

Kant's Non-Conceptualism, Elusive Objects, and the Gap in the B Deduction

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Thus I had to deny **scientific knowing** (*Wissen*) in order to make room for **faith** (*Glauben*). (CPR Bxxx; see also A828/B856)

--I. Kant¹

Wovon man nicht sprechen kann, darüber muss man schweigen.

--L. Wittgenstein²

For objects, McDowell's claim that the conceptual is unbounded amounts to the claim that any object can be thought of. Likewise for the sort of thing that can be the case: the claim is, for example, that whenever an object has a property, it can be thought, of the object and the property, that the former has the latter.... McDowell's argument in any case seems to require the premise that everything (object, property, relation, state of affairs, ...) is thinkable. That premise is highly contentious. What reason have we to assume that reality does not contain *elusive objects*, incapable in principle of being individually thought of?.... Although elusive objects belong to the very same ontological category of objects as those we can single out, their possibility still undermines McDowell's claim that we cannot make "interesting sense" of the idea of something outside the conceptual realm We do not know whether there are actually elusive objects. What would motivate the claim that there are none, if not some form of idealism very far from McDowell's intentions? We should adopt no conception of philosophy that on methodological grounds excludes elusive objects.

--T. Williamson³

I. Introduction

This paper is about the nature of the relationship between

(1) the doctrine of Non-Conceptualism about mental content,

(2) Kant's Transcendental Idealism,

and

(3) the Transcendental Deduction of the Pure Concepts of the Understanding, or Categories, in the B (1787) edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, i.e., the B Deduction.

Correspondingly, the main thesis of the paper is this: (1) and (2) yield serious problems

for (3), yet, in exploring these two serious problems for the B Deduction, we also

discover some deeply important and perhaps surprising philosophical facts about Kant's theory of cognition and his metaphysics.

II. Non-Conceptualism, Transcendental Idealism, and the B Deduction

The thesis of *Non-Conceptualism* about mental content says that not all mental contents in the intentional or representational acts or states of conscious animals are strictly determined by their conceptual capacities, and that at least some mental contents are strictly determined by their non-conceptual capacities.⁴ Non-Conceptualism is sometimes, but not always, combined with the further thesis that non-conceptual capacities and contents can be shared by rational human animals, non-rational human animals (and in particular, infants), and non-human animals alike. But in any case, Non-Conceptualism is directly opposed to the thesis of *Conceptualism* about mental content, which says that all mental contents are strictly determined by conscious animals' conceptual capacities.⁵ Conceptualism is also sometimes, but not always, combined with the further thesis that the psychological acts or states of infants and non-human minded animals lack mental content.

Now in a nutshell, Non-Conceptualism says that our cognitive access to the targets of our intentionality is neither always nor necessarily mediated by concepts, and furthermore that our cognitive access to the targets of our intentionality is sometimes wholly *unmediated* by concepts; and Conceptualism says that our cognitive access to the targets of our intentionality is always and necessarily mediated by concepts. Here, then, is the fundamental philosophical issue: Can we and do we sometimes cognitively encounter things directly and pre-discursively (Non-Conceptualism), or must we always cognitively encounter them only within the framework of discursive rationality (Conceptualism)?

Before going on, I need to say something about Transcendental Idealism.

According to Kant, a mental representation is *transcendental* when it is either part of, or derived from, our non-empirical (hence a priori) innately-specified spontaneous cognitive capacities (*CPR* A11/B25) (*Prol* 4: 373n.). This allows me to spell out Transcendental Idealism as a two-part thesis:

Transcendental Idealism = (1) *Transcendentalism* + (2) *Idealism*.

(1) **Transcendentalism** = Necessarily, all the forms or structures of rational human cognition are generated a priori by the empirically-triggered, yet stimulus-underdetermined, activities of our innately-specified spontaneous cognitive capacities (= cognitive faculties, cognitive powers).

(2) **Idealism** = Necessarily, all the proper objects of rational human cognition are nothing but appearances or phenomena (i.e., mind-dependent, sensory, spatiotemporal, directly perceivable objects) and never things-in-themselves or noumena (i.e., mind-independent, non-sensible, non-spatiotemporal, real essences constituted by intrinsic non-relational properties) (*CPR* A369 and *Prol* 4: 293-294, 375).

Now (1) + (2) = Kant's "Copernican revolution" in metaphysics:

Up to now it has been assumed that all our cognition must conform to the objects; but all attempts to find out something about them *a priori* through concepts that would extend our cognition have, on this presupposition, come to nothing. Hence let us once try whether we do not get farther with the problems of metaphysics by assuming that the objects must conform to our cognition, which would agree better with the requested possibility of an *a priori* cognition of them, which is to establish something about objects before they are given to us. This would be just like the first thoughts of Copernicus.... (*CPR* Bxvi),

which I will rationally reconstruct as *The Conformity Thesis*:

It is *not* the case that rational human minds passively conform to the objects they cognize, as in Classical Rationalism and Classical Empiricism. On the contrary, necessarily, all the proper objects of rational human cognition conform to—i.e., they have the *same* form or structure as, or are *isomorphic* to—the forms or structures that are non-empirically generated by our innately-specified spontaneous cognitive capacities. So necessarily the form or structure of the manifestly real natural world we cognize is *mind-dependent*.

