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Sensation and Intentionality in Kant’s Theory of Empirical Cognition

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in

Philosophy

by

Timothy P. Jankowiak

Committee in Charge:

Professor Eric Watkins, Chair
Professor Rick Grush
Professor Don MacLeod
Professor William O’Brien
Professor Clinton Tolley

2012
The Dissertation of Timothy P. Jankowiak is approved, and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication on microfilm and electronically:

Chair

University of California, San Diego

2012
DEDICATION

To my mother, Annabelle, for showing the unwavering and single-mindedly optimistic confidence in me that only a mother can show with sincerity; to the memory of my father, Paul, for always encouraging me to do with my life whatever I would find most satisfying; and to my wife, Joy, for keeping me happy and sane over the last seven years.
EPIGRAPH

Is our soul in itself so empty that unless it borrows images from outside it is nothing? (Leibniz, *New Essays*)

For how else should the cognitive faculty be awakened into exercise if not through objects that stimulate our senses and in part themselves produce representations, in part bring the activity of our understanding into motion to compare these, to connect or separate them, and thus to work up the raw material of sensible impressions into a cognition of objects that is called experience? (Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*)

*Shall I project a world?* If not project then at least flash some arrow on the dome to skitter among constellations and trace out your Dragon, Whale, Southern Cross. Anything might help. (Thomas Pynchon, *The Crying of Lot 49*)
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employment to keep from starving during the summer months, Eric has gone far above and beyond what is expected from an advisor, and for this I am immensely grateful. Clinton Tolley has also always shown a great deal of focussed attention to the development of my interpretation. My conversations with him consistently challenged me to think through the possible alternatives and objections to my claims, and the final product is clearly the better for this. Other faculty members whose feedback was particularly helpful, especially in the context of the History of Philosophy Roundtable discussion group, include Don Rutherford, Rick Grush, Michael Hardimon, Monte Johnson, Sam Rickless, and Gila Sher.

Each of the above has, in various ways, helped make this dissertation better than it could otherwise have been. The responsibility for any and all remaining imperfections lies only with myself.

Lastly, and most importantly, I must thank my wife, Joy. She was more than understanding and encouraging during the many long days and late nights of work on this document, and the fact that I have come away from it with my sanity mostly intact can only be attributed to the comfort and support she provided.
VITA

**Education**

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**Areas of Specialization**

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Early Modern Philosophy

**Areas of Competence**

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Phenomenology
Philosophy of Mind and Perception

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Editorial work for De Gruyter for *Proceedings of the 2010 International Kant Congress*, (2011)
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**Publications**

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Sensation and Intentionality in Kant’s Theory of Empirical Cognition

by

Timothy P. Jankowiak

Doctor of Philosophy in Philosophy

University of California, San Diego, 2012

Professor Eric Watkins, Chair

The core project of this dissertation is twofold. First, it provides a reconstruction of Kant’s theory of how sensation contributes to the cognition of physical objects in the spatiotemporal world. It is first shown how sensation acquires a representational function through its relation to the mental states that Kant labels “intuitions.” In intuitions, a posteriori sensations are combined with the a priori representation of space to produce nonconceptual representations of sensory qualities arrayed in space. These intuitions yield our most basic representations of objects in the world. Then it
is shown how the data given in sensory intuitions allows for the application of some of our most basic conceptual representations of these objects, most importantly the concepts of “reality” and “actuality.” We can represent something as real because sensations allow us to determine the “intensity” of an object’s physical density and sensible qualities. We can represent an object as actual when the representation of that object coheres with the rest of our sensory representations of the natural world. 

Second, it is argued that a careful analysis of the “intentionality” of our sensory representations reveals the ontological status of the objects of cognition to be quite minimal. The empirical objects we represent in experience, Kant thinks, have no existence beyond their being what is articulated by the representational contents of intentionally-directed mental states. This, it is argued, is the proper understanding of Kantian idealism, and it is shown that this interpretation is maximally consistent with Kant’s relevant writings on the issue. These two projects are by no means distinct, for Kant argues that intentional relations to empirical objects are possible only because of the \textit{a posteriori} matter given in sensation. The most novel contribution of the project lies in showing how Kant’s theory of the ontological status of appearances can be understood as a consequence of his theory of how sensations make possible our intentionally-directed empirical representations.
Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Reading Kant on Sensation and Intentionality

The mind that Kant describes in his *Critique of Pure Reason*¹ cannot help but attempt to form objectively valid representations of the various things and facts (construed most broadly) that populate the universe. We can discern at least four different domains of thought in which the mind attempts to form such objective representations: metaphysics, mathematics, logic, and empirical cognition (which includes natural science).² Metaphysics (at least as carried out by Kant’s predecessors) yields no more than the transcendental illusion of objective certainty, and is revealed in Kant’s Transcendental Dialectic to be no more than the building of castles in the sky. Mathematics and logic yield objective certainty, but this knowledge is merely formal: through mathematics we learn about the possible forms that

¹Unless otherwise noted, all translations of Kant’s writings are from the *Cambridge Editions of the Works of Immanuel Kant* (general editors: Paul Guyer and Allen Wood). All page citations are to the standard Prussian Akademie-Ausgabe editions of Kant’s *Gesammelte Schriften* (cited by volume and page number), except the *Critique of Pure Reason*, which is cited in accordance with the standard A/B (1781/1787 editions respectively) citations, and the * Reflexionen*, which are cited by their Akademie-Ausgabe number (e.g., R6350).
²One might include practical cognition in this list, but this is a cognition of how things ought to be, not a cognition of how things are.
objects presented in space and time might take, and through logic we learn what sort of entailment and containment relations hold between conceptual forms, but neither yield knowledge of actual, concrete, individual objects. It is only in empirical cognition, says Kant, that we can come to have knowledge of actual, concrete, individual objects existing in space and time. The one element that distinguishes empirical cognition from these other modes of thought is sensation (Empfindung). Sensation is the singular point of contact between the representational activities of the mind and the world we take to exist independently of these activities, and it is through sensation that our thought is capable of reaching beyond itself and its own forms to the empirical world in space and time. Sensation, that is, is a condition on the possibility of intentional relations to real objects. The central project of this dissertation is to provide a reconstruction of Kant’s theory of the role of sensation in empirical cognition.

Any commentator who wants to give a comprehensive account of Kant’s theory of sensation is faced with two great difficulties. First, Kant himself says frustratingly little about sensation and its function in cognition, and the little he does say is not obviously consistent. Although we find scattered remarks about sensation in the Transcendental Aesthetic, the Transcendental Deductions, the Anticipations of Perception, and the A-edition’s Fourth Paralogism, most of Kant’s attention in his articulation of his theory of cognition in Critique of Pure Reason is on the transcendental and a priori elements of his account (not empirical and a posteriori sensations). This is of course not so surprising, for it is here that Kant’s most novel and important philosophical advances lie; nevertheless, since sensation plays the centrally important role of securing reference to concrete particulars in the empirical world, one would have liked to hear more detail about how sensation enables such reference.

Second, since the basic function of sensation is to enable our representations
to be about spatiotemporal objects in the empirical world, the “intentionality” (or “aboutness” or “object-directedness”) of our sensory representations cannot be clarified independently of a simultaneous clarification of the ontological status of these objects. Were Kant any sort of traditional realist about spatiotemporal objects, this task would be relatively easy: we could simply say that, in general, the objects we represent exist, more or less as we take them to be, independently of us and our representations. Kant, however, is no traditional realist and claims to be a “transcendental idealist,” arguing that objects in space and time are mind-dependent “appearances” (Erscheinungen), which are to be distinguished from the transcendent and unknowable things in themselves which somehow “ground” our empirical representations. This severely complicates any attempt to get clear on the intentional relation between sensory representations and their objects. Because Kant never rendered his various formulations of his transcendental idealism with an adequate degree of precision and determinacy, any reader seeking clarity on these issues today is faced with a vast yet crowded field of interpretive spaces. Lucy Allais describes the situation with an appropriate tone of pessimism: “Interpretations of Kant’s transcendental idealism vary so wildly that sometimes it scarcely seems possible that they are all interpretations of the same philosophical account of the relation between mind and world, put forward by the same philosopher, largely in one book.”

It will not be possible within the space of one dissertation both to give a comprehensive reconstruction of Kant’s theory of sensation and give a full argument for an interpretation of transcendental idealism. Thus insofar as the former requires taking a determinate stance on the latter, some principled decisions must be made early on about how to read Kant’s assertions of transcendental idealism, even if these

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decisions cannot receive the full argumentation that they deserve.

Surveying the literature of the last half century or so, one can discern two fundamentally distinct approaches to reading Kant’s transcendental idealism, which correspond to two basic sets of claims occurring throughout the *Critique*. On the one hand, Kant makes a set of *metaphysical* assertions about things in themselves and appearances: the former are not possibly spatiotemporal, the latter are necessarily spatiotemporal; the former are mind-transcendent, the latter are mind-dependent and are mere representations “in us” (mere *Vorstellungen*, in some sense of this term). On the other hand, he makes a set of *epistemological* claims about our knowledge of the empirical world: we are in immediate and direct perceptual and epistemic contact with spatiotemporal material substances, and our knowledge of these entities does not depend on any prior awareness or knowledge of internal mental states. Although these claims are not necessarily inconsistent, it has long been recognized that they are in tension. For instance, if empirical objects are substances, how can they also be said to be mind-dependent? Faced with this tension, some commentators choose to prioritize the metaphysical claims, and then attempt to fit the epistemological claims into the broader metaphysical framework; others prioritize the epistemological claims, and attempt to understand the apparently metaphysical claims from within the epistemological framework. Writers who have taken the metaphysical approach (albeit in many different directions) include Jonathan

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5See A19/B33, A371f., A274f.
6This way of looking at the basic partisan divide in the literature is similar to, but should not be equated with, the “one-world/two-world” debate. The reason I avoid describing the dialectic in those terms is that nowadays there is a wide range of one-world interpretations that range from fully epistemic or methodological readings on one side to strong metaphysical readings on the other. At the same time, there are few, if any, commentators who would claim without strong qualification to subscribe to a reading that appeals to two fully distinct ontological realms. Dennis Schulting, in a recent summary of the state of the debate, has concluded that “the two-workder appears to be a straw-man” (“Kant’s Idealism: The Current Debate,” in *Kant’s Idealism: New Interpretations of a Controversial Doctrine*, ed. by Dennis Schulting and Jacco Verburgt, Springer Press, 2011, p. 6).

I fall squarely within the former camp. That is, I think any proper reading of Kant’s transcendental idealism must take seriously the unambiguous assertions about the radical dissimilarity between appearances and things in themselves. Kant doesn’t just say that space and time are subjective conditions on intuiting objects, he also says that (as an objective matter of fact) things in themselves cannot possibly be spatiotemporal. Thus the objects we intuit, viz., the appearances we know as physical objects, cannot be identified with independently existing things in themselves. Things in themselves constitute the “really real” or “ultimate” reality, and appearances, the things we represent as constituting our “empirical” reality, do not belong to such an ultimate realm. I hold that this central metaphysical claim about the difference between the transcendentally real (things in themselves) and the empirically real (physical objects in space and time) must be taken as a fundamental

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7While I do hold that it is helpful to look at the literature in this way, my division of interpretive approaches along the lines indicated should not be taken as absolute. Further, not every interpretation will fit neatly into just one or the other category. Karl Ameriks, for instance, has argued for what he terms a “moderate interpretation” to interpreting transcendental idealism that would seem to fall somewhere between the two approaches I have outlined. (See his ‘Kant’s Idealism on a Moderate Interpretation,” in Kant’s Idealism: New Interpretations of a Controversial Doctrine, ed. by Dennis Schulting and Jacco Verburgt, Springer Press, 2011, pp. 29-54.)

8Some have objected to this metaphysical reading of the supposed non-spatiotemporality of things in themselves on the grounds that it would amount to a “noumenalist” position which pretends to cognize things in themselves as noumena in the “positive” sense (see, for instance, Lucy Allias (op. cit., 2004), p. 668-9; see also Kant’s A235/B294ff. for his discussion of the phenomena/noumena distinction). I disagree with this accusation because to say that things in themselves are not spatiotemporal is by no means to say what they are. Either way, were such a claim about things in themselves tantamount to an illegitimate noumenalist assertion, the blame rests squarely with Kant and not his reader. For Kant states repeatedly and in no uncertain terms that things in themselves cannot possibly be spatiotemporal (see especially the Transcendental Aesthetic and his discussion of the first and second Antinomies).
interpretive constraint on any attempt to reconstruct Kant’s account of the relations between sensation and the objects of cognition. Thus although it falls beyond the scope of my project to provide a reconstruction of Kant’s arguments for the ideality of space and time and the consequent divide between the objects of empirical cognition and things in themselves, Kant’s conclusion to these arguments will be presupposed. I will subsequently take it for granted that any adequate interpretation of Kant’s theory must be consistent with these substantive metaphysical claims.

Given this basic interpretive starting point, it follows that we cannot expect any sort of traditional epistemological story about sensation’s role in securing intentional relations to objects. According to such traditional models, there are representation-independent entities in the world and these objects are in causal interaction with our sensory organs. This causal interaction produces sensations, and then through some sort of processing and appropriation of this sensory data (there are many different stories about how this can go), conceptual judgments about the objects that caused the sensations are formed. These judgments attain the status of knowledge when there is an adequate degree of correspondence and justification relations between the judgment and the representation-independent object which the judgment is about (and there are just as many stories about how this can go).

If, by contrast, the objects we come to represent in empirical cognition depend for their existence on these representational activities themselves, then it would not be sufficient to explain sensation’s role in securing intentional relations to these objects by appeal to correspondences between the causes of sensation and the representations and judgments resulting from sensation. For the objects of our representations (appearances) are numerically distinct from the causes of sensations (things in themselves\(^9\)). Instead, our intentional relations to, and subsequent knowledge of,

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\(^9\)I discuss things in themselves as the ultimate causes of sensations in §5.2.1 below.
the objects we come to represent on the basis of sensation must be understood, at least in part, in terms of the dependence of these objects on the cognitive activities themselves that represent them. Determining the most philosophically satisfying interpretation of what exactly Kant could mean by this and how sensation makes these intentional relations possible will be the central task of my project.\footnote{When I speak of sensations “securing” or “making possible” intentional reference to objects (and hence experience generally), I do not mean to suggest that sensations are \textit{sufficient} conditions on the possibility of such reference. Nothing could be further from the truth for Kant. Across the \textit{Critique} he articulates several conditions on the possibility of experience, most importantly space and time as forms of sensibility and the synthetic unity of apperception that structures the understanding and its categories. My point with regard to sensation is that without a sensory matter, these pure forms would remain empty and hence would be unable to do any work. Sensation is thus a \textit{necessary} condition on the possibility of experience, if not a sufficient one.}

According to the interpretation I’ll articulate and defend (across the entire dissertation, but most directly in chapter 3), the objects to which sensations secure an intentional relation are to be understood as \textit{mere intentional objects}, which are constructed in representation out of the raw data initially presented in sensation. On this interpretation, which I label “intentional object phenomenalism,” for a cognition to intend an empirical object is not for there to be a \textit{relation} between the representation and an independently existing entity, but instead for a certain kind of \textit{content} to occur within the representation on the basis of collections of sensations being processed in a certain way. Across the bulk of the dissertation I will explain, in as much detail as Kant’s writings allow, how this processing works and what sort of representational contents result from this processing.

