

Overview of *The Transcendental Deduction*

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1 *The Task of the Deduction*

- Demonstrate the legitimacy of the categories
 - Legitimacy understood in terms of concepts which have their source in the mind (i.e. the categories) but which are correctly and justifiably applied to features present in experience
 - The “transcendental” nature of the argument is characterized as an argument which begins from obvious or uncontroversial premises and argues to some conclusion understood as a necessary condition for the possibility of the truth of those premises
 - Kant’s use of “*Deduktion*” redeploys German legal vocabulary; in Holy Roman Empire Law, “*Deduktion*” signifies an argument intended to yield a historical justification for the legitimacy of a property claim
 - * In Kant’s usage a deduction is an argument that aims to justify the use of a concept, one that demonstrates that the concept correctly applies to objects
 - The demonstration of their legitimacy proceeds by appealing to the necessary role of the categories in coming to have empirical *cognition* [*Erkenntnis*] of any sort
 - * Confusingly, Kant often elides this notion of empirical cognition with the notion of “Experience” [*Erfahrung*]

1.1 *Grades of “Experience”*

- Kant’s usage of “experience” [*Erfahrung*] is ambiguous throughout his work^{1,2}
 - (e1) having sensations
 - (e2) having sensations and being conscious of them
 - (e3) having intuitions
 - (e4) having intuitions and conceptualizing them (bringing them under concepts)
 - (e5) having intuitions and conceptualizing them by means of physical-object concepts
 - (e6) having intuitions and conceptualizing them as mine
 - (e7) having intuitions and making judgments about them
 - (e8) having intuitions and knowing propositions about them

¹ In the first paragraph of the introduction to the work, Kant uses “experience” in two different senses without calling the reader’s attention to the fact. The experience with which all our knowledge is said to begin is “the raw material of the sensible impressions”; experience in this sense is then said to be worked up by the understanding into “that knowledge of objects which is entitled experience” (B1). The same ambiguity runs throughout the work. (???) , 73)

² Empirical cognition, however, is experience (B166). Experience is an empirical cognition, i.e., a cognition that determines an object through perceptions (A176/B218). Therefore experience itself – i.e., empirical cognition of appearances – is possible only in as much as we subject the succession of appearances, and hence all change, to the law of causality (A189/B234).

2 The Structure of the Deduction

- Transition (§§13-14)
- The problem of combination (§15)
- The first step (§§16-20)
- The second step (§§21-26)

2.1 Transition to the Deduction

- §13 On The Principles Of A Transcendental Deduction As Such
 - Discussion of a need for a transcendental as opposed to a merely empirical deduction.
 - This is based on the fact that an empirical deduction is unavailable due to two reasons – viz.
 1. the a priori nature of the categories
 2. their semantic content includes notions of necessity and universality (A91-2/B124)
- §14 Transition To The Transcendental Deduction Of The Categories
 - Discussion of the nature of empirical cognition as a complex of intuition and concept (A92-3/B125)
 - The categories are a necessary condition for the empirical cognition of objects – i.e. are necessary conditions for occurrence of thought about objects (of experience) (A93/B125-6)

³ All combination (*conjunctio*) is either composition (*compositio*) or connection (*nexus*). The former is the synthesis of a manifold of what does not necessarily belong to each other...The second combination (*nexus*) is the synthesis of that which is manifold insofar as they necessarily belong to one another...(B201-2)

⁴ the combination (*conjunctio*) of a manifold in general can never come to us through the senses, and therefore cannot already be contained in the pure form of sensible intuition; for it is an act of the spontaneity of the power of representation, and, since one must call the latter understanding, in distinction from sensibility, 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** in order at the same time to draw attention to the fact that we can represent nothing as combined in the object without having previously combined it ourselves, and that among all representations **combination** is the only one that is not given through objects but can be executed only by the subject itself, since it is an act of its self-activity. (B129-30)

⁵ Now the representation of a composite, as such, is not a mere intuition, but requires the concept of a compounding, so far as it is applied to the intuition in space and time. So this concept (along with that of its opposite, the simple) is one that is not abstracted from intuitions, as a part-representation contained in them, but is a basic concept, and a priori at that – in the end the sole basic concept a priori, which is the original foundation in the understanding for all concepts of sensible objects. There will thus be as many a priori concepts resident in the understanding, to which objects given to the senses must be subordinated, as there are types of compounding (*synthesis*) with consciousness, i.e., as there are types of synthetic unity of apperception of the manifold given in intuition. (*Progress*, 20:271)

2.2 The Problem of Combination (§15)

- §15 On the possibility of a combination as such
 - Sets up a problem (the problem of combination)
 - Explains that a “unity” is necessary for the resolution of that problem
 - * What does Kant mean by “combination” [*Verbindung*]³
 - * Why can’t combination be given in intuition?⁴
 - * What is the connection of the categories with combination?⁵

2.3 The First Step (§§16-20)

- The primary goal of the first step is to demonstrate the truth of a conditional claim—viz. if there is cognition then the categories must play a role in its generation
 - §16 On the original synthetic unity of apperception

- §17 The principle of the synthetic unity of apperception is the supreme principle for all use of the understanding
- §18 What objective unity of self-consciousness is
- §19 The logical form of all judgments consists in the objective unity of apperception of the concepts contained in them
- §20 All sensible intuitions are subject to the categories, which are conditions under which alone their manifold can come together in one consciousness

2.4 *The Second Step (§§21-26)*

- The second step has two aims:
 1. articulate the limited application of the categories in *cognition*—viz. they may be used only within the bounds of sensible experience
 2. demonstrate the actuality of cognitions in which the categories are applied (i.e. the antecedent of the conditional proven in the first step)
- The second step has six sections:
 - §21 Comment
 - §22 A category cannot be used for cognizing things except when it is applied to objects of experience
 - §23 [A commentary on §22]
 - §24 On applying the categories to objects of the senses as such
 - §25 [Commentary on §24, specifically intuition of the self]
 - §26 Transcendental deduction of the universally possible use in experience of the pure concepts of understanding

References & Further Reading

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