In this way, all versions of Transcendental Idealism hold that the manifest natural world we directly perceive must *in some sense* conform to the non-empirical structures of our innate cognitive capacities.

Now the Pure Concepts of the Understanding, or Categories, are a species of innate non-empirical structures of the human mind. More specifically, the Categories are second-order concepts, derived from pure general logic, that partially determine the objective application of every first-order or empirical concept (*CPR* A76-83/B102-113). The main thesis of the B Deduction is this: “the categories are conditions of the possibility of experience, and thus are also valid *a priori* of all objects of experience” (*CPR* B161), i.e.,

TD1: The Categories are necessary a priori conditions of the possibility of all objects of experience.

Kant argues for **TD1** by arguing that the Categories are necessary a priori conditions of the possibility of the experience of objects. Obviously, then, he can get to the conclusion that he wants only if *the experience of objects* is identical to *the objects of experience*, and this in turn is true only if Transcendental Idealism is true. Kant makes this point very clearly in his philosophical correspondence:

You put the matter quite precisely when you say “The content (*Innbegriff*) of a representation is itself the object; and the activity of the mind whereby the content of a representation is represented is what is meant by ‘referring to the object’.” (*PC* 11: 314)

Béatrice Longuenesse aptly dubs this Kantian thesis “the internalization to representation of the object of representation.”⁶ So the B Deduction requires the truth of Transcendental Idealism, and more specifically it requires the internalization to representation of the object of representation.

But Transcendental Idealism is a highly controversial thesis, to say the least, and indeed I myself think that unqualified or *Strong* Transcendental Idealism is false, although a Weak or *Counterfactual* version of Transcendental Idealism does seem to me

to be true.⁷ By “Strong Transcendental Idealism,” or STI for short, I mean this Kantian doctrine:

- (1) Things-in-themselves (a.k.a. “noumena,” or Really Real things, i.e., things as they could exist in a “lonely” way, altogether independently of rational human minds or anything else, by virtue of their intrinsic non-relational properties) really exist and cause our perceptions, although rational human cognizers only ever perceive mere appearances or subjective phenomena.
- (2) Rational human cognizers actually impose the non-empirical structures of their innate cognitive capacities onto the manifest natural world they cognize, i.e., necessarily, all the immanent forms or structures of the proper objects of human cognition are literally *type-identical* to the forms or structures that are non-empirically generated by our innately-specified spontaneous cognitive capacities.

and

- (3) Necessarily, if all rational human cognizers went out of existence, then so would the manifest natural world they cognize.

And by “Weak or Counterfactual Transcendental Idealism,” or WCTI for short, I mean this Kantian doctrine:

- (i) Things-in-themselves are logically possible, but at the same time it is necessarily unknowable and unprovable whether things-in-themselves exist or not, hence for the purposes of metaphysics, epistemology, and ethics, they can be ignored (= *methodological eliminativism about things-in-themselves*).
- (ii) Necessarily, all the proper objects of rational human cognition have the *same* forms or structures as—i.e., they are *isomorphic* to—the forms or structures that are non-empirically generated by our innately-specified spontaneous cognitive capacities, but at the same time those worldly forms or structures are *not* literally type-identical to those mental forms or structures (= *the necessary-conformity-without-literal-identity thesis*).
- (iii) It is a necessary condition of the existence of the manifest natural world that if some rational human animals *were* to exist in that world, then they *would* directly cognize that world via essentially non-conceptual (i.e., intuitional) representational content, at least to some extent (= *the counterfactual cognizability thesis*).

and

- (iv) The manifest natural world has at some earlier times existed without rational human animals to cognize it directly, and could exist even if no rational human animals existed to cognize it directly, even though some rational human animals now actually exist in that world—e.g., I (R.H.) now actually exist in the manifest natural world—who do in fact cognize it directly, at least to some extent (= *the existential thesis*).

In any case, if I am correct about the falsity of STI, then its falsity is obviously one serious problem for the B Deduction. This problem can be avoided, however, if we remain officially agnostic about the truth of Transcendental Idealism and as choosing between STI and WCTI, and then correspondingly weaken the main thesis of the B Deduction as follows:

TD2: The Categories are necessary a priori conditions of the possibility of *the experience of all objects*.

