

# A Peculiar Intuition: Kant's Conceptualist Account of Perception

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## Abstract

Both parties in the active philosophical debate concerning the conceptual character of perception trace their roots back to Kant's account of sensible intuition in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. This striking fact can be attributed to Kant's tendency both to assert and to deny the involvement of our conceptual capacities in sensible intuition. He appears to waver between these two positions in different passages, and can thus seem thoroughly confused on this issue. But this is not, in fact, the case, for, as I will argue, the appearance of contradiction in his account stems from the failure of some commentators to pay sufficient attention to Kant's developmental approach to philosophy. Although he begins by asserting the independence of intuition, Kant proceeds from this nonconceptualist starting point to reveal a deeper connection between intuitions and concepts. On this reading, Kant's seemingly conflicting claims are actually the result of a careful and deliberate strategy for gradually convincing his readers of the conceptual nature of perception.

“The finitude of knowledge directly demonstrates a peculiar inner dependency of thinking upon intuition, or conversely: a need for the determination of the latter by the former.”

Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*

## Introduction: Kant’s Contradictions

The work of Kant resists straightforward interpretation. One way this resistance manifests itself is in his apparent tendency to contradict what he has said before: in earlier chapters or sections, or sometimes even within a single passage. Kant’s writings are riddled with seemingly inconsistent claims on various topics. As his influential commentator and translator Norman Kemp Smith once noted, “... Kant flatly contradicts himself in almost every chapter; ... there is hardly a technical term which is not employed by him in a variety of different and conflicting senses. As a writer, he is the least exact of all the great thinkers.”<sup>1</sup>

In what follows, I examine a striking instance of this phenomenon, one that concerns a crucial topic in the *Critique of Pure Reason*: Kant’s account of sensible intuition. As we will see, Kant both asserts and denies the involvement of our conceptual capacities in intuition. He appears to waver between these two positions at different points in the text, and can thus seem thoroughly confused on the matter. In truth, however, Kant is not confused. I will argue that he appears to contradict himself only when we fail to pay sufficient attention to his developmental approach to philosophy. Although he begins by asserting the independence of intuition, Kant proceeds to reveal a deeper connection between intuitions and concepts. On my reading, these seemingly conflicting claims are actually the product of a well-crafted strategy for gradually convincing his readers of the conceptual character of intuition.

I begin with a brief overview of Kant’s account of intuition. Then, in section two, I examine several recent interpretations of Kantian intuition that deny the involvement of concepts. My criticism of these non-

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1 Kemp Smith, N. (2003 [1923]) *A Commentary to Kant’s Critique of Pure Reason* (London: Macmillan), p. xxix. Kemp Smith attributes this tendency, at least in part, to Kant’s sloppy methods of composition. More positively, he sees it as a reflection of Kant’s open-minded acknowledgement of the perplexities that stand in the way of simple solutions to philosophical problems. The latter suggestion is picked up on by Wilfrid Sellars, who writes: “Kant is fighting his way towards a clarity of structure which he never achieves, and which is in his thinking only as the oak is in the acorn.” (Sellars, W. (1992 [1968]) *Science and Metaphysics: Variations on Kantian Themes* (Atascadero: Ridgeview), §1, p. 2) While Sellars’ point surely holds in some cases, I hope to show that there is more clarity of structure in Kant’s account of intuition than first appears there.

conceptualist readings points the way to an alternative developmental approach, which I present in section three. In section four I apply this general interpretive strategy to the specific topic of intuition, focusing, in particular, on Kant's argument in §26 of the B-Deduction. Finally, in section five, I consider some broader implications of this conceptualist account of intuition.

## I. The Place of Intuition in Kant's Account of Experience

Kantian intuition is a peculiar thing. It plays a central but contested role in his broader account of the nature of experience. For Kant, our ability to have experience and knowledge of the world can be characterized in terms of two distinct, but interrelated cognitive capacities: the faculties of sensibility and understanding. Through sensibility, we receive intuitions: representations of particular objects. For example, in an everyday act of perception<sup>2</sup> I might receive a sensible intuition of a particular round, red apple. Through understanding, we produce concepts: general representations that can figure in logical judgments. So, I might form the general concept of 'roundness' or 'redness,' which I can use in judgments concerning many different objects. One of Kant's main tasks in the first *Critique* is to identify the correct relationship between sensibility and understanding.<sup>3</sup> He will argue that knowledge is possible only through their cooperation. This point is captured in a well-known remark by Kant:

Without sensibility no object would be given to us, and without understanding none would be thought. Thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind .... The understanding is not capable of intuiting anything, and the senses are not capable of thinking anything. Only from their unification can cognition arise. (A51/B75)

Experience, he claims, always involves sensibility and understanding working together.

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2 Here and elsewhere, I employ the term 'perception' somewhat loosely to refer to acts of receiving sensible content (or to the content received by such acts). For Kant, the term has a slightly different meaning: "representation with consciousness" (A320/B376). This is broader than what I have in mind, for it includes not just sensible intuitions, but also sensations and concepts. Perception, in Kant's sense, does not play a major role in my discussion. However, the term figures prominently in the contemporary debate to which I am relating Kant's account of intuition, and this is how I use it.

3 This is one way of characterizing the task of the Transcendental Deduction. Here Kant argues that the categories, the fundamental concepts of understanding, apply to all objects that can possibly be given to us in sensible intuition. As he puts it, the categories "... must be recognized as *a priori* conditions of the possibility of experience (whether of the intuition that is encountered in them, or of the thinking)." (A94/B126) All parenthetical references are to Kant, I. (1997) *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. and eds. P. Guyer and A. Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press). "A" and "B" refer to the pagination of the first and second German editions, respectively. For other work by Kant, I provide references to both the German *Akademie* edition and an English translation.

Though the general outline of Kant's project is reasonably clear, his interpreters continue to dispute the specific nature of this interdependent relationship between sensibility and understanding. The notion of intuition is often a focus of these disputes, for intuition occupies a curiously unstable position within Kant's cognitive topography. Indeed, Kant's account of intuition can appear hopelessly confused, for at different times he seems both to assert and to deny the dependence of intuition on understanding.

These opposing statements concerning intuition appear frequently in the first *Critique*. For example, Kant states: "Objects are therefore given to us by means of sensibility, and it alone affords us intuitions; but they are *thought* through the understanding, and from it arise concepts." (A19/B33) In the same vein, he later writes: "That representation that can be given prior to all thinking is called *intuition*." (B132)<sup>4</sup> On a related point, Kant sometimes claims that an intuition could amount to cognition or knowledge apart from any contribution by understanding. For example, in his taxonomy of representations (the *Stufenleiter*), he states that "... an objective perception is a *cognition*, ..." and then adds that an objective perception "... is either an *intuition* or a *concept* ..." (A320/B376-7).<sup>5</sup> This remark suggests that an intuition is, even by itself, a cognition.

