Inferentialism and the Transcendental Deduction

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One recent trend in Kant scholarship has been to read Kant as undertaking a project in philosophical *semantics*, as opposed to, say, epistemology, or transcendental metaphysics.[1] This trend has evolved almost concurrently with a debate in contemporary philosophy of mind about the nature of concepts and their content. Inferentialism is the view that the content of our concepts is essentially inferentially articulated, that is, that the content of a concept consists entirely, or in essential part, in the role that that concept plays in a system of inferences. By contrast, relationalism is the view that this content is fixed by a mental or linguistic item's standing in a certain relation to its object. The historical picture of Kant and the contemporary debate about concepts intersect in so far as contemporary inferentialists about conceptual content often cite Immanuel Kant not only as one of the founding fathers of a tradition that leads more or less straightforwardly to contemporary inferentialism, but also as the philosopher who first saw the fatal flaws in any attempt to articulate the content of our concepts relationally.[2] Kant's advances over his predecessors (e.g. Descartes, Locke and Hume) are cited as examples of the triumph of inferentialism over relationalism. On the other hand, contemporary relationalists maintain that it is only the meagre resources that these philosophers misguidedly permitted themselves that allowed Kant to win the day. A more state-of-the-art relationalism, they argue, is more than adequate to meet the challenges laid down by Kant.[3]

The purpose of the current paper is to revisit the historical debate – specifically between Kant and Hume – to see (a) whether Kant can plausibly be read as an inferentialist, (b) if so, what kind of inferentialist he is, (c) how Kant argues against Hume's view, and

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(d) whether these arguments are sound. I will argue that Kant *is* an inferentialist, that his arguments against Hume's relationalism rest on certain further considerations that he marshals regarding the role of concepts in our mental lives, and that these considerations commit him to a very particular brand of inferentialism according to which what is represented by a concept is not an object or set of objects but a *way* that objects can be.

Hume's Conceptual Relationalism

Hume sets out in *A Treatise of Human Understanding* to provide a complete scientific account of the mental lives of human beings. He begins there by drawing a distinction between two kinds of mental entities. 'All the perceptions of the human mind resolve themselves into two distinct kinds [. . .] impressions and ideas' (*T* 1.1.1.1; SBN 1).[4] He then further divides each of these classes of perceptions into those that are simple and those that are complex. 'Simple perceptions or impressions and ideas are such as admit of no distinction or separation. The complex are the contrary to these, and may be distinguish'd into parts' (*T* 1.1.1.2; SBN 2). For Hume, the mind contains atomic impressions and ideas – simple perceptions – and perceptions that are built up from these – complex perceptions. Hume next observes that these simple ideas are caused by and exactly resemble their corresponding simple impressions, and concludes that all simple ideas are *copies* of simple impressions.[5] Since the causal condition and resemblance condition, respectively, jointly constitute what it is to *be* a copy for Hume, his conclusion straightforwardly follows from his observations.

Although Hume never explicitly announces that he is doing so, he goes on in the subsequent parts of the *Treatise* to employ this 'copy principle' as a *semantic* principle, as determining the *content* of ideas.[6] That is, he goes on to suppose that the content of any given simple idea is just the simple impression from which it has been copied (i.e. which it exactly resembles and caused its existence).[7] Because complex ideas are not exact copies of complex impressions and because they can be caused by complex impressions that they do not resemble,[8] Hume's semantic story about them is both more complicated and little more obscure. The general idea is that a complex idea is *composed of* simple ideas each of which has its content through being a copy of the impression which is its

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object. Complex ideas, then, have as their content the aggregate content of their constituent simple ideas.[9]

It is important to notice here that Hume's account of the content of simple and complex ideas is a form of relationalism. A simple idea has the content that it does by standing in a certain relation to the impression that it represents; it is a *copy* of it.[10] Similarly, the content of a complex idea is an aggregate of the content of its constituent simple ideas, which is determined relationally. This relationalism about ideas, we are about to see, applies also to Hume's theory of abstract ideas, the closest thing in Hume's system to what Kant calls 'concepts'.

Hume summarizes his account of abstract ideas as follows:

> When we have found a resemblance among several objects, that often occur to us, we apply the same name to all of them, whatever differences we may observe in the degrees of their quantity and quality, and whatever other differences may appear among them. After we have acquir'd a custom of this kind, the hearing of that name revives the idea of one of these objects, and makes the imagination conceive it with all its particular circumstances and proportions. But as the same word is suppos'd to have been frequently apply'd to other individuals, that are different in many respects from that idea, which is immediately present to the mind; the word not being able to revive the idea of all these individuals, only touches the soul, if I may be allow'd so to speak, and revives that custom, which we have acquir'd by surveying them. They are not really and in fact present to the mind, but only in power, nor do we draw them all out distinctly in the imagination, but keep ourselves in a readiness to survey any of them, as we may be prompted by a present design or necessity. (*T* 1.1.7.7; SBN 20–1)

Upon encountering a number of objects that all resemble one another, we come to call them all by the same name. Eventually we form a habit of associating this name with these objects, so that an encounter with the one produces an idea of the other. Still further on in the process, we come to abridge this association so that upon hearing a certain name, we no longer immediately call to mind *all* the objects with which that name is associated, but only some. These some stand for all the objects, however, in so far as we are disposed to recall those others, if the need were to arise – for instance, if we needed to draw conclusions about all the objects on the basis of conclusions that we draw about this some.[11]

The single idea that is called to mind by the hearing of the word is 'abstract' just in so far as it stands in the proper relation to the other ideas also associated with that word. The content, then, of this abstract idea is just the sum of the content of all of the ideas so associated with it. Here is Hume describing how a mind not yet comfortable with the use of some abstract idea can familiarize itself with its content:

> Before those habits have become entirely perfect, perhaps the mind may not be content with forming the idea of only one individual, but may run over several, in order to make itself comprehend its own meaning, and the compass of that collection, which it intends to express by the general term. (*T* 1.1.7.10; SBN 22)

What the mind intends to express by a general term is the content of the collection of ideas that are associated with the general term. The content of one's idea of, say, 'elephant' is just the sum of the content of all of the ideas that one associates with the word 'elephant'. Again, there are nuances and difficulties here that need not concern us. What does concern us is the sense in which this is a *relationalist* theory of concepts.