For the purposes of this paper, I want to focus mainly on another serious problem about the B Deduction, which I call *The Gap in the B Deduction*. The Gap in the B Deduction is that the B Deduction is sound only if Conceptualism is true, but Conceptualism is arguably false and Kant himself is a non-conceptualist. If Kant is a non-conceptualist and Kant's Non-Conceptualism is true, then there are actual or possible *rogue objects* of human experience—or what Timothy Williamson aptly calls “elusive objects”—that either contingently or necessarily do not fall under any concepts whatsoever, including the Categories. So if Kant's Non-Conceptualism is true, then both **TD1** and **TD2** are false.

The preceding paragraph might seem completely bizarre to you. This is because Kant is almost universally regarded as the *founding father* of Conceptualism and the *nemesis* of Non-Conceptualism. As York Gunther puts it:

In his slogan, “Thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind,” Kant sums up the doctrine of conceptualism.⁸

But as I've argued in several papers and books, not only does this famous slogan *not* mean what Conceptualists think it means. *On the contrary*, Kant is most accurately regarded as not only the founder of Conceptualism but also and perhaps even more

importantly as the founder of *Non-Conceptualism* alike.⁹ In the next section, I will briefly recap that argument.

III. The Togetherness Principle and Kant's Non-Conceptualism

According to Kant, judgments are complex conscious cognitions that

- (i) refer to objects either directly (via intuitions) or indirectly (via concepts),
- (ii) include concepts that are predicated either of those objects or of other constituent concepts,
- (iii) exemplify pure logical concepts and enter into inferences according to pure logical laws,
- (iv) essentially involve both the following of rules and the application of rules to the objects picked out by intuitions,
- (v) express true or false propositions,
- (vi) mediate the formation of beliefs,

and

- (vii) are unified and self-conscious.

The three leading features of this account are, first, Kant's taking the capacity for judgment to be the central cognitive faculty of the human mind, in the sense that judgment, alone among our various cognitive achievements, is the joint product of all of the other cognitive faculties operating coherently and systematically together under a single higher-order unity of rational self-consciousness (*The Centrality Thesis*); second, Kant's insistence on the priority of the propositional content of a judgment over its basic cognitive-semantic constituents (i.e., intuitions and concepts), over the inferential roles of judgments, over the rule-like character of the judgment, over the conscious psychological states in which propositions are grasped as well as the non-self-conscious psychological processes in which propositions are synthetically generated, and over beliefs in those propositions (*the Priority-of-the-Proposition Thesis*); and third, Kant's background

metaphysical doctrine to the effect that judgments are empirically meaningful (“objectively valid”) and true (“objectively real”) if and only if Transcendental Idealism is correct (*The Transcendental Idealism Thesis*).¹⁰

One of the best-known and most widely-quoted texts of the *Critique of Pure Reason* is this pithy slogan: “thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind” (CPR A51/B76). This slogan encapsulates what I call *The Togetherness Principle*. The “togetherness” here is the necessary cognitive complementarity and semantic interdependence of intuitions and concepts:

Intuition and concepts ... constitute the elements of all our cognition, so that neither concepts without intuition corresponding to them in some way nor intuition without concepts can yield a cognition.

Thoughts without [intensional] content (*Inhalt*) are empty (*leer*), intuitions without concepts are blind (*blind*). It is, therefore, just as necessary to make the mind’s concepts sensible—that is, to add an object to them in intuition—as to make our intuitions understandable—that is, to bring them under concepts. These two powers, or capacities, cannot exchange their functions. The understanding can intuit nothing, the senses can think nothing. Only from their unification can cognition arise. (CPR A50-51/B74-76)

What does The Togetherness Principle mean? The famous texts just quoted have led many readers and interpreters of Kant—e.g., Wilfrid Sellars and John McDowell¹¹—to deny the cognitive and semantic independence of intuitions: intuitions without concepts either simply do not exist or else are wholly meaningless (i.e., neither objectively valid nor rationally intelligible) even if they do exist. And this denial appears to be supported by at least one other text:

The understanding cognizes everything only through concepts; consequently, however far it goes in its divisions [of lower concepts] it never cognizes through mere intuition but always yet again through lower concepts. (A656/B684).

But even so, this cannot be a correct interpretation of the famous texts at A50-51/B74-76, just because of what Kant says in these texts:

Objects can indeed appear to us without necessarily having to be related to functions of the understanding. (CPR A89/B122, underlining added)

Appearances can certainly be given in intuition without functions of the understanding. (CPR A90/B122, underlining added)

Appearances might very well be so constituted that the understanding would not find them in accordance with the conditions of its unity.... [and] in the series of appearances nothing would present itself that would yield a rule of synthesis and so correspond to the concept of cause and effect, so that this concept would be entirely empty, null, and meaningless. Appearances would none the less present objects to our intuition, since intuition by no means requires the functions of thought. (CPR A90-91/B122-123, underlining added)

That representation which can be given prior to all thinking is called **intuition.** (CPR B132)

The manifold for intuition must already be given prior to the synthesis of the understanding and independently from it. (CPR B145, underlining added)

Concept differs from intuition by virtue of the fact that all intuition is singular. He who sees his first tree does not know what it is that he sees. (VL 24: 905, underlining added)

In other words, according to these six texts, intuitions are *essentially non-conceptual cognitions*, that is, cognitions that both exist and are objectively valid without requiring concepts and with an essentially different kind of representational content from that of concepts.¹² But now we are in a dilemma. How then can these two apparently contradictory sets of texts be reconciled?

