold that the phenomenal character of perceptual experience essentially involves the obtaining of a non-representational relation which holds between subject and perceived objects. Representational theories are those which hold that the phenomenal character of perceptual experience essentially involves representational properties which determine accuracy conditions for the perceptual state.

Interest in these debates has been prompted by the recent development and defence of *naïve realist* relational theories. Such views hold that the non-representational relation involved in perceptual experience is one which subjects stand in to ordinary material objects and their properties. Versions of this view were popular amongst the early 20<sup>th</sup>-century Oxford Realists [Cook Wilson 1926; Prichard 1909], but it is the recent work of John Campbell, Mike Martin and others which has brought the proposal back into the philosophical landscape [Campbell 2002; Martin 2002; Brewer 2006].

This debate in the philosophy of perception intersects with a recent issue of interpretation in Kant's theoretical philosophy. Kant famously holds that there are two stems to human cognition: a passive faculty of sensibility and an active faculty of the understanding. The former presents us with objects by means of intuitions; the latter enables thought by means of concepts. But thoughts without content are empty and intuitions without concepts are blind: only from their unification can cognition arise (A51/B76). An important question to ask is how we should understand the relation between intuitions and concepts and what contribution each makes to our perceptual consciousness of the world.

Following a series of papers by Robert Hanna and Lucy Allais, answers to these questions have split into two broad camps. The traditional *conceptualist* interpretation holds that the application of concepts is necessary for the perceptual presentation of empirical objects in intuition. In contrast, the *non-conceptualist* interpretation of Allais and Hanna holds that intuitions can present us with empirical objects without any application of concepts.

This terminology is somewhat unhelpful since the terms 'conceptualist' and 'non-conceptualist' are used in the philosophy of perception literature to pick out varieties of representational theories: conceptualist theories hold that perceptual experience involves properties which represent the world as being some way and that subjects who undergo such experiences need possess the concepts required to specify the content of those experiences; non-conceptualist theories hold that perceptual experience involves properties which represent the world as being some way but deny that subjects need possess the concepts required to specify the content of those experiences [Crane 1992]. This use should not be confused with the terminology used by those involved in the debate about how to understand

Kant's theoretical philosophy. In the rest of this paper I will use the terms 'conceptualism' and 'non-conceptualism' solely in the Kantian sense.

How do the debate about the nature of perceptual experience relate to the Kant debate? There is no immediate correspondence between positions in one debate and positions in the other. Yet those on both sides of the Kant debate often assume that conceptualist interpretations are committed to ascribing to Kant a representational account of perceptual experience. This is important because one way of motivating non-conceptualism goes via the claim that Kant's account of the perceptual presentation of empirical particulars should be read on the model of a relational account of perception [Allais 2009, pp.387-392; 2010, pp. 58-62; 2011, pp.379-383]. The assumption appears to be that if Kant's account of intuition is relational, then he can't have thought that the application of concepts is necessary for the perceptual presentation of empirical particulars.

My primary concern in this paper is to suggest that non-conceptualism is false: Kant holds that the application of concepts is necessary for the perceptual presentation of empirical objects in intuition. But I will also show that this has no implications for the question of whether Kant endorsed a representational or relational theory of perception. Relational theories of perception are compatible with conceptualism.

Why would one think that conceptualism required a representational account of perceptual experience? It is true that influential conceptualist interpretations have ascribed to Kant a representational account of perceptual experience [McDowell 1998; Abela 2002], but it is hard to find an explicit argument in the literature for this supposed link.

Here is one line of thought: according to conceptualist interpretations, Kant held that the application of concepts is necessary for the perceptual presentation of empirical objects. The reason for endorsing this claim is that Kant takes intuitions to depend on acts of synthesis. And acts of synthesis are undertaken by the understanding: they take the manifold of intuition and combine it according to rules. These rules are concepts of the understanding. Combining the manifold of intuition in accordance with rules thus involves applying concepts in intuition. And if concepts are applied in intuition, then perceptual experience represents the world as being a certain way. Thus the reasons which motivate a conceptualist

interpretation of Kant also motivate ascribing to him a representational theory of perception. ([Ginsborg 2006, pp. 64-67] presents a particularly clear exposition of this line of thought.)

In the final section of this paper I will examine this argument. Before that, in §2, I will set out the debate between conceptualist and non-conceptualist interpretations and draw attention to the considerations which motivate each side of the debate. In §3 I will draw on the B-edition of the Transcendental Deduction to provide some reason for thinking that non-conceptualism is false. Finally, in §4 I will show that this has no bearing on the question of whether Kant endorsed a relational theory of perception: conceptualism is compatible with relational theories.