At first blush, it might be difficult to see how Hume's account of abstract ideas is a relationalist one. The content of such ideas does not seem to be fixed by relating ideas to the objects of which they are copies, but rather it is fixed by relating ideas to *one another*. At the outset of this investigation, this seemed to be the very hallmark of a *non*-relationalist account, such as inferentialism. The key to seeing why contemporary relationalists nonetheless cite Hume as a forefather is to see that, while his account of the content of concepts does *involve* the relations among ideas, it does so in a way that is fairly innocuous for the more general project of relationalism. In particular, it is an essential part of Hume's account of the content of abstract ideas that such ideas *do* relate to the objects of which they are copies; it is just that, on that account, they do so *indirectly*. It is still the case that the content of an abstract idea, for Hume, is given by the relation that that idea bears to the object of which it is a copy. An abstract idea has as its content that which the ideas that are 'annexed' to it have as *their* content, and these ideas have as their content that of which they are copies. An abstract idea, therefore, has the content that it does by standing in a certain relation to *collections* of copied objects, rather than single ones. Hume makes use of

a principle of collection, which involves relations between ideas, but the content-conferring relation remains essentially the same; it is the copy relation applied to collections rather than individuals. The annexed ideas are each copies of such-and-such objects, and the collection of them has as its content just the collection of their content. The key to relationalism is the delineation of the content of a concept as essentially a word–world, or idea–object relation.[12] Hume's account keeps this fundamental commitment intact: the content of an abstract idea is still a function of the relation of that idea, and those ideas that resemble it, to their objects.

Before we move on, it is important to note the representational work that such ideas perform in Hume's system. Hume, like most relationalists, takes it that the work that a concept does is similar to that of concrete ideas; it stands for something. Just as a concrete idea stands for a concrete particular, an abstract idea stands for – according to the specifics of Hume's account – a collection of such particulars. As Hume remarks regarding his theory of abstract ideas, it is sufficient for his purposes if he can show – without violating either of the commitments listed earlier – that his theory is able to account for the fact that:

> Some ideas are particular in their nature, but general in their representation. (*T* 1.1.7.10; SBN 22)

What Hume wants to show is that we are able to represent a plurality of objects using just a single idea. As we will see in a moment, one of the crucial differences between Hume's system and Kant's – and one of the reasons why Kant cannot be a relationalist about concepts – is the different work that each assigns to concepts.

The Problem of the Unity of the Proposition

Before moving on to our examination of Kant's theory of concepts, though, we have one more piece of business to take care of. Both modern and contemporary forms of relationalism about conceptual content must at some point confront the problem of the unity of the proposition.[13] As it is, in part, a dissatisfaction with modern attempts to solve this problem that motivates Kant's inferentialism, and as one of the arguments in favour of that inferentialism is that it seems to be able to solve this problem, it will be worthwhile to

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spend a small amount of time seeing how this problem arises for Hume in light of his theory of abstract ideas.

The problem of the unity of the proposition is simply the challenge to say what differentiates a proposition (or a belief, a judgement, a sentence, etc.) from a list of names. The problem is particularly acute for the relationalist about conceptual content because it is an immediate consequence of relationalism that (at least) the concepts that appear in a proposition – and in most cases, the other items as well – each have the content that they do independently of any of the other items appearing in that proposition, and independently of the proposition itself.[14] For the relationalist, the concepts that appear in a proposition have the content they do by standing in certain relations *to their objects*, not to any other mental/linguistic item. For Hume, the concrete simple ideas that appear in propositions are *copies of* their objects. Complex concrete ideas purport to be copies of their objects. Abstract ideas have as their content the sum of the content of the ideas that they resemble and therefore dispose one to recall upon being prompted.

This being the case, the elements of a proposition each look to be a kind of name, either of an object, a set of objects, etc., and so the problem of how to differentiate a proposition from a list of names is particularly pressing.[15] To see why, consider the following list of names:

(1) Joan, Judy, Jessica, Jeffrey

This list is clearly not a proposition. It does not *say* anything. It does not represent anything as being the case, or any object as being a certain way. If, however, this list is not a proposition, neither are the following:

(2) 'This sphere', 'is red'
(3) An idea of a sphere, an idea of something red
(4) An idea of a red sphere

For a relationalist, 'this sphere' and 'is red' both have the content that they do by standing in a certain relation to their objects. Simply putting each of these next to one another does not make them into a proposition, and more specifically does not make them into the proposition that this sphere is red. Similarly, on Hume's account,

according to which it is *ideas* that have content by standing in certain relations to their objects, placing two independently contentful ideas next to one another, or associating two such ideas, also does not make a proposition out of them. (2) and (3), like (1), do not *say* anything, do not represent anything as being the case, etc.[16]

It is perhaps because he sees this that Hume himself takes a different line on the unity of the proposition altogether. Hume's official position is that a proposition – or a belief – is not a unity of distinct items at all, but rather it is a single idea with a great degree of force and vivacity.[17] The role that force and vivacity play here is simply to distinguish a belief from a mere contemplation. What is important to notice for our purposes is that *what* is believed or contemplated is *a single idea*. Hume takes it that all belief (or judgement) concerns:

> the existence of objects or of their qualities. 'Tis also evident, that the idea of existence is nothing different from the idea of any object, and that when after the simple conception of any thing we wou'd conceive it as existent, we in reality make no addition to or alteration on our first idea. (*T* 1.3.7.2; SBN 94)

Thus, Hume embraces (4) as best representing the form of a proposition. Of course, it should be obvious that this will not do at all. Reducing a list to a single item surely cannot be the way of explaining how it is that a proposition differs from a list, and adding that this single item appears particularly forcefully and vivaciously to us does not help either.

All of this is not to say that Hume does not have additional resources to marshal in addressing the problem of the unity of the proposition, or that the problem is unsolvable for any relationalist.[18] Rather it is simply to point out that this problem is a standing challenge to *any* philosopher who undertakes to account for the content of concepts, and that there is a straightforward way that it is particularly acute for the relationalist. As we will soon see, this problem is a going concern of Kant's, and is one to which he thinks he has a solution.

Inference and the Transcendental Deduction

While Hume's theory of concepts is fairly straightforward and simple, Kant's is not. In fact, to appreciate the full force of Kant's argument against Hume's relationalism we must plumb at least some

of the depths of the notoriously murky Transcendental Deduction of the Pure Concepts of the Understanding, one of the places in his corpus in which Kant pays significant attention to the nature and function of concepts. I will begin this expedition with a brief overview of the purposes and structure of the Deduction.[19] I will then move on to discuss the role that Kant assigns concepts in our mental lives as a result of the conclusions of the Deduction. Last, I will draw out the consequences of this assignment for the inferentialism/relationalism debate.

As is well known, Kant's Transcendental Deduction is his attempt to answer a certain *quid juris* question.[20] As Kant tells us:

> Jurists, when they speak of entitlements and claims, distinguish in a legal matter between questions about what is lawful (*quid juris*) and that which concerns the fact (*quid facti*), and since they demand proof of both, they call the first, that which is to establish the entitlement of the legal claim, the deduction. (A84/B117)[21]

Kant's Deduction concerns a kind of entitlement, and more particularly an entitlement that creatures like us have to the use of a particular kind of *concept*: pure a priori concepts. An empirical a posteriori concept, for Kant, is a concept the content of which is derived from experience – in a sense with which we will not concern ourselves just yet – and the justification of the use of which is conducted by appeal to this pedigree:[22]

> We make use of a multitude of empirical concepts without objection from anyone, and take ourselves to be justified in granting them a sense and a supposed signification even without any deduction, because we always have experience ready at hand to prove their objective validity. (A85/B117)

Empirical concepts are, more or less, the concepts with which Hume is most comfortable. They are concepts whose origins can be traced up to experience (although perhaps not in the straightforward way that Hume thinks they can).