In the passages quoted above, Kant identifies intuition as a cognition given independently of understanding. Elsewhere in the *Critique*, however, Kant seems to take the opposing view. For example, he declares: "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 understanding." (A79/B104-5) Later he adds that "... all combination, whether we are conscious of it or not, whether it is a combination of the manifold of intuition or of several concepts, ... is an action of the understanding, which we would designate with the general title synthesis ..." (B129-30).<sup>6</sup> In these passages Kant now asserts that our faculty of understanding is at work in acts of sensible intuition. Moreover, Kant rejects the claim that intuition could amount to cognition by itself, for he insists that "... neither con-

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4 Further examples can be found at A51/B75 and A89/B122.

5 Kant makes the same point in the *Jäsche* and *Vienna* logics (Kant, I. (1992) *Lectures on Logic*, ed. J. M. Young (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), pp. 589 [Ak. 9:91] and 265-6 [Ak. 24:805-6]).

6 The phrase "manifold of intuition" is ambiguous, in that it could mean either the manifold contained in a single intuition or the manifold of different intuitions that are combined in experience. I take Kant to be making the former point: that understanding is responsible even for the unity of a single intuition. This point is made explicitly in the previously quoted passage. See also §26 of the B-Deduction, where Kant again identifies the role of understanding in the "composition of the manifold in an empirical intuition" (B160).

cepts without intuition corresponding to them in some way nor intuition without concepts can yield a cognition.” (A50/B74)<sup>7</sup>

This brief survey of passages is not promising. Kant seems to be taking both sides of the debate, first asserting the independence of intuition and then insisting that it relies essentially on understanding. These claims concerning the role of understanding in sensible intuition are not casual discrepancies: they reflect a deep philosophical tension in his system, one that arises from the distinctive role intuition plays in his account of experience. For Kant, it is through intuition that we are given objects. This point can be put in two ways. In positive terms, intuitions supply the sensible content that gives significance to our thoughts and makes knowledge of the world possible. They supply the material with which understanding works in forming beliefs and judgments. In negative terms, intuitions set a limit on the legitimate activity of understanding. That is, in giving objects they provide a constraint on our conceptual activity, in that our conceptual beliefs are assessed based on their fit with these intuited objects. Absent this constraint, untethered reason can make no progress. As Kant puts it:

The light dove, in free flight cutting through the air the resistance of which it feels, could get the idea that it could do even better in airless space. Likewise, Plato abandoned the world of the senses because it set such narrow limits for the understanding, and dared to go beyond it on the wings of the ideas, in the empty space of pure understanding. He did not that he made no headway by his efforts, for he had no resistance, no support, as it were, by which he could stiffen himself, and to which he could apply his powers unorder to put his understanding into motion. (A5/B9)

This, of course, is the point of the second half of the *Critique*, the Dialectic. There Kant diagnoses the various ways in which we are led into metaphysical conundrums when we pursue knowledge unconstrained by sensible intuition.<sup>8</sup>

In playing this role, however, intuition faces two seemingly opposed demands. On the one hand, if intuition is to constrain thought then it should be outside it, serving as an external check on what beliefs should count as knowledge. Here, the fear is of a problematic idealism, in which our thoughts would lose their connection to the external world. Intuition is meant to secure this connection by providing objects to us. Kant has this role in mind when he emphasizes the independence of intuition from the activity of understanding.

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<sup>7</sup> See also A51/B75 (quoted earlier in section one) and A258.

<sup>8</sup> See A63/B87-8.

On the other hand, intuitions must have the appropriate normative structure to serve as reasons in support of our beliefs. In this case, the fear is that we will fall into what Wilfrid Sellars calls the “myth of the given”: demanding that intuition contribute to knowledge, while denying it the conceptual features that are required of this role. Sellars and, more recently, John McDowell have argued that avoiding this myth is a central concern of the first *Critique*.<sup>9</sup> Indeed, there are a number of passages that, I believe, express Kant’s wish to avoid a problematic appeal to the Given. In some of them, he considers the possibility of our sensible intuitions being so different in character from our conceptual thoughts as to make them unfit to serve as material for our conceptual activity, raising the worry of a fundamental disconnect between sensibility and understanding. For example, he writes:

For appearances could after all be so constituted that the understanding would not find them in accord with the conditions of its unity, and everything would then be in such confusion that, e.g., in the succession of appearances nothing would offer itself that would furnish a rule of synthesis and thus correspond to the concept of cause and effect, so that this concept would therefore be entirely empty, nugatory, and without significance.” (A90/B122-3)<sup>10</sup>

The same issue comes up in Kant’s discussion of the necessary “affinity” of the sensible manifold for the law-like unity demanded by understanding (e.g., A113, A122-3) and in his concern to establish “... the conditions under which objects in harmony with those concepts [i.e., the categories] can be given ...” (A136/B176).<sup>11</sup> This demand for intuition to have a rational structure is met when Kant states the dependence of intuition on understanding.

Unfortunately, these two demands seem to oppose one another, leaving us in a dilemma. In order to play its role of providing content for our knowledge of the world, it appears that intuition must be both within and outside the conceptual sphere of understanding. It is this philosophical dilemma that lies at the root of Kant’s seemingly contradictory account of intuition.<sup>12</sup>

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9 See: Sellars, W. (1997 [1956]) *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press); and McDowell, J. (2009) “Avoiding the Myth of the Given,” in *Having the World in View: Essays on Kant, Hegel, and Sellars* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press), pp. 256-274.

10 See also: A112 and A156/B195.

11 See also: Kant, I. (2002) “On a Discovery Whereby Any New Critique of Pure Reason is to Be Made Superfluous by an Older One,” in *Theoretical Philosophy after 1781*, eds. H. Allison and P. Heath (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press), p. 335 [Ak. 8:249].

12 In examining the role of intuition in giving us objects, I have focused on the related ideas of constraining and supplying content for thought. In doing so, I don’t mean to deny that there are other valid ways of expressing its role. For example, intuition gives us individuated particulars, as distinct from the generality of concepts. I take it that

Kant's conflicting claims regarding intuition have led to two distinct interpretations in the secondary literature. Those who favor the first set of claims see Kant as offering a *nonconceptualist* account of intuition. On this reading, the understanding plays no role in the initial activity of sensibility, and thus the intuitions that we are immediately given in sensibility lack conceptual structure.<sup>13</sup> I will focus on three recent defenders of the nonconceptualist interpretation: Lucy Allais, Lorne Falkenstein, and Robert Hanna.<sup>14</sup> Other interpreters, who prefer the second set of claims, see Kant as a *conceptualist* regarding intuition, insisting that our conceptual capacities must already be at work in the reception of sensible content. Two prominent contemporary defenders of a conceptualist view of Kantian intuition are Paul Abela and John McDowell.<sup>15</sup> The presence in the *Critique* of these conflicting claims, which support two opposing interpretations of Kant on intuition, has led to a striking situation. As Hanna notes, "Kant's theory of intuition is the hidden historical origin of both sides of the debate between conceptualists and non-conceptualists."<sup>16</sup> We can thus hope

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these ways of thinking about intuition are closely related, although I will not pursue the connection here.

