

24.201 Topics in History of Philosophy: KANT

The Transcendental Deduction

The First Edition Deduction

1. *A change of focus.* After the Transcendental Aesthetic's focus on intuitions and sensibility, we shift now to the other side of Kant's duality: namely, concepts, and the understanding. Just as space and time provide the structure for intuiting, perceiving, so logic provides the structure for thinking. Logic provides us with all the forms of possible judgements (A67/B92 ff). These then provide the 'clue' for working out what the categories are: *a priori* concepts that apply not to objects in general, but objects of intuition in general, intuitions being the only objects of possible experience (just above A96). The concepts are not derived *from* experience (for then they would not be *a priori*), but must apply *to* experience (A86/B119, A96).

2. *The idea of a deduction of the categories.* (Note, incidentally, Kant's warning about the difficulty of his argument at A98.) Kant explains the deduction as a *justification* (A84/B117): an answer to the question of *right*, not the question of *fact*: about a right to knowledge claims. Representation and its object: which makes which possible? (The Copernican project again (B125).) Kant's strategy: self-consciousness requires knowledge of an objective, rule governed world, because it requires application of the categories (A97). The aim is ambitious: to establish, from the mere fact of self-consciousness, that we must be conscious of objects.

3. *The three fold synthesis in the understanding.* The capacities in the understanding to compare, connect, and unify the fragmentary manifold items in intuition (A97).

(a) *Apprehension in intuition.* The running through and gathering together of what is intuition. The many items in intuition could not even be represented as many unless there were some single unitary vantage from they could be represented (A99).

(b) *Reproduction in imagination.* The role of imagination in reproducing past representations to construct something more than mere fragmentary thoughts or images (A102).

(c) *Recognition in a concept.* Recognizing present thoughts to be the same as, and continuous with, the immediately past (A103): the notion of a 'concept' as a grasping, gathering together (*Begriff* (A104)).

4. *The object of representations, objectivity, and unity of consciousness.* 'The object is viewed as that which prevents our modes of knowledge from being haphazard or arbitrary .' (A104) 'the unity which the object makes necessary can be nothing else than the formal unity of consciousness...' (A105). What explains the unity we ascribe to an object? A traditional realist answer is that the object is the source of the unity; but Kant says, on the contrary, the unity is the source of the object, but that we must think of the unity as coming from the object. Self-consciousness is consciousness only of the unity of appearances, brought under concepts (A107, A122, A124)). The *a priori* conditions of possible experience are at the same time conditions of the possibility of objects of experience. Idealist conclusions (A114, A126-8): 'the understanding is itself the source of the laws of nature'.

The Second Edition Deduction

1. 'It must be possible for the '*I think*' to accompany all my representations' (B131). The representations must have whatever features they need for this to be possible: 'as my representations... they must conform to the condition under which alone they *can* stand together in one universal self-consciousness' (B132) (What is the 'condition'?). Jonathan Bennett drew an analogy, in *Kant's Analytic*: I can wonder whether it is *my* tummy that's rumbling, but not whether *I'm* the one embarrassed. Mental states somehow have their ownership written in to them.

2. *Identity of consciousness* a presupposition of diverse experiences (B133). Only in so far as I can unite the manifold—the various representations—in one consciousness, is it possible for me to represent to myself the identity of consciousness throughout these representations. Otherwise there would be a self as fragmented as the intuitions (B134). Note that on Kant's account self-consciousness is a presupposition, rather than an object, of knowledge. There is a contrast with Descartes: for Kant, no thinking substance to be known by introspection. There is a contrast also with Hume: for Kant, the self is no mere bundle of impressions or intuitions (the Kantian counterpart) (cf. B157-159).

3. An *object* is a manifold (a plurality, diversity) that is *united* (B137). The unity in the object is provided by the application of the categories by the understanding, rules without which experience would be unruly (B143, B145). The categories are applied only when there is a unity in the 'I' who applies them. Therefore there is a unity in the object if and only if there is a unity in the subject: equivalently (?) there is self-consciousness if and only if there is objective knowledge, i.e. knowledge of objects.

4. A. C. Ewing's summary of the Deduction:

I am conscious of a variety, a, b, c.

This entails synthesis: the putting together of a, b, c in a united system.

There is synthesis if and only if there is unity of consciousness: the *same* self is aware of a, b, c

There is synthesis if and only if there is unity in an object: a, b, c are connected.

Connection must be by means of categories, and therefore is objective.

5. *How far does the Deduction get us?* Strawson suggests that, even if it works, the argument is basically a preface, a program, for arguments about substance and causality later in the analytic, whose task is to spell out in more detail just how it is that self-consciousness involves consciousness of objects.