Pure a priori concepts, on the other hand, are those concepts that are not derived from experience, and the justification of the use of which cannot, therefore, be a posteriori. It is Kant's goal in the Transcendental Deduction (and in the *Critique* more generally) to provide an a priori justification of such concepts:

> Among the many concepts, however, that constitute the very mixed fabric of human cognition, there are some that are also destined for pure use *a priori* (completely independently of all experience), and these always require a deduction of their entitlement, since proofs from experience are not sufficient for the lawfulness of such a use, and yet one must know how these concepts can be related to objects that they do not derive from any experience. (A85/B117)

Pure a priori concepts are those concepts, more or less, with which Hume is not comfortable. They are the concepts (e.g. necessity, persistence, etc.) that Hume argues that we *cannot possibly have* because they do not resemble any of our impressions. Hume thus has to explain how it is that we *think* we have such concepts, and what in our mental lives we are mistaking for them. Kant, on the other hand, believes that we do make (legitimate) use of such concepts, and the goal of the Transcendental Deduction is to justify this use.[23] Since the use to which such concepts – and all concepts – are put is to be applied to objects, what must be shown in this deduction is that applying pure a priori concepts to objects is a justified practice.

The way that Kant sets out to show this is by showing *this* practice is an essential part of *another* practice, which is itself justified.[24] Suppose, for instance, that I have been given permission to play baseball today. Now suppose that the question arises whether I have permission to take an at bat today. By showing that taking an at bat is an essential part of playing baseball, I thereby show that I have permission to take an at bat. That is, one could not have permission to play baseball without *also* having permission to take an at bat.[25] Similarly, Kant's plan in the Deduction is to show that the use of pure a priori concepts is an essential part of another practice that is itself justified, and thereby to secure justification for the former practice.[26]

The practice of which Kant takes the employment of pure a priori concepts to be an essential part is just the practice of conceiving of some representations as belonging to *oneself*. That is, Kant argues throughout the course of the *Critique* that employing pure a priori concepts is necessary for conceiving of one's thoughts *as* one's own. Here is Kant, early on in the B-Deduction, explicitly stating this as the condition to which he will appeal during the course of the Deduction:

> For the manifold representations that are given in a certain intuition would not all together be my representations if they did not all together belong to a self-consciousness; i.e. as my representations (even if I am not conscious of them as such) they must yet necessarily be in accord with the condition under which alone they can stand together in a universal self-consciousness, because otherwise they would not throughout belong to me. From this original combination much may be inferred. (B131)

The mental representations that are given in an intuition must all be *someone's* mental representations. Kant is concerned with what conditions must be in place for the possibility of a person's being justified in claiming his representations as his own. As the cryptic remark at the end of this quotation implies, it is from the conditions of this practice – the practice of being able to claim one's representations as one's own – that Kant hopes to justify the practice of employing pure a priori concepts.

Part of Kant's insight here is to see that being able to claim one's representations as one's own is not as straightforward a process as some of his modern predecessors thought it to be. Descartes, for instance, seems to think that the inference from a premise of the form,

(D1) [I think x] and [I think y] and [I think z]

leads validly to a conclusion of the form,

(D2) [The I that thinks x] = [the I that thinks y] = [the I that thinks z].

That is, Descartes takes the fact that he can introspectively observe that he thinks x, and that he can introspectively observe that he thinks y, and that he can introspectively observe that he thinks z, to imply that it is one and the same thing, *he*, that has all of these thoughts.[27] Descartes famously writes of his arrival at this conclusion that:

> This is a considerable list, if everything on it belongs to me. But does it? Is it not one and the same 'I' who is now doubting almost everything, who nonetheless understands some things, denies everything else, desires to know more, is unwilling to be deceived, imagines many things even involuntarily, and is aware of things just as true as the fact that I exist,

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> even if I am asleep all the time, and even if he who created me is doing all he can to deceive me? [. . .] That fact that it is I who am doubting and understanding and willing is so evident that I see no way of making it any clearer. (1984: 19)

Of course, those of us who have read our Hume find the matter to be significantly less clear. We know that this inference – from the existence of certain experiences to the identity of the subjects of these experiences – is fallacious. Putting the matter first-personally, as Descartes does, Hume writes:

> For my part, when I enter most intimately into what I call *myself*, I always stumble on some particular perception or other, of heat or cold, light or shade, love or hatred, pain or pleasure. I never catch *myself* at any time without a perception, and never can observe any thing but the perception. [. . .] The mind is a kind of theatre, where several perceptions successively make their appearance; pass, re-pass, glide away, and mingle in an infinite variety of postures and situations. There is properly no *simplicity* in it at one time, nor *identity* in different; whatever natural propension we may have to imagine that simplicity and identity. (*T*1.4.6.3–4; SBN 252)

What Hume points out here is that, when we introspect, we find exactly the matter that Descartes does – this or that perception – but that this is not sufficient to yield an experience of the *self* – something which endures through time and is the *subject* of these perceptions. As Kant puts it, '[the] identity of the subject, of which I can be conscious in all my representations, does not concern any intuition of the subject, whereby it is given as object' (B408). If, however, we can have the experiences that would justify our endorsing Descartes's premise, but still lack the resources for supporting his conclusion, then clearly his inference is fallacious. Because Hume thinks that an *experience* of the self is the only ground that could warrant the further premise needed to make the argument valid, when he fails to find such an experience, he famously rejects Descartes's conclusion. Kant, as we are about to see, does not.[28]

What Kant sees is that, although Descartes's inference is invalid, his conclusion is one that each of us is nonetheless entirely justified in accepting. That is, we are each justified, according to Kant, in conceiving ourselves as single, unified subjects of experience persisting through time. This is just what it is to be able to claim various temporally dispersed representations as our own. It is to identify

those representations as belonging to a single, unified self persisting through time. Kant takes the claim expressing this identification – that it must be possible for *me* to think all *my* representations collectively as *mine*, the principle of the necessary unity of apperception – to be analytic, and so takes our justification for holding it to be straightforward.[29] His question is not *whether* we are justified in so thinking of ourselves, but rather *how* we come to be so justified. The lesson that Kant learns from Hume *contra* Descartes, then, is not that we ought not to (or cannot) conceive of ourselves as single, unified subjects persisting through time, but rather that our doing so cannot consist in an experience either of this persisting self or of the manifold of experiences that this subject has. It cannot consist in the former because we have no such experience. It cannot consist in the latter because such a manifold is not sufficient for constituting the idea of a single self that is the subject of the entirety of such a manifold.