- 13 I have characterized this reading in two ways, to reflect a distinction drawn in contemporary debates between *content* and *state* conceptualism. In my view, either formulation is adequate to express the philosophical tension in Kant's thought. On the significance of the content-state distinction, see Bermúdez, J. (2009) "The Distinction Between Conceptual and Nonconceptual Content," in *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Mind*, eds. B. McLaughlin, A. Beckermann, and S. Walter (Oxford: Oxford University Press), pp. 459-461.
- 14 See: Allais, L. (2009) "Kant, Non-conceptual Content and the Representation of Space", *The Journal of the History of Philosophy* 47(3), pp. 383-413; Falkenstein, L. (1995) *Kant's Intuitionism: A Commentary on the Transcendental Aesthetic [Intuitionism]* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press); and Hanna, R. (2006) *Kant, Science, and Human Nature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press). Although my discussion of these authors will focus on areas of disagreement, I hope it is evident how much I have benefited from engaging with their work. An important variation on their non-conceptualist approach can be found in the work of Henry E. Allison. He identifies a "proto-conceptual" unity of intuition, one that arises independently of understanding and is then reproduced by the categories in thought. See Allison, H. (2004) *Kant's Transcendental Idealism: An Interpretation and Defense* [revised and enlarged edition] (New Haven: Yale University Press), p. 188. I consider Allison's reading more directly in a forthcoming piece, "Rational Experience: Confronting Skepticism in Kant's Deduction of the Categories."
- 15 See: Abela, P. (2002) *Kant's Empirical Realism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press); and McDowell, J. (1998) "Having the World in View: Sellars, Kant, and Intentionality", *The Journal of Philosophy* 95(9), pp. 431-91. These are the two conceptualist readings of Kant that are closest to my own view. Although we share the same basic position concerning the role of the categories in sensible intuition, my interpretation differs in two important respects. First, we differ in our view of the details of Kant's argument for this position, especially the argument in §26 of the B-Deduction that I discuss in section four. Second, as will become evident, my reading is distinct in emphasizing Kant's strategy of leading the reader only gradually to his conceptualist standpoint. There are several other conceptualist readings of Kant in the recent literature that are less closely related to my interpretation. Of these, two especially valuable articles are: Ginsborg, H. (2008) "Was Kant a Nonconceptualist?", *Philosophical Studies* 137(1), pp. 65-77; and Engstrom, S. (2006) "Understanding and Sensibility", *Inquiry* 49(1), pp. 2-25.
- 16 Hanna, *Human Nature*, pp. 90-1.

that adjudicating the debate over how to read Kant on intuition can also contribute to the larger philosophical debate over the conceptual character of perception.<sup>17</sup>

To be clear, I do not claim to be a neutral adjudicator of this dispute, for I believe that our immediate sensible access to the world must be conceptual in character. What I hope to show is that Kant too is best read as a conceptualist regarding intuition. Moreover, I will argue that such a reading allows us to explain the apparent contradictions in his account, revealing them to be the product not of confusion, but rather of a deliberate strategy of gradually revealing the role of understanding in intuition.

Of course, defenders of both the conceptualist and nonconceptualist readings of Kantian intuition are well aware that each side finds some textual support in the *Critique*. Thus a lot of interpretive effort has been devoted to explaining (or explaining away) those passages that seem to contradict the preferred reading. In the following section, I examine how some defenders of the nonconceptualist reading have dealt with these problematic passages. The lessons learned will point us toward a different approach, which I present in section three.

## II. Nonconceptualist Interpretive Strategies

Turning to some recent nonconceptualist interpretations of Kant, we find two prominent strategies for addressing those passages that seem to support the opposing conceptualist reading. First, interpreters often attempt to distinguish different senses of certain key terms in order to avoid a contradiction. A second strategy involves downplaying the scope or significance of problematic passages. I will consider each of these tactics in turn.

On the first strategy, interpreters attribute the appearance of contradiction in Kant's account to his failure to mark important distinctions in his use of key terms. So, when Kant says that mere intuition both is

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17 Following Kant, I am focusing on the role in intuition of a special set of concepts: the categories. As I will show, a strong case can be made that Kant believes the categories are already at work in our immediate intuition of sensible objects. It is less clear whether he sees empirical concepts as also being an immediate part of sensible perception. In fact, I believe that the general framework Kant sets out in establishing this role for the categories can be usefully employed in explaining the role of empirical concepts in perception, but I am not defending this broader claim here. On empirical concepts in Kant, see: Ginsborg, H. (2006) "Empirical Concepts and the Content of Experience," *European Journal of Philosophy* 14(3), pp. 349-372; and chapter four of Pippin, R. (1982) *Kant's Theory of Form: An Essay on the Critique of Pure Reason* (New Haven: Yale University Press).

and is not a cognition, a number of commentators have suggested that Kant is actually using broader and narrower senses of the term ‘cognition.’ Hanna, for instance, writes:

We have already seen how cognitions in general are objective conscious representations, and that both concepts and intuitions are cognitions. In the B edition of the first *Critique* however Kant also highlights a much narrower notion of ‘cognition’ that means *objectively valid judgment* (CPR Bxxvi n., B146), and this is in fact how he is using it in the famous texts at A50-1/B74-6.<sup>18</sup>

For Hanna, cognition, construed broadly, would include any mental representation that is appropriately objective in character. When considered more narrowly, however, as a subset of cognition in general, it includes only those representations that are produced by an explicit act of judgment.

Hanna’s distinction would be effective in resolving Kant’s apparently contradictory statements. When Kant denies that intuition by itself amounts to cognition, Hanna sees him as meaning that intuition is not cognition narrowly-defined, since it is not the product of judgment. If this is right, then there would be no inconsistency when Kant claims elsewhere that intuition is a cognition, for there Kant means only that intuition is objective, and thus a cognition merely in the broader sense. Hanna’s manner of resolving the contradiction is meant to provide support for a nonconceptualist reading of Kant. By identifying intuition as a cognition only in the broader sense, Kant would be denying that the conceptual activity of judgment plays any role in intuition.<sup>19</sup>

While Hanna’s distinction would resolve the issue, his proposal faces two problems. First, Kant never explicitly makes this distinction between two senses of cognition. If he does have such a distinction in mind, it is striking that he fails to draw attention to it.<sup>20</sup> Naturally, it remains possible that Kant is relying on Hanna’s distinction without explicitly drawing it. That said, absent direct textual evidence the distinction derives much of its plausibility from its fit with the nonconceptualist reading of Kant, and thus cannot provide independent support for this reading.

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18 Hanna, *Human Nature*, p. 98. In the previous section I quoted a portion of the text to which Hanna is here referring.

19 Allais (“Non-conceptual Content,” pp. 392-3) endorses this strategy, as it is presented in Hanna.

20 Hanna cites two passages in support of his distinction: B146 and a note at Bxxvi. However, these passages mark a distinction between cognition and mere thought (that is, something that is not cognition at all), rather than the distinction we are looking for, between narrow and broad senses of cognition. I have been unable to find any examples of the latter distinction in Kant’s work.