By way of one last introductory remark, I should mention that my overall intention in the discussions to follow is to present an interpretation that is faithful to both the letter and the spirit of the historical Kant, but that I will not be overly concerned to ensure that the view attributed to Kant coincides with something that
could be defended as the “correct” view of sensations, empirical objects, and the relations between them. The principle of charity dictates that commentators do their best to attribute the most reasonable arguments and the most defensible positions to the philosophers they discuss, and to this extent I aim to be maximally charitable. But if a philosopher makes claims that by contemporary standards are simply untenable—in this case, that the stuff of ultimate reality has no spatiotemporal component to it, and thus that the objects we experience are transcendentally ideal—I think it better to take the philosopher on their own terms rather than whitewash the position to make it more palatable to contemporary thinkers. If this means that the Kant I describe does not hold a theory that would be accepted by contemporary thinkers (at least that part of his theory that depends on the non-spatiotemporality of things in themselves or the consequent ideality of empirical objects), then I do not apologize for this, for my aim is first and foremost to depict a faithful rendition of the historical philosopher.

All that being said, I think the case could be made—though I will not attempt to make it here—that an account of sensation and its contribution to the intentionality of perceptual consciousness which rejected transcendental idealism but was otherwise very close to the theory articulated in this dissertation could yield a defensible and interesting theory which could appeal to many philosophers working on theories of perception today. This non-historical project must, however, await a different venue.

1.2 Outline of the Work

In the remainder of this introductory chapter, I present the necessary background for the discussion of Kant’s theory of sensation. I first (§1.3) give an ac-
count of some of the most relevant themes in early modern philosophical discussions of sensations. Focussing on the Cartesians, Leibnizians and the British empiricists, I address their various positions regarding the representationality of sensation (§1.3.1), the epistemic and psychological relation between sensation and the representation of mind-independent entities (§1.3.2), and the relation between sensation and higher forms of cognition (§1.3.3). These are all issues the clarification of which is centrally important to the full articulation of Kant’s theory of sensation, and so it is important to have a sense of part of the tradition to which he was responding when we examine his various positions on these issues. Then (§1.4), I present a preliminary discussion of some of the most important aspects of Kant’s theory of representation, broadly construed. Here I introduce the distinction between the metaphysical status of representations as mental events and their functional role within cognition (§1.4.1), Kant’s account of representations as analyzable into material and formal components (§1.4.2), and, most importantly, Kant’s understanding of the notion of a representation’s “relation to an object,” or “intentionality” as I will be discussing it (§1.4.3).

In chapter 2, I introduce most of the passages from the critical period (approximately 1781-1800) in which Kant discusses sensation and its function in cognition. I first (§2.1) show that, taken at face value, many of his claims would seem to be incompatible. He sometimes suggests that sensations are not representations at all, sometimes suggests that they are merely “subjective” representations, and other times that they are “objective” representations. This leaves us wondering what the official line on sensations is supposed to be. I begin to unravel these apparent inconsistencies in §2.2 by appeal to Kant’s claims from the Critique of Judgment of 1790 and the Anthropology of 1798 about different ways in which representations, and especially sensations, can be either subjective or objective. This puts me in a
position in §2.3 to show that Kant’s apparently inconsistent claims about sensation in the first *Critique* can in fact be read as mutually consistent, once it is realized that he was not always using the terms “subjective” and “objective” in the same way there. Now most commentators who have had anything to say about Kant’s theory of sensation uncritically accept Kant’s claims that sensations are either not representational at all, or that they only represent the subject itself. The upshot of the discussion of chapter 2 is that Kant does in fact assign a certain kind of “objective” function to sensation. Sensations are objective insofar as they enable an intentional reference to external entities distinct from the subject. This is an important aspect of Kant’s theory to which most commentators have paid little attention, but it will turn out to be of central importance in reconstructing Kant’s account of how intentional relations to empirical objects are possible. By the end of chapter 2, we are left with the conclusion that sensations are capable of securing these intentional relations because of their relation to what Kant calls “empirical intuitions.” What empirical intuitions are and what their relation to sensation is becomes one of the central topics of chapter 3.

In chapter 3 I present the core of my interpretation of Kant’s theory of sensation and its function in securing intentional relations to empirical objects. The discussion here is framed in terms of resolving the apparent paradox posed by two distinct sets of claims about the objects of empirical cognition and our relations to these objects (§3.1). On the one hand, he clearly affirms some form of *phenomenalism*, according to which all empirical objects are mere representations existing in the mind (in some sense, yet to be explained, of “in”). On the other, however, he affirms a form of *direct realism*, according to which we enjoy an immediate perceptual awareness of material substances existing distinct from us in space (in some sense, yet to be explained, of “distinct”). Thus he seems to be asserting both that (i)
the objects of perception are mind-dependent, internal mental states, and that (ii) the objects of perception are mind-independent, external physical objects. As both of these positions have to do with the objects to which we are related in empirical cognition, it makes sense to investigate these claims through an analysis of empirical intuitions, which are the representations through which all other representations can relate to these objects (A19/B33). Thus in §3.2 I explain what exactly Kant means when he says that sensations are the “matter” of intuition. I argue that an empirical intuition is the mental activity whereby a collection of sensations is organized within the representation of space and time such that the subject becomes non-conceptually aware of arrays of sensible qualities occupying regions of space and time. This brute, non-conceptual awareness presented in intuition is how intentional relations to empirical objects are initially established in cognition.

In §3.3 I use this interpretation to make sense of the problem from §3.1. I show that both Kant’s phenomenalism and his direct realism have their roots in the theory of empirical intuition, and that, read as Kant intended them, these theses are not incompatible. I show that Kant’s phenomenalism should be construed as what I call an “intentional object phenomenalism” according to which the objects of perception are mere intentional objects having no self-standing ontological status in their own right. These objects are merely what is purported and articulated by the contents of our cognitions, and in this sense these objects are “mere representations.”

11As I will explain in greater detail when the time comes, the claim that appearances are mere representations because they are mere intentional objects is very different from saying that they are mere representations because they can be identified with mental states or events. The proper answer to the question “What is an empirical object made of?” is “material substance,” not “sensations” or some other kind of mental stuff. Just as we do not identify the scene depicted in a painting with the paint itself, so too there is no reason to identify the appearance represented with the mental events doing the representing, even if these appearances have no existence apart from their being represented. Stated in Cartesian terminology, we could say that Kant’s appearances are the “objective reality” of our representations, but not their “formal reality” (see his “Third Meditation”). In short, appearances are representations in that they are the represent-ed, but not in that they are that which does the representing.
at the same time, since the content of our intuitions immediately presents objects that the subject necessarily takes to be in space, and hence to be existing distinct from itself, there remains an important sense in which the objects we immediately experience in cognition are mind-independent spatiotemporal entities (and not mind-dependent internal mental states). That is, even though transcendental philosophy reveals the objects of perception to be mind-dependent intentional objects, in normal cases of perceptual awareness we necessarily take these objects to exist on their own, independently of us. In other words, Kant’s direct realism is to be read as a thesis about necessary features of the contents of our representations, not as a thesis about real relations to (in fact, not merely purportedly) mind-independent entities.

Where the purpose of Part I (chapters 2 and 3) is to explain the relation between sensation and the receptive faculty of sensibility, and thereby to show how objects can be given in intuition, the purpose of Part II (chapters 4 and 5) is to explain the relation between sensation and the active faculty of understanding, and thereby to show how objects can be thought through concepts. While it is true that all applications of concepts to empirical objects depend to some extent on the data given in sensation, my discussions in Part II will focus on only two concepts, viz., the categories of reality and actuality. These concepts are members of Kant’s list of “pure” concepts which constitute the a priori representation of an object in general. That is, they are concepts that must be exemplified in some way by any object that could possibly be an object of experience for minds like ours. The categories of reality and actuality are of particular importance for my purposes because both of these concepts are introduced and discussed in terms of their relationships with sensation. In chapters 4 and 5, I analyze these relationships.

In chapter 4, I attempt to reconstruct Kant’s argument about the category of reality in the Anticipations of Perception, which is where Kant attempts to prove that
every possible object of empirical cognition will display what he calls an “intensive magnitude” corresponding to the intensive magnitude given in sensation. An intensive magnitude is the measure of the degree of a quality at a point, i.e., a quantity that can vary independently of the spatial extent or temporal duration of a thing (e.g., the brightness of a light-source, or the physical density of a bit of matter). Kant says that the measure of an object’s intensive magnitude is a determination of its “reality” (Realität), i.e., the degree to which the object fills a space or possesses a quality. After giving an account of what counts as a reality for Kant, and what it means to make a judgment determining the reality of an object (§4.1), I turn to Kant’s argument for the claim that every possible object of experience will necessarily have some intensive degree of reality (§4.2). What is most surprising about Kant’s argument is that he seems to be making an inference from a psychological fact about sensations—that they have intensive magnitudes—to a necessary fact about the objects in the empirical world corresponding to these sensations—that they too have intensive magnitudes. After laying out the basic structure of the argument as Kant presents it (§4.2.1), I describe and criticize one of the only fully worked out readings of the argument found in the recent literature (§4.2.2). According to this reading, Kant’s argument is an epistemic one, and the intensity of sensations are taken to be evidence for the intensity of their corresponding objects. But as even proponents of this interpretation admit, it is a very bad argument, and so I propose an alternate reading (§4.2.3). According to the reading of the argument I defend, the relation between the intensive magnitudes of sensations and that of empirical realities is not an evidential one, but a metaphysically constitutive one. Since empirical objects are constructed in representation out of the raw data given in sensation, it follows that features of these sensory building blocks would determine features of the objects whose representations they constitute (just as the color of the bricks
determines the color of the wall). This reading of the argument provides further, indirect evidence for the intentional object phenomenalism articulated in chapter 3, because this interpretation turns out to be necessary for reading Kant’s argument in the Anticipations as anything but an embarrassing non sequitur. I conclude the chapter by responding to possible objections (§4.3).

Lastly, in Chapter 5, I will complete the interpretation of the relation between sensation and the intentionality of our representations by discussing two distinct but related sets of issues. Both issues have to do with the ways in which Kant will describe objects as “outside me,” i.e., as distinct from my mind in some way, and how Kant’s account of the externality of objects intersects with his theory of sensation. Sometimes he will use this phrase in an empirical sense: objects are outside me when they are represented in space. Other times, this phrase is used in a transcendental sense: objects are outside me when they exist independently of my mind and its representations. Both of these senses of externality have to do with the ways that objects can be said to exist or be actual independently of me, but the senses of the independence are very different. In §5.1, I treat the externality of empirical objects and discuss what goes into the representation of an object as actual. I first argue (§5.1.1) that Kant’s conception of the actuality of an empirical object commits him to a form of coherentism regarding actuality, and that this account of actuality fits closely with the intentional object phenomenalism defended throughout the dissertation. I then discuss some of the consequences of this view in relation to a reading of the Refutation of Idealism (§5.1.2). I conclude here that for an object to be “outside me” in the empirical sense is for me to represent this object as though it exists independently of my mind (even though Kant’s philosophy reveals the mind-dependence of these very objects). In §5.2 I discuss things in themselves as outside me in the transcendental sense. In this context I discuss, first (§5.2.1), things in themselves
as the ultimate and true causes of sensations, and I show how an interpretation in terms of intentional object phenomenalism can undermine any supposed “problem of double affection.” Secondly, in §5.2.2, I attempt to provide a reconstruction of an argument for the existence of things in themselves. According to this argument, which Kant never states explicitly, yet nevertheless will hint at occasionally, the very existence of sensations proves the existence of things in themselves. The discussion in chapter 5 will complete the project of the dissertation because, in addition to showing how sensations determine the content of the representations of empirical objects, it will also have been shown how this sensory matter initially enters the mind and fuels cognition.

1.3 Sensation in Early Modern Thought

Before beginning the analysis of what Kant has to say about sensation, it is worth laying out some of the central trends in early modern conceptions of sensation. This will allow us to have in view the sorts of positions and theories that Kant took himself to be appropriating and responding to. After briefly explaining the points of near unanimous agreement among Kant and the early moderns, I’ll turn to addressing their different views on the representationality of sensation (§1.3.1), the relation between sensation and beliefs in external objects (§1.3.2), and the relation between sensation and higher modes of cognition (§1.3.3).

There are certain points about which nearly all early modern thinkers are in agreement regarding sensation. The first is that sensation is a mental state of some kind. According to Descartes, sensations are “the various different states of the mind, or thoughts, which are the immediate result of [movements of the nerves in
the brain].”\textsuperscript{12} Malebranche repeatedly states that “sensations are nothing but modes of the mind.”\textsuperscript{13} Leibniz classified them as species of representation. Others, e.g., the british empiricists or the Wolffians referred to them with the mentalistic terms “ideas,” “Gedanken,” or mental “impressions.” Kant himself will classify sensation within his taxonomy of various \textit{Vorstellungen} (A320/B376).