Here is Kant expressing both the problem that he finds in Descartes, along with the general outlines for his solution to it:

> For the empirical consciousness that accompanies different representations is by itself dispersed and without relation to the identity of the subject. The latter relation therefore does not yet come about by my accompanying each representation with consciousness, but rather by my adding one representation to the other and being conscious of their synthesis. Therefore it is only because I can combine a manifold of given representations in one consciousness that it is possible for me to represent the identity of the consciousness in these representations itself. (B134)

Kant's explanation, then, of how it is possible to conceive of oneself as a single, unified subject of experience persisting through time is that this is possible only if one can 'combine a manifold of given representations in one consciousness'. What Kant sees is that while (D2) does not follow from (D1), it does follow from:

(K) I think [x + y + z].[30]

That is, while introspectively observing a manifold of various representations is not sufficient for conceiving of oneself as a single, unified subject persisting through time, conceiving of a single representation, *the content of which includes a manifold of representations*, is sufficient. Otherwise put, he sees that we would be justified in

inferring that one and the same thing experiences all of x, y and z if we were justified in thinking that one and the same thing thinks something *else* whose *elements* included x, y and z. Again, if x, y and z were three parts of *a single cognition* had by a single individual, then it would follow trivially that the 'I that thinks x' is the same as the 'I that thinks y' and the same as the 'I that thinks z'.

As we should now expect, the cognition that Kant thinks plays this role in our thought is exactly the kind of cognition that necessarily employs pure a priori concepts. Thus, Kant's strategy can now be fleshed out a bit more. Kant sets out to justify our use of pure a priori concepts. His plan is to show that our use of pure a priori concepts is an essential part of our engaging in another practice that is itself justified. This practice is that of conceiving of ourselves as single, unified subjects of experience persisting through time. Following Hume, he argues that doing *this* is not possible through an experience of such a self, because we have no such experience. He further follows Hume in thinking that being introspectively aware of each member of a manifold of experiences is also not sufficient for these purposes. Most recently we have seen Kant notice that it *would* suffice for so conceiving ourselves to have a single cognition, the contents of which are the set of experiences in need of uniting. If it is true that we can only have such a cognition *by* employing the pure a priori concepts, and the rest of Kant's arguments here are sound, then he will have found the justificatory argument for which he is searching.

Our next task will be to see what reason Kant gives for thinking that the pure a priori concepts are necessary for having this kind of cognition. Before we can do that, however, we must see what kind of cognition Kant thinks this to be. He writes:

> Understanding is, generally speaking, the faculty of cognitions. These consist in the determinate relation of given representations to an object. An object, however, is that in the concept of which the manifold is united. (B137)

Kant here suggests that our manifold of intuitions is united by our employment of *object-concepts*.[31] The single cognition [x + y + z] is the use of an object-concept whose elements include a manifold of intuitions and which, because it is a single cognition, is had by a single thinker.[32] An example will help illustrate why it is that Kant thinks that this particular kind of cognition can do this work, while

other kinds cannot. Suppose that one is presented with the following diachronic manifold of intuitions:

t_1: This short grey tail.
t_2: This big grey body.
t_3: This big, flat grey ear.
t_4: This long grey trunk.[33]

According to Kant, it is by thinking of such a manifold of intuitions using an object-concept, such as 'elephant', that we unite them in a single cognition.[34] Our question is what makes such a concept particularly suited to do this work. Kant's answer is that by applying an object-concept to a manifold of intuitions, by thinking of these intuitions as being of an *elephant*, what we crucially add to that manifold is an element of *necessity*.

> If we enquire what new character *relation to an object* confers upon our representations, what dignity they thereby acquire, we find that it results only in subjecting the representations to a rule, and so in necessitating us to connect them in some specific manner; and conversely, that only in so far as our representations are necessitated in a certain order as regards their time-relations do they acquire objective meaning. (A197/B242)

By applying the object-concept 'elephant' to the above manifold of intuitions, by conceiving of that manifold as being the result of an encounter with an elephant, we suppose that those intuitions are connected to one another *necessarily*.[35] We suppose that it is not an accident that we encounter first a tail, then a body, then an ear, then a trunk.[36] We attribute the order of this series of intuitions to the two-part story of *my* running my gaze from the back to the front *of an elephant*. Kant's thought is that we conceive of ourselves as single, unified subjects of experience persisting through time *by* conceiving of our manifold of intuitions as being the result of multiple encounters with a single, lawful world of objects persisting in space and time:

> Just this transcendental unity of apperception, however, makes out of all possible appearances that can ever come together in one experience a connection of all of these representations in accordance with laws. For this unity of consciousness would be impossible if in the cognition of the manifold the mind could not become conscious of the identity of the

> function by means of which this manifold is synthetically combined into one cognition. (A108)

Thus the single cognition that unites all and only those actual and possible representations that are properly called *mine* is just the thought of this single world as encountered *by me*. Since this thought unites the entire manifold of intuitions, and since this single cognition is had, necessarily, by a single self, the possibility of having such a cognition allows one to conceive of oneself as a single, unified self persisting through time. Object-concepts are just those concepts through which we form such a thought piecemeal, as we encounter not the entire world, all at once, but the objects that make it up, one at a time.[37]

We can now see how Kant's strategy in the Deduction is carried out, if not in detail, then at least in broad strokes. The pure a priori concepts are the rules that specify what counts as an *object*-concept, that is, what counts as a concept capable of positing the sort of necessity among intuitions that results in the proper uniting of that manifold.[38] Thus, the employment of empirical concepts in accordance with the pure a priori concepts is necessary for conceiving of a single, lawful world of objects persisting in space and time. This, in turn, is necessary for conceiving of ourselves as single, unified subjects of experience persisting through time. Conceiving ourselves in this way is a practice that is analytically justified. And so, the employment of pure a priori concepts is justified on the grounds that it is an essential part of a practice that is itself analytically justified.

What should interest us most in this picture is the role that Kant here assigns to object-concepts. Their purpose is twofold. First, in so far as we apply an object-concept to a manifold of intuitions, we take those intuitions to be necessarily connected to one another. An object-concept is that which, somehow, posits these necessary connections. Second, in deploying a particular object-concept in this way, we also deploy a certain explanation of *why* the necessary connections amongst these intuitions exist: it is because they are the result of an encounter with an object that is part of world governed by such necessities. Thus, for Kant, the primary work that concepts do in our mental lives is to unite our manifold of intuitions.

The most important point about Kant's theory of concepts that we can take away from the Transcendental Deduction, then, concerns the role of concepts vis-à-vis the positing of necessities

amongst the elements of the manifold of intuitions. Suppose Kant is correct to think that concepts must serve this function. What we need, then, is an account of *how* they do so. How is it, that is, that concepts 'posit' these necessities? How do they represent the elements of the manifold as being necessarily connected in these ways? Here is Kant's answer:

> A concept is always, as regards its form, something universal which serves as a rule. The concept of body, for instance, as the unity of the manifold which is thought through it, serves as a rule, in our cognition of outer appearances. But it can be a rule for intuitions only insofar as it represents in any given appearances the necessary reproduction of their manifold, and thereby the synthetic unity in our consciousness of them. (A106)

Our concept of an object serves as a *rule* in our cognition of outer appearances, in our thought about objects. As what kind of rule?[39] What I want to argue for presently – on both exegetical as well as philosophical grounds – is that Kant is thinking of rules here as rules of *inference*, and that his theory of concepts is an inferentialist one.[40] The picture, when it is completed, will be this. We represent necessities among the elements of the manifold of intuitions at the object-level by licensing certain material inferences at the meta-level. To borrow an example from Wilfrid Sellars, it is by licensing the inference from 'lightning now' to 'thunder soon' that we come to represent the necessary connection between lightning and thunder (1967: 117). It is because our inferential practices are such as to treat certain material inferential moves as valid, that we come to represent the world as one of objects bearing certain necessary connections to one another.