There is a further problem with this proposal, for, once we begin to distinguish different senses of Kant's key terms, it becomes difficult to stop doing so. Allais, for example, addresses a passage from Kant that seems to support a conceptualist view of space by again distinguishing two senses of 'space.' When Kant claims that understanding must produce the unity in our representation of space, she writes:

... for this reading to be consistent with Kant's fundamental duality of sensibility and understanding, it must be that there is some aspect of our representation of space which is not dependent on this .... We can allow that there are two 'levels' of our representation of space: first, the ordering representation, the form of outer sense, which enables us to be presented with empirical particulars as uniquely located in an oriented and egocentrically-centred three-dimensional framework, and second, the representation of a unified objective space as the object of study of geometry, which results from the first level being brought under the transcendental unity of apperception.<sup>21</sup>

That is, Allais takes Kant to be claiming that we have a basic representation of space, one prior to any activity of understanding, and then a further representation of space that reflects the activity of understanding. Once again, this is a distinction that Kant never explicitly draws in the text. Moreover, this unmarked distinction leads Allais to draw yet another: this time between two senses of representing a particular (one preconceptual, the other conceptual).<sup>22</sup> In general, this proposal encourages a proliferation of distinct senses of terms on which Kant is said to be equivocating. As one is forced to impose more of these unmarked distinctions on Kant's text, the interpretation becomes less plausible.

We find an important source for this nonconceptualist approach in Sellars' *Science and Metaphysics*. Sellars also identifies an ambiguity in Kant's account of intuition, charging that Kant fails to distinguish between intuition as a preconceptual manifold (what Hanna and Allais might call cognition in the broad sense) and intuition as the representation of an individual (narrow cognition).<sup>23</sup> Sellars recognizes the implications of drawing this distinction, seeing that it requires drawing a similar distinction in our notions of space. As he puts it:

... the distinction we have been drawing between the impressions of sheer receptivity and the intuitions of the productive imagination must be paralleled by a corresponding distinction between two radically different senses of spatial terms, in one of which we can speak of *impres-*

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21 Allais, "Non-conceptual Content," p. 404.

22 Allais, "Non-conceptual Content," p. 405.

23 Sellars, *Science and Metaphysics*, §10, p. 4 and §§17-18, p. 7.

sions as having a spatial form, while in the other we can speak of *the objects of intuition* as having a spatial form.<sup>24</sup>

But Sellars is also acutely aware of the difficulties this strategy creates for Kant. Supporters of the nonconceptualist reading often point to the Aesthetic as the place in the *Critique* where Kant defends intuition as a cognition, broadly construed. Sellars, however, recognizes that, even in the Aesthetic, Kant already treats intuitions (and space and time) as belonging within the conceptual sphere. As he notes:

... the characteristics of the representations of receptivity as such, which is what should *properly* be meant by the forms of sensibility, are never adequately discussed, and the so-called forms of sensibility become ever more clearly, as the argument of the *Critique* proceeds, forms of conceptual representations.<sup>25</sup>

In adopting the nonconceptualist strategy of distinguishing broader and narrower senses of Kant's key terms, Sellars correctly identifies a problem with this reading of Kantian intuition, for nowhere in the *Critique* does Kant offer a distinct account of intuition as a cognition in the broader and supposedly preconceptual sense.<sup>26</sup> Sellars, who endorses his own version of a nonconceptualist account of intuition, sees this as a problem for Kant. We can also see it, however, as a problem for the nonconceptualist reading of Kant.

I have identified some issues that arise for the first strategy of distinguishing the senses of key terms. Another common approach is to downplay the scope or significance of problematic passages. This second strategy is frequently employed to explain Kant's remarks on the blindness of mere intuition. As we saw earlier, Kant insists that "intuitions without concepts are blind" (A51/B75), thereby suggesting that intuitions could have no cognitive value without the involvement of understanding. Responding to this passage, a number of nonconceptualist interpreters have argued that the blindness of mere intuition is not as complete as it sounds. Allais, for example, writes:

... while the metaphorical term 'blind' on its own might suggest something that is in no sense representational, given Kant's *definition* of intuition, intuitional blindness *cannot* mean that intuitions are not *singular representations* because Kant *defines* intuitions as immediate singular representations."<sup>27</sup>

Similarly, Hanna states that:

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24 Sellars, *Science and Metaphysics*, §20, p. 8. See also §74, p. 29.

25 Sellars, *Science and Metaphysics*, §77, p. 30. See also §§19-20, pp. 7-8 and §75, p. 29.

26 There is a helpful discussion of Sellars on this point in McDowell, "Having the World in View," pp. 452-7.

27 Allais, "Non-conceptual Content," p. 393.

... 'blind intuition' for Kant does not mean either 'bogus intuition' or 'meaningless intuition': rather it means objectively valid non-conceptual intuition. So Kant's term-of-art 'blind intuition' no more implies the denial of intuitional cognition than our contemporary psychological term-of-art 'blindsight' implies the denial of visual cognition ....<sup>28</sup>

On this second strategy, when Kant calls mere intuition blind, he is not stating that such an intuition would be totally empty of cognitive content. Rather, it can still provide a kind of sensible content prior to the activity of understanding, even if this content is, in some respect, limited.

As with the earlier strategy, this tactic would succeed in resolving the contradictions in the text, while supporting a nonconceptualist reading of intuition. It faces a serious problem, however, for passages elsewhere in the *Critique* strongly suggest that the blindness of mere intuition really is total. For example, Kant calls the Transcendental Analytic, the part of the *Critique* in which he defends the necessary role of understanding, "... a logic of truth. For no cognition can contradict it without at the same time *losing all content*, i.e., all relation to any object, hence all truth." (A62-3/B87, my emphasis) And later, in the Transcendental Deduction itself, he states: "The synthetic unity of consciousness is therefore an objective condition of all cognition, not merely something I myself need in order to cognize an object but rather something under which every intuition must stand in order to become an object for me..." (B138).<sup>29</sup> Passages such as these are less amenable to the down-playing strategy. We might question what Kant means in invoking the metaphor of blindness, but here the related threats of "losing all content" or of no longer having objects through intuition are direct and unequivocal, making it difficult to deny that, for Kant, understanding must be involved in sensible intuition.