## 2. Non-conceptualism

According to *non-conceptualist* interpretations of Kant's theory of cognition, we can be perceptually presented with particulars without any input from the active faculty of the understanding [Allais 2009, 2012], [Hanna 2001, 2005]. Since Kant introduces the understanding as 'a faculty for judging' and tells us that all judgement proceeds via concepts (A69/B94), this is often expressed as the claim that one can be perceptually presented with particulars without the application of concepts. Non-conceptualist readings hold that 'for Kant, the application of concepts is not necessary for our being perceptually presented with outer particulars' [Allais 2009, p.394].

Non-conceptualism is opposed by those who hold that, for Kant, the application of concepts is necessary for perceptual experience [McDowell 1998], [Abela 2002]. But we need to be careful as to what is meant by the application of concepts. Conceptualist interpreters often distinguish 'two aspects of the activity of understanding' [Longuenesse 1998, p.63]: the understanding as rule-giver for the synthesis of the manifold in intuition and the understanding as discursive combiner of concepts in judgement. It is the former, and not the latter, which conceptualist interpretations take to be necessary for perceptual experience. Thus if the phrase 'application of concepts' is reserved for the latter activity – the deployment of concepts in judgement – then there is no bar to conceptualists accepting Allais's claim that 'the application of concepts is not necessary for our being perceptually presented with outer particulars' [Allais 2009, p.394]. Rather, the sense in which conceptualists take the application of concepts to be necessary for

perceptual experience is that they take the perceptual presentation of objects in intuition to require a perceptual synthesis of the manifold of intuition, undertaken by the understanding in accordance with concepts.

One way to characterise this dispute is over where best to limn the domain of the understanding. Traditional conceptualist readings of Kant's theory of cognition see the understanding as reaching all the way out to perception itself: the understanding is active in perceptual experience because the application of concepts is required for the perceptual presentation of outer particulars. Non-conceptualists hold that the understanding is required only for subjects to engage in a certain form of thought: the perceptual presentation of particulars can take place in the absence of concepts, but we require input from the understanding in order to cognize them in a certain way.

We can mark this distinction by distinguishing the conditions necessary to engage in a certain sort of thought about objects and the conditions necessary to be perceptually presented with such particulars. Conceptualist readings of Kant hold that the application of concepts is necessary for the perceptual presentation of particulars; non-conceptualists hold only that the application of concepts is necessary for us to think about objects in a certain way. As Allais puts it, 'once we draw a distinction between the *perception* of a distinct *particular* and *cognition* of an *object* in the full-blown Kantian sense of an object, [non-conceptualists] can allow that Kant does not see concepts as necessary for the basic intentionality of perception – that fact that perception presents us with distinct particular things' [2012, p.41]. And this is compatible with thinking that the understanding is required for cognition.

How should we decide between these views? Conceptualism is sometimes motivated by appeal to the opening paragraphs of the Transcendental Logic in which Kant distinguishes sensibility from the understanding and notes their interrelation (A50-52/B74-76). But this will not suffice. Kant's claim in these passages is only that the unification of sensibility and the understanding is required for *cognition* [*Erkenntnis*] (A51/B76), and this falls importantly short of claiming that their co-operation is required for perception itself. Thus Kant's oft-quoted claim that thoughts without concepts are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind (A51/B75) need not be read as claiming that intuition without concepts do not amount to

perception, but rather that intuitions without concepts are incapable of yielding cognition.

One might attempt to draw a link from these passages to perception by noting that Kant held experience [*Erfahrung*] to be ‘a kind of cognition requiring the understanding’ (Bxvii), for if the understanding is active in cognition, and if experience is a kind of cognition, then the understanding is active in experience. But Kant’s use of the term ‘experience’ is not continuous with that of contemporary philosophers of perception and it is open for non-conceptualists to hold that at least some of Kant’s uses of the term pick out a form of judgement made on the basis of perceptual experience rather than the experience itself (e.g., B166, A176/B218, A189/B234). On this reading, those passages in which Kant claims that *Erfahrung* requires the active, combinatorial input of the understanding (A93/B126) show only that the understanding is required for a certain sort of empirical judgement or thought. There is nothing thus far which threatens the non-conceptualist claim about *perception*.

It is for this reason that the debate between conceptualist and non-conceptualists has largely focused on whether the application of concepts is required for intuition [*Anschauung*]. In contrast to his use of term ‘*Erfahrung*’, Kant tells us explicitly that visual perception is a form of objective empirical intuition [An AA07:154; cf. Prol. AA04:283] and that empirical intuition is the means by which we are perceptually presented with objects [A180/B222; Prol. AA04:283]. Thus if the application of concepts is required for *Anschauung* itself, this would seem to tell against non-conceptualism: the discursive activity of the understanding would be involved in the very perception of distinct particulars and not just required for their cognition in thought.