Secondly, the qualities presented in sensations (the specific and peculiar feelings of, e.g., sweetness or a chromatic hue) were taken to be radically different from the qualities of the objects in the external world that may somehow correspond to sensations. This position was sometimes expressed through a contrast with the Aristotellean tradition. According to Aristotle, the faculty of sensation (\textit{ἀναίρεσις}) involves the receiving of an object’s “form” (\textit{φύσις}) into the soul, but without the matter that constitutes the object.\textsuperscript{14} On this model, the sensation in the soul is homogeneous with the object that caused it because the two share the same form. This model was not available to the early modern philosophers, however, because they were, with only a few exceptions, substance dualists: the “soul” of the early moderns was nothing like Aristotle’s \textit{ψυχή}, which was not a \textit{substance} distinct from the matter of the organism, but rather just its animating principle, i.e., its form. Since, for the early moderns, sensations are modifications of an immaterial soul, they are not similar to the material objects to which they correspond.\textsuperscript{15} Hence, Descartes will argue that sensations are caused by motions communicated to the brain and noticed by the soul,

\textsuperscript{13}The Search After Truth I.1.§i., tr. by Thomas Lennon, Cambridge University Press, 1997.
\textsuperscript{14}See \textit{De Anima}, 424a.
\textsuperscript{15}One obvious exception here is Berkeley, who identifies so-called material objects with collections of mental ideas. Thus for him, a sensation of a color is just like the feature of the object the sensation represents because the two are really the same thing. Even for him though, if there were such a thing as material substance, it would be nothing like the sensory ideas we find ourselves with, and one of his arguments against materialism in based on his so-called “likeness principle” that “an idea can be like nothing but an idea” (\textit{Principles of Human Nature}, §8, ed. by Jonathan Dancy, Oxford University Press, 1998).
but that “there is no way of understanding how these same attributes (size, shape and motion) can produce something else whose nature is quite different from their own—like the substantial forms and real qualities which many philosophers suppose to inhere in things.”\textsuperscript{16} Similarly, Malebranche will argue that it is an error to believe that “colors, light, odors, tastes, sound, and several other sensations, are in the air or in external objects causing them,” because really these sensations are just in the mind and are occasioned by “the motion of imperceptible bodies.”\textsuperscript{17} Locke famously distinguishes between primary and secondary qualities and argues that the latter, which he equates with “sensible qualities,” are really just various modifications of the “bulk, figure, [etc.]” of bodies by virtue of which they have the “power” to produce sensations in us, and that the “ideas produced in us [are not] resemblances of something in the objects.”\textsuperscript{18} For Leibniz, the heterogeneity between the qualities presented in sensations and the objects they correspond to is attributed to a lack of clarity and distinctness among the innumerable petites perceptions constituting any given sensation: sensations represent the world as it is, but so confusedly that the image they present is severely distorted.\textsuperscript{19} For Kant, this heterogeneity between a sensation and the corresponding quality in an object can be taken for granted, and he will claim that “things like colors, tastes, etc., are correctly considered not as qualities of things but as mere alterations of our subject, which can even be different

\textsuperscript{16} Principles of Philosophy, IV.§198.
\textsuperscript{17} The Search After Truth, I.xi.§3.
\textsuperscript{18} Essay Concerning Human Understanding, II.viii. §§23-25, ed. by P. Nidditch, Oxford University Press, 1975. Cf. II.viii. §§14ff. Locke will on occasion refer to sensations of primary qualities. These sensations, if they could properly be called such, would bear a resemblance to their objects. Since Locke thinks that ideas of primary qualities can be had through more than one sensory modality, we should not think of sensations of primary qualities on Locke’s model, but rather sensations which are caused by them and can lead to ideas of primary qualities. (For the feel of a cube in one’s hand is nothing like the sight of a cube; hence if these sensations are radically different, it can’t be right to say that they are both like one and the same primary quality.)
\textsuperscript{19} See the preface to Leibniz’s New Essays on Human Understanding, tr. by P. Remnant and J. Bennett, Cambridge University Press, 1996, p. 54ff. Descartes also classified sensations as “confused thoughts” (Principles of Philosophy, IV.§191).
in different people” (A29/B45).

The third point of near universal agreement is that sensations are in some way necessary and responsible for our awareness of and beliefs about objects distinct from ourselves and our own minds. Here, however, is where things get interesting and a lot of the agreement ends. For how exactly sensations relate to external objects and facilitate an awareness of them can be explained in many different ways. First off, there is the semantic question: What, if anything, do sensations refer to? Secondly, there is the epistemological question: What is the relation between sensation and the justification of beliefs in the existence of external objects? Lastly, there is the question of the relation to other modes of cognition: How are sensations similar to or different from higher forms of thought in the way these different forms relate us to external objects?

1.3.1 The Representationality of Sensation

Regarding the semantic question, the first decision is whether sensations should be considered representational at all. After agreeing that they are mental states of some kind, there remains the question whether they are mental states that refer to other entities or are themselves the objects of other referring mental states (or perhaps both). The British empiricists are not so easy to pin down on this question. Locke will say that “external, material things” are the “objects of sensation,”20 and Hume will assert that there is no difference between impressions and ideas “except their degree of force and vivacity,”21 indicating that impressions can refer just as much as ideas. Yet at the same time, Locke will sometimes suggest that simple sensory ideas do not represent objects in their own right, but only insofar as they

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20 Essay, II.i.§3.
are noticed by and given sense through acts of “perception,” and that a sensory idea is not itself an act of perception or thought, but is rather just “the immediate object of perception, thought, or understanding.”

The claim thus seems to be that sensory ideas can be significant insofar as they are the objects of perception, but not that they signify in their own right. Likewise, Hume will indicate that we only take our impressions to be impressions of something distinct from themselves after a long and complicated process of “habit”-development involving all of the faculties of sense, imagination, and reason, which would suggest that in their own right sensory impressions are merely the objects of ideas, and though these impressions can come to be habitually associated with object-representing ideas, the impressions themselves are not intrinsically representational. And lastly, Berkeley will describe sensations as a species of “ideas,” which are completely passive and are the objects of perception, but since perception (and representational thought generally) is an activity of the mind, sensations could never be perceivings, but rather only that which is perceived.

I thus take the considered position of the British empiricists to be that sensations could be called “representational” in the loose sense that we might say an arrow drawn on the sidewalk is representational, but really the representing is carried out by acts of perception through which the mind is interpretively aware of the sensation (just as one must know how to interpret the arrow before it can mean “go that way”). Sensations can thus be signs for outer objects, but these outer objects can only be intended through other mental acts that make use of sensations as their objects.

Most of the rationalists were unanimous in holding that sensations are rep-

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22 Essay, II.viii.§8.
23 For a discussion of this ambiguity in Locke, see Matthew Stuart’s “Having Locke’s Ideas,” Journal of the History of Philosophy, Vol 48, No. 1 (Jan 2010), pp. 35-59.
24 See Hume’s lengthy discussion of this in the chapter “Skepticism With Regard to the Senses” in his Treatise (I.iv.§2).
resentational, but there is disagreement over what the objects of sensations are. According to some, the objects of sensations are states of the perceiving subject. Although Descartes is not perfectly clear on the matter, this would seem to be his considered view. While he grants in the *Principles of Philosophy* that we often take the qualities presented in sensation to be “real things existing outside our mind,” he also says that this is a mistake, and when we clearly and distinctly perceive sensations, “they are regarded merely as sensations or thoughts,” and he goes on to claim that sensations “do not represent anything located outside our thought.”

Descartes’ position would thus seem to be that while we often mistakenly think that sensations refer to (or are identical to) qualities in objects, e.g., color and so on, really the qualities referred to are those of the sensations themselves (since colors cannot possibly exist on the surfaces of material bodies, which are individuated only by “size, shapes, motions and so on”). Hence sensations are, in a certain respect, self-referential because they phenomenally present to the mind the qualities that they themselves bear.

Later German rationalists were content to let sensations refer to non-mental

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25 One possible exception is Malebranche, who seems to have asserted that sensations are merely modifications of the mind, but that they do not have any representational function in their own right. This would put his position close to that of the British empiricists (as I have characterized it), but this would not be so strange, given Malebranche’s many other affinities with the empiricists.

26 For a thorough discussion of this aspect of rationalist theories of sensation, see Alison Simmons’s “Changing the Cartesian Mind: Leibniz on Sensation, Representation and Consciousness,” *Philosophical Review*, Vol. 110, No. 1 (Jan 2001), pp. 31-75. As she understands the difference between the Cartesians and Leibniz, although both agree that representationality is coextensive with the mental, only Leibniz takes representationality to be essential to the mental. According to the Cartesians, consciousness is more essentially associated with the mental than representationality, which she takes to be incidental to the mental.

27 *Principles of Philosophy*, I.§68.

28 Ibid., I.§71.

29 Ibid., I.§71.

30 Margaret Wilson offers a similar reading of these passages in “Descartes on the Representationality of Sensation,” in *Central Themes in Early Modern Philosophy*, ed. by J.A. Cover and Mark Kulstad, Hackett Publishing Company, 1990. Simmons (p. 50) points out that Arnauld held the same position.
states, but several of them still insisted that the proper objects of sensations are states of the sensing subject. Wolff defines sensations (Empfindungen) as “ideas [Gedancken] which are grounded in the changes of the extremities of our bodies” and he claims that although these can come to “make us conscious of that outside us which affects us,” in the first instance these sensations “direct themselves toward [richten sich nach] our bodies.” Following Wolff, Baumgarten distinguishes between inner sense and outer sense and argues that the latter “represents the state of my body.” The Wolffian position would thus seem to be that sensations are both caused by and are representations of the modified states of the sensory organs of the body of the perceiver, but that these sensations can subsequently enable consciousness of other external entities.

The Cartesian and Wolffian takes on the representationality of sensations could both be called “subjective” in the sense that they describe sensations as representations of states of the subject. Other writers in the German tradition chose instead to describe sensations in terms we might call “objective” insofar as they were said to refer to entities in the world beyond the merely subjective states of the mind or body. Most prominent here is Leibniz, who famously held that minds (or, more precisely, “monads”) represent everything in the universe, albeit usually unclearly and confusedly. At the basis for this universal representation were Leibniz’s “petites perceptions,” which are unconscious (or barely conscious) minuscule representations of an infinitude of states across the universe. Leibniz used the term “sensation” to refer to organized collections of petites perceptions that had reached a sufficient

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32 Ibid., §219, p. 121 (my trans.).
33 Ibid.
degree of clarity and distinctness so as to be capable of some lasting duration in consciousness.\textsuperscript{35} In a different vein, Crusius will argue that “the distinguishing mark [Kennzeichnen] of actuality for our understanding is in the end always sensation,” and that “outer sensations give us concepts of things that are outside our soul.”\textsuperscript{36} Kant’s contemporary Eberhard will argue that whether a sensation refers to an external object or simply the sensing subject itself is a matter of degree. He argues that “the more confused a sensation is, the less the sensing substance distinguishes itself from the cause of its sensation,”\textsuperscript{37} but when a sensation is distinct, by contrast, as is typically the case with hearing and sight, “the soul views the object with which it is concerned as located outside of itself.”\textsuperscript{38}

We see that during the 140 or so years before the publication of the \textit{Critique of Pure Reason} there were three different answers one could give to the question about the representationality of sensation. According to the empiricists sensations are not representations that themselves have objects, but they can be the objects of other representational (perceptual) acts, and can thereby come to stand in as signs for external entities. According to the Cartesians and Wolffians, sensations are representational, but they represent the modified state of the subject (either the sensory quality in the mind or the affection in the physical organ of sense). And according

\textsuperscript{35}See Leibniz’s \textit{Principles of Nature and Grace, Based on Reason} (1714), in \textit{Philosophical Essays}, ed. by Roger Ariew and Daniel Garber, Hackett Publishing Company, 1989, p. 208. Although Leibniz uses the term “sensation” to refer to collections of perceptions unified and brought to consciousness, when put in comparison with the position we will find in Kant, it will turn out that Leibniz’s sensations are analogous to Kant’s intuitions, and Leibniz’s petites perceptions to Kant’s sensations. In both cases (or so I will argue in chapter 3) we have conscious representations of external bodies—Leibnizian sensations and Kantian intuitions—which are materially constituted by sensory impressions which are in themselves not accessible to consciousness—Leibnizian petites perceptions and Kantian sensations.

\textsuperscript{36}Entwurf der Nothwendigen Vernunft-Wahrheiten, Leipzig, 1766 (1st ed. 1745), §16, p. 28 (my trans.).


\textsuperscript{38}Ibid., p. 330.
to the Leibnizians and Kant’s immediate German predecessors, sensations directly represent external objects distinct from the subject. We will soon see (chapter 2) that Kant incorporates all three of these conceptions of sensation into his various remarks on the issue. Although these remarks will initially present themselves as inconsistent, I will attempt to show that they can all be reconciled into a coherent theory. The most important upshot of my discussion there will be the claim that Kant is more or less in agreement with Leibniz, Crusius, and Eberhard that sensations can represent external objects in space and time. *How* exactly sensations can do this will require a detailed reconstruction of Kant’s theory of empirical intuition, which will be one of the primary tasks of chapter 3.

### 1.3.2 Sensations and beliefs about external objects

What about the epistemological significance of sensation? What is the relation between sensations and our claims to know, or at least be aware of, objects perceived in the world? Although there is disagreement over whether sensations can be said to refer to external objects, all will agree that our beliefs about these objects are in some way dependent on sensations. The question now becomes whether and to what extent our beliefs about external objects are warranted by sensations.

Descartes famously invokes skepticism regarding what the senses can tell us. As far as he is concerned it is possible that we are systematically deceived by some malicious intelligence.\(^39\) Similarly, Malebranche (anticipating Hume) argues that sensations “could subsist without there being any object outside us” because “their [i.e., sensations’] being contains no necessary relation to the bodies that seem to cause them.”\(^40\) There is “no necessary connection” because of the heterogene-

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\(^{39}\)See his “First Meditation.”

\(^{40}\) *Search After Truth*, I.1.§1.
ity, discussed above, between the qualities of sensations and the external occasions thereof. Descartes and Malebranche could thus only secure anything approaching sensory knowledge of the world by appeal to theological considerations regarding God’s benevolence: Descartes’ God would not systematically deceive us and Malebranche’s God would only cause sensations in us that would help us safely navigate the world.

Leibniz could also appeal to divine benevolence to alleviate the worry that our sensations might not correspond to realities distinct from the mind. Although he does not think that our sensations are caused by external entities, he does think that they represent external entities, and that such representation is the basic function of the mind. The correspondence of our representations with these external entities is guaranteed by the divinely pre-established harmony of all monads with each other. This is not to say that all representations are accurate and veridical though, because, as Leibniz and his followers repeatedly emphasize, they are confused representations that can at best give one only a rough idea of the objects in the vicinity of the perceiver.

The British empiricists did not disagree with the Cartesians’ denial of any sort of necessary connection between the qualities of the sensations we find ourselves with and their external correlates, but they lost less sleep over external world skepticism.41 Locke asserts unequivocally that we have knowledge of the existence of external objects “by sensation” when these objects “operate upon us.”42 Although this “knowledge” is never quite as certain as deductive or intuitive knowledge, it’s more than good enough,43 and he goes on to give several arguments in favor of the

41Berkeley is, again, the odd one out here, because he denies flat out the existence of an external, material world, but his argument against the existence of material substance had very little to do with skeptical considerations.
42Essay, IV.xi.§1.
43Ibid., §3.
trustworthiness of the senses by appeal to (i) our inability to freely induce sensations, (ii) the involuntariness of sensations, (iii) the great difference between sensations and the mere memory thereof, and (iv) the consistency of the reports of various instances of sensations.44

Hume is a bit more cautious in his pronouncements on the question of sensory knowledge of external objects, but even he will assert that “‘tis vain to ask, Whether there be body or not?” because “Nature” has made it impossible for us to take seriously any form of external world skepticism (it is “an affair of too great importance to be trusted to our uncertain reasonings and speculations”).45 The interesting question for Hume is not one of justification, but rather of how it comes to be that we can form the very idea of the mind-independent existence of objects that correspond to our sensory impressions in the first place. His question is semantic, not epistemological. The most fundamental principle of his Treatise is the claim that every idea can be traced to some impression, so if there is an idea of mind-independence, it must be traceable to some impression. His elegant solution, which I will not rehearse in detail here, is that there is a felt tension between the apparent constancy of our sense impressions (when I close my eyes and reopen them, I see more or less the same things as before) and our reason-based knowledge that an impression cannot exist unperceived. He argues that the imagination, in response to the feeling of this tension, posits a “double-existence” such that there are mind-independent entities that correspond to and cause our mental impressions, and that these account for the coherence of our impressions.46 What I take to be most important to Hume’s account is that our belief in the existence of external objects follows neither from a brute sensory awareness, nor from a reason-based inference, but comes instead

44Ibid., §§4-7.
45Treatise, II.iv.§2., p. 187.
simply by psychological necessity: human minds are structured such that we cannot help but believe in the existence of external objects on the basis of internal sensory states. The biggest difference between Hume and his predecessors on this issue is thus that he switches the emphasis from giving an epistemic account of our beliefs in external objects to giving a psychological account.