### III. The Developmental Approach

I have identified problems with the strategies employed by nonconceptualist interpreters of Kant in addressing passages that seem to support a conceptualist reading. To arrive at a convincing account of intui-

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28 Hanna, *Human Nature*, p. 99. On the same point, see Falkenstein, *Intuitionism*, pp. 59 and 376 en. 57. Falkenstein offers an extraordinary psychological explanation of Kant's tendency to make claims that seem to contradict his ultimate position, noting that: "Kant was not the sort of person who had the intellectual courage to face up to a dilemma and reject one alternative in favor of the other. Instead, when he felt himself pulled in opposite directions by conflicting imperatives, his preference was to try to work out some way of satisfying both." (p. 19)

29 Kant makes a similar point in the A-Deduction: "All intuitions are nothing to us and do not in the *least concern us* if they cannot be taken up into consciousness [that is, into the conceptual activity of understanding], whether they influence it directly or indirectly, and through this alone is cognition possible." (A116, my emphasis)

tion, we need to find a better explanation for how these seemingly contradictory passages fit together. We can begin to see what such an explanation might look like by focusing on a key feature of the above strategies: namely, the appeal to initial definitions of terms. Recall, for instance, how Allais downplays Kant's claim that mere intuition would be blind. She responds that this blindness cannot be so total as to prevent it from being able to represent a particular, for, as she notes, "Kant *defines* intuitions as immediate singular representations."<sup>30</sup> Falkenstein takes the same methodological approach, appealing to Kant's initial definition of terms to justify his decision to downplay the significance of later claims that appear at odds with these definitions. In fact, he adopts as a core interpretive principle the view that one should treat initial definitions as canonical.<sup>31</sup>

It is important to see that the approach Allais and Falkenstein adopt is at odds with Kant's own position on the role of definitions in philosophy. In the Doctrine of Method, at the end of the *Critique*, he distinguishes the methods of philosophy and mathematics, noting that:

... in philosophy one must not imitate mathematics in putting the definitions first, unless perhaps as a mere experiment. For since they are analyses of given concepts, these concepts, though perhaps only still confused, come first, and the incomplete exposition precedes the complete one, so that we can often infer much from some marks that we have drawn from an as yet uncompleted analysis before we have arrived at a complete exposition, i.e., at a definition; in a word, it follows that in philosophy the definition, as distinctness made precise, must conclude rather than begin the work. (A730/B758)

Contemporary philosophers often start by defining their terms, so Kant's tendency to begin using key concepts without fully explaining what he means by them can be disconcerting. For Kant, however, this is a deliberate procedure. He believes that philosophers must enter their inquiries with only a confused and partial understanding of their terms. It is only by doing philosophy that we achieve full clarity as to what they mean. For Kant, a definition is a philosophical accomplishment, not a starting point.<sup>32</sup>

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30 Allais, "Non-conceptual Content," p. 393.

31 Falkenstein, *Intuitionism*, p. 18. This is a general point about Falkenstein's treatment of Kantian definitions. On the specific definition of intuition, he prefers to consider it in terms of immediacy, rather than singularity, concluding that the latter criterion comes into conflict with fundamental Kantian beliefs. See Falkenstein, *Intuitionism*, pp. 70-71.

32 On the role of definitions in philosophy for Kant, see: Beck, L. W. (1956) "Kant's Theory of Definition," *Philosophical Review*, 65, pp. 179-191; and Carson, E. (2006) "Locke and Kant on Mathematical Knowledge," in *Intuition and the Axiomatic Method*, eds. E. Carson and R. Huber (Dordrecht, Springer), pp. 3-19.

Allais, in claiming that the initial characterization of intuition as an immediate singular representation is the definitive statement on the topic, breaks with Kant's own philosophical method. His remarks on definitions in philosophy point us toward a different, developmental approach. We should see the *Critique* as the gradual unfolding or working out of a philosophical position, and this means that his claim that mere intuition would be blind (or other claims like it) cannot be dismissed just because it goes against his initial "definition" of the term. After all, such a claim may reflect a significant refinement in our comprehension of the nature of intuition. To be clear, I do not mean to suggest that Kant simply rejects his initial characterization of intuition as a singular representation, for he continues to refer to the singularity of intuitions later in the *Critique* and in subsequent works. The mistake I am identifying lies in taking this initial description to have a kind of finality, one that precludes any further specification of the capacities involved in having a singular, immediate representation of an object.

There is extensive textual support for my suggestion that Kant is employing a developmental approach in the *Critique*. For instance, in characterizing his own transcendental philosophy, he emphasizes that:

In its transcendental efforts, therefore, reason cannot look ahead so confidently, as if the path on which it has traveled leads quite directly to the goal, and it must not count so boldly on the premises that ground it as if it were unnecessary for it frequently to look back and consider whether there might not be errors in the progress of its inferences to be discovered that were overlooked in its principles and that make it necessary either to determine them further or else to alter them entirely. (A735-6/B763-4)

Here, he clearly has a developmental method in mind. Now, one might object that Kant, in characterizing philosophy in this way, refers only to the initial investigations of the philosopher, not the published results of these investigations. But, in fact, we find numerous instances in the *Critique* where Kant employs a developmental approach. Consider, for example, his gradual refinement of the notion of understanding. As he summarizes:

We have above explained the *understanding* in various ways—through a spontaneity of cognition (in contrast to the receptivity of the sensibility), through a faculty for thinking, or a faculty of concepts, or also of judgments—which explanations, if one looks at them properly, come down to the same thing. Now we can characterize it as the *faculty of rules*. This designation is more fruitful, and comes closer to its essence. (A126)

It is only in working through the argument of the Deduction that Kant leads the reader to a full grasp of the nature of this faculty.<sup>33</sup>

I have identified a general developmental approach that Kant practices in the *Critique*, and I have provided several illustrations of his use of this strategy. In the next section I will show that he adopts the same method in his account of intuition. Before turning to the details of this account, however, it will be helpful to consider why Kant favors this complicated and potentially confusing mode of presentation. Here we should recall Kant's concern with how strange and unintuitive his new philosophical system would appear to his readers. This is evident in Kant's remarks likening the *Critique* to a radical Copernican revolution in thought.<sup>34</sup> Kant's developmental approach is meant to ease our transition to the critical philosophy. He begins with the commonsense distinction between perceiving an object and thinking of it. Based on this distinction, he offers separate treatments of our passive faculty of sensibility (which receives intuitions) and our active faculty of understanding (which produces concepts). With this basic framework in place, Kant proceeds to complicate the matter, revealing an interdependency between sensibility and understanding that undermines their initial separate treatments. If this is correct, then Kant's opposing claims concerning intuition should be seen not as contradictions standing in need of resolution, but, rather, as earlier and later moments in a coherent process of philosophical inquiry.<sup>35</sup> Having outlined this general interpretive model, we can now consider its specific application to Kant's theory of intuition.<sup>36</sup>

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33 We find a similar developmental approach in Kant's account, in the A-Deduction, of a threefold synthesis by which we cognize objects of experience. There he provides successively deeper explanations of the kind of synthesis required to perceive objects. He begins by showing our need to collect together the manifold content of intuition—to *apprehend* it. He then shows that our capacity to do this presupposes a synthesis of *reproduction*, by which we recall the temporally successive moments of perception. This synthesis, in turn, presupposes a synthesis of *recognition*, by which we see the reproduced and apprehended manifold as belonging together under the categories. Thus, what he initially presents as a simple act of collecting together a sensible manifold is gradually revealed to involve more complex intellectual capacities. It is by refining this account of synthesis that Kant reveals the necessary role of the categories in experience.