Are there any reasons to think that one can be presented with particulars in intuition absent any function of the understanding? Particular attention has been paid to a passage at A90/B123 in which Kant raises the possibility that ‘appearances could after all be so constituted that the understanding would not find them in accord with the conditions of its unity’, before concluding that ‘[a]ppearances would nonetheless offer objects to our intuition, for intuition by no means requires the functions of thinking’ (A90/B123; see [Hanna 2005, pp.249-250], [Allais 2009, pp.387-8]). Non-conceptualists take Kant to be raising a genuine metaphysical possibility here, one which is signalled by his claim that ‘objects can indeed

appear to us without necessarily having to be related to the functions of the understanding' (A89/B122). But an alternative is to take these passages as expressing a mere epistemic possibility which will later be shown not to be a genuine metaphysical possibility at all. And an epistemic possibility is compatible with the conceptualist reading.

Is the metaphysical reading supported by the fact that Kant uses the indicative 'can' [*können*] in the formulation at A89/B122, as opposed to the subjunctive 'could' [*könnten*] at A90/B123? ([Allais 2009, p.387 n.13].) The issue is not clear. Guyer and Wood note a passage in the *Reflexionnen* (1776-78, AA19:122-3, reprinted in [Kant 2005, p.222]) where Kant formulates an epistemic possibility without using the subjunctive: [Kant 1998, p.725 n.17]. And, more generally, the use of the indicative in the formulations at A89/B122 may be compatible with the three paragraphs which end that section (A89-92/B122-124) operating under an assumed 'for all we know' operator. We are not forced to treat the possibility expressed at A90/B123 as metaphysical.

More compelling, to my mind, are Kant's scattered writings about the nature of non-human animal (hereafter: animal) engagement with the world. Kant takes animals to be sensible beings that are incapable of discursive thought [An AA07:196]. Thus if one wants to make it plausible that Kant held that we can be perceptually presented with objects through sensibility alone, it is natural to consider Kant's views on animal consciousness. And there are a number of passages in which Kant appears to suggest that animals can be perceptually presented with objects through sensibility, despite the fact that they do not have the resources to conceptualise such objects. These passages have been taken to support a non-conceptualist reading of Kant [Allais 2009, pp.406-407].

Consider Kant's rejection, repeated at various places throughout his writings, of Descartes's view of animals as merely mechanical. In the Critique of the Power of Judgement Kant says that 'animals also act in accordance with representations (and are not as Descartes would have it, machines)' [C] AA05:464n; cf. MV AA28:449, FS AA02:330-331]. Kant takes this to mark a difference between his and Descartes's views on animal cognition and such acting is often explicated as involving perceptual acquaintance with particulars in the world. The most significant remark is found in Kant's discussion of the different levels of cognition in his lectures on logic where he says that '[a]nimals are acquainted with objects

too, but they do not cognize them' [JL AA09:64-5; see also VL AA24:846]. And while he denies that the ox has a distinct concept of its stall, he is clear that the animal perceives it [FS AA02:59]. (See [Naragon 1990] and [McLear 2011] for further discussion and textual evidence.) These passages suggest that animals can be perceptually aware of particulars in the environment without any involvement of the understanding. I take this to be a significant consideration in support of non-conceptualism.

However, Kant's comments on animal consciousness are varied and widely dispersed, and there are prominent passages central to the first Critique which appear to tell against the non-conceptualist reading. Let me highlight two from the Transcendental Analytic. The first concerns the role of synthesis in the representation of intuitions; the second concerns Kant's aims in the Transcendental Deduction of the Categories. In each case I will set out why the material has been thought to support a conceptualist reading before providing the non-conceptualist response. (See [Griffith 2012] for discussion of these passages.)

(1) *Synthesis*: the most telling passages in support of the idea that the understanding is involved in intuition are those in which Kant describes the role of synthesis in the representation of intuition (A98-A107, A117f.). Synthesis is the activity of 'putting different representations together with each other' (A77/B103); it is a 'necessary ingredient' (A120n) in the perception of objects because otherwise the manifold of intuition would be 'dispersed and separate in the mind' (A120); without synthesis we would have only 'unruly heaps' of representations [*Vorstellungen*] (A121). But 'the same function which gives unity to the various ideas in a judgement also gives unity to the mere synthesis of various ideas in an intuition' (A79-80/B105-106) and all combination is an act of the understanding (B130). Thus the perceptual presentation of particulars in intuition involves a discursive act of the understanding.