We find positions bearing some resemblance to Hume’s among Kant’s German predecessors and contemporaries. As mentioned in §2.1 above, Crusius asserts (without much argument, unfortunately) that “the distinguishing mark of actuality [Wirklichkeit] for our understanding is ultimately always sensation.”47 Later he will elaborate the position slightly and speak of sensations “necessitating” the representation of objects as actual:

We perceive ideas in ourselves. In some of them we are necessitated, when awake, to represent things immediately as actual and present. We call it outer sensation if we represent these things as outside of things we think in ourselves.48

The position is not that sensations are evidence for the existence of external objects. Perhaps they are that also, but the primary connection with beliefs about external objects is that sensations force us to believe in such objects. In a similar vein, when Eberhard writes an entire treatise on the relation between sensation and thought, his discussions of the role of sensation in leading to the representation of external objects are primarily psychological accounts of what factors cause sensations to represent “objectively” (external objects) versus “subjectively” (our own pleasurable or painful state). Thus he too is concerned less with the sensory justification of beliefs in external entities on the basis of sensation than on a psychological account of how sensation causes us to form beliefs about such things.

47Entwurf, §16, p. 28.
48Ibid., §426, p. 854 (my trans.). He goes on to say that “we are constrained to think that the bodies we see are in space” (§428, p. 858, my trans., emph. added).
Although I cannot claim that this brief history is exhaustive or even thorough, we can discern at least one important trend in the changing approaches to understanding the relation between sensation and beliefs in external entities. Across the 17th to the 18th centuries, the discussion shifts from being primarily epistemological (Descartes, Malebranches, Leibniz, and Locke) to primarily psychological (Hume, Crusius, Eberhard). By Kant’s time, the question was not whether we are entitled to believe in external entities on the basis of sensations, but rather how sensations necessitate us in forming such beliefs. I will show in chapter 5 that Kant was in line with his contemporaries on this issue and that he more or less agrees with the Crusian line that “sensation is the mark of the actual.”\footnote{Such a pronouncement could be read as a summary statement of the principle of the Postulates of Empirical Thinking in General (A218/B265ff.).} We will see, though, that Kant does not simply adopt this position uncritically. Where the necessitation of the representation of actuality on the basis of outer sensation is presented by his predecessors as brute psychological fact, Kant redescribes this necessitation in terms of his transcendental analysis of the conditions on the possibility of experience. We will see that this injects a normative component into the sensory representation of actuality, and this, in turn, makes the connection between sensation and the belief in mind-independent realities epistemological once more.

1.3.3 The Relation between Sensing and Thinking

One of Kant’s most important points of divergence from his early modern predecessors is his claim that representations of sensibility are fundamentally different in kind from representations of understanding. Intuitions are passive and represent singular objects immediately, while concepts are active and represent objects through general marks. Further, since judgment can be carried out only by the understanding,
error can only be located in the understanding: for since the senses cannot judge, they cannot err (see A293/B350).

Kant’s predecessors did not make such a strong distinction. According to Descartes and his followers, sensations are not different in kind from higher (i.e., more clear and distinct) forms of cognition, but are instead simply a mode of highly “confused thoughts.”\(^{50}\) The Leibnizians graded representations only in terms of their clarity and distinctness, and subsequently gave sensations poor marks. For Locke, sensations were simply a kind of “simple” idea which could serve as building blocks for more complicated ideas (constituted through processes of composition and abstraction), but the content of even simple ideas were not so different from concepts.\(^{51}\) Berkeley denied the possibility of abstract ideas outright and argued instead for an imagistic psychology according to which all ideas—simple sensations and complexes of these simple ideas—are particular.\(^{52}\) And although Hume will distinguish impressions (sensations) from ideas, this distinction turns out to be merely one of degree, with ideas and impressions differing only as a function of their force and vivacity.\(^{53}\)

Although these different schools of thought were willing to reduce both sensation and higher modes of cognition together to just so many modes of thought, representation or ideation, they were by no means blind to the obvious difference between, say, the sensing of a red patch and the judgment that “some apples are red,” and we can discern the antecedents of Kant’s sharp contrast in the various positions they defended. One obvious way to distinguish between representations of sense and those of higher cognitive faculties is by appeal to a passive/active distinction. Sensations are received involuntarily and it is not up to us to determine

\(^{50}\) *Principles*, IV.§191.
\(^{51}\) Cf. *Essay*, II.xii.
\(^{52}\) See the Introduction to the *Principles of Human Knowledge*.
what features these sensations will display. However, the thoughts, opinions, beliefs, imaginations and so on that we form on the basis of these sensations are up to us. Although I cannot see an object as having any other hue than the one I sense, I can choose to think of that hue in any number of ways (e.g., similar to this one, different from that, appealing, unappealing, etc.). Some of the early moderns emphasize the passivity of sensation in contrast to other forms of thought (e.g., Descartes, Locke, Berkeley and, to some extent, Hume), but the distinction does not amount to much when ideas, whether generated passively or actively, are all of a common currency.

Some of the early moderns could not appeal to a passive/active distinction at all. Since Malebranche held that the only causally efficacious power in the universe was the divine will, all ideas in finite minds are passively received. Conversely, for Leibniz and many of his followers (e.g., Eberhard), to represent is essentially an activity of the mind, and so although sensations seem to be received involuntarily, really sensations, like all representations, are the products of the mind’s own activity.54

The activity/passivity distinction is one of the most important contrasts between sensibility and understanding for Kant because it marks the basic difference between the functions of the two fundamental faculties. Kant’s take on the active/passive distinction (which he describes in terms of Receptivität and Spontaneität) is more sophisticated than that of his predecessors though, for he incorporates the distinction between passive and active representations into his distinction between matter and form in cognition. It isn’t simply that some representations are caused by us and some are not. Rather, to have objects be passively imprinted in sensation is for them to be “given” (gegeben).55 These given representations serve as a “mat-

54See his Monadology, §11 and Eberhard’s Allgemeine Theorie, §2.
55See A50/B74: “Our cognition arises from two fundamental sources in the mind, the first of which is the reception of representations (the receptivity of impressions), the second the faculty for cognizing an object by means of these representations (spontaneity of concepts); through the former an object is given to us, through the latter it is thought in relation to that representation
ter” on which a “form” can be imprinted by the conceptualizing powers of the active understanding. The Kantian thesis that the passivity of sensibility involves being given an object and that the activity of the understanding involves applying conceptual form to this object indicates a second centrally important distinction between the representations of the two faculties. This second distinction has to do with the content of the two classes of representation, which also has some antecedents in early modern thought.

A common way for the early moderns to characterize sensation was in terms of its simplicity, which was in contrast to the complexity of higher modes of thought. As Simmons describes the Cartesian position, “Sensations may be rearranged, combined, and embellished by judgments in our full-blown sense-perceptual experience, but there is nothing more primitive out of which they are composed.”\textsuperscript{56} The empiricists also place a strong emphasis on the simplicity of sensation, treating sensation first because they take complex ideas to be compounded from simple ideas.\textsuperscript{57} The problem with characterizing sensations as “simple” is that it is not completely clear what the claim really means. To be sure, each individual perception is only one perception, and hence is simple in that respect, but the same could be said for all mental events, however cognitively robust. Presumably when Locke describes sensations as simple he means that the idea of red cannot be analyzed into component ideas, but this seems to mischaracterize the phenomenology of perception. We never have perceptions of one and only one sensory data point. Rather, we perceive entire surfaces, and these are composed of innumerable individual points. Even if it were

\textsuperscript{56}Simmons, p. 48.
\textsuperscript{57}According to Locke, “as the Mind is wholly Passive in the reception of all its simple Ideas, as the Materials and Foundations of the rest, the other are framed” (\textit{Essay}, II.xii.§1). And according to Hume, “Simple perceptions or impressions and ideas are such as admit of no distinction nor separation. The complex are the contrary to these, and may be distinguished into parts” (\textit{Treatise}, I.i.§1).
true at a physiological level that the distinct impressions received by the nervous system are simple (say individual firings of rods or cones in the retina), the conscious representations through which we sense the world are not simple.$^{58}$

Thus it is misguided to distinguish our most basic perceptual states from higher modes of cognition in terms of the simplicity or complexity of their content. But of course there is something to the suggestion that the applicability of higher modes of cognition to objects in the world requires some kind of appropriation of what is given through more basic sensory inputs. In this respect Kant’s theory marks an advance over the early moderns. Instead of distinguishing representations of sensibility from those of understanding in terms of the simplicity or complexity of their content, he distinguishes them on the basis of whether their contents refer singularly or generally. Both intuitions and concepts can be considered “complex” (the former because they “contain a manifold” (B160) and the latter because they can be analyzed ever further into more specific “marks” (Jäschke Logic, 9:97)). But intuitions are distinguished because they essentially refer to just one concrete object, while concepts refer always to possibly many objects (and they can only acquire singular reference through their combination with intuition). Thus Kant’s account of the relation between sensing and higher modes of cognition is not a simple compositional one in which sensory states are combined into complex conceptual states; rather, sensory states secure reference to individual objects, which enables conceptual representations to “think” these objects generally. The reason this Kantian model marks an advance over the earlier models is that it retains the sense in which higher modes of cognition are based on and require sensory inputs from the world, but it assigns

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$^{58}$The situation is especially problematic in Locke, who wants to classify ideas such as “perception” as simple ideas too. How the idea of perception—which seems to presuppose concepts of mindedness, consciousness, relation, idea, and so on—could count as simple is utterly obscure, and Locke’s division of ideas in terms of simplicity and complexity ends up looking arbitrary in the extreme.
fundamentally distinct functions to the two cognitive modes, and thereby captures the difference between the establishing of intentional reference and the determination of what the intended objects are.

1.4 Preliminaries Regarding Kantian Representation

In this section I will make several distinctions regarding the nature of Kantian representations that will be important for the discussions to come. I will first distinguish the analysis of representations as psychological states from the analysis of their function in cognition (§1.4.1). Then I will examine the distinction between “matter” and “form,” as Kant applies these terms to representations (§1.4.2). And lastly I will discuss the important concept of the relation between a representation and its object (§1.4.3).

First though, a remark on the way I’ll be using the term “representation” (Vorstellung). There is a wide and narrow use of this term in Kant. The wide use of “representation” designates any mental state, irrespective of whether that mental state has an object to which it is directed. So for instance, feelings are phenomenal states with pleasurable or displeasurable valences, but they are simply experienced by the subject and do not refer to anything (though, to be sure, they can come to be associated with things).⁵⁹ Feelings will count as representations in this wide sense. Sensations (as I will argue in the next chapter) are unconscious prior to their synthesis into intuitions, and independent of this synthesis they do not refer to objects, but instead are mere modifications of the faculty of sensibility. These also could be called

⁵⁹For instance, if I take pleasure in a beautiful painting, the pleasure itself is just a mental state which I enjoy having, but it is not directed at the painting. Yet I associate the having of the pleasure with the painting because I realize that the former is caused by the latter.
representations in the wide sense. This is not, however, how I will be using the term. Instead, I will take a representation proper to be a mental state which has at least some intentional content, i.e., object-directedness. That Kant, at least in his more careful moments, wants to define representations in this more restricted sense is clear when he remarks that “all representations, as representations, have their objects” (A108). Feelings and sensations considered independently of intuition will not count as representations, and I will refer to these instead simply as “mental states.” In general, I will speak of a mental state as “representational” when it refers to an object. Of course what it means for a Kantian representation to refer to an object is a complicated matter which will take some effort to make clear.

1.4.1 Metaphysical status distinguished from cognitive function

One can distinguish two distinct modes in which any given type of representation can be analyzed. I’ll refer to these as the investigations of the metaphysical status of a representation, and of the cognitive function of a representation. The first of these explains what a representation is, while the second explains how a representation functions in cognition. Kant himself doesn’t typically thematize his discussions of representations or representational faculties in this way, but if we look at the various sorts of claims he makes about representations, we see that they fall naturally into these two modes of description.\(^{61}\)

\(^{60}\)Lucy Allais also makes a point to distinguish mental states from representations proper in the same way, asserting that representations are mental states with intentional content (Kant, Non-Conceptual Content, and the Representation of Space,” Journal of the History of Philosophy, vol. 47, no. 3, (2009) p. 390).

\(^{61}\)One place where he comes close to explicitly thematizing the distinction I draw here is in the famous passage from the Second Analogy in which he describes how a representation can come to have an object. He asks, “how do we come to posit an object for these representations, or ascribe to their subjective reality, as modifications, some sort of objective reality?... How does this
Sometimes representations are described in terms of what they are in themselves, qua mental events. After all, whatever else we might want to say about them, representations are first and foremost events that take place within the mind of a thinking subject, and hence they are, at bottom, psychological (or at least mental) phenomena. We investigate the metaphysical status of a representation when we ask after its psychological constitution and structure, as well as the psychological principles and laws by which the representation is formed (which, for Kant, will always be through some synthetic or combinatory activity). So, for instance, when Kant refers to all representations as ultimately modifications of the mind, he is describing their metaphysical status. The same goes for his suggestion that representations are analyzable into matter and form, for the matter and form of representations describe their mereology as mental events (more on this shortly). And likewise, when Kant describes the synthesis of intuitions or concepts out of a given manifold by the imagination, he is describing their creation by a psychological process.

All of these issues (synthesis, matter and form, etc.) fall under what has been referred to as Kant’s “transcendental psychology.” It is psychology because it treats representations as mental events resulting from mental activity carried out by mental faculties. But it is transcendental because Kant takes himself to be making these representation go beyond itself and acquire objective significance that is proper to it as a state of the mind?” (A197/B242). In formulating the question in this way, he is distinguishing, first, the representation as a mere psychological state, and then, second, asking after the possibility of a certain specific function that that state can come to perform.

Although there is often the temptation to treat representations as “things” of some sort, especially given that Kant will refer to representations as possible objects of other representations, I think it is best to treat representations as events. They are after all temporal but not spatial, they are not substantial (being merely modifications of the subject), and they are activities performed by the various faculties. With respect to any given representation, we would do just as well to call it a representing.

See A46/B63, A97, A197/B242, A491/B519.

See A20/B34ff., A266/B322; Jäsche 9:91, 101, 121.