34 As Kant notes, Newtonian science "... would have remained forever undiscovered if Copernicus had not ventured, in a manner contradictory to the senses yet true, to seek for the observed movements not in the objects of the heavens but in their observer." (Bxxii n.) Kant frequently expresses his concern that readers will find his views strange and counter-intuitive. For example, he writes: "That nature should direct itself according to our subjective ground of apperception, indeed in regard to its lawfulness even depend on this, may well sound quite contradictory and strange." (A113-14) I examine passages such as this one (and his attempt to resolve these anticipated concerns) in Bauer, N. (2010) "Kant's Subjective Deduction," *British Journal for the History of Philosophy*, 18(3), pp. 433-460.

35 We find additional evidence for the claim that Kant is relying upon a developmental method in his correspondence

## IV. Kant's Developmental Account of Intuition

Kant's account of intuition in the *Critique* exemplifies the developmental method outlined above, for he refines his account on the basis of successively deeper reflections on what is required to intuit a sensible object. In the process, Kant gradually reveals the essential role of understanding in intuition.

After the preface and introduction, the main argument of the *Critique* starts in the Transcendental Aesthetic. There Kant begins by distinguishing two kinds of cognition. As he puts it:

In whatever way and through whatever means a cognition may relate to objects, that through which it relates immediately to them, and at which all thought as a means is directed as an end, is intuition.... The capacity (receptivity) to acquire representations through the way in which we are affected by objects is called sensibility. Objects are therefore given to us by means of sensibility, and it alone affords us intuitions; but they are *thought* through the understanding, and from it arise concepts. (A19/B33)

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with a former student, Jakob Sigismund Beck, who wrote an influential three-volume exposition of the critical philosophy in the 1790s. Beck may have been the first person to comment upon Kant's developmental approach. In a letter to Kant he writes:

In your *Critique of Pure Reason* you lead your reader gradually to the highest point of the transcendental philosophy, viz., to the synthetic unity.... I say that one can only have a full understanding of all these things, and even of the discursive concept 'possibility of experience' itself, when one has fully mastered this standpoint.... Your *Critique*, however, leads your reader only gradually, as I say, to this standpoint, and thus, according to its method, it cannot clear up the matter right at the beginning ...

(Letter from Beck to Kant dated June 17, 1794 in Kant, I. (1999) *Correspondence*, pp. 479-81 [Ak. 11:509-10]. See also his letter dated May 31, 1792 (p. 414 [Ak. 11:338]).)

Beck himself was dissatisfied with this developmental method, and his later attempt to reformulate Kant's position by means of a nondevelopmental method would ultimately drive the two friends apart. At this time, however, Kant endorsed Beck's reading of his work and accepted this developmental characterization. (See, for example, Kant's letters to Beck dated December 4, 1792 (Kant, *Correspondence*, p. 445 [Ak. 11:395]) and July 1, 1794 (pp. 481-3 [Ak. 11:514-15]). Beck's work on Kant has been unduly neglected. His reading of the critical philosophy is very illuminating, as is Kant's evolving reaction to it. I hope to pursue this topic elsewhere.

36 The developmental aspect of Kant's method has not received sufficient attention in these debates. One significant exception is H. J. Paton, who writes:

There is hardly a breath of the work of understanding in the Aesthetic; and Kant, I believe, expects his readers to remember, through a long and complicated argument, that everything is in a sense provisional and is to be reinterpreted in the light of what comes later. I think that a hint or two to that effect would have been a help ... (Paton, H. J. (1936) *Kant's Metaphysic of Experience: A Commentary on the First Half of the Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (London: Macmillan), vol. I, pp. 52-3).

On the last point, I have tried to show that Kant does provide a number of hints regarding his method, although I agree that a more direct statement of his intentions would have been helpful.

In this passage, Kant identifies the two ways in which we cognize an individual object: either by receiving it in an intuition, or by making a conceptual judgment about it.<sup>37</sup> Intuitions and concepts are our two kinds of objective representations. Now, our having these two kinds of cognition presupposes our also having the capacity to produce each one. This leads Kant to posit two faculties: sensibility, through which we intuit objects, and understanding, by which we make judgments concerning them. This distinction between two basic faculties of cognition is the starting place of his theoretical philosophy.<sup>38</sup>

Up to this point, Kant's distinction between intuitions given in sensibility and concepts produced by understanding is not meant to be particularly controversial. As noted previously, it is grounded in the commonsense distinction between the perception and thought of objects. Kant now proceeds to investigate how sensibility and understanding are able to produce their respective kinds of cognition. What he finds is that each faculty must have basic forms that structure its cognitions. In the Aesthetic Kant identifies space and time as the forms of all sensible intuition. With regard to the former, he argues that we can intuit objects only as spatially structured, standing systematically in relation to other objects within a single spatial framework. This unified spatial framework must already be in place prior to our experience of particular objects, since it is a precondition for the possibility of intuiting objects at all. For this reason, Kant argues that space must be the form of our outer sensibility.<sup>39</sup> Later, in the Transcendental Analytic, Kant identifies the categories as the fundamental forms of all thought of an object. That is, he claims that the various categories are different expressions of the unity that makes our thought objective in character: for instance, judging (in the case of the category of causality) that the events we perceive stand in causal relation to one another.<sup>40</sup>

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37 Kant is clear about the close connection between concepts and judgments, referring to the former as "... predicates of possible judgments ..." (A69/B94) and stating that "... the understanding can make no other use of these concepts than that of judging by means of them." (A68/B93)

38 Both the Aesthetic, which examines our faculty of sensibility, and the Analytic, which examines understanding, begin by positing this basic distinction between the two faculties. For the Analytic, see A50/B74.

39 Kant makes a parallel argument for the temporal form of our inner sensibility. I lack both the space and time to explore the details of Kant's arguments in the Aesthetic.

40 Kant initially presents his list of categories in the metaphysical deduction (A76/B102), but there is some debate as to whether he defends the status of these particular categories as forms of thought here. The uncertainty is a result of the structure of Kant's argument in the Analytic, which is much more complicated than the corresponding argument in the Aesthetic. In the Analytic, Kant proves the validity of categories in general in the Transcendental Deduction, without arguing for specific categories. Before and after the Deduction, Kant makes the case for his twelve specific categories, but the relation between the pre and post-Deduction passages is contested. It is my view that the Metaphysical Deduction, which precedes the Transcendental Deduction proper, simply offers a clue to

At this stage of his inquiry, Kant is focusing on the distinction between the faculties of sensibility and understanding, for he is concerned with their role in producing intuitions and concepts, respectively. He has also identified the distinct formal structure each faculty must have to play its cognitive role in experience. Many of the passages cited earlier in support of the nonconceptualist reading belong to this moment in his investigations. Kant is not finished, however, and we will now explore how he refines his initial account of intuition, building upon this dualistic foundation. This takes place primarily in the Transcendental Deduction, to which I now turn.