The non-conceptualist response to these passages is to deny that all synthesis is a result of the understanding: as Allais puts it, 'synthesizing is not the same as conceptualizing' [Allais 2009, p.396]. And though there are passages in which Kant presents synthesis as an act of the understanding, he most often ascribes its function to the imagination (A78/ B104, A118, A119, A120, A123, A124, B151), an intermediate faculty which has aspects of both sensibility and the understanding. Hanna

similarly takes synthesis to be a 'lower-level' spontaneous cognitive power which falls under the remit of sensibility: sensibility is 'only relatively passive, but not entirely passive... by virtue of its expressing a mental power for spontaneous synthesis, or mental processing.' [Hanna 2005, p.249]. The non-conceptualist claim is that the synthesis of intuitions can take place absent any function of the understanding and that the mere recognition of processing activity is not enough to show the involvement of the understanding in perception.

(2) *The Deduction*: Kant's stated aim in the Transcendental Deduction is to show that 'without their [the categories] presupposition nothing is possible as object of experience' (A93/B125). For 'the objective validity of the categories, as *a priori* concepts, rests on the fact that through them alone is experience possible (A93/B126). Traditional readings of the Transcendental Deduction have taken these passages to support the claim that the categories are conditions on the possibility of experience [McDowell 1998], [Abela 2002], a conclusion which has been taken as equivalent to the conceptualist claim that the application of concepts is required for perceptual experience. On this reading, demonstrating the objective validity of the categories requires showing how intuitions already involve the actualisation of categorial capacities [McDowell 1998, Lecture II].

Allais's response is to dispute this account of the Deduction. Drawing on the distinction between the conditions necessary to perceive a particular and those necessary to cognize an empirical object, she claims that the Deduction aims only to show that the categories are necessary conditions on the possibility of thinking about objects in a particular way (as persisting, causal unities) and not conditions on being presented with particulars in perception [Allais 2012, pp.41-46]. As we have already noted, Kant takes experience [*Erfahrung*] to be a kind of cognition involving the understanding. Thus when Kant says here that without the categories' presupposition nothing is possible as an object of *experience*, the non-conceptualist takes him to be making a claim about the necessity of the categories for *thinking* of objects in a particular way. On Allais's non-conceptualist reading, the Deduction aims only to show that the categories are conditions on a certain sort of thought.

How should we weigh these competing considerations? In what follows I will set out a reason for thinking that the understanding must be involved

in intuition for Kant, and therefore that the perceptual presentation of objects involves a discursive act of the understanding. The issue turns on a set of passages in §§20-26 of the B-Edition of the Transcendental Deduction of the Categories and the role that the argument of the Deduction is intended to play in Kant's philosophy. This will comprise my defence of the claim that the understanding is active in perceptual experience, contrary to the non-conceptualist reading, and that the application of concepts is therefore required for perceptual experience.

### 3. The B-Deduction

As has been well documented, the argument in the B-Deduction consists of two separate stages. In §§15-19, Kant focuses on the role that the categories play as intellectual conditions on empirical representation arguing that '[a]ll sensible intuitions stand under the categories, as conditions under which alone their manifold can come together in one consciousness' (B143). This is because 'the combination of the manifold in general can never come to us through the senses' (B129); such combination is possible only if 'all the manifold of intuition stand under conditions of the original synthetic unity of apperception' (B136); bringing representations under this synthetic unity requires a process of synthesis; and the rules which govern this synthesis are the categories (B143). 'Thus the manifold in a given intuition also necessarily stands under the categories' (B143).

In the second part of the B-Deduction, Kant shifts his focus from the categories as intellectual conditions on representation to the way in which objects 'come before our sense' (B160). The intention is to show that 'from the way in which the empirical intuition is given in sensibility that its unity can be none other than the one the category prescribes to the manifold of a given intuition' (B144-5). The main argument in support of this claim occurs primarily in §26 with reference to material outlined in §24 and Kant is explicit that this second step is needed to complete his proof (B144-145). (In what follows I draw on my reading of the Transcendental Deduction set out in [Gomes 2010].)

Kant's argument in these passages centres on the role that space and time play in our representation of empirical particulars. As the forms of human sensible intuition, space and time structure the manifold of appearance since such a manifold 'can only occur in accordance with this form'

(B161). But space and time are represented by us not only as forms of sensible intuition, but also as intuitions themselves, and therefore as possessing a unity of the manifold of empirical intuition within them. This unity ‘precedes all concepts, though to be sure it presupposes a synthesis, which does not belong to the senses but through which all concepts of space and time first become possible’ (B161n). This presupposed synthesis is one in which ‘the understanding determines the sensibility’ (B161n). So the unity of space and time is to be explained with reference to the effect of the understanding upon sensibility itself: the understanding plays a role in our representation of particulars as situated in space and time.