See A98ff. and B155ff.
claims not on the basis of empirical observation of the workings of the mind, but rather on the basis of inferences to conditions on the possibility of experience. Hence transcendental psychology is *a priori*. Transcendental psychology is contrasted with empirical psychology, which explains *a posteriori* facts about the operations of the mind. The fact that I experience the color green with the particular chromatic quality that I do, or the fact that the associative powers of the imagination are stronger in some people than in others are examples of empirical psychological facts.

For my purposes in this dissertation, I am interested in the metaphysical status of representations only insofar as this is relevant to understanding their cognitive function. There are two basic functions that representations play within cognition. First, representations relate the thinking subject to objects, i.e., they secure the referential link between mind and world. This is the *semantic* function of a representation, its “aboutness” or *intentionality*. Second, in virtue of the relations that semantically-laden representations bear to each other, some representational states can justify or warrant the having of other representational states. This is the *epistemic* function of representations. If I have a representation of the cup on the desk, then, other things being equal, I am justified in having the representation that the cup is on the desk. And if I represent that the cup is on the desk, then I am justified in representing that the desk is beneath the cup, etc. The semantic function of a representation is more basic than the epistemic function of a representation because I cannot justify my representation that something is the case about some object if I cannot first refer to that object.\(^{66}\) (For this reason, my argument in the following

\(^{66}\)I take this claim that intentional relations to objects are necessary for, and hence more basic than, epistemic relations among propositions expressing beliefs about these objects to be the majority opinion. It is not, however, universal: Robert Brandom reads Kant (approvingly) as implicitly holding that the overall structure of our discursive commitments, expressed through our normative judgments about the world, is in fact the condition on our ability to achieve intentional relations to individual objects, rather than the other way around (see ch. 1 of his *Making it Explicit*, Harvard University Press, 1994). Although I think his view is highly philosophically interesting in its own
chapters will begin with an analysis of how sensation secures intentional reference in cognition, and I will only proceed to epistemic considerations once the basic semantic structure of sensory representations is made clear.)

One might suppose that the account of the cognitive function of a representation can, for the most part, take place in abstraction from the account of its metaphysical status. In general, it would typically be most convenient to refer to representations not in terms of what they are as mental events, but in terms of what role they play within the cognitive process. When we inquire into the cognitive function of a representation it matters not at all what sort of mental state is playing that role, so long as it is the sort of thing that really can play that role. In the same way that it doesn’t matter whether a mathematical problem is solved on paper, with an abacus, or by a computer, so long as the result is correct and the procedure legitimate, so too all that matters about the metaphysical status of a representation with respect to its cognitive function is that it can successfully play the role it is assigned. Nevertheless, in order to justify treating Kantian representation purely in terms of their function, it must first be made clear that his transcendental psychological claims about the metaphysical statuses of representations both 1) really are necessary on a priori grounds, and 2) can in fact perform the function to which they are assigned. Hence one of the core aims of chapters 2 and 3 will be to explain how exactly Kant understands the metaphysical status of sensations and empirical intuitions with an eye towards grounding the cognitive functions they are supposed to play. By the end of chapter 3, we will see that, for Kant, the account of the cognitive function of sensation and intuition is inextricably tied up with the transcendental psychological account of their metaphysical status.

right, it cannot be Kant’s. This is because it ignores Kant’s fundamental claim that reference to objects is secured by sensibility—which Brandom’s account minimizes, or erases altogether—not understanding.
1.4.2 Matter and Form

One of the most important aspects of Kant’s theory of representation is the distinction between matter and form, and he suggests that all empirical representations (and many non-empirical ones too) can be analyzed into a material and a formal component. Now the closest Kant comes to a definition of these terms is in the section on the Amphiboly of Concepts of Reflection where he remarks that “[matter] signifies the determinable in general, while [form] its determination” (A266/B322). This definition is not very helpful though because one can discern in Kant’s writings two very different conceptions of the distinction between matter and form, and both versions of this distinction are consistent with this definition.

Usually, Kant will treat the matter of a thing as the set of constituents that make it up, while its form is whatever principle of organization unites all those constituents together. I’ll refer to this version of the distinction as the “mereological version” since it characterizes the distinction in terms of the relation among the parts of a thing. In the Inaugural Dissertation, Kant defines the matter of the world as “the parts, which are taken to be substances,” while the form “consists in the co-ordination,... of substances” (2:389-390). And again in the Amphiboly, Kant remarks that “in every being its components (essentialia) are the matter; the way in which they are connected in a thing, the essential form” (A266/B322). So, for

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67 Not only is the matter/form distinction important to Kant’s catalogue of the types of mental entities populating the mind, but Kant will also claim that the distinction runs through all of philosophy, and we can see the distinction pop up in his moral philosophy as well as his natural science.

68 Sensation, as we will see in Chapter 2, is completely material and has no form on its own (independently of its combination into higher representational types). But as we will also see, sensations on their own cannot properly be classified as representations, so they do not violate the rule that all representations possess both matter and form.

69 Similarly, in the L1 Metaphysics Lectures (from the mid-1770s), Kant says that “In the world whole we look at two aspects: 1. at matter, and that is the substances; 2. at form, that is the composition or the connection of the many” (28:195). Presumably, the “connection of the many” here is the spatiotemporal coordination of substances together with their interdependent causal interactions.
instance, the matter of the cup is the bits of matter (in the physicist’s sense) which comprise it, while its form is the particular shape into which those bits are arranged.

Most important for my purposes though is the matter and form of representations specifically, not just things generally. On the mereological version of the distinction, the matter of a representation will be whatever more basic mental states (be they themselves representations or something more primitive) comprise the representation, while the form is whatever synthetic activity unites these mental states together. We see this expressed in the Jäsche Logic where Kant writes that “the matter of judgment consists in the given representations that are combined in the unity of consciousness in the judgment, the form is the determination of the way that the various representations belong, as such, to one consciousness” (9:101). Similarly, in the Amphiboly, Kant writes that “In every judgment one can call the given concepts the logical matter (for judgment), their relation (by means of the copula) the form of the judgment” (A266/B322). And in the Metaphysik Mrongovius (1780s) he says, albeit somewhat loosely, that “experience has matter, i.e., data, and form, i.e., the connection of the data” (29:795). These passages fit the general definition from the Amphiboly which relates matter to form as determinable to determination: they describe the material components of a representation as that which is to be determined in virtue of being combined into a conscious unity. For instance, if I judge that ‘the ball is blue,’ the concept blue and the concept of the ball are the matter which is to be determined; the determination which unites them into a single conscious representation is the form of a predication relation between substance and accident.

The mereological version of the distinction between matter and form pertains to the metaphysical status of a representation. For here representations are being described in terms of their constitution and structure qua mental events. The other
version of the distinction to which Kant will sometimes allude pertains to the semantic function of representations. Sometimes Kant will claim that the matter of a representation is whatever object that representation is a representation of, while the form is whatever determination comes to be predicated of that object. Here matter relates to form as subject to predicate in the content of representation. I'll call this version of the distinction the “semantic” version. The clearest statement of the semantic version of the distinction appears in the Jäsche Logic: “In every cognition we must distinguish matter, i.e., the object, and form, i.e., the way in which we cognize the object” (9:33). We also find this position expressed in a Reflexion dated 1796-8: “That which is thought in a judgment is the object (matter); the thought of it through the predicate is the form in which I think it” (R6350). The semantic version of the distinction also fits the general definition from the Amphiboly (viz., matter and form as determinable and determination, respectively). When I make a judgment about an object, I am determining it in some way, and hence the object is the determinable and that which I predicate of it is the determination. So on this version of the distinction, in the judgment that ‘the ball is blue’ the subject of the judgment—the ball—is the matter, while the predicate ascribed to it—blueness—is the form.

Granting that he sometimes waffles between the two distinctions, it is clear on textual grounds that the mereological version of the distinction is the one that Kant typically has in mind when he refers to the matter or form of a representation. This is the version of the distinction that applies to things generally (not just representations), and it seems to be the version described in the examples in the Amphiboly’s discussion of the distinction (viz., when he says that the matter of a

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70See also 9:91: “With every concept we are to distinguish matter and form. The matter of concepts is the object, their form universality.”
judgment is the concepts which are related by the form of the copula). Although I do think it is clear that Kant almost always has the mereological version in mind in the *Critique* it would be unwise to prejudge the question and just assume that this is Kant’s meaning whenever we encounter a claim about the matter or form of a representation. Hence in the next chapter, when I discuss Kant’s claims about the matter and form of empirical intuitions, I will argue that Kant must have the mereological version in mind because his claims wouldn’t make sense on the semantic version.

In describing this version of the matter/form distinction as “mereological,” I do not mean to imply that the laws of mereological combination determine the entire content of a representation. That is, I am not claiming that, e.g., an empirical intuition is simply a collection of sensations arranged in a certain way, or that a judgment is just two concepts related in a certain way. There is a further ingredient, beyond simply part-part and part-whole relations, which determines the content of a representation, and this is the intentional component, i.e., that in virtue of which the representation is a representation of something. This intentional component is the last aspect of representations in general I want to discuss here.

### 1.4.3 Relation to an object

The most fundamental aspect of the cognitive function of a representation is its representational content, i.e., the way in which that representation relates to an object.\textsuperscript{71} Kant remarks that “all representations, as representations, have

\textsuperscript{71}There is a strong sense in which the representational content of a representation is a point of overlap between its metaphysical status and its cognitive function. For on the one hand, it is true of a representation, considered as mental event, that it purports to represent what it does. That is, it is a fact about representations as such that they have content. Yet on the other hand, representations are only able to function as they do because they represent what they do. Although there is this interesting overlap, I treat the representational content of representations as an issue within the broader question of the cognitive functions they perform.
their object” (A108), and one of his primary goals in the Transcendental Analytic is to explain how representations, which in themselves are mere modifications of the mind, come to have the “dignity” of “relation to an object” (A197/B242). How then should we understand the relation between a representation and its object? The most common expressions by which Kant will refer to this relation are phrases such as “corresponds to” (A20/B34; A105; A165; A240/B299), “relates to” (A108; A19/B33; A197/B242), or simply (expressed with the genitive) “is the object of” (A20/B34; A104; B207). It is probable that he means to use these terms interchangeably, at least in many instances. However, we should not assume that Kant always has the same sort of relation in mind when he uses these terms, nor that they should all be taken as synonymous expressions. And in fact, one can discern at least three different ways in which the relation between a representation and its object can be taken.

On the one hand, the relation between a representation and its object could simply be causal. That is, an object could be said to correspond to a representation because the object is causally responsible for the occurrence of that representation. Here the relation between representation and object would be metaphysical, because the relation would explain the occurrence of the representation qua mental event. Kant seems to have this sort of relation in mind, for instance, in the introduction to the Transcendental Deduction, where he describes one of the possible ways in which representations can relate to objects in terms of the object “making the representation possible” (A92/B125). Likewise, when Kant writes in the Anticipations of Perception that sensation corresponds to the real in appearance, he might be taken to mean that reality in an object is what causes sensation.72

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72In chapter 4, I will argue that this is not what Kant intends, although this is how many have taken his claim.
On the other hand, the relation between object and representation could be referential, i.e., intentional. That is, the object of the representation could be what the representation refers to, or intends. Note, however, that we can distinguish two distinct ways in which a representation can be said to refer to an object. First, intentionality could be construed as a relational property of the representation, such that the representation “intends” an independently existing object by putting the subject in an awareness relation to it. A representation is intentional in this sense when an object is present to consciousness and the representation enables the subject to (speaking loosely) “see” this object. Intentionality in this sense is a success term, because it obtains (or not) as a function of whether there really is an entity distinct from the representation and toward which the representation is directed. I cannot intend (in this sense) non-existent objects because it is impossible for a relation to obtain if one of the requisite relata is missing.

Second, intentionality could be construed as a monadic property of a representation which merely describes what the representation purports to be about. Considered in this way, the intentionality of a representation refers only to its content. To use an admittedly inelegant term that has, for better or worse, been in circulation since Brentano, the intentional object “inexists” within the content of the representation. Intentionality in this sense is no longer a success term because a representation can intend its (inexisting) object irrespective of the actuality or non-

73By “content” I mean to refer to the monadic feature of a representation in virtue of which that representation presents something to the subject in some specific way. The content of a representation is how the subject “takes” the object to be (and this “taking” can be either conceptual or non-conceptual for Kant). If I represent an animal first as friendly and then as frightful, the object I refer to remains the same, but the content through which I refer to it changes. In this respect, “content,” as I will be using the term, is roughly analogous to Frege’s Sinn. Thus my usage of this term is in contrast to many contemporary philosophers of mind who use the term “content” as synonymous with “object.” For many of these writers, representations that have no actual object also thereby have no content. I will not be using these terms in these ways. A content can be said to refer to or articulate and describe an object, but cannot be identified with an object.
actuality of the thing.\textsuperscript{74} Just as Botticelli’s \textit{Venus} is, despite her non-actuality, still about the goddess, so too representations can be said to be about what they represent even if their objects do not exist.\textsuperscript{75} We can make a conceptual distinction between a representation and its content, but the distinction is \textit{merely} conceptual. Just as there isn’t really a relation between the painting and what it depicts (the painting \textit{just is} the depiction), so too the representation \textit{just is} the presence to consciousness of its content.

We thus have two very different conceptions of intentionality on the table. It would be misguided to ask which is the “correct” conception, for both are perfectly legitimate concepts. Yet since the two really are distinct, we must be careful to keep them distinct in any discussion of intentional structures and relations. Thus I will adopt the following terminology. I’ll say that the relational conception of intentionality is called \textit{E-intentionality} (because it denotes an \textit{extrinsic} feature of a representation insofar as the representation refers to something that \textit{exists}). And I’ll say that the non-relational conception of intentionality is called \textit{I-intentionality} (because it is an \textit{intrinsic} feature of a representation which denotes the \textit{inexisting} content of the representation). From here on I will be using these terms in accordance

\textsuperscript{74}This is not to say that there cannot be failures of I-intentionality in a different sense. I-intentionality can be “unsuccessful” when I misrepresent an object. The relevant difference with E-intentionality though is that when there is no object in the appropriate relation to consciousness, there is no E-intentionality at all. Representations possess I-intentionality, however, irrespective of the existence of their objects or their veridicality.

\textsuperscript{75}It should be emphasized that the representational purport of I-intentionality really does merely \textit{purport} to establish a relation between subject and object, and it remains an open question whether there is any relatum on the other side. Some thinkers interpret Kantian transcendental idealism to imply that the only intentionality in Kant is I-intentionality. James Van Cleve, for instance, argues that every appearance is a mere “virtual object”, which “is not to be conceived as having its own special kind of being” (\textit{Problems From Kant}, Oxford University Press, 1999, p. 8.). Likewise, Richard Aquila argues that Kant’s appearances are mere intentional objects possessing no independent ontological status (see his \textit{Representational Mind}, Indiana University Press, 1983, and his “Hans Vaihinger and Some Recent Intentionalist Interpretations of Kant,” \textit{Journal of the History of Philosophy}, 41 (2) 2003, p. 231-50). I think this suggestion is basically correct, but it will take the entirety of chapters 2 and 3 to explicate fully how exactly I think we should understand the ontological status of appearances qua intentional objects.
with the following definitions:

E-intentionality is the relational property of a representation by virtue of which an existing entity is present to consciousness.