The answer is that what Kant is actually saying in the famous texts at A50-51/B74-76 is that intuitions and concepts are cognitively complementary and semantically interdependent *for the specific purpose of constituting objectively valid judgments.* This in turn corresponds directly to a special, narrower sense of ‘cognition’ that Kant highlights in the B edition of the first *Critique*, which means the same as ‘objectively valid judgment’ (B xxvi, Bxxvi n.). But from this it does not follow that there cannot be “empty” concepts or “blind” intuitions outside the special context of objectively valid judgments. ‘Empty concept’ for Kant does not mean either “bogus concept” or “wholly meaningless concept”: rather it means “concept that is not objectively valid,” and for Kant there can be very different sorts of concepts that are not objectively valid, including rationally intelligible concepts of noumenal objects or

noumenal subjects. Similarly, ‘blind intuition’ for Kant does not mean either “bogus intuition” or “wholly meaningless intuition”: rather it means “empirically meaningful non-conceptual intuition.” Therefore, despite its being true for Kant, according to the Togetherness Principle, that intuitions and concepts must be combined with one another in order to generate objectively valid judgments, nevertheless intuitions can also occur independently of concepts and still remain objectively valid. And in particular, to the extent that intuitions are cognitively and semantically independent of concepts, and also objectively valid, they contain *non-conceptual objective representational mental contents*. So Kant’s Togetherness Principle is also perfectly consistent with his Non-Conceptualism.

IV. The B Deduction Again and Elusive Objects

Here is a brief reconstruction of the B Deduction (*CPR* B129-169):

- (1) Empirical judgments, or judgments of experience, are directed towards objects of experience.
- (2) Given Transcendental Idealism, the logical forms implicit in the propositional contents of judgments of experience are necessarily mirrored in the representational contents of conscious perceptions in order to constitute the the cognition of objects of experience.
- (3) These logical forms are Pure Concepts of the Understanding or Categories (i.e., second-order non-empirical concepts insofar as they specifically apply to objects) that are originally derived from pure general logic, when construed as an exhaustive theory of logico-syntactic and logico-semantic forms *of* and *in* propositional contents.
- (4) Since the spatiotemporal forms of intuition that necessarily govern all conscious perceptions, and also the Categories that govern all propositional contents of judgments, alike fall under the faculty of apperception, or rational self-consciousness, when apperception is directly combined with the faculty of the imagination and its figural synthesis or *synthesis speciosa* (the combination of which Kant calls “the original synthetic unity of apperception”), and since Transcendental Idealism is true, it follows that the objectivity of any object of experience is strictly determined by the forms of intuition plus the Categories that are alike implicit in judgments of experience about those objects and also literally imposed upon those objects of experience by the faculties of the judging subject in acts of judgment.

(5) Therefore the Categories necessarily apply to all and only the objects of experience, and are objectively valid.

(6) Therefore the Categories are necessary a priori conditions of the possibility of all objects of experience. (TD1)

This is certainly not the place to engage in a critical discussion of the many different possible interpretations of the B Deduction; nor is it the place to relate the B Deduction to the A Deduction. For our purposes right now, the crucial points to notice are three.

First, as many commentators have noted, there is an intimate and indeed necessary connection between Kant's theory of judgment and the B Deduction. Without the Centrality Thesis and the Priority-of-the-Proposition Thesis, the argument could not even be valid, much less sound. Kant's conception of the objectivity of objects of experience, and the role that the categories play in determining this objectivity, both depend heavily on the assumption that all human cognition is centrally judgmental, and also on the further assumption that judgmental cognition is essentially propositional.

Second, as many commentators have also noted, the conclusion of the B Deduction depends intimately and again indeed necessarily on Kant's conception of the role of the faculty of apperception or rational self-consciousness in the nature of the judgment. Without Kant's doctrine that the unity of the proposition is strictly determined by the higher-order self-representations introduced by the faculty of apperception, it could not be the case that the pure concepts of the understanding, as logical forms, would necessarily carry over into the objects of experience, as constituting their objective structure.