I will begin with the exegetical part of the argument.[41] I should say at the outset that I will not argue that the following texts *prove* that Kant is an inferentialist. This is, admittedly, not the only possible reading of which these passages admit. Rather, I will argue that these passages are suggestive of a more comprehensive theory of concepts than is explicitly introduced in them, and that the best sense that can be made of what this theory might be is that it is a very specific kind of inferentialism. In particular, it is an inferentialism that, combined with Kant's sophisticated account of perception, yields a kind of picture-theory according to which intuitions are the pictorial elements, and concepts are the relations into which these

elements are put in order to represent the relations in which the items pictured stand. More on these details later. For now, let's turn to the text.

The place in the first *Critique* where Kant is most explicit about his theory of concepts is in the Metaphysical Deduction, which is fairly short, and will repay a close reading. The first passage of interest is the following:

> Now the understanding can make no other use of these concepts than that of judging by means of them. Since no representation pertains to the object immediately except intuition alone, a concept is thus never immediately related to an object, but is always related to some other representation of it (whether that be an intuition or itself already a concept). Judgement is therefore the mediate cognition of an object, hence the representation of a representation of it. (A68/B93)

The first thing we are told here is that the understanding can make no other use of a concept than to judge by means of it. It should be clear that the inferentialist can, at least, make good sense of this claim. If concepts are given their meaning from the role they play in a system of inference, then a concept outside of a judgement – where it cannot license, prohibit, or require such inferences – has no use. Furthermore, the specific use that Kant attributes to concepts – judging by means of them – also makes perfect sense on an inferentialist line. It is because concepts license, prohibit and require certain judgements that, when one judges, one judges by means of these concepts. It is in accord with the rules that such concepts provide that one ought to make one's judgements.

The passage goes on to declare that an intuition is a representation of an object, and that a judgement is a representation of an intuition. It seems clear that the judgement here is a representation of an intuition *because* it has a concept in it. That is, it is the presence of a concept in a judgement that *makes the judgement* a representation of an intuition. In what sense, then, we must wonder, does a judgement represent an intuition, and how does the concept deployed in a judgement accomplish this? What follows this passage seems to be Kant's explanation of just this:

> So in the judgement, e.g. 'All bodies are divisible,' the concept of the divisible is related to various other concepts; among these, however, it is here particularly related to the concept of body, and this in turn is related to certain appearances that come before us. (A68/B93)

Note that Kant writes that *in the judgement*, 'All bodies are divisible,' the concept of the divisible is related to *various* other concepts, and that the concept of body is only one among these. This is interesting because on its face this judgement relates only *two* concepts: bodies and divisibility. Kant, however, writes that even in this very judgement, despite these appearances, 'divisible' relates not only to 'bodies', but also to some other, unnamed concepts. What I want to suggest is that this can best be understood by supposing that something about *the concept 'divisible' itself* relates it to other concepts. More particularly, what I want to suggest is that the concept 'divisible' just *is* its relation to other concepts.[42] The work that 'divisible' does in the judgement, 'All bodies are divisible,' is exhausted by the relations that it bears to other concepts (and to those certain appearances that come before us). To place an 'are divisible' next to an 'all bodies' is to take up a certain position in a network of various related concepts and intuitions (a network of various *normative* relations: commitments, prohibitions, permissions, etc.). It is to judge that bodies are related in a certain way to not only divisibility, but all that being divisible entails (e.g. being extended, having parts, etc.).

The other important part of this passage to note is the *other* direction of flow of concepts implied in it. That is, not only is 'divisible' connected to other concepts, but equally importantly, 'body' is connected to 'certain appearances that come before us'. What Kant is implicitly up to here is presenting for the first time his *two-part* inferentialism. The first part of this theory is that a concept has its content by being related (inferentially) to other concepts. The second part is that this network of inferentially related judgements must eventually include 'certain appearances that come before us'.[43] That is, the operation of concepts in our mental lives presupposes that these concepts are connected not only to each other, but also to *intuitions*, which provide their essential link to perception and thereby to the objects which both of these kinds of representations, in their own way, represent:[44]

> The concept of body thus signifies something, e.g. metal, which can be cognized through that concept. It is therefore a concept only because other representations are contained under it by means of which it can be related to objects. (A69/B94)

Not only are the relations that concepts bear to one another a crucial part of Kant's story, but the relations that they bear to intuitions is equally important. This is because without this link to intuitions, and thereby to perception, concepts would have no connection to objects, which as we are about to see, and as Kant suggests here, would rob them of their representative power. Intuitions provide the necessary starting place of cognition, or conceptual thought. Kant has essentially discovered language-language and language-entry moves, and made them part of the very content of a concept.[45]

What I am suggesting, then, is that the best way to understand Kant's claim that judgements are meta-representations is through the additional thesis that the way that we represent, for example, a body as being divisible is by placing an intuition of a body into a system of inference that licenses certain further judgements about bodies, such as that all bodies are extended. Of course, what Kant *says* is just that in the judgement, 'All bodies are divisible,' the concept 'divisible' is connected to various other concepts, and that the concept body is connected to various appearances (intuitions). The key to my exegetical thesis is that the best way to understand *this* as an *explanation* of what comes before it – the claim that judgements are meta-representations – is through the two-part inferentialism I have been outlining.

Here is another way of approaching these passages. Kant claims that a judgement is a meta-representation: a representation of an intuition. Now, clearly not all judgements are *about* intuitions. (While we can make judgements about intuitions, the more paradigmatic case is one in which the judgement is about objects in space and time.) So, typically, it is *by* representing intuitions in a certain way that a judgement comes to represent *the world* as being a certain way. The key questions here are how do judgements represent intuitions, and how does doing this represent the world as being a certain way? The inferentialist has a ready answer. Necessary connections among worldly objects are represented by placing the elements of the manifold of intuitions into certain relations: inferential ones (that is, not relations with their objects, but with other mental/linguistic items). These relations mimic, or picture, the relations that the objects pictured stand in to each other. Intuitions are the representative counterparts of objects, and concepts ways of placing intuitions into relations with each other that are the counterparts of relations in which their objects stand. Consider what Kant says in

another context, again about the concept 'body' in a slightly different context:

> Thus in the case of the perception of something outside of us the concept of body makes necessary the representation of extension, and with it that of impenetrability, of shape, etc. (A106)

Obviously, when Kant writes here that 'the concept of body *makes necessary* the representation of extension' he does not mean that when we think 'body' we necessarily also think 'extension'. Clearly, there are plenty of times in the life of a human being that one thinks (and *can* think) 'body' without also thinking 'extension'. Kant's claim is not a claim about the *association* of ideas (*à la* Hume), but rather can best be understood as a claim about the inferential, *normative* relations between concepts. This is why Kant casts concepts as *rules*. When one judges of something that it is a body, one is also thereby *committed to* judging of that thing that it is extended.[46] This is a key difference between Kant's inferentialism and Hume's associationism. Kant leaves open the possibility that while we might, in fact, judge falsely that some body is not extended, we are necessarily wrong to do so.