I-intentionality is the monadic property of a representation by virtue of which an inexisting content is present to consciousness.

E-intentionality describes what is in fact present to consciousness, and I-intentionality describes what we take ourselves to be representing in consciousness. E-intentionality is a relation between ontologically similar objects (existing representations and existing objects), while I-intentionality is at best a “quasi-relation” between existing representations and “inexisting” intentional objects.

The relation between these two modes of representation is complicated. The first point to make here is that I-intentionality is not simply E-intentionality minus referential success. To use the classic example, if I do not know that the evening star is identical to the morning star, then my two experiences of the thing will I-intend different objects, even while they E-intend the same object. Thus my E-intending the evening star does not imply my I-intending the evening star.\textsuperscript{76} And in general, any time a representation E-intends some object O, there is no guarantee that it I-intends O correctly (because the subject might be ignorant about what it is she is faced with); and any time a representation I-intends O, it does not mean that it E-intends O (because O might not exist, or at least not exist where the subject represents it). Yet at the same time, every instance of E-intentionality will presuppose some I-intentionality, for I cannot be said to successfully refer to some object unless there is some content to the representation, that is, unless the representation purports its object in some way.\textsuperscript{77}

\textsuperscript{76}Saul Kripke famously makes similar claims (albeit in a different idiom and as part of a different project) in lecture 2 of his *Naming and Necessity* (Harvard University Press, 1972; see esp. pp. 97-105).

\textsuperscript{77}Derk Pereboom ("Kant on Intentionality," *Synthese*, Vol. 77, No. 3, 1988) has noted a dis-
From a pre-theoretical or “naive realist” point of view, one might think that in healthy, normal, everyday modes of perceptual representation, all three of these ways of speaking of the object-relatedness of representations will coincide. If I see a chair, then I typically want to say that the chair caused my representation, that the chair is what my representation purports to refer to, and that the chair is what my representation in fact refers to. As we will come to see however, things are not so simple with Kant. With respect to the first distinction (between cause and reference), the transcendental distinction between appearances and things in themselves will give us reason to question whether the ultimate causes of representations (things in themselves) can ever be said to be identical to the objects referred to by the representations (appearances). And how one understands the distinction between I-intentionality and E-intentionality will depend, at least in part, on how one interprets transcendental idealism. If one takes a strong metaphysical reading of the doctrine (as I do), then the (mere) phenomenality of appearances could be taken to imply that the very notion of successful (E-intentional) reference to such a thing is nonsense.

So we can distinguish these three different possible relations between representation and object. Thus in any given instance in which Kant refers to the relation

tinction in the history of philosophy which is similar to the one I’ve drawn here. He distinguishes between extensional and intensional (note the ‘s’) conceptions of intentionality in the history of early modern philosophy, and argues that Kant’s theory is novel in its exclusively intensional characterization of intentionality. Where extensional intentionality requires the existence of some object which the subject (by way of the representation) relates to, an intensionalist intentionality is existence-independent (p. 325). Furthermore, unlike with extensionalist theories, intensional intentionality is concept-dependent. That is, change in the concepts used in a representation will change the intentionality of the representation (unlike in extensionalist theories). Pereboom argues that Kant’s theory is entirely intensionalist. I think his analysis goes in the right direction, however, I also think he ignores an important respect in which Kant thinks that there must really be something (existent) towards which the subject is directed in representing. Specifically (as I will show in chapter 3), the intuition must present a collection of sensory states for higher modes of cognition to determine in judgment. In this sense, Kant’s break from his empiricist predecessors, while hardly insignificant, is not in this respect quite as radical as Pereboom suggests, because there is still a form of existence-dependence presupposed by what I have called the I-intentionality of empirical representations.
between a representation and its object, it will be up to the interpreter to decide which of these possible relations Kant had in mind. That being said, I think there is sufficient textual evidence to support the claim that Kant’s basic, or default, understanding of the relation between representation and object is in terms of what I have called I-intentionality. In the places where Kant explicitly thematizes the notion of an object of cognition (most notably the Transcendental Deductions and the Second Analogy), his remarks point in this direction. At A104 he writes,

And here then it is necessary to make understood what is meant by the expression “an object of representations.” We have said above that appearances themselves are nothing but sensible representations, which must not be regarded in themselves, in the same way, as objects (outside the power of representation). What does one mean, then, if one speaks of an object corresponding to and therefore also distinct from the cognition? It is easy to see that this object must be thought of only as something in general = X, since outside of our cognition we have nothing that we could set over against this cognition as corresponding to it. (A104)

This language strongly suggests that the relation between representation and object is fundamentally one of referential purport. Kant is claiming that, on the one hand, the very notion of representing presupposes that the representation is beholden to something distinct from itself—this is the “something in general =X.” Yet on the other hand, since we only have conscious access to “appearances,” which are mere “sensible representations,” we cannot ground our representations in a real relation to this “something in general =X,” for this something lies permanently beyond the grasp of consciousness. The representation of an object is justified not through securing an actual relation to the object, but rather, as he goes on to argue (A105), synthesizing a manifold in accordance with the necessary and a priori rules of what it is for something to be an object for us (conditions, that is, on taking representings to be beholden to something which is independent of them). Kant’s point then, or at

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78 And as he goes on to say, “we have only to do with the manifold of our representations” (A105).
least part of it, is that what makes a mental state representational is not the obtaining of an actual relation between the state and an independent object, but rather the purport or presupposition that there is some object to which the representation is beholden. This purport is what I have referred to as I-intentionality.

We find a similar position in section 17 of the B-Deduction, where Kant defines an object as “that in the concept of which the manifold of a given intuition is united” (B137). Again, Kant wants to insist that what is essential to something’s being an object of consciousness is always a matter of mental states being synthesized in a certain way. For “object” is being defined here fundamentally in terms of what it is to use and apply a concept of an object. As he goes on to argue, something can be said to be “an object for me” when I have synthesized the representation of it in accordance with the rules of the synthetic unity of consciousness (B138). He could have said, but he didn’t, that something becomes an object for me when my mind stands in some privileged relation to an independently existing entity. Hence again we see that Kantian intentionality is intrinsic to the content and structure of representation, and is not (at least not primarily) a matter of extrinsic relations obtaining between the mental state and something else.

Finally, in the Second Analogy, Kant returns to the topic, claiming,

If we investigate what new characteristic is given to our representations by the relation to an object, and what is the dignity that they thereby receive, we find that it does nothing beyond making the combination of representations necessary in a certain way, and subjecting them to a rule; and conversely that objective significance is conferred on our representations only insofar as a certain order in their temporal order is necessary. (A197/B242)

Here, again, for a representation to have an object, all that is needed is that the content in the representation be subjected to certain rules. Nothing is said about whether the object of these representations need be something distinct from the mind
in a real relation to it.\footnote{Van Cleve seems to arrive at a similar conclusion regarding Kant’s characterization of the object of cognition: “what it is for representations to have ‘relation to objects’ just is for them to stand in certain relations to one another” (Problems From Kant, p. 93).}

Although I do not want to rule out that Kant might sometimes refer to the notion of an object of a representation in the causal sense or the E-intentional sense, I take these passages to show that the primary and default conception of “relation to an object” for him is what I have called I-intentionality.\footnote{Three philosophers who seem to agree with my analysis that what I have called I-intentionality is the core concept of the relation between representation and object in Kant are Karl Ameriks, Robert Brandom and Beatrice Longuenesse. Ameriks argues that Kant’s theory of perception is similar to Thomas Reid’s (and different from their predecessors) because for both, their theory of intentionality implies that perception is not a success term, but is rather (as with the German \textit{Wahrnehmung}) merely a \textit{taking} to be true (“A Common-Sense Kant?” in Kant and the Historical Turn, Oxford University Press, 2002, p. 121-122). Similarly, Brandom contrasts Kant’s account of the relation between representation and object from that of the Cartesian tradition because Kant is less concerned with representational success than with “more fundamental questions about representational purport” (op. cit.). Longuenesse says that the most basic revolutionary insight of the \textit{Critique} is a revision of the traditional notion of the relation between representation and object: “While the Letter to Herz presents the relation between a representation and its object as a causal relation between two heterogeneous entities, the representation that is ‘within’ the mind and the object which is ‘outside’ it, the \textit{Critique} internalizes the relation between the representation and the object \textit{within representation itself}, so that the problem assumes a new meaning” (Kant and the Capacity to Judge, Princeton University Press, 1998, p. 17). Stated simply, something becomes an object of cognition only when the subject represents to itself something as its object.} At bottom, what it is for a representation to have an object, and hence to be a representation at all, is for the subject to take itself to be constrained in the rule-governed synthesis of that representation. This taking-to-be-constrained comes not from an extrinsic relation to another entity, but from \textit{a priori} rules implicit in the synthetic unity of consciousness. In the next two chapters we will see how objects can be given through sensation and intuition such that the understanding has an empirical material to which it can apply these \textit{a priori} rules.
Part I

Sensibility
Chapter 2

The “Objectivity” of Sensations

Kant’s primary goal in the first half of the Critique of Pure Reason—the Transcendental Aesthetic through the Analytic of Principles—is an attempt to explain how it is that human minds are capable of forming objectively valid representations of particular states (and eventually general laws) of the natural world. Kant famously establishes a division of labor between two distinct cognitive faculties, arguing that the cooperation of both is necessary for knowledge of the world.1 With the understanding or intellect (Verstand) we can apply concepts, form judgments, and make inferences. Through understanding the mind is active. However, since the basic representation of understanding, the concept (Begriff), is a general representation, and hence can apply to possibly many objects, through understanding alone no representational connection to individual objects (i.e., demonstrative reference) is possible (A68/B93). Furthermore, the understanding on its own has only the form of the logical connections that obtain between concepts and judgments to deal with.

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1 Cf. A50/B74: “Our cognition arises from two fundamental sources in the mind, the first of which is the reception of representations (the receptivity of impressions), the second the faculty for cognizing an object by means of these representations (spontaneity of concepts); through the former an object is given to us, through the latter it is thought in relation to that representation (as a mere determination of the mind).”
Without some informational input (what Kant will call the “matter” of experience) to the understanding’s processing to secure a cognition’s directedness towards an actual state of affairs, no specific conceptualizations are possible and conceptual activity would remain merely formal, empty of all empirical content. So understanding is insufficient for cognition of the natural world in two ways. It cannot represent individual objects on its own, and any empirical reference (whether singular or general) requires that a material input be given to it.

Sensibility (Sinnlichkeit), the other basic representational faculty, supplies these elements. The basic representation of sensibility is intuition (Anschauung). An intuition is a representation which relates immediately to a single sensible object (A320/B376; A713/B741). Through intuition we form representations of individual objects in the world.² Now intuitions have both an a priori and an a posteriori component. The a priori component, the form of space and time, is an innate disposition to represent objects spatially and temporally. This disposition lies ready within sensibility itself, and precedes all experience.³ The mere form of space and time alone, however, cannot ground concrete empirical cognition of the world, for these forms only determine the necessary structures of the objects of intuitions generally, but not the specific spatiotemporal determinations that actual objects will display. Although the forms of space and time can inform me of the basic geometrical and arithmetical laws that all objects of intuition will (necessarily) obey, these forms alone cannot tell me the shapes and structures of the objects that (contingently) happen to occupy the region of spacetime in which I find myself. It is the a posteriori element of intuition

²Hintikka provides a useful discussion of this basic function of intuition in “On Kant’s Notion of Intuition (Anschauung),” in The First Critique: Reflection’s on Kant’s Critique of Pure Reason, ed. by Pendelhum and MacIntosh, University of Calgary, 1969, p. 38-53. See also Manley Thompson’s “Singular Terms and Intuitions in Kant’s Epistemology,” Review of Metaphysics, Vol. 26 (2) 1972.

³Note that Kant is not claiming here that the representations of space and time themselves are innate. Although Kant is an innatist with respect to the disposition to represent objects spatially, he does not believe that there are any innate representations.
that provides the substantive informational link between the world and the representation thereof. This *a posteriori* element is sensation (*Empfindung*) according to Kant. Sensation is said to be the matter of intuition and of experience generally. It is only in virtue of the involvement of sensation that any representational activity can be called “empirical,” or, which is the same thing, it is only because of sensation that representational activity can be more than merely formal.\(^4\)

So empirical representations can be directed towards individual objects in the world because of sensation. This fact alone shows that sensation occupies a centrally important place in Kant’s theory of empirical cognition. Without sensation, we could cognize the formal possibility of an object in general, but we could not cognize actual objects in the world.\(^5\) It is unfortunate, then, that Kant never focuses any detailed discussion directly on the role that sensation is to play in empirical cognition. Instead Kant’s remarks about sensation are brief, scattered, and often ambiguous. Because of this, commentators have failed to reach a consensus about how we should understand the function of sensation in Kant’s theory. Everyone agrees that sensation results from the affection of objects on the senses, and that it is in some way connected with the matter of intuition. But there is disagreement over whether sensation has any semantic function or epistemic function, and if so, what form exactly these functions would take.

Many will assert that sensation is just the raw, unprocessed, non-representational data of experience, and they leave it at that. Robert Pippin interprets Kantian sen-

\(^4\)Cf. A86/B118: “[T]he impressions of the senses provide the first occasion for opening the entire power of cognition to [pure concepts] and for bringing about experience, which contains two very heterogeneous elements, namely a *matter* for cognition from the senses and a certain *form* for ordering it from the inner source of pure intuiting and thinking, which on the occasion of the former, are first brought into use and bring forth concepts.”

\(^5\)In fact, Kant claims that the very definition of actuality must be given in terms of the relation of an object to the material conditions of experience, i.e., sensation. This aspect of his account of actuality is discussed in §5.1.1 below.
sations as “not a mode of representation at all” and he claims that they “comprise only the undifferentiated material of experience.” Likewise, Wayne Waxman holds that “sensations are raw, utterly formless, representational primary matter,” and he argues that they are just as inaccessible to consciousness as things in themselves. Lorne Falkenstein goes so far to claim that sensations are not mental states at all, much less representations, and are instead the physical effects of objects on our sense organs.

Others, without claiming that sensations are as such representations of anything, still want to emphasize sensation’s privileged status as being a sort of necessary first stage in the cognitive process, and that our reference to and beliefs about objects must be traced back to what is given in sensation. For instance, Rolf George, while denying that sensations themselves have any intentional object, claims that sensations are the intentional objects of other representations, and that we construct our reference to physical objects out of our initial attention to sensory states.