Third and finally, as fewer commentators have noticed,¹³ the problematic linchpin of the whole argument is in fact the antecedent of step (4), which asserts that the unity of the spatiotemporal forms of intuition and the unity of propositional content in

judgments is *identically the same* unity, namely the unity literally imposed by the faculty of rational self-consciousness in accordance with the categories, when it is directly combined with the faculty of imagination and its figural synthesis. In other words, according to Kant the spatiotemporal *intuitional* unity of the content of our conscious perceptual representations is necessarily also a fully *logico-conceptual* unity. If this claim were not true, then the unity of conscious perceptions of objects in space and time might be distinct from the unity of judgments, and, assuming the truth of Transcendental Idealism, even though the categories necessarily applies to all objects of conceptual and judgmental human experience, there might then still be some spatiotemporal objects of conscious perception to which the categories either *do not necessarily apply* or *necessarily do not apply*: that is, there might be some *rogue objects* of human *intuitional experience* that are not or cannot also be objects of human *conceptual and judgmental experience*, in the metaphysically robust sense that all those objects of human intuitional experience turn out to be *causally deviant* and *nomologically ill-behaved*, thereby falling outside the Categories.

Interestingly and highly relevantly, Williamson has recently rediscovered the possibility of rogue objects, under the apt label of “elusive objects,” in his critique of John McDowell’s well-known Conceptualist interpretation of Kant’s philosophy of cognition and metaphysics in *Mind and World*. Indeed, in this connection, we need only replace every occurrence of ‘McDowell’ with a corresponding occurrence of ‘Kant’ in the text I quoted in the third epigraph of this paper, in order to make exactly the same point I am making about the B Deduction:

For objects, [Kant’s] claim that the conceptual is unbounded amounts to the claim that any object can be thought of. Likewise for the sort of thing that can be the case: the claim is, for example, that whenever an object has a property, it can be thought, of the object and the property, that the

former has the latter.... [Kant's] argument in any case seems to require the premise that everything (object, property, relation, state of affairs, ...) is thinkable. That premise is highly contentious. What reason have we to assume that reality does not contain *elusive objects*, incapable in principle of being individually thought of?... Although elusive objects belong to the very same ontological category of objects as those we can single out, their possibility still undermines [Kant's] claim that we cannot make "interesting sense" of the idea of something outside the conceptual realm We do not know whether there are actually elusive objects. What would motivate the claim that there are none, if not some form of idealism very far from [Kant's] intentions [i.e., *subjective* idealism]? We should adopt no conception of philosophy that on methodological grounds excludes elusive objects.

What makes this striking contemporary parallel possible is of course the fact that

McDowell's radical Conceptualism is nothing more and nothing less than *the B*

*Deduction taken all the way out to the limits of the world.*¹⁴

V. The Gap in the B Deduction: Blind Intuitions and Spontaneous Elusive Objects

This last point about elusive objects fully reveals The Gap in the B Deduction. In our discussion of the B Deduction, it was noted that Kant's argument for the objective validity of the Categories will go through only if all the objects of human intuitional experience are necessarily *also* objects of human conceptual and judgmental experience, that is, are necessarily *also* objects falling under all of the Categories, or at the very least under the three Analogies of Experience, which collectively provide necessary and sufficient criteria for the objectivity of all objects of conceptual and judgmental experience. But if this claim fails, then there can in principle be nomologically ill-behaved or elusive objects of "blind" or non-conceptual human intuitional experience that fall outside the scope of all empirical concepts, all judgments of experience, and thus also outside of all the Categories, especially including the Analogies of Experience.

Given Kant's Non-Conceptualism, and the corresponding possibility of blind or non-conceptual intuitions, there can be empirical intuitions that do not require empirical concepts, judgments of experience, or Categories. Since the intuitional experience of

these objects does not require the correct application of empirical concepts, judgments of experience, or Categories, some of these intuitions could pick out nomologically ill-behaved or elusive objects that fell either contingently or necessarily outside the constraints of the Analogies of Experience. Examples of such elusive objects would include objects of intuition that engaged in systematically counter-nomological behavior (magic), purely random or indeterministic behavior (pure chance), or spontaneous goal-directed behavior (life, consciousness, freedom).

The case of possible *spontaneous* elusive objects is especially significant, precisely because Kant's analysis of causation in the Second Analogy of Experience and also his analysis of freedom in the Third Antinomy both explicitly entail the metaphysical possibility of spontaneous events that necessarily do not fall under the mechanistic and strict deterministic causal laws of nature.