How should we understand these passages? The second part of the Deduction isolates a form of synthesis which is involved in some aspect of our representation of particulars. Since Kant is explicit that this form of synthesis is one which proceeds from the understanding – he calls it figurative or transcendental (B151) and describes it as ‘an effect of the understanding on sensibility’ (B152) – it is not open to the non-conceptualist to claim that this is a process of combination which doesn’t involve the understanding [Allais 2009, pp.396-397]: Kant states unambiguously that the transcendental synthesis described in §24 is one in which ‘the understanding determines the sensibility’ (B160n).

If such synthesis is governed by the understanding, is it required for the perceptual presentation of particulars in space and time or only for our cognition of objects? Allais claims the latter: she takes these passages in the second part of the B-Deduction to show only that there is a way of *thinking* about objects as spatial which requires the input of the understanding. As sensible beings, we are presented with objects as spatially arrayed through the form of our intuition and this enables the perceptual presentation of particulars distinct from us and situated about us in the environment. But there is also a way in which concept-using creatures such as ourselves think about space when representing the world as objective and to say that our representation of space is transformed by the understanding through a transcendental synthesis is to say only that there is a way of *thinking* about space which requires the activity of the understanding. This is compatible with the absence of the understanding in the perceptual presentation of particulars as spatially and temporally arrayed [Allais 2012, pp.47-48].

In order to see why this non-conceptualist reading of §§22-26 is inadequate, we need to fix upon the purpose of the Transcendental Deduction. On Allais's reading, Kant's aim in the Deduction is to show that the categories are necessary conditions on a certain sort of thought. This is a scaling back of the traditional import of the Deduction and Hannah Ginsborg complains that it 'threatens to trivialize Kant's central project in the Critique, or at least to diminish its interest and importance' [Ginsborg 2006, p.62]. This is unfair: as Allais points out it would be interesting if a certain way of thinking about objects – a way which Kant thinks to be both necessary and a priori – were required in order for us to ascribe properties to persisting objects in the world [Allais 2012, p.50]. So the retreat from identifying conditions on experience to identifying conditions on thought does not recede to triviality even if it remains a retrenchment of traditional ambitions.

What is more important, however, is that this scaling back prevents the Transcendental Deduction from providing a response to Humean concerns about the justified application of a priori concepts. (Hannah Ginsborg makes this point in her [2007, pp.69-70]; compare [Strawson 1966, pp.73-74, p.85].) As James Van Cleve has pointed out, there is a difference between showing that we must apply the categories and that the categories must apply: 'one may slip without noticing from one to the other, but between the two there is no small distance. It is the distance between our using a category and its being instantiated, or between making a judgement and it being true.' [Van Cleve 1999, p.89]. Humean scepticism about the justified application of a priori concepts will not be answered by showing only that we must apply the categories to experience, for that is compatible with the falsity of any such application. Kant needs the stronger claim: that the categories must apply.

Allais's reading of the Transcendental Deduction supports only the weaker claim: that we must make use of the categories in making judgements about the world as containing persisting, causal unities. But it is compatible with this conclusion that all the judgements we so make are false. And if this were the case, our thinking about the world would be subject to an unavoidable error: we would be compelled, of necessity, to think of the world as containing persisting substances, capable of existing unperceived and standing to each other in causal relations; but none of these judgements about the world would be accurate. Without the stronger conclusion that the categories must apply to experience, the Deduction

cannot be used to answer Humean scepticism about justification. The result is not simply a curtailment in the argument's ambitions but a neutering of its force.

Van Cleve's distinction offers us a way to read the argument which makes sense of the B-Deduction and its relation to Humean scepticism. (This is the reading offered in [Gomes 2010].) The first part of the proof, §§15-19, argues for the claim that we must apply the categories, whilst §§22-26 complete the argument by showing that the categories must apply. Kant's claim is that since the unity of space and time arises from a process of transcendental synthesis, that which is given in space and time stands under the unity of apperception. And in virtue of so standing, it is constituted so as to require synthesis in accordance with a priori rules of the understanding, namely the categories. It is the fact that both transcendental synthesis and categorial synthesis originate in the understanding which explains why the categories must apply.

Note that the fact that we must apply the categories is not independent of the fact that the categories must apply: if it were so independent, the result would be what Kant calls 'a kind of preformation-system of pure reason' (B168), a view on which it is only accidentally true that our application of the categories is objectively valid. On the reading offered here, the interdependence of our application of the categories and their required application consists in the fact that both transcendental and categorial synthesis originate in the understanding: it is the nature of the understanding which explains both why we must apply the categories and why the categories must apply. (Thanks to a referee for raising this point.)