Concepts, on this line, are the rules that govern such inferential connections. For instance, our concept of an elephant, on this view, is just a rule for putting a manifold of intuitions like the one we encountered earlier into the right relations with each other, and with a set of other possible intuitions of elephants and other elements in the natural world. It is by doing *this* that we use the concept of an elephant to *unite* all of these intuitions, and it is in this sense that in any *particular* judgement that employs the concept 'elephant', that concept is already, *in that very judgement*, related to other concepts (as well as certain intuitions, and other judgements).

Before we move on, it is important to note here (as earlier) that while some of the examples we have been lately using are examples of inferences that are plausibly considered *analytic*, Kant – and the inferentialist more generally – is not limited to including only these among the content-determining inferences for a given concept. 'Body' is necessarily connected to 'extension' and thereby to 'shape', 'impenetrability', etc. Such inferences may well be analytic. Consider, however, the connections between the intuitions of a short grey tail, a big grey body and a long grey trunk. We wanted to cast these intuitions as being united by the application of the concept

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'elephant' to them. What we are in a position to see now is that the *way* that these intuitions are so unified is *inferentially*. When one encounters a short grey tail and judges of it that it is the short grey tail *of an elephant*, one is thereby *committed* to also judging, *ceteris paribus*, that this tail is connected to a big grey body (of which one can, in appropriate circumstances, also form an intuition), and that this big grey body is connected to a head with a long grey trunk, etc. Prima facie, these latter kinds of inferences are not analytic.[47] That is, they are not instances of *formally valid* inferences, but rather are examples of what Sellars calls *material* inference. It is material inferences that allow us to represent the lawful relations between spatio-temporal objects (such as the parts of elephants, or lightning and thunder, etc.). It is by licensing the inference from 'lightning now' to 'thunder soon' that we represent the necessary connection, the lawful relation of lightning and thunder. Kant would here add that not only do physical necessities fall under this rubric, but so do those of mathematics and transcendental philosophy.

What all of this amounts to is not just a new theory of how the content of concepts is articulated (inferentially as opposed to relationally), but also a new conception of how it is that a concept functions in our mental lives. Remember on Hume's account, and on those accounts that are most typical of relationalists, a concept has the content that it does in virtue of its standing in the relation that it does to its object. A concept, on that view, *stands for* an object, or collection of objects, etc. just as an idea stands for its object. It is exactly this thesis that Kant here denies, and whose denial constitutes his strongest argument for inferentialism. For Kant, a concept does not *stand for* an object or collection of objects, etc. at all. Rather, the essential role of a concept is to represent objects *as being a certain way*, as standing in certain necessary relations to one another.[48] It accomplishes this not by *standing for* these relations, but by placing intuitions (which do stand for their objects) in certain relations with one another. Thus Kant has something like a *picture theory* of meaning, according to which the *elements* of the picture are intuitions, and the *relations* into which these elements are put, their form, is constituted by the concepts under which they are subsumed.[49]

Kant draws this distinction in ways of representing as constituting part of the difference between intuitions and concepts:

> All intuitions, as sensible, rest on affections, concepts therefore on functions. By a function, however, I understand the unity of the action of ordering different representation under a common one. (A68/B93)

Intuitions are the product of the mind's being affected in certain ways by objects. They are representations of determinate individuals, their objects (which, since Kant is an *empirical realist*, are first and foremost *physical* objects). Concepts, by contrast, are functions, or rules, for ordering such intuitions. They represent these objects as being connected in certain ways, not by representing some *further* object, but by placing these representations, intuitions, into certain (inferential) relations with one another. (The job of a *function*, in this context, is to carry one from some input – an intuition – to an output of the same kind – other intuitions.) The relationalists' mistake, Kant contends, is that they misunderstand the proper role of concepts in our system of thought. As Kant puts it, concepts do not relate to objects immediately, but only mediately. They do so by relating intuitions to *one another*.

Consider again, then, the judgement, 'This sphere is red'. We saw earlier that the relationalist confronts a difficulty in accounting for the unity of this judgement. Because 'this sphere' and 'is red' have the content that they do in virtue of standing in certain relations to their objects, it is unclear how these *conceptual* representations combine to make the *propositional* representation that this sphere is red. It is unclear, that is, how these representations combine to form more than a mere list of representations.

Kant's answer is that 'is red' does *not* have the content that it does by standing in a certain relation to an object, set of objects, etc. 'This sphere is red' is not, on Kant's view, a combination of two items each of which stands for a certain bit, or certain bits, of the world. Rather, for Kant, a judgement is a *way* of representing *one* item, of saying *how* that item is. It does this *by* representing a representation of it. Placing an 'is red' after an intuition such as 'this sphere' is a way of relating 'this sphere' to other *intuitions*. The items related in this judgement are, in a sense, not an intuition and a concept, but rather multiple intuitions. This is because, as we saw, a concept is a *function*; it takes one from an intuition to various other intuitions (sometimes by way of further concepts/functions). It does not itself stand for anything, but rather relates items, which themselves stand for objects, to other such items. A concept is a

way of signalling certain inferential licenses at the meta-level, and of thereby positing certain necessary connections at the object level.[50] It is *by* relating intuitions inferentially that concepts contribute to a picture of how natural objects are related (necessarily connected). The problem of the unity of the proposition is solved by conceiving concepts as this kind of intra-mental, normative *relation*.

To return to the eponymous topic of this essay, the Transcendental Deduction begins with the necessary goal of conceiving of ourselves as single, unified subjects of experience persisting through time. Kant there argues that this can be accomplished only by employing an object-concept in a judgement as a way of uniting a given manifold of intuitions. This unification is accomplished by placing those intuitions into inferential relations with one another. This placement is accomplished by pairing intuitions with concepts, which are themselves nothing but such inferential placeholders. As it turns out, then, the solution to the problem addressed in the Transcendental Deduction is *also* a solution to the problem of the unity of the proposition. This is because the solution to the former casts concepts as achieving the unification of a manifold of intuitions not by standing in any relation to some further object, but rather by placing intuitions into inferential relations with each other. The content of a concept, then, is determined entirely by the inferential role they assign to the intuitions with which they are paired. A judgement cannot be a list of names because concepts *are not names*. Concepts are rules, or functions. The 'is red' in 'this sphere is red' does not name a property, redness, but rather signals that the intuition next to it, the 'this sphere', is connected to various other intuitions and concepts in specific ways.