For Kant, X is spontaneous if and only if X is a conscious mental event that expresses some acts or operations of a living, conscious creature, and X is

(i) causal-dynamically *necessarily unprecedented*, in the two-part sense that

(ia) living, conscious mental events of those specific sorts have never actually happened before,

and

(ib) the settled empirical facts about the past together with the general causal laws of nature do not provide nomologically sufficient conditions for the existence or specific character of those living, conscious mental events,

(ii) *underdetermined* by external sensory informational inputs, and also by prior desires, even though it may have been triggered by those very inputs or motivated by those very desires

(iii) *creative* in the sense of being recursively constructive, or able to generate infinitely complex outputs from finite resources,

and also

(iv) *self-guiding*. (CPR A51/B75, B130, B132, B152, A445-447/B473-475)

Furthermore, spontaneity can be either *relative* or *absolute*. Relative spontaneity requires *inputs* to the conscious mind, whereas absolute spontaneity allows the conscious mind *to generate its own outputs without any triggering inputs*. For example, human a priori cognition is only relatively spontaneous because it requires sensory inputs via empirical intuition, whereas an intellectual intuition, if it existed, would be absolutely spontaneous because it could cause the objects of its thoughts to exist just by thinking them (CPR A19-22/B33-36, B71-72). Now according to Kant, the concept of a cause analytically entails the concept of its effect, and the general schematized pure concept of CAUSE says that something *X* (the cause) necessitates something else *Y* (its effect) in time according to a necessary rule or law. Or equivalently, according to Kant, to say that *X* causes its effect *Y* is to say that *X* is nomologically sufficient for *Y* in time (CPR B112, A144/B183). Then *X* is a relatively or absolutely spontaneous cause of its effect *Y* if and only if

(1) *X* is nomologically sufficient for *Y* in time,

and

(2) *X* is a living, conscious mental event that is necessarily unprecedented, underdetermined by external sensory inputs and desires, creative, and self-guiding.

A very good and very striking example of relative spontaneity can be found in Kant's discussion of the Second Analogy of Experience. There Kant distinguishes between

(a) *objective or law-governed* temporal orderings of conscious perceptions of changing states of things (Kant's example is the successive positions of a boat floating downstream)

and

(2) *subjective or arbitrary* temporal orderings of conscious perceptions of changing states of things (Kant's example is the succession of sensory objects of someone's gaze flitting over a house).

Thus relative spontaneity is necessarily built into our conscious mental representation of *any* objective causal sequence, via what Kant calls the “the **subjective sequence** of apprehension,” whose ordering is always subjectively experienced as “entirely arbitrary” (*ganz beliebig*) in the activities of our conscious attention, and not necessitated (*CPR* A193/B238). In other words, attentive human consciousness in inner sense is inherently *nomologically ill-behaved*, non-deterministic, and non-mechanistic, precisely because it is teleological and psychologically free. And for precisely this reason, according to Kant, empirical psychology cannot ever be a genuine exact or mathematized science

The empirical doctrine of the soul must always remain ... removed ... from the rank of what may be called a natural science proper. This is because mathematics is inapplicable to the phenomena of the inner sense and their laws.... It can, therefore, never become anything more than a historical (and, as such, as much as possible) systematic natural doctrine of the inner sense, i.e., a natural description of the soul, but not a science of the soul. (*MFNS* 4: 471, underlining added)

What about absolutely spontaneous elusive objects? The class of absolutely spontaneous elusive objects is one and the same as the class of events that manifest *transcendental freedom*:

By freedom in the cosmological sense ... I understand the faculty of beginning a state **from itself** (*von selbst*), the causality of which does not in turn stand under another cause determining it in time in accordance with the law of nature. Freedom in this signification is a pure transcendental idea, which, first, contains nothing borrowed from experience, and second, the object of which cannot be given determinately in any experience.... But since in such a way no absolute totality of [natural] conditions in causal relations is forthcoming, reason creates the idea of a spontaneity, which could start to act from itself, without needing to be preceded by any other cause that in turn determines it to action according to the law of causal connection. (*CPR* A533/B561, underlining added)

In this way, it can be seen that the spontaneous elusive objects that are actually or possibly picked out by blind or non-conceptual human intuitional experiences are not so very strange objects after all. In fact all and only the living, conscious, self-conscious,

deliberative intentional agents or *persons* are the spontaneous elusive objects that cannot even in principle be brought under empirical concepts and the Analogies of Experience.

In the *Critique of Practical Reason* Kant explicitly asserts that rational personhood (*Persönlichkeit*) itself is just

freedom and independence from the mechanism of nature regarded as a capacity of a being subject to special laws (pure practical laws given by its own reason). (*CPrR* 5: 87, underlining added)

Therefore *we ourselves are the relatively and absolutely spontaneous elusive objects* that are actually and possibly cognitively accessible only through either

(a) blind intuitional experiences of inner sense in the wholly arbitrary ordering of conscious perceptions,

or else

(b) blind intuitional experiences of our own practical freedom or autonomy:

Practical freedom can be proved through experience. For it is not merely that which stimulates the senses, i.e., immediate affects them, that determines human choice, but we always have a capacity to overcome impressions on our sensory faculty of desire by representations of that which is useful or injurious even in a more remote way; but these considerations about that which in regard to our whole condition is desirable, i.e., good and useful, depend on reason. Hence this also yields laws that are imperatives, i.e., objective **laws of freedom**, and that say **what ought to happen**, even though it never does happen. . . . We thus cognize practical freedom through experience, as one of the natural causes, namely a causality of reason in the determination of the will. (*CPR* A802-803/B830-831, underlining added)

The consciousness of this fundamental law [of pure practical reason, which says: so act that the maxim of your will could always hold at the same time as a principle of universal law giving] may be called a fact of reason, since one cannot ferret it out from antecedent data of reason, such as the consciousness of freedom (for this is not antecedently given), and since it forces itself upon us as a synthetic proposition a priori based on no pure or empirical intuition. . . . In order to regard this law without any misinterpretation as given, one must note that it is not an empirical fact, but the sole fact of pure reason, which by it proclaims itself as originating law. (*CPrR* 5: 31, underlining added)

Two things fill the mind with ever new and increasing admiration and reverence, the more often and more steadily one reflects on them: the starry heavens above me and the moral law within me. I do not need to search for them and merely conjecture them as though they were veiled in obscurity or in the transcendent region beyond my horizon; I see them before me and connect them immediately with the consciousness of my existence. (*CPrR* 5: 161-162, underlining added)

In other words, we actually, directly, and non-conceptually experience *ourselves* in inner and outer sense as the absolutely intrinsically valuable, exciting, and absolutely unique

elusive objects—rational human animals, or human persons—that make moral facts in particular and categorically normative facts more generally *manifest* in the natural world.

Back now to the B Deduction. The crucial point about absolutely spontaneous elusive objects, i.e., human persons capable of freedom, is that all empirical concepts, all judgments of experience, all schematized Categories, especially including the Analogies of Experience, and thus all the strict deterministic causal laws of mechanistic natural science *cannot* apply to such objects, insofar as they are also causal-dynamic events that happen in the natural world. That is a direct implication of Kant's metaphysical Incompatibilism about free will and universal natural Determinism, as fully spelled out in the Third Antinomy and the *Critique of Practical Reason*.¹⁵ So in virtue of Kant's Incompatibilism together with his Non-Conceptualism, not only is it true that the Categories *do not necessarily apply* to all objects of conscious human perception or intuitional experience (because of the metaphysical possibility of magical elusive objects and pure chance elusive objects), but also it is true that the Categories *necessarily do not apply* to all actual and possible spontaneous elusive objects like us (because of the metaphysical actuality and possibility of the incompatibilistic living, conscious free will of human persons). Therefore the B Deduction *decisively* fails.

VI. Conclusion

Suppose that I am correct that there is a serious Gap in the B Deduction because the B Deduction is sound only if Conceptualism is true, but Conceptualism is arguably false and Kant himself is a Non-Conceptualist, precisely due to the dual possibility of blind or non-conceptual intuitional experiences and relatively or absolutely spontaneous elusive objects. From that it would immediately follow that the B Deduction is deeply

unsound. Nevertheless, we could again deploy the strategy of *weakening* the main thesis of the B Deduction, and preserve something of philosophical importance. More precisely, we could start with **TD2**, and then weaken it as follows:

TD3: The Categories are necessary a priori conditions of the possibility of *the experience of all and only the objects represented by objectively valid judgments*.

Otherwise put, **TD3** says that the Categories apply to all and only the semantic contents of judgments that can be explained and justified by the exact (i.e., mathematical and natural) sciences and the mechanistic metaphysics of universal natural Determinism. But what about all the blind intuitional experiences and elusive objects that fall essentially outside the nets of empirical concepts, judgments of experience, and the Categories, especially including the Analogies of Experience? Exactly the right thing to say here, I think, is what Wittgenstein said at the very end of the *Tractatus*: “Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent.” In other words, there are certain irreducibly living, conscious, personal, practical, and moral facts in the world that just *cannot* be cognized by the exact sciences, and which *can* be cognized *only* by means of a direct essentially non-conceptual grasp of the teleological phenomena constituting these living, conscious, personal, practical, and moral facts, which Kant calls *faith* or *Glaube*, and about which the sciences must therefore remain silent, or else fall into metaphysical illusion. Or as Kant put the very same point:

Thus I had to deny **scientific knowing** (*Wissen*) in order to make room for **faith** (*Glauben*). (CPR Bxxx; see also A828/B856)

Thus the B Deduction *had to fail*, given Kant’s other deeper and larger cognitive and metaphysical commitments. Against that deeper and larger Kantian cognitive and metaphysical backdrop, then, it seems to me that the B Deduction *is* a sound argument for **TD3**. So even if Kant is wrong about Strong Transcendental Idealism or STI, and also

wrong about **TD1** and **TD2**, he can still be *right* about **TD3**. And I do think that he actually is right about **TD3**. So even fully granting the problematic possibility of elusive objects and the Gap in the B Deduction, it is still possible to defend an important and substantive Kantian thesis about *the objectivity of judgments of experience*.