There are also many, by contrast, who do claim that sensation is a mode of representation, but there is disagreement over what sort of objects these representations refer to. Richard Aquila reads Kant as claiming that a mental state “is called ‘sensation’ precisely in virtue of its ability to call our attention to the altered state of the sense organs” and that they thereby relate the subject to the modified states of the sense organs.

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6 *Kant’s Theory of Form*, Yale University Press, 1982, p. 31.
7 Ibid., p. 36.
9 Ibid., p. 219-220.
10 *Kant’s Intuitionism*, University of Toronto Press, 1995, ch. 3.
of the receptive part of the cognizing subject. Similarly, Manley Thompson will distinguish sensation from intuition by taking sensation to represent the subject’s own sensory state, while intuition represents an object in spacetime. A less popular view, but one that I think is more defensible than most commentators have acknowledged, is that sensations represent physical objects in space-time. Arthur Collins, for instance, argues that “sensations provide the matter of our empirical representations,” and that, “sensation carries the burden of representing non-mental existence.”

Most commentators agree that whether sensations should properly be considered representations (as opposed to some lesser mental state), they at least have some epistemic relevance insofar as they provide a belief-constraining function in our cognition. That is, it is widely accepted that we form the empirical representations that we do (instead of others) because we are given this sensory input (instead of some other). There are, however, a few writers who have denied this. Pippin argues that although we necessarily represent sensations as though they guide and constrain our cognition, since “we follow our own rules for what counts as guidedness,” this constraint is merely apparent. Abela argues for a similar position, arguing that sensation can have no epistemic significance nor belief-constraining function whatsoever.

So there are basic disagreements on two fundamental issues: there is the question of what, if anything, the semantic content of a representation is (i.e., what

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13 In this respect, Aquila reads Kant as in line with the Wolffians who claimed that sensations represent the states of the organs of sense (see p. 20ff. above).


16 *Kant’s Theory of Form*, p. 51.

it refers to and how it refers), and there is the question of what, if anything, the epistemic significance of sensation is (i.e., whether and how it plays a belief constraining role in cognition). My own view, for which I'll be arguing in the remainder of this chapter, is that sensations can wear two different hats with respect to their representational content. I will argue that although sensations in themselves (i.e., independent of their synthesis in intuition) are not capable of having representational content, when sensations come to be contained in intuition as their matter, they can function in the representing either of the subject as it is modified, or of the physical object which does the modifying. (In addition to this semantic function, I will also show in Appendix B to Part I that sensations are epistemically significant insofar as facts about any given manifold of sensations will guide the formation of the intuition in which they come to be contained, and hence (directly) determine the representational content of intuition, and hence (indirectly) determine the judgments which get made about the object given in that intuition.)

I will not be able to give a full account of the epistemic significance of sensation until the second half of the dissertation. My purpose in the present chapter is more modest, focussing primarily on the question of whether sensations should be said to perform representational work, and if so, what it is that they represent. In §2.1, I collect Kant’s various remarks about sensation from across the Critique, showing that Kant uses the term Empfindung in three distinct ways. In §2.2, I appeal to Kant’s discussion of the objectivity and subjectivity of sensations in the Critique of Judgment and the Anthropology to show that there are two different senses in which sensations can be either subjective or objective. Finally in §2.3, I show that we can apply the distinctions discovered in §2.2 to the interpretive problems discussed in §2.1, and thus can come away with a coherent interpretation of Kant’s theory of sensation. The most important result of this chapter will be that, despite some
indications to the contrary, Kant does hold that sensations have a representational function, and that in empirical cognition they are intentionally directed at qualities of physical bodies in space (i.e., they are not mere introspective awarenesses of the subject’s own current sensory state). Sensations themselves are not representations in the full sense, but as components of intuition, they carry out the task of securing reference to the empirical object.\textsuperscript{18}

Having shown by the end of this chapter that Kant is committed to a representational function for sensation (even though, again, they are not themselves representations), I will be in a position in the next chapter to show how this function actually plays out when sensations are involved in empirical intuitions. This will then allow me to explain how sensations provide a belief-constraining role in cognition, and hence how sensations can be considered epistemically significant (even though neither they nor intuition independent of concepts can themselves be the bearers of epistemic content, i.e., judgments that can be true or false).

2.1 Three Accounts of Sensation in Critique of Pure Reason

Kant is less than clear about the way he understands sensation and its function in intuition. Although he makes it explicit early on that sensations are creatures of the receptive faculty and that they have some relation to what he calls the “matter

\textsuperscript{18}There is no inconsistency in the claims that sensations are not themselves representations, yet that they can have a representational function. For they only have this function in virtue of their relation to mental states which are representations in the full sense, viz., intuitions. By way of analogy, we would not say that there is any inconsistency between saying that a single sand-bag is not itself a barricade, but that it can perform the function of barricading when placed in the appropriate context in the appropriate relation to other sandbags. By way of a closer analogy, we would also not think it inconsistent to say that a single daub of red paint, on its own, does not represent the surface of a red apple, but that in the context a still-life painting the daub could take on the function of representing the apple’s surface.
of appearance” (A20/B34), their precise status as mental states and the precise sense in which they relate to the matter of appearance are never carefully explicated. All of Kant’s important remarks about sensation occur in contexts where his primary attention is focussed on other issues. Many of his claims about sensation can thus appear definitional if taken on their own, but in context can have the look of off-hand remarks which may or may not be expressed with precision. In fact, if we collect together all of the claims that Kant makes about sensations and the relations they bear to other types of representations, we find that:

- sensation corresponds to the matter (i.e., “the real,” or “the physical”) of appearance (A20/B34, A165, B207, A175/B217, A723/B751)
- sensation corresponds to the matter of empirical intuition (A168/B209-10)
- sensation is the matter of appearance (A42/B59-60)
- sensation is the matter of perception (B207, A166/B208)
- sensation is the matter of experience (A223/B270)
- sensation is contained in the objects of perception (B208)
- sensation is related to something outside me (A23/B38)
- sensation itself is represented outside me (A20/B34, A23/B38)
- sensation grounds qualitative sensory feels like tastes and colors (A28-9)
- sensation just is qualitative sensory feels like tastes and colors (A175/B217)
- sensation represents the subject as it is affected (B207, A320/B376)
- sensation represents the real in the object doing the affecting (B207, A374)

This set of claims taken together comprises one big mess, and it will not be possible to walk away with a coherent theory of sensation if we follow the exact letter of

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19Kant’s attention in the Transcendental Aesthetic is on pure intuition and the ideality of space and time, in the Anticipations it’s on the reality judged in objects, and in the Fourth Paralogism it’s on the actuality of objects in space.
Kant’s account of sensation. I want to argue though, that if we comb through his various remarks on sensation, we will see that they naturally fall into three distinct characterizations. In the remainder of this section I will separate out these three characterizations, and in §2.2 and §2.3 I will show how they can best be reconciled.

2.1.1 Sensation as Subjective Modification

We saw above that Kant implicitly distinguishes the metaphysical status of a representation from its function in cognition. I initially characterized this as a way to discuss representations, but we can also carry the distinction over to mental states generally. We find this sort of distinction at work in his characterizations of sensations. The first official definition he gives of sensation in the *Critique* comes at the beginning of the Transcendental Aesthetic where he gives a characterization of sensation in terms of its metaphysical status. He writes that “the effect of an object on the capacity for representation, insofar as we are affected by it, is sensation” (A20/B34). In describing sensations fundamentally as effects, he is drawing attention to their status as psychological phenomena, and this is independent of what role they might play in the cognitive process. Later in the Aesthetic he again characterizes sensations as resulting from the affection of objects when he says that

20 These claims make it easy to see why some of Kant’s less sympathetic readers have found in his theory a naive (and nearly absurd) form of subjective phenomenalism. For some of these remarks could ground an inference of the following sort: qualitative phenomenal feels like tastes and colors are sensations, which are the matter of appearance, which is a degree of reality, which is just the physical stuff from which bodies are made; therefore physical bodies are composed of qualitative sensory feels like tastes and colors. Kant, on this uncharitable reading, is just a painfully verbose Berkeley.

21 As we’ll see, the question whether sensations are mere mental states, full representations, or something in between, is not always completely clear. I will argue eventually that there are some uses of the term ‘sensation’ according to which they are representations, but that Kant should really be read as using the term to refer to inner intuitions of the empirical self in these situations. In most uses of the term, sensations are not themselves representations, but they do have a quasi-representational function to play in virtue of their constituting certain representations. This latter usage is the more interesting one, and the one to which much of the next chapter is devoted.
sensation “presupposes the actual presence of the object” (A50/B74). Sensations in this initial characterization are states of the subject’s receptive faculty. Since the existence of these states is brought about by the affection of something on the senses, one can say that sensations are modifications in sensibility brought about by affecting objects. We would do just as well to call sensations in this sense “sense impressions.” I will refer to sensations under this description as “E-sensations” to emphasize the fact that when he describes them in this way, he understands them primarily as effects, and hence as mental states which are part of the pre-cognitive, pre-intentional, and pre-epistemic causal order.

So sensations on this characterization are effects, or modifications. What sort of effects, then, are they? Kant describes the metaphysical status of E-sensations in...
more detail in the Anticipations of Perception. There he tries to show that we necessarily represent an intensive degree of reality (\textit{Realität}) in the object of perception, and that this intensive degree corresponds to an intensive degree in the sensation caused by the object.\textsuperscript{26} He writes,

\begin{quote}
Now since sensation in itself is not an objective representation, and in it neither the intuition of space nor that of time is to be encountered, it has, to be sure, no extensive magnitude, but yet it still has a magnitude (and indeed through its apprehension, in which the empirical consciousness can grow in a certain time from nothing = 0 to its given measure), thus it has an \textbf{intensive magnitude}. (B208)
\end{quote}

In referring to sensations \textit{in themselves}, Kant is abstracting from any role sensations may play in higher orders of cognition (e.g., empirical intuitions or empirical concepts). The “influence on sense” which produces these effects is the same as that described in the Transcendental Aesthetic (A20/B34). Sensations have “no extensive magnitude,” i.e., no spatial extension and hence no composition. This is unsurprising because extensive magnitude presupposes composition and hence what Kant calls “combination” (\textit{Verbindung}).\textsuperscript{27} Since all combination presupposes a combinatorial activity of the subject,\textsuperscript{28} and since Kant is treating sensation “in itself,” hence prior to any combinatorial activity, sensations cannot be composite things.\textsuperscript{29} Yet sensations nevertheless have an \textbf{intensive magnitude}. An intensive magnitude, or what he will also call a “degree” (\textit{Grad}), is the quantity of a quality which can be given a determinate value on a continuous scale of possible such values. These degrees can be invoked to quantify what Kant will call the “reality” in any given

\textsuperscript{26}The Anticipations will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4 when I analyze the relation between sensation and the category of \textit{Realität}.

\textsuperscript{27}Cf. Axioms of Intuition, A162/B202ff.

\textsuperscript{28}“We can represent nothing as combined in the object without having previously combined it ourselves” (B130).

\textsuperscript{29}This is consistent with the claim from the B-Deduction that “the combination of a manifold in general can never come to us through the senses” (B129).
thing. Both sensations and the physical objects to which they correspond are said to have some form of reality (B207). In physical objects, the reality of any given bit of matter will be its causal force (given in terms of attractive and repulsive forces). The real of a sensation, on the other hand, is merely the sensory quality displayed by that sensation. The examples he gives of these qualities are “color, e.g., red” and “warmth” (A173/B215), and a few pages later he gives as examples of “the quality of sensation” “colors, tastes, etc.” (A175/B218). Thus the reality, or intensive quality, of sensation is the raw sensory feel encountered in perception. These qualities are the primitive, unanalyzable, even indescribable, yet at the same time utterly familiar, phenomenological properties in virtue of which our sensory experience is sensory.

So now we are in a position to give a more complete definition of the metaphysical status of sensation: an E-sensation is a simple (i.e., uncombined, pre-synthetic) mental state, which results from the affection of an object on the receptive faculty, and which has a determinate sensory quality and a determinate degree of intensity. An E-sensation should thus be understood as a sort of qualitative “lighting up” of sensibility which is brought about by the subject’s receptive interaction with some affecting object. It is worth keeping in mind, however, that in characterizing sensations as qualitative modifications of sensibility, they remain within the causal order of the perceptual process, and nothing has yet been said about any respect in which these qualitative “lightings up” might be or become conscious. Given that

\[30\text{The term “reality” (} \text{Realität}\text{) has a special use in Kant. It is not meant, as in normal usage, to be synonymous with “existence” or “being.” The difference between these concepts is discussed in chapter 4 (p. 216ff.).\]

\[31\text{Cf. Metaphysik Mrongovius (1782-3): “For internally the real is the sensations, externally that which corresponds to them” (29:862).}\]

\[32\text{The causal force in objects is thus first knowable due to the degree of influence the object has on the senses. Ceteris paribus, the degree of sensation corresponds to the degree of influence something has on the senses, which in turn corresponds to the degree of causal power in the object. The full story, however, is not so simple. How the intensity of a sensation contributes to our knowledge of objects is the central topic of the Anticipations which will be discussed in detail in Chapter 4.}\]
Kant rules out the possibility of consciousness without combinatory activity, and that E-sensations are being considered in abstraction from this activity, we should presume that E-sensations as such cannot be conscious mental states. That is, they are neither representations that have objects, nor can they themselves be objects of introspective observation. This may sound somewhat strange, for it may sound as though sensations are mental states to which we have no mental access. And it would also be strange indeed to say that what makes sensory consciousness sensory lies beyond the horizon of consciousness. This isn’t quite the claim though. Instead, it is sensations in themselves and on their own, i.e., prior to (or at least in abstraction from) their involvement in any synthetic combination, which are off-limits to consciousness. The next two characterizations of sensation posit them as mental states which do involve consciousness. The respect in which they involve consciousness will however take some work to make clear.

2.1.2 Sensation as Subjective Representation

According to the first characterization of sensations, they are fundamentally to be understood as modifications of the receptive subject. Other times though, Kant will characterize sensations not simply as the modifications themselves, but as representations by which we come to be aware that the subject is modified. The most straightforward formulation of this characterization of sensation appears in Kant’s oft-cited taxonomy, or “Stufenleiter” of representations at the beginning of the Transcendental Dialectic. He says there that a sensation is “a perception that refers [bezieht] to the subject as a modification of its state” (A320/B276). What is most significant here is that sensations are now not simply phenomenal “lightings up,” but they also have some representational work to perform, they “refer.” Perceptions are here called “representations with consciousness,” which indicates that
sensations (in this sense) are not merely the pre-conscious results of affection, but are representations which can inform us about this affection.