This reading focuses on the way in which transcendental synthesis accounts for a certain aspect of our empirical intuitions: it thus claims a role for the understanding in the perceptual presentation of empirical particulars. If there were no other activity for the understanding than the application of concepts, then the case against conceptualism would be complete. But Kant describes the unity of space and time conferred by transcendental synthesis as preceding all concepts (B160n.), a remark which reaffirms the claims of the Aesthetic that concepts do not contribute towards our representation of space and time (A24-5/B39; A31-2/B47). This suggests that although §§22-26 make the case for the involvement of the understanding in the perceptual presentation of particulars, they don't yet show that perception involves the application of concepts.

This can seem incoherent: how can there be activity of the understanding which precedes all concepts when Kant introduces the understanding as the faculty for judging via concepts (A69/B94, A126)? This is a delicate topic. There is a more fundamental characterisation of the understanding in the B-Deduction as the capacity for apperception (B133-134n), and Kant elsewhere suggests that this capacity is more basic than the categories (A401). Béatrice Longuenesse and others have claimed that Kant is committed to a pre-discursive, and therefore pre-conceptual, function for the understanding and one way to understand this is as a non-discursive exercise of the capacity of apperception distinct from the discursive exercise at work in judging via concepts [Longuenesse 1998, p.211f; 2000; Gomes 2010, pp.130-131; Land 2011]. The prospect of the understanding operating on our representation of space and time other than through the application of concepts leaves open the possibility of a position which is non-conceptualist in letter if not in spirit: one on which the perceptual representation of particulars involves a pre-discursive act of the understanding without involving the application of concepts.

However, we can now return to §§15-19 to complete the case against the non-conceptualist. §§22-26 show that the categories must apply by isolating a role for the understanding in the perceptual presentation of particulars as situated in space and time. But if this argument is to work, it must be the case that the transcendental synthesis discussed in §§22-26 originates in the same understanding as the categorial synthesis discussed in §§15-19: only so will Kant have a guarantee that what is given in space and time is such as to be necessarily subject to the categories. Thus we must read the process of synthesis offered in the first part of the B-Deduction as originating in the understanding and proceeding according to the categories. The synthesis of the manifold of intuition takes place according to the categories, contrary to the non-conceptualist suggestion.

On this way of reading the Transcendental Deduction, §§15-19 show that we must synthesise the manifold of intuition in accordance with the categories and §§22-26 show that sensible intuition is constituted such that it must be synthesised in just this way. This is exactly how Kant presents the result of the first part of his proof in the summary at §20 where he concludes: 'the manifold in a given intuition also necessarily stands under the categories' (B143). I have suggested that we must take this at face value if Humean scepticism is to be forestalled: the categories are active, for Kant, in perceptual experience.

Is this consideration decisive? There are two caveats to be borne in mind. The first concerns Kant's views on animal consciousness. As mentioned above, there are grounds for thinking that Kant held that animals can be perceptually presented with empirical objects absent any function of the understanding. To the extent that one finds these grounds compelling – as I do – then an onus remains on conceptualist interpretations to explain how their account of human perceptual experience is compatible with the thought that non-human animals can be perceptually presented with objects absent the application of concepts. I won't attempt such an explanation here but it is worth noting that an interpretative debt remains to be discharged.

The second concerns the purpose of the Transcendental Deduction. In raising this objection to non-conceptualist readings of Kant, I have assumed that the role of the Deduction is to respond to Humean worries about our *justified* application of a priori concepts to experience. And one may contest this claim. There are other, more local, sources for the Deduction to which Allais's reading is responsive. In his comments on Kant's Inaugural Dissertation, Johann Heinrich Lambert accepts that knowledge 'arises out of two entirely different and, so to speak, *heterogenous* sources, so that what stems from the one source can never be derived from the other', but questions 'to what extent these two ways of knowing are so completely *separated* that they *never* come together' [C AA10:105]. Similarly Marcus Herz, in his Observations on Speculative Philosophy from 1771, asks how external things can agree with our intellectual representations [in Watkins 2009, p.299]. These challenges to Kant's pre-critical position raise the question of how it is that a priori concepts can be applied to experience, not whether they can ever be accurately applied so.

Allais's reading responds to the concerns of Lambert and Herz: it portrays Kant as concerned to show why it is that we must use a certain set of a priori concepts in making judgements about objects in the world. And one might hold that the justification of such application is accomplished elsewhere in the Critique. But if one thinks that the role of the Deduction is to combat Hume's problem [Prol. AA04:259-261] – or, perhaps more accurately, if one thinks that Hume's problem concerns not just our possession and application of a priori concepts but also our justified application of them – then the understanding must be involved in intuition and, in particular, the manifold of intuition must be synthesised

in accordance with the categories. This gives us reason to think that, for Kant, the categories need be employed in perceptual experience and therefore that the application of concepts is necessary for perceptual experience contrary to the non-conceptualist claim.