Although sensibility and understanding are initially presented as independent faculties, Kant reveals a deeper connection between them in the Deduction. How Kant establishes this connection varies in the two versions of the Deduction that he wrote for the first and second editions of the *Critique*. I will focus on the argument of the rewritten B-Deduction, for here he brings out the connection of our faculties more directly and clearly.<sup>41</sup>

As any reader of Kant will appreciate, it would be madness for me to aim at fully unraveling the tangled knot that is the B-Deduction. I will instead tease out one key strand of the argument by focusing on the unity of intuition.<sup>42</sup> As I see it, Kant begins the Deduction by asserting the unity of intuition, drawing upon the earlier results of the Aesthetic. From this starting point, he proceeds to identify the categories as the real source of this intuitional unity. Having established this point, he then identifies and addresses a problem in

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identifying the twelve categories, inferring them from the forms of judgment used in general logic. It is only afterward, in the Principles, that Kant follows up on this clue, with the generalized results of the Transcendental Deduction now in place, to defend the validity of each individual category. But one's position on the relation between these three stages in Kant's defense of understanding should not affect the point I am making here about the general aim of the Analytic.

41 Commentators often overstate the differences between the two Deductions. As I have argued elsewhere, both versions establish the necessity of a connection between our sensible and intellectual faculties. The A-Deduction, however, offers only an indirect defense of how this connection is possible, one that involves undermining the competing positions that either faculty can produce cognitions on its own. By contrast, the B-Deduction provides a fuller, positive account of the relation between sensibility and understanding. In doing so, it better explains their fundamental connection. I discuss the argument of the A-Deduction in detail in Bauer, "Kant's Subjective Deduction," and I examine the relationship between the A and B-Deductions in chapters five and six of Bauer, N. (2008) *Kant's Transcendental Deductions of the Categories* (dissertation, University of Chicago).

42 In doing so, I am drawing on the work of Dieter Henrich, although his reading of how intuitional unity figures in the argument of the B-Deduction is quite different from mine. See Henrich, D. (1969) "The Proof-Structure of Kant's Transcendental Deduction," *The Review of Metaphysics*, 22(4), pp. 640-659.

explaining how the categories can be this source of unity.<sup>43</sup> I will now discuss each of these steps in greater detail.

In the Aesthetic, Kant takes it for granted that we can have *intuitions* of objects in the world through sensibility. An intuition is a cognition, and a cognition is a representation of a unified manifold, so an intuition is a unified representation of a sensibly given manifold. In his earlier discussion of intuition, Kant identifies its unity as being spatial and temporal in character, but he does not yet question how this unity is achieved. Now, in the Deduction, the unity of intuition comes under examination.<sup>44</sup> Early in the B-Deduction, Kant declares that only the categories of understanding can produce this unity. As he puts it:

... all combination, whether we are conscious of it or not, whether it is a combination of the manifold of intuition or of several concepts, and in the first case either of sensible or non-sensible intuition, is an action of the understanding, which we would designate with the general title synthesis ... (B130).

This means that intuition, presented initially as a product of sensibility alone, must also involve the work of understanding, for absent its production of unity we would have only a sheer manifold of receptivity, not individuated objects. Moreover, without this individuation, sensibility would be unable to perform its cognitive role of guiding and constraining our thought.<sup>45</sup> As a result, we now see that the categories must already be involved in sensible intuition, for, otherwise, intuition would lack the unity that is essential to its cognitive nature.

At this point, however, Kant runs into a problem. Our intuitions, at least for objects of everyday experience, are empirical or *a posteriori*, whereas the categories are pure *a priori* concepts. Even if we recognize the categories as the only possible source of unity, it is difficult to see how these nonempirical concepts could be responsible for the empirical unity of sensibly given intuitions.

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43 I believe that this distinction, between showing that the categories must be the source of intuitional unity and then explaining how they can be this source, is the basis for Kant's division of the argument of the B-Deduction into two steps. I discuss this point, in relation to Henrich's influential discussion of the two-steps-in-one-proof puzzle (Henrich, "Proof-Structure"), in chapter seven of Bauer, *Kant's Transcendental Deductions*.

44 See Kant's footnote in §26 of the B-Deduction. There he acknowledges the work left unfinished in his earlier discussion of intuition, stating that "In the Aesthetic I ascribed this unity merely to sensibility, only in order to note that it precedes all concepts, thought to be sure it presupposes a synthesis, which does not belong to the senses ..." (B160). This is a notoriously obscure note, but it is at least evident that Kant is refining his earlier account of intuitional unity.

45 Defenders of the nonconceptualist reading claim that space and time, as forms of intuition, are sources of a unity that allows us to individuate objects independently of concepts. But Kant is quite clear in the passage quoted above, and elsewhere, that this sort of unity can be found only in the categories of understanding.

Kant addresses this lingering concern in the second half of the B-Deduction, primarily in §26. There he appeals to the formal character of intuition. He writes: “But space and time are represented *a priori* not merely as *forms* of sensible intuition, but also as *intuitions* themselves (which contain a manifold), and thus with the determination of the *unity* of this manifold in them ...” (B160). Since space and time are themselves representations of a unified manifold of content, as the Aesthetic revealed, they too must be the product of the synthesizing activity of understanding. This is the key to solving Kant’s problem. Were intuitions entirely empirical, there would be no way of deriving their unity from *a priori* categories. Our intuitions, however, have an essential spatiotemporal structure, based on our *a priori* forms of sensibility. These forms allow Kant to close the apparent gap between *a posteriori* intuitions and *a priori* concepts. Because the forms of sensibility are available *a priori*, they can be categorially structured by understanding prior to experience. Moreover, because all intuitions are given through these forms, we can now see how they inherit this categorial structure. Kant has thus achieved the goal he set out at the midpoint of the Deduction: “In the sequel (§ 26) it will be shown 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 in general ...” (B144-5). By appealing to the fact that empirical intuitions are given through *a priori* sensible forms, Kant removes the mystery in explaining how the categories are the source of intuitional unity.

At this stage of his inquiry, Kant has moved beyond his initial presentation of sensibility and understanding as wholly separate faculties, revealing the deeper connection between them. What emerges from his investigations is a sensibility whose forms of intuition are already categorially-shaped by understanding prior to experience. And this connection explains how understanding can be the source of the unity of our sensible intuitions, for anything given in our sensibility will have the categorial unity of our sensible forms. For example, Kant notes that our empirical intuition of a house is dependent on the unity of space as our form of outer sensibility. He then adds: “This very same synthetic unity, however, if I abstract from the form of space, has its seat in the understanding ...” (B162). That is, the unity of space has its original source in understanding, and this is why the categories of understanding must be at work in our intuition of the house. Spatial unity just is a specific instance of categorial unity, which means that the objects we intuit in space will

already be conceptually determined by understanding. The passages I cited earlier in support of the conceptualist reading express the insight resulting from these further investigations, by which Kant has refined his original account of intuition.