A concept is a rule for connecting intuitions, which connections create a picture of the world. The intuitions in this picture represent the objects in the world; the inferential relations between such intuitions represent the necessary connections between these worldly objects. This is exactly what the Transcendental Deduction required for conceiving of oneself as a single, unified subject of experience persisting through time, and it is in this way that the Deduction provides a key justification for what I have argued is Kant's inferentialist account of concepts.

Notes

1 Cf. Sellars (1967), Brittan (1978), Pippin (1982), Brandt (1995), Longuenesse (1998), Hanna (2001), Rosenberg (2005).

2 Cf. Sellars (1967: chapter 1). Robert Brandom correctly cites Kant's key inferentialist insight as concerning the primacy of the proposition (Brandom 1994: 79–80), but does not concern himself with Kant's *arguments*. Rosenberg (2005) traces a line in Kant's thought to which the current study owes much.

3 The most vocal relationalist in this regard is Jerry Fodor (2003), who explicitly undertakes to give an updated version of Humean relationalism.

4 Quotations from the *Treatise* are cited from both Hume (2000), the Norton edition (by paragraph number), and Hume (1978), the Selby-Bigge edition (by page number).

5 It is worth noting that, in observing that simple impressions are the cause of simple ideas, Hume does not employ the notion of causation that he shows to be problematic later in the *Treatise* – necessary connection – but rather appeals to exactly the alternative account of causation that he later proposes: constant conjunction and precedence.

6 Kemp (2000) does a nice job of presenting a reading of Hume as expressly concerned with the *content* of mental items, and his use of the copy principle as content-fixing. For a brief discussion of how this principle plays a crucial role in some of Hume's most important arguments cf. Landy (2009b).

7 It is worth noting that on this reading, for Hume, impressions have *no content* because they are not copied from anything. This goes some way towards explaining why Hume cites the difference between impressions and ideas as being 'the difference betwixt feeling and thinking' (*T* 1.1.1.1; SBN 1). Of course, Bennett (1971) argues that because impressions *must* have content, they must be copied from objects in the external world. Everson (1988) does a nice job of rebutting this suggestion, but see Landy (2006) for a necessary corrective to the conclusion that Everson draws from his argument.

8 'I observe that many of our complex ideas never had impressions, that correspond to them, and that many of our complex impressions never are exactly copy'd in ideas' (*T* 1.1.1.4; SBN 3).

9 What one *wants* to say here, of course, is that a complex idea has as its content more than just the *aggregate* content of its constituent simple ideas; it has as its content some *structured* whole whose parts are the content of these simple ideas. Unfortunately, *Hume* cannot say this for reasons having to do with his theory of complex representation; cf. Landy (2009a).

10 Remember that, strictly speaking, for Hume we do not have any idea of the external world. All our ideas are of mental items. Perhaps a less sceptical version of Hume could use the copy principle to fix worldly objects as the content of our ideas, if they held that our ideas are caused by and resemble such objects.

[11] 'Thus shou'd we mention the word *triangle*, and form the idea of a particular equilateral one to correspond to it, and shou'd we afterwards assert, *that the three angles of a triangle are equal to each other*, the other individuals of scalenum and isosceles, which we over-look'd at first, immediately crowd in upon us, and make us perceive the falsehood of this proposition, tho' it be true with relation to that idea, which we had form'd' (*T* 1.1.7.8; 5BN21).

[12] Of course, this object may be – and in Hume always is – a further mental entity, but this will not be *essentially* so. What is essential to the content of an idea is not its relation to any other idea, but its relation to its *object*.

[13] For treatments of the problem of the unity of the proposition as it appears in modern philosophy, cf. Linsky (1992), Ott (2004). For a treatment of this problem's recurrence at the start of the twentieth century, cf. Gibson (2004). For contemporary treatments of the problem, cf. Carruthers (1983), Wiggins (1984), Brandom (1994), Fodor (2003).

[14] Cf. Sellars (1963a), Landy (2007).

[15] Hume tries to get by with objects and sets of objects; Plato includes the Forms; Frege includes 'unsaturated' concepts, etc.

[16] It is worth noting that it is unclear whether the standard contemporary move – made in, for instance, Fodor, (2003) – of making each of the items on what would otherwise be a mere list of names syntactically structured helps at all. It should be obvious that we could also put such items on a list, and thus the question of how to differentiate such a list from a proposition still remains.

[17] Hume argues as follows. All belief concerns 'the existence of objects or of their qualities' (*T* 1.3.7.2; SBN 94). ''Tis also evident, that the idea of existence is nothing different from the idea of any object' (*T* 1.3.7.2; SBN 94). 'When you wou'd in any way vary the idea of a particular object, you can only encrease or diminish its force and vivacity' (*T* 1.3.7.5; SBN 96). 'An opinion, therefore, or belief may be most accurately defin'd a lively idea related to or associated with a present impression' (*T* 1.3.7.5; SBN 96).

[18] Cf. Landy (2007) for a catalogue of possible Humean reactions to this challenge.

[19] In what follows, I will present, but not defend, a particular reading of the Transcendental Deduction that owes much to Sellars originally, and Rosenberg following him. It is drawing the specific link between this reading of the Deduction and Kant's inferentialism that I take to be the major work of this paper.

[20] It is thanks to Henrich (1989) that we know the full extent to which Kant modelled his deduction on the juridical practices of eighteenth-century German courts.

[21] All passages from Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* are taken from Kant (*CPR*).

[22] Longuenesse (1998) provides an admirably thorough exploration of this kind of derivation. Rosenberg (2005) also contains many insights.

[23] It is not an accident that I switched from the locution 'having concepts' to 'making use of concepts' when I switched from talking about Hume to talking about Kant. Hume, as I pointed out, thinks of concepts as mental entities. Kant, on the other hand, as we will see, thinks of them as *rules*.

[24] For a similar approach to a slightly different justificatory problem cf. Sellars (1964 and 1988). For a similar approach to the Transcendental Deduction cf. Rosenberg (2005). For a discussion of Rosenberg's approach cf. Landy (2009).

[25] Designated hitters, bench warmers and rain-outs aside.

[26] Technically, this project is not completed until the end of the Analytic of Principles.

[27] Of course, it is controversial whether *Descartes* actually makes this inference. It will suffice for present purposes to see that it is an inference with which Kant's modern predecessors are concerned, and to which Kant pays a good deal of attention.

[28] Of course, Hume does not *really* reject Descartes's conclusion either. Famously, in the Appendix to the *Treatise* he writes: 'But upon a more strict review of the section concerning personal identity, I find myself involv'd in such a labyrinth, that, I must confess, I neither know how to correct my former opinions, nor how to render them consistent' (*T* App. 10; SBN 633). The problem Hume finds with his account of personal identity is that if it is to work, there must be some principle according to which the various perceptions that constitute *a self* are united. Because the only principles that Hume is willing to consider are those that can be *experienced*, he is left in despair: 'But my hopes vanish, when I come to explain the principles, that unite our successive perceptions in our thought or consciousness. I cannot discover any theory, which gives me satisfaction on this head' (*T* App. 20; SBN 636).