#### 4. Naïve Realism

What are the implications of this discussion for the question of whether Kant held a relational or representational theory of perceptual experience? The short answer is: not much. But in order to see why, it will be useful to set out some definitions.

Let the *phenomenal properties* of an experience be those in virtue of which there is something it is like to have an experience. The *phenomenal character* of an experience consists of its phenomenal properties. We type experiences by their phenomenal character: two experiences are of the same fundamental kind if and only if they have the same phenomenal character [Soteriou 2005, p.194]. *Relational* theories of perceptual experience are those on which the phenomenal properties of the experiences involved in perception essentially involve non-representational relations to objects. *Representational* theories of perceptual experience are those on which the phenomenal properties of perceptual experiences essentially involve representational properties.

One question about these definitions is where to place the account of perception defended by John McDowell [1994, 1998]. Relational theorists often cite him as a proponent of a representational theory of perceptual experience, on grounds that McDowell takes perception to have a certain sort of content [Brewer 2007]. McDowell disputes this characterisation: he takes his view to show that the proper account of the relational aspect of perception cannot do without representational notions and thus that relational views are compatible with perceptual experience having content. [McDowell 2013]. I won't pursue this issue here. Although McDowell's account of perception is interesting and important, the considerations to be outlined below hold even for those who understand the relational aspect of perception in wholly non-representational terms.

In a series of recent articles, Lucy Allais has made the case that there are affinities between Kant's account of the perceptual presentation of empirical particulars and contemporary relational accounts of perception.

She is reluctant, for fears of anachronism, to straightforwardly ascribe a relational theory of perceptual experience to Kant, but she nevertheless holds that one finds in Kant ‘some of the ideas which [relational] theories of perception are trying to capture’ [Allais 2011, p.380]. Let me state some of her considerations.

First, there is Kant’s notion of intuition. Allais thinks that we ‘cannot make sense of the Kantian notion of intuition’ without recognising the relational aspect of his account of perception [2011, p.381]. On Allais’s reading, intuitions are singular and immediate (A320/B377, A713/B741); they are object-dependent (Prol. AA04:281, B72); and their role is to give us objects in such a way that we can think about them (A23/B39, A239/B298). These considerations do not force upon us a relational reading of Kantian perception, but they can be easily captured on a view which takes intuitions to involve relations of acquaintance which immediately present empirical objects to consciousness in such a way that they can be the subjects of thoughts.

Second, there is the argument for transcendental idealism in the *Transcendental Aesthetic*. Many commentators have noted a gap in this argument: Kant moves from claims about our representation of space to conclusions about space itself. Allais argues that this gap disappears if Kantian intuitions involve a relational component [2010, pp. 58-62]. That is, ascribing to Kant a relational account of intuition explains why he took himself to be justified in moving from claims about our representation of space to conclusions about space itself.

Finally there is the *Refutation of Idealism*. Kant there takes himself to establish the reality of outer objects, those objects which Descartes thought doubtful, for ‘the consciousness of my own existence is at the same time an immediate consciousness of the existence of other things outside me’ (B276). This thought is echoed in some of the claims made by relational theorists [Gomes forthcoming]. And Allais claims that ‘although he [Kant] does not explicitly situate his view in terms of the theories of perception we discuss today, [in the *Refutation of Idealism*] he clearly commits himself to a key part of the direct realist or relational position.’ [2011, p.382].

My purpose here is not to evaluate these considerations but to consider what implications they have for the debate between conceptualist and non-

conceptualist interpretations. Allais appeals to such considerations in motivating her non-conceptualist reading [Allais 2009, pp.387-392] and it is common to find those who reject Allais's non-conceptualism *also* rejecting her case for a relational aspect to Kant's account of perception [Ginsborg 2007]. One might think, then, that a relational account of Kantian perception entails a non-conceptualist interpretation, and vice versa: that conceptualist interpretations require ascribing to Kant a non-relational account of experience. In what follows I will show that this is mistaken.

Why might one think that there is a link between the conceptualist–non-conceptualist debate and Kant's account of perception? I suggested in §1 that one might think that the reasons which support a conceptualist interpretation also support ascribing to Kant a representational account of perceptual experience. Let us formulate this line of thought by means of the following argument:

1. Intuitions involve acts of synthesis.
2. Acts of synthesis combine a manifold in accordance with rules.
3. If an act of synthesis is undertaken by the understanding, then the manifold is combined in accordance with concepts.
4. All acts of synthesis are undertaken by the understanding.
5. The manifold of intuition is combined in accordance with rules (from 1 and 2)
6. The manifold of intuition is combined in accordance with concepts (from 3, 4 and 5)
7. If the manifold of intuition is combined in accordance with concepts, then intuition represents the world *as* being a certain way.