## V. The Significance of Kant's Conceptualism

The developmental model that I have defended above provides us with a better explanation of why Kant seems to contradict himself in presenting his theory of intuition. In claiming, for instance, that intuition is given through sensibility alone, Kant is working from an earlier level of reflection. When he then goes on to state that understanding is necessarily involved in intuition, this is not a contradiction. Rather, it is a refinement of his account as he moves to a fuller grasp of the conditions sensible perception, one that reveals the necessary unifying role of understanding. The appearance of contradiction in Kant's work results from the tendency of his readers to compare such statements out of context, without sufficient consideration for their place within the emerging argument of the *Critique*. By contrast, when we are attuned to Kant's successively deeper reflections on the nature of intuition, a more coherent account comes into view.

The key to Kant's conceptualist account of intuition is to see the role of understanding as transformative, rather than additive. Earlier, I noted that Allais' nonconceptualist reading leads her to distinguish two notions of space: pre and post-conceptual. It might appear that I am making a similar point: positing a pre-conceptual form of space that is available to be processed by understanding. There is, however, a key difference. Allais sees both kinds of space as being part of experience—or, at the very least, making a discrete contribution to that experience. That is, we initially have a nonconceptual spatial intuition, and understanding then adds conceptual structure. On my view, by contrast, nonconceptual intuitions can neither be perceived by a rational being nor make an independent contribution to this perceptual experience. In acquiring rationality, understanding transforms our sensibility, so that what we intuit is already conceptually-structured.<sup>46</sup>

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46 One way of putting this would be to say that, for rational beings, space has a *geometric* structure: it is systematically arranged to form a unified whole. (This, I suggest, is precisely why rational beings are confronted by the mathematical antinomies concerning space and time. See A426-43/B454-71.)

By refining his account of intuition, Kant moves from an initial treatment of sensibility and understanding as separately operating faculties to a recognition of their deeper connection. In doing so, however, Kant does not mean to undermine completely the original distinction. He continues to recognize the legitimacy of distinguishing between sensible intuitions and intellectual concepts, even as he acknowledges the conceptual structure of the former. This comes out particularly clearly in a discussion of intuition from a later, unpublished work. In *What Real Progress Has Metaphysics Made in Germany*, Kant states that human knowledge:

... consists of concept and intuition. Each of these two is representation, indeed, but not yet knowledge. To entertain something through concepts, i.e., in general, is to think, and the power to think, understanding. The immediate representation of the individual is intuition. Knowledge through concepts is called discursive, that in intuition, intuitive; *for a cognition we in fact require both combined together, but it is called after that to which I particularly attend on each occasion*, as the determining ground thereof.<sup>47</sup>

In this passage Kant again leads us to see the necessary role of understanding in intuition, so that neither intuition nor concept can amount to cognition by itself. This insight, however, does not prevent him from calling a particular cognition an intuition. Although we now realize that understanding determines our sensibility prior to experience, we can still meaningfully distinguish sensible intuitions from intellectual judgments. For instance, I can tell the difference between my passive intuition of a rectangular sheet of paper (received by a sensibility whose form has been conceptually transformed by the categories of understanding) and my active judgment that the paper is rectangular (in which the understanding works directly with the concepts ‘paper’ and ‘rectangular’).<sup>48</sup> In other words, even after recognizing the deeper connection between sensibility and understanding, Kant continues to hold that there is something correct in the earlier distinction between intuition and concept, although this distinction appears in a new light.<sup>49</sup> We now see that understanding supplies the unities of space and time that make it possible to cognize individual objects. However, we can still distin-

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47 Kant, I. (2002) *Theoretical Philosophy after 1781*, eds. H. Allison and P. Heath (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), p. 406 [Ak. 20:325] (my emphasis).

48 For a more elaborate defense of this point, see McDowell, “Having the World in View,” pp. 457-8 & 438-41. McDowell argues that we can see conceptual capacities being at work in both intuition and judgment, while still distinguishing the passive employment of conceptual powers in intuition from the free or spontaneous employment of these powers in acts of judgment.

49 Borrowing a metaphor from Wittgenstein, we could say that Kant would *not* have us throw away the ladder once we have climbed up it. Nonetheless, we do acquire greater insight concerning the lower rungs from our new perch. See Wittgenstein, L. (1974) *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, trans. D. F. Pears and B. F. McGuinness (New York: Routledge), §6.54, p. 74.

guish the way this categorial unity is passively instantiated in sensibility (in our reception of intuitions) from the way it is actively invoked in a judgment produced directly by understanding itself. We can mark this distinction, as Kant does, by identifying the former as the unity of sensibility, even as we recognize that its ultimate source lies in understanding.<sup>50</sup>

It is vital to the coherence of Kant's account of intuition that he not completely undermine his original distinction between sensibility and understanding. As we saw earlier, his account faces two seemingly opposed demands. On the one hand, intuition *must* be outside thought in order to provide an external constraint on our judgments. On the other hand, intuition must have the conceptual structure that will allow it to serve as a reason for beliefs, where this suggests that it *cannot* be external to thought. That is, intuition must belong, as Sellars famously put it, within the "space of reasons."<sup>51</sup> Nonconceptualist readings of Kant on intuition address the former demand at the expense of the latter. Conceptualist readings threaten to explain the latter at the expense of the former.

Kant's developmental model allows us to meet both demands. When we recognize the deep connection between sensibility and understanding, we are able to see that the intuitions given through a categorially-determined faculty of sensibility will themselves have the conceptual structure and unity required to individuate objects, thus placing them within the space of reasons. But we can acknowledge this connection while still preserving our original insight concerning the important difference between intuitions and concepts. That is, we can distinguish between intuitions, received through a categorially-shaped sensibility, and judgments, produced directly by understanding. Consider, for instance, the concept of causality. We can recognize that all objects or events given in intuition will be determined through the category of causality – and, thus, that every event must be experienced as having a cause. Within this overarching conceptual determination, however, there is still plenty of room for perceptual constraint. After all, the necessary causal structure of our sensibility is entirely general in nature, leaving the specific causes of events undetermined. These we can discover only in perception itself. So, our judgments concerning the cause of some particular event will be

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50 This might be a useful way of understanding Kant's obscure point in the previously mentioned note at B160 of the B-Deduction. Confirming this, however, is likely beyond my cognitive powers.

51 Sellars, *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind*, §36, p. 76.

constrained by our actual intuitions of this event. These intuitions are not derived from the specific judgments we subsequently form concerning them, and they are thus sufficiently independent to provide a meaningful check on our beliefs. If this is right, then Kant has resolved our dilemma: we need not sacrifice conceptual intelligibility in order to achieve perceptual constraint.

Kant's developmental approach thus allows for a more plausible theory of intuition. It is not a bundle of contradictions, as Kemp Smith and others have worried. The apparent inconsistencies in the text disappear when we see them as marking refinements in the initial presentation of our cognitive faculties. While continuing to acknowledge a significant dualism between perception and thought, Kant leads his readers gradually to his deepest philosophical insight: the hidden connection between our sensible and intellectual faculties.<sup>52</sup>

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