[29] The principle for uniting the self that Hume sought, Kant thinks, is simply '*These* thoughts are *mine*'. There is no *reductive* principle according to which we can identify all and only *my* thoughts. We can only so identify them by *presupposing* the self that has such thoughts. The thoughts that are mine are simply the ones that *I* have.

[30] The nature of the '+'s here will be our topic later. For now these just signal some sort of combination of a manifold of intuitions occurring as part of a single cognition. Later we will see that this combination is *inferential*.

[31] I here take over Kant's terminology and speak of a manifold of *intuitions*, rather than a manifold of experiences.

[32] It is, more specifically, the application of an object-concept to a manifold of intuitions. Such an application occurs in a *judgement*, and explaining how *this* works, how concepts are 'applied' to manifolds of intuitions, will bring us full circle back to where we started our investigation of Kant: the problem of the unity of the proposition. We have a way to go yet, however, before we complete the circle.

[33] Notice that we could have run this example synchronically, if what we wanted was a unified self at a time. For instance, we could have made

our manifold out of the synchronic experiences (1) I see a grey trunk, (2) I hear a loud trumpeting sound, (3) I feel leathery skin, (4) I smell dung, etc., or even synchronic experiences such as (1) I see a grey patch in such-and-such a portion of my visual field, (2) I see a darker grey patch in such-and-such other part of my visual field, etc.

[34] It is worth noting here that the terms in which we have described these intuitions also make use of object-concepts – 'tail', 'body', 'ear' and 'trunk'. This gets us into the complicated theme of the productive imagination and the difference between intuitions and *sensations*. Intuitions, for Kant, are already themselves *conceptual* episodes – which for us means that they are already enmeshed in a network of inferential relations. Sensations are the non-conceptual episodes that are united by the understanding to form intuitions (cf. A79/B104), and so it is sensations that are, strictly speaking, the closer analogue to Hume's impressions. Hanna (2001) is a recent attempt to push intuitions further towards the non-conceptual.

[35] It is not, of course, the case that an elephant *necessarily has* a tail, an ear, a trunk arranged in such-and-such a configuration. There are, sadly, elephants without such parts. Rather the necessity attaches to the relation of these *intuitions* to one another. They are necessarily connected, as opposed to being merely contingently *associated*, because they are the result of an encounter with an object, in this case an elephant.

[36] Kant argues, most explicitly in the Analytic of Principles, that the difference between conceiving of a manifold of intuitions as a mere series of random representations, and conceiving of such a manifold as a series of representations *of objects*, is thinking of the items of that manifold as being necessarily connected to one another; cf. Strawson (1959: chapter 2).

[37] There is, of course, a long story to tell here about the *ways* in which we encounter this world of objects: from a perspective in space and time.

[38] Cf. Sellars (2002).

[39] It is surprising how infrequently this question is asked in the literature on the *Critique*, the Transcendental Deduction, and Kant's theory of concepts more generally. Notable exceptions are Sellars (1967), Pippin (1982), Longuenesse (1998) and Rosenberg (2005).

[40] That is, that not only is a concept an inferential rule, for Kant, but that is *all* that it is.

[41] I will *not* be looking at all at the *Jäsche Logic*, which many commentators argue presents compelling evidence that Kant held an abstractionist theory of concepts and concept acquisition. There are two main reasons for this omission, which I will present, but for which I will not argue here. The first is that much of what is uncontroversial in what Kant has to say about his theory of concepts in the first *Critique* is fairly clearly incompatible with the abstractionist theory of concepts presented in the *Logic*. For instance, the anti-empiricist doctrine of the *spontaneity* of the understanding pretty clearly rules out the possibility that concepts are products of mechanical operations performed on intuitions (or anything else). Second, given this incompatibility,

we have more reason to take seriously what Kant has to say about concepts in the first *Critique* than we do what he says in the *Logic*. As has been often noted, the *Logic* is a compilation (by Gottlob Benjamin Jäsche) of the notes that Kant used in his exoteric lectures on logic at the university. It is therefore true, both that he did not have the final say on what went into the published version of these notes, and that he had reason to present a simplified and unrepresentative version of his *very* complex views on concepts in these lectures. For these reasons, I will proceed by taking the first *Critique* as the final word on Kant's theory of concepts.

[42] This interpretation is thus crucially different from that presented in Hanna (2001). Hanna argues that, while concepts *also* act as rules of inference, this is by virtue of their representing intrinsic structural *properties* of empirical objects. There is not space enough to show it here, but I would argue that such a reading makes Hanna's Kant a kind of relationalist, and therefore susceptible to the problem of the unity of the proposition.

[43] It is by including these certain appearances that come before us that Kant signals that he is here considering *empirical* concepts. *Pure* concepts do not have, or need to have, this empirical component. Pure a priori concepts, the categories, are a different beast still. They can plausibly be read, I think, as inferential meta-rules concerning what first-order rules count as rules for understanding manifolds of intuitions *as objects*.

[44] There is not space to argue it here, but I will point out that if concepts are related *inferentially* to intuitions, which I think they are, then intuitions must, in some sense, be conceptual. Room, however, is still made for the non-conceptual in our mental lives by distinguishing intuitions from *sensations*. Cf. Sellars (1967).

[45] Of course, Kant is thinking in terms not of *languages*, but rather of systems of mental representation. For the story of how philosophy moved from this Kantian perspective to one that explicitly engages language and communal standards for the correctness and incorrectness of inference cf. Landy (2008).

[46] A similar reading is available of Kant's talk of one concept's *containing* another. A concept, *A*, can be said to contain another, *B*, just in case if one commits oneself to something's being *A* one also thereby commits oneself to its being *B*. This, of course, would need to be worked out in more detail alongside Kant's texts, but seems like a prime facie good start.

[47] Sellars (1963b) and Brandom (1994) both contain what I take to be plausible ways of cashing out the analytic/synthetic distinction in post-Quinean ways.

[48] This explains what Longuensse calls the 'privileging of predication' (1998: 104). As Hanna (2001) points out, this is a substantial and controversial claim that does a great deal of work in Kant's theory of judgement.

[49] Notice that calling the theory described here a picture theory does not thereby commit one to a relationalist account of the representative power of pictures. Clearly, one cannot be an *inferentialist* about such a picture, but one is not thereby forced to relationalism. One might hold, for instance, that a picture represents in virtue of the representative power of its elements, and that each of these represents in virtue of its place in the picture. For a discussion of the relation of inferentialism, picture theory, and relationalism, cf. Rosenberg (2007: chapter 5).

[50] Obviously this reading of Kant owes much to Sellars (1963a and 1979). This is in large part because Sellars is such a close and careful reader of Kant.

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