For the purposes of this discussion, let us accept that if (7) is true, then perceptual experience, for Kant, involves representational properties. And I take (6) to be equivalent to the conceptualist claim discussed in §§2 and 3.

Non-conceptualists respond to this argument by rejecting (4): they hold that some acts of synthesis are not undertaken by the understanding. This allows them to reject both (6) and (7): they can deny both that the application of concepts is necessary for experience and that perception involves the presence of representational properties. I have provided some

reason above for thinking this rejection to be problematic. If this were the only way to take seriously the relational considerations voiced by Allais, we would be wise to dispute her motivations.

Conceptualists endorse (1) to (6). This allows them two options for accepting the relational considerations. First, they can reject (7). Or second, they can claim that (7) is itself compatible with ascribing to Kant a relational theory of perception. It is this second option which I will set out here.

To see that (7) is compatible with a relational theory of Kantian perception, we need to make some further distinctions. It is common in the philosophy of perception literature to distinguish *strong* and *weak* representational theories of perceptual experience. Strong representational theories hold that *all* of the phenomenal properties of perceptual experiences are representational properties. Weak representational theories hold that at least *some* of the phenomenal properties of perceptual experiences are representational properties. This latter position leaves open the possibility of perception possessing non-representational phenomenal properties. Such an option is familiar to us from discussions about whether experiences have qualia, since qualia are non-representational sensational phenomenal properties of experience, but weak representationalism itself is silent on the nature of the non-representational phenomenal properties that it allows.

An analogous distinction applies to relational theories of perception. Strong relational theories hold that *all* of the phenomenal properties of perceptual experience are non-representational relations; weak relational theories hold that at least *some* of the phenomenal properties of perceptual experiences are non-representational relations. Some naïve realists explicitly commit themselves to strong relational theories [Brewer 2007, p.89], but there are no grounds for thinking that all must do so. As Soteriou puts it,

those who appeal to non-representational properties in their account of the conscious character of experience need not deny that experiences have intentional contents with veridicality conditions... They might hold that the obtaining of the relevant psychological but non-representational relation is an element of the conscious character of successful perception. [Soteriou 2010, p.225]

Weak relational theories allow that there may be non-relational elements to the phenomenal character of perception.

Once we have made these distinctions, we can see that weak representational and weak relational theories are perfectly compatible: one can allow that perceptual experience has both representational and relational phenomenal properties. This is because ‘possession of any one phenomenal property does not exclude the possibility of having any of the others’ [Martin 1998, p.178 fn.16]. On such a mixed view, the phenomenal properties of perceptual experience involves both representational and relational elements. Thus a commitment to the presence of representational phenomenal properties does not require a rejection of relational phenomenal properties.

What are the implications for the argument above? The claim in (7) takes a stand on whether experience, for Kant, has representational properties. It thus commits Kant to some form of representational theory. But it is silent on the question of whether experience *also* has relational phenomenal properties. It is thus compatible with ascribing to Kant a weak relational theory.

How does this bear on the considerations appealed to by Allais? That will depend on whether the considerations appealed to support the claim that perceptual experience has nothing other than relational elements, or whether they support only the weaker claim that perceptual experience has, for Kant, at least *some* relational component. I take it to be clear that they only do the latter: so long as Kantian experience has some relational component, we can account for all the features that move Allais. And this means that one who *does* find such considerations suasive has grounds only to ascribe to Kant a weak relational theory of perception. And a weak relational theory is compatible with (7).

The result for conceptualist interpretations is that even if they are committed to the claim that perceptual experience has, for Kant, representational phenomenal properties, this is perfectly compatible with holding that such experience also has, for Kant, relational phenomenal properties. They are thus compatible with ascribing to Kant a weak relational theory.

Is conceptualism compatible with *strong* relational theories? That depends on the prospects for rejecting (7). I won't explore that option here, but it is worth noting that (7) is not without question. There are many activities which are conceptual in the sense of requiring the application of concepts, the outcome of which are not themselves conceptual or representational. (Think of building a car.) And it is not clear why combining the manifold of intuition in accordance with concepts requires intuition itself to possess representational properties, as opposed, say, to some other mental state. At the very least, more needs to be said about what is involved in (7) if we are to be confident that conceptualism is incompatible with a strong relational theory.

None of this speaks in favour of ascribing to Kant a relational account of perceptual experience. My intent has been simply to show that conceptualist interpretations need not take a stand on this issue. Consideration of the structure and aim of the Transcendental Deduction gives reason to reject non-conceptualism: Kant held that the application of concepts is necessary for the perceptual presentation of empirical particulars. But we can reject non-conceptualism whilst remaining neutral on how best to capture Kant's account of perceptual experience.<sup>1</sup>

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