

The Transcendental Deduction I

PHIL 4/871

1 What is a “Transcendental Deduction”?

- The “transcendental” nature of the argument is due to its role in explaining the conditions of the possibility of experience.
 - In contemporary philosophy, transcendental arguments are often characterized as arguments that begin from obvious or uncontroversial premises and argue to a 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 claim¹
 - 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

¹ Jurists, when they speak of entitlements and claims, distinguish in a legal matter between the 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 or the legal claim, the **deduction**. (B116)

2 The Problem of the Deduction

- Kant aims to show that the categories, which are the logical functions of judgment in relation to given objects (i.e. to given *intuitions* of objects), legitimately apply to such objects. Why might they not apply?
 1. A priori concepts are not derived from any experience of empirical objects, so it is not obvious why such concepts would apply to empirical objects
 2. Unlike the *forms* of intuition, the categories are *not* conditions under which something is given to consciousness via intuition²
- Q1: If the categories are not conditions of being given something in intuition, then what are they conditions of?
- A1: The categories are conditions of our *cognition* of objects
 - Cognition requires the determinate representation of an object
 - The categories (in combination with intuition) are responsible for this determinacy

² The categories of the understanding, on the contrary, do not represent to us the conditions under which objects are given in intuition at all, hence objects can indeed appear to us without necessarily having to be related to functions of the understanding, and therefore without the understanding containing their *a priori* conditions. Thus a difficulty is revealed here that we did not encounter in the field of sensibility, namely how **subjective conditions of thinking** should have **objective validity**, i.e., yield conditions of the possibility of all cognition of objects; for appearances can certainly be given in intuition without functions of the understanding. (A89-90/B122)

3 What is Presupposed by the Deduction?

- Q₂: Is the presumption of cognition a reasonable starting point for the argument of the TD?
- A₂: At this point Kant need not assume that we *have* cognition, only that *if* we have cognition, *then* such cognition relies on the categories. In step two, Kant argues that we have a priori cognition of space and time as objects of pure mathematics, and that this is only possible given the categories
- Q₃: What's the relation between cognition and experience?

3.1 Grades of "Experience"

- Kant's usage of "experience" [*Erfahrung*] is ambiguous throughout his work^{3,4}
 - (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

³ 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. (Van Cleve 1999, 73)

⁴ 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).

4 The Structure of the Deduction

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

4.1 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)

4.2 *The Structure of the First Step (§§15-20)*

- 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
 - §15 On the possibility of a combination in general
 - §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

5 *The First Step of the Deduction*

5.1 *§15—The Problem of Combination*

- §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*]⁵
 - * Why can’t combination be given in intuition?⁶
 - * What is the connection of the categories with combination?⁷

⁵ 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)

⁶ 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)

⁷ 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)

5.2 §16—*The Original Synthetic Unity of Apperception*

THINKABILITY & MINENESS

1. A representation is *thinkable* if and only if it is *self-consciously thinkable*⁸
2. A representation counts as *mine* if, and only if, it is self-consciously thinkable
3. ∴ All my representations must be thinkable

⁸ The **I think** must **be able** to accompany all my representations; for otherwise something would be represented in me that could not be thought at all, which is as much as to say that the representation would either be impossible or else at least would be nothing to me. (B131–2)

SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS & NUMERICAL IDENTITY

1. If a representation is *mine*, then I must be able to represent myself as numerically identical⁹
2. The representation of my self-identity itself depends on my ability to combine representations in a single consciousness¹⁰
3. ∴ Insofar as I represent *myself* (i.e. am conscious of my identity), I must possess the capacity to synthesize or combine representations in one consciousness

⁹ the representation **I think**, which must be able to accompany all others and which in all consciousness is one and the same (B132)

¹⁰ 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, i.e., the **analytical** unity of apperception is only possible under the presupposition of some **synthetic** one. (B133–4)

Apperception: self-consciousness, or consciousness of one's representations

Original Apperception: the fundamental productive power of self-consciousness¹¹

- Note that this means the “I think” is not to be identified with original apperception, but is rather its *product*

¹¹ that self consciousness which, because it produces the representation **I think**, which must be able to accompany all others and which in all consciousness is one and the same, cannot be derived from any other (B132)

Transcendental Apperception: the unity of self-consciousness upon which cognition or experience depends¹²

¹² I also call its unity the **transcendental** unity of self-consciousness in order to designate the possibility of a priori cognition from it. (B132)

5.3 §17—*Relation to an Object/Objects as Unities*

1. All unification of representations demands a unity of consciousness in their synthesis
2. The representation of an object is a unity of representations^{13,14}
3. ∴ A unity of consciousness is necessary for the relation of representations to an object (or more simply, for the representation of an “object” in Kant's sense)

¹³ The **understanding** is, to speak generally, the faculty of **cognitions**. These consist in the determinate relation of given representations to an object. But an **object** is that in the concept of which the manifold of a given intuition is united. (B137)

¹⁴ What is an object? That whose representation is a sum of several predicates belonging to it. The plate is round, warm, made of tin, etc. Warm, round, being made of tin, etc., are not objects, although the warm [thing], the tin [thing], etc., indeed [are]. An object is that in the representation of which various others can be thought as synthetically combined... (R6350, I8:676)

5.4 §18—*Necessity and Universality*

1. Experience contains representation of objective simultaneity and succession
2. Representation of objective simultaneity and succession requires representation of universality and necessity
3. The empirical unity of consciousness generated by association cannot explain the possibility of such representation¹⁵
4. ∴ Associationism is insufficient for explaining representation involving necessity and universality

5.5 §19—*Judgment & Synthesis*

1. We distinguish between mere subjective association of concepts and objective judgment
2. Objective judgment involves a relation between two concepts that transcends particular contingent facts concerning their relation by a particular subject¹⁶
3. This distinction cannot be accounted for by a merely associationist account of the mind
4. There are no other plausible explanations besides associationism and the synthesis theory
5. ∴ Only synthesis explain the objective status of judgment¹⁷

5.6 §20—*Intuition & Synthesis*

1. Intuition of an *object* requires a unified “manifold”
2. The unity of a manifold is brought about by the unity of apperception
3. The unity of apperception brings about the unity of a manifold via an act of judgment in accordance with one of the logical forms
4. The categories are the rules of combination by which each of the logical functions of judgment is carried out with respect to intuition
5. ∴ Any intuition of an object must conform to the categories

- Q₄: Why doesn't the Deduction end here?
- A₄: There are two remaining issues
 1. We haven't yet seen that there is “experience” or cognition of objects
 2. There are important negative aspects of the view that Kant seeks to explain

References & Further Reading

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¹⁵ Whether I can become **empirically** conscious of the manifold as simultaneous or successive depends on the circumstances, or empirical conditions. Hence the empirical unity of consciousness, through association of the representations, itself concerns an appearance, and is entirely contingent...One person combines the representation of a certain word with one thing, another with something else; and the unity of consciousness in that which is empirical is not, with regard to that which is given, necessarily and universally valid. (B140)

¹⁶ In accordance with the [laws of association] I could only say “If I carry a body, I feel a pressure of weight,” but not “It, the body, is heavy,” which would be to say that these two representations are combined in the object, i.e., regardless of any difference in the condition of the subject, and are not merely found together in perception (however often as that might be repeated).

¹⁷ a judgment is nothing other than the way to bring given cognitions to the objective unity of apperception (B141)

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