NOTES

¹ For convenience I refer to Kant's works infratextually in parentheses. The citations include both an abbreviation of the English title and the corresponding volume and page numbers in the standard "Akademie" edition of Kant's works: *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, edited by the Königlich Preussischen (now Deutschen) Akademie der Wissenschaften (Berlin: G. Reimer [now de Gruyter], 1902-). For references to the first *Critique*, I follow the common practice of giving page numbers from the A (1781) and B (1787) German editions only. I generally follow the standard English translations from the German texts, but have occasionally modified them where appropriate. Here is a list of the abbreviations and English translations of the works cited:

- CPR* *Critique of Pure Reason*. Trans. P. Guyer and A. Wood. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1997.
- CPrR* *Critique of Practical Reason*. Trans. M. Gregor. In *Immanuel Kant: Practical Philosophy*. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1996. Pp. 133-272.
- PC* *Immanuel Kant: Philosophical Correspondence, 1759-99*. Trans. A. Zweig. Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1967.
- Prol* *Prolegomena to any Future Metaphysics*. Trans. J. Ellington. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1977.
- VL* "The Vienna Logic." In *Immanuel Kant: Lectures on Logic*. Trans. J.M. Young. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1992. Pp. 251-377.

² L. Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, trans. C.K. Ogden (London: Routledge Kegan Paul, 1922/1981), p. 189, prop. 7.

³ T. Williamson, *The Philosophy of Philosophy* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), pp. 16-17.

⁴ See, e.g., J. Bermúdez, "Nonconceptual Mental Content," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2003 Edition), E. Zalta (ed.), URL = <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2003/entries/content-nonconceptual/>; G. Evans, *Varieties of Reference* (Oxford: Clarendon/Oxford Univ. Press, 1982), esp. chs. 4-6; and Y. Gunther (ed.), *Essays on Nonconceptual Content* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003).

⁵ See, e.g., J. McDowell, *Mind and World* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1994); J. McDowell, *Having the World in View* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 2009); S. Sedivy, "Must Conceptually Informed Perceptual Experience Involve Non-conceptual Content?," *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 26 (1996): 413-431; and B. Brewer, *Perception and Reason* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1999).

⁶ B. Longuenesse *Kant and the Capacity to Judge*, trans. C. Wolfe, Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 1998), pp. 20, 108.

⁷ See, e.g., R. Hanna, *Kant, Science, and Human Nature* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2006), section 6.1.

⁸ Y. Gunther, "Introduction," in Y. Gunther (ed.), *Essays on Nonconceptual Content* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003), pp. 1-19, at p. 1.

⁹ R. Hanna, *Kant and the Foundations of Analytic Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2001), esp. chs. 1-2 and 4; R. Hanna, "Kant and Nonconceptual Content," *European Journal of Philosophy* 13 (2005): 247-290; R. Hanna, "Kantian Non-Conceptualism," *Philosophical Studies* 137 (2008): 41-64; Hanna, *Kant, Science, and Human Nature*, ch. 2; R. Hanna and M. Chadha, "Non-Conceptualism and the Problem of Perceptual Self-Knowledge," *European Journal of Philosophy*, pre-published URL = <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1468-0378.2009.00377.x/abstract>, and forthcoming in print in vol. 19, 2 (June 2011); R. Hanna, "The Myth of the Given and the Grip of the Given," forthcoming in DIAMETROS; and R. Hanna, "Beyond the Myth of the Myth: A Kantian Theory of Non-Conceptual Content," forthcoming in *International Journal of Philosophical Studies*.

¹⁰ See R. Hanna, “Kant’s Theory of Judgment,” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2009 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2009/entries/kant-judgment/>.

¹¹ See, e.g., W. Sellars “Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind,” in W. Sellars, *Science, Perception, and Reality* (New York: Humanities Press, 1963), pp. 127-196; W. Sellars *Science and Metaphysics: Variations on Kantian Themes* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1968); and McDowell, *Mind and World*.

¹² This is a controversial thesis. For a full defense of it, see Hanna, “Kantian Non-Conceptualism”; Hanna, “The Myth of the Given and the Grip of the Given”; and Hanna, “Beyond the Myth of the Myth: A Kantian Theory of Non-Conceptual Content.”

¹³ But see P. Kitcher, *Kant’s Transcendental Psychology* (New York: Oxford, 1990).

¹⁴ See McDowell, *Having the World in View*, chs. 1-3.

¹⁵ See Hanna, *Kant, Science, and Human Nature*, ch. 8; and R. Hanna, “Freedom, Teleology, and Rational Causation,” *Kant Yearbook* 1 (2009): 99-142.