When Kant characterizes sensations in this way, he typically wants to emphasize that they are “subjective.” Hence I’ll refer to sensations under this description as S-sensations. In the Transcendental Aesthetic, sensations are called “subjective representations” (A28/B44) which “belong only to the subjective constitution of the kind of sense... [which] do not in themselves allow any object to be cognized, least of all a priori” (B44). And in the Anticipations of Perception, he refers to “the real of the sensation, as merely subjective representation, by which one can only be conscious that the subject is affected, and which one relates to an object in general” (B207), and he goes on to make explicit that “sensation in itself is not an objective representation” (B208). We find a similar claim in the *Metaphysik Vigilantius* (1794-5) where Kant claims that “the representation of the impression of the object on us is sensation,” which is “something subjective that we all must cognize a posteriori” (29:829). Likewise, in *Metaphysik L*₂ (1791-2) Kant writes that, “a representation that is referred not to the object, but rather merely to the subject, is called sensation” (28:547).

In these passages, sensations are subjective because they represent the subject in its being modified and they result from the constitution of the sensing subject. There is the suggestion that sensations might in a certain sense relate to objects in space, but they do this only indirectly: they make the subject aware that it is affected, and thereby they can be said to relate to “an object in general” (B207). By this Kant seems to mean that the having of a sensation could warrant a sort of inference from the fact that the subject is affected to the thought that there is something affecting the subject. But this does not imply that the intentional object (in either the intrinsic or extrinsic sense of §1.4.3) of the sensation is an object in
space. That would require some further representational state. Kant seems to be insisting here that the intentional object of the sensation is always the sensing subject itself. Sensations are subjective because they are mental states which represent the subject.

Note that this position should already raise some red flags when put in contrast to the initial definitions in the Transcendental Aesthetic. Empirical intuitions were said to relate to objects in space both “immediately” and “through sensation” (A20/B34). Yet now sensations are said to be representations of the subject, which, if taken to be Kant’s considered view, would imply that empirical intuitions relate immediately to objects in space, but only through the mediation of representations of the subject. It would seem that one of these two claims must be qualified or revised.

So far, it is unclear how we should understand the relation between E-sensations and S-sensations. Kant gives no indication that he takes himself to be referring to different entities with this second description. The first characterization is about the metaphysical status of sensations, while the second is about their cognitive function, so the two characterizations may just be different ways of describing two different aspects of the same thing. However, it would be strange to say that one and the same mental state is both a modification of the subject, yet also that by which the subject is aware of its modification. Such a claim suggests that sensations refer to themselves. Perhaps such a position would not be incoherent, but we should keep in mind that there is at least some tension between the two claims. More difficult to resolve is the issue of sensations as conscious representations. We saw that sensations qua sense impression, considered simply as the effects of objects on the senses and in abstraction from any synthesis in which they might be involved, are simple mental states and hence not conscious representations. Yet now subjective representations are said to be “representations with consciousness” (A320/B376) and they make
us aware of our current sensory state. Since awareness for Kant necessarily involves some synthetic combination of representations with the apperceptive subject, these S-sensations must be assumed to involve some sort of synthesis, and hence they must be distinct from the pre-synthetic sensations which are the immediate results of the impingement of objects on the senses.

Thus far there are three interpretive problems in need of resolution: 1. It is not clear how empirical intuitions can relate to objects in space both immediately yet “through” representations of the sensing subject. 2. Kant seems to be committed to the claims that sensations are effects on the senses (E-sensations), yet also that by which we are aware of these effects (S-sensations), and hence that sensations are representations of themselves (assuming that E-sensations are identical to S-sensations). 3. Kant seems to commit himself to the claims that sensations are pre-synthetic, which implies that they are unconscious (E-sensations), yet also that they are conscious representations, which entails some synthetic combination (S-sensations). All these puzzles provide a strong hint that when Kant refers to sensation as an effect (E-sensation), he either is not referring to the same thing as when he refers to sensation as a subjective representation (S-sensation), or, if he is referring to the same thing, then he must be referring to it at very different moments or stages in the cognitive process. Ultimately I’ll argue that latter is what Kant has in mind. First though, we must complicate things a bit further by looking at one more basic characterization Kant gives of sensation.

2.1.3 Sensation as Objective Representation

Having just seen Kant claim in several places that sensations are subjective representations that are referred to the subject and that they are explicitly not ob-

\[33\text{Cf. B131ff.}\]
jective, it will come as a surprise to find that Kant also claims that sensations refer to the objects of perception, i.e., appearances in space. The first suggestion that sensations are at least sometimes related to an object (not simply to the subject insofar as it is affected by an object) is in the Transcendental Aesthetic where Kant claims that, “that in the appearance which corresponds to sensation [is] its matter” (A20/B34). Now this claim that sensation corresponds to the matter of appearance need not in itself necessarily be read as the stronger claim that the sensation represents the matter of appearance (even though the correspondence claim is surely consistent with this stronger reading.) He might just mean that sensation corresponds to the matter causally, but not intentionally. At face value this might be a natural way to read the claim, since part of the conclusion of the Anticipations of Perception is that the intensity of a sensation co-varies with the degree of influence of the object on the senses, which seems to be a causal notion (B208). In the formulation of the principle of the Anticipations of Perception, however, Kant makes it clear that the correspondence relation between the sensation and the matter of appearance is not merely causal, but also representational. He says there that “in all appearances the real, which is an object of the sensation, has intensive magnitude, i.e., a degree” (B207). This indicates that sensations function to represent a feature of the appearance, and so in this sense can be called “objective,” or, at the very least, “object-directed.” I will refer to sensations under this description as O-sensations.

Kant returns to this point in the first-edition Fourth Paralogism, during his attempt to reply to skeptical doubt about the external world. There he writes that,

34Kant makes a similar remark in the Phoronomy Chapter of the Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science: “Matter, as opposed to form, would be that in the outer intuition which is an object of sensation, and thus the properly empirical element of sensible and outer intuition, because it can in no way be given a priori. In all experience something must be sensed, and that is the real of sensible intuition” (4:481). See also Prol. 4:324.
Sensation is that which designates \[ \text{bezeichnet} \] an actuality \[ \text{Wirklichkeit} \] in space and time, according to whether it is related \[ \text{bezogen wird} \] to the one or the other mode of sensible intuition. Once sensation is given (which, if it is applied to an object in general \[ \text{auf einen Gegenstand \"uberhaupt... angewandt wird} \] without determining it, is called perception \[ \text{Wahrnehmung} \]), then through its manifold many an object can be invented in imagination that has no empirical place outside imagination in space and time. Whether we take sensations, pleasure and pain, or even external sense \[ \text{"ausseren Sinne} \] such as colors, warmth, etc., it is certain beyond doubt that it is perception through which the material must first be given for thinking objects of sensible intuition. This perception thus represents (staying for now only with outer intuitions) something real in space. (A374)

This argument (which, it must be admitted, is rather weak) is intended to show that at least sometimes our representations of objects in space are not imaginary, because the imagination can only reproduce sensory content which must initially be given through outer sense.\(^\text{37}\) The strength of the argument is, however, not important to my present purposes. What matters is the account of the representational status of sensation implicit in the argument. Kant claims that a sensation comes to be a “perception” when it is “applied to an object in general without determining it”; further, sensation “designates” a reality in space, and, as perception, it “represents” this reality. Presumably, the “without determining it” remark is meant to indicate that the way in which sensations represent objects is not conceptual. For it is through concepts that objects are determined in representation, and whatever else they might be, sensations are surely not concepts.\(^\text{38}\)

\(^{35}\)Guyer and Wood translate \text{Wirklichkeit} as “reality” here.

\(^{36}\)Guyer and Wood translate \text{"ausseren Sinne} as “sensation” here.

\(^{37}\)Kant significantly revised this argument in the B-edition of the \textit{First Critique} as the Refutation of Idealism. I discuss the Refutation and Kant’s argument that sensations must be caused by something distinct from the subject in Chapter 5 (especially §5.1.2 and §5.2.1).

\(^{38}\)Eric Watkins has suggested to me another possible sense in which sensations might be “applied to an object without determining it.” Sometimes the determination of an object is just the application of a predicate to it. Hence the claim here at A374 would be that sensations represent their objects, but not as predicates in a judgment. This would be consistent with my reading because only concepts can occupy the predicate position in a judgment.
represent objects. They refer to “actualities.” This is a very different position from those passages in which Kant characterizes sensations as representations only of the subject insofar as it is modified.

Also important in this passage is the distinction between sensations such as “pleasure and pain,” and sensations of “outer sense,” such as “colors, warmth, etc.” The distinction implicit here is between outer and inner sense, which are associated with space and time respectively. The distinction he draws implies that some sensations represent the subject (S-sensations), which is essentially temporal, yet that other sensations represent physical objects (O-sensations), which are essentially spatial. This suggests that we reevaluate those of Kant’s claims about the subjectivity of sensations that seemed to suggest that sensations only represent the subject (apparently as a matter of definition).

Further indirect evidence that Kant assigns some objective function to sensation is the theory implicit in the initial series of definitions opening the Transcendental Aesthetic (which I mentioned just above as a problem for the subjective characterization of sensations). Intuitions are said to “relate immediately” to their objects. Empirical intuitions, whose objects are bodies in space, do this “through sensation” (A20/B34). Hence sensation secures the referential link to empirical objects. So if we are to take these definitions at face value, then sensations, in this sense at least, are object-directed, and hence are O-sensations (and not, as in the second characterization of sensation, representations of the subject).

The inconsistency between the characterizations of S-sensations and O-sensations is straightforward: Kant sometimes wants to say that sensations are only representations of the subject itself, and that they are “never objective.” Yet he also seems to commit himself to the position that sensations are necessary for the objective relation between empirical intuitions (and hence empirical representations generally)
and bodies in space, and he even states that sensations have properties of these bodies (their reality) as their intentional objects. And we can summarize the various interpretive puzzles presented by all three different characterizations as follows: Kant is inconsistent on whether sensations should be considered unconscious and non-representational mental states (E-sensations), or whether they should be said to have an intentional object, and if so, whether this intentional object is the sensing subject itself (S-sensations) or a physical body in space (O-sensations). Taken strictly at face value, it would seem that Kant does not have a consistent theory of sensation in the Critique. But if we can find a way to qualify some of his claims or even revise them slightly in a way that leads to a philosophically satisfying picture, but one that remains distinctly Kantian, then so much the worse for taking things at face value. Thus next in §2.2, I will argue that the apparent inconsistency between the passages I’ve discussed is due simply to terminological looseness, and that Kant does in fact have a consistent and coherent theory of the role of sensation in cognition.

2.2 Two Distinctions Between Subjective and Objective

In this section I will argue that if we look closely at Kant’s various remarks about sensation throughout the critical period, we can in fact discern two completely different senses in which we might refer to sensations as either subjective or objective. I will show that, according to his theory, there is one sense in which sensations are always subjective, but a very different sense in which they are only sometimes subjective. Specifically, I will show that since the particular phenomenal qualities had by sensations (e.g., the redness of an experience as of redness, the haptic feeling of
resistance against my palm, etc.) are, strictly speaking, not properties of the objects we perceive but are rather determined by contingent facts about human sensory organs, they can be called subjective. That is, sensations are always subjective because the range of possible qualities displayed by sensations result from and are generated by the constitution of the human sensory apparatus, not the object itself. This claim about the contingency of the qualities displayed by sensations does not however speak to the function that sensations can play in cognition. Hence I will also argue that Kant thinks that sometimes sensations are synthesized into inwardly directed intuitions which represent the subject itself in its modification. In this sense sensations can be subjective, but are not necessarily so, for in other cases sensations can be synthesized into outwardly directed intuitions of bodies in space. In outer intuitions, which are ubiquitous in normal perception, sensations can be said to be “objective,” or at least “object-directed.”

Now while I do think that we can find this distinction between these two very different senses of subjectivity and objectivity in the Critique, as we saw, the textual evidence there is very slim and not obviously consistent. For instance, after formulating the principle of the Anticipations in terms of the real in the appearance as the object of sensation (B207), Kant goes on to affirm on the very next page that sensations are only subjective never objective (B208). To get clear on the theory of sensation that Kant has in mind, we must look outside the first Critique to other of his writings from the period. Fortunately, there are two places, both from the late critical period, where we find some detailed discussion of sensation and where the different senses in which sensations can be said to be either subjective or objective are drawn out. These are the Critique of Judgment (1790) and the chapter on psychology in the Anthropology from a Pragmatic Standpoint (1798). I will now discuss both of these texts to show that there really are two very different senses in which Kant will
refer to sensations as subjective or objective. In *Critique of Judgment*, Kant will argue that sensations are always subjective, for their qualities are contingent on the structure of our sense organs; but nevertheless, sensations “express” features of the objects of appearance, and thereby contribute to the cognition of objects. In the *Anthropology*, Kant seems to have the same position in mind, only now he refers to sensations as subjective when they “draw the attention” to the subject itself, and objective when they draw attention to the object. After isolating these two senses of the distinction in these two texts, we will be able to reread the relevant claims from the first *Critique* to try to cull a coherent theory of sensation out of the scattered remarks Kant gives us there.

### 2.2.1 Sensation in *Critique of Judgment*

In section VII of the second Introduction to *Critique of Judgment*, Kant distinguishes two aspects of empirical representation. On the one hand, there are those aspects of the representation which are determined by the relation between the object and the subject, and, on the other, there are those aspects which are determined just by the object itself (irrespective of the relation between the representation of the object and the subject).

What is merely subjective in the representation of an object, i.e., what constitutes its relation to the subject, not to the object, is its aesthetic property [ästhetische Beschaffenheit]; but that in it which serves for the determination of the object (for cognition) or can be so used is its logical validity [logische Gültigkeit]. (5:188-9)

A representation’s aesthetic properties relate the representation to the subject, while its logical validity relates it to the object. I’ll refer to the kind of subjectivity being characterized here as “aesthetic subjectivity,” or simply “A-subjectivity.” (Likewise, we could also refer to “logical objectivity”, but this concept will not play any role
in my discussion.) At first glance, this language might suggest that any aspects of representations that Kant will count as A-subjective will by that fact not contribute to the cognition of the object. This is not however what Kant means. The difference between the aesthetic properties of a sensible representation and its logical validity is simply the difference between sensibility and understanding, intuition and concept. Concepts (and any subsequent judgments or inferences) have logical validity because they purport to determine the objects of the representation independently of their relation to the representing subject. Sensations and intuitions, however, are A-subjective because the spatiotemporal features and sensory qualities found in the representation of the object in the object are determined by the way human sensibilities are affected by objects.\(^{39}\) In general, representations are A-subjective insofar as their content is determined by the nature of the sensibility of the sensing subject rather than by the subject-independent features of the object itself.\(^{40}\) These aspects of the representation tell us more about the way in which the subject is affected by the object than the object itself. By contrast, concepts and judgments apply to their objects independently of the way in which these objects affect us. A truck is correctly conceptualized as a truck irrespective of facts about the human sensory apparatus.\(^{41}\)

\(^{39}\)We see a similar description of sensation as early as the *Inaugural Dissertation* of 1770. There he says that “in respect of its quality [a sensation] is dependent upon the nature of the subject in so far as the latter is capable of modification by the object in question” (2:393).

\(^{40}\)These features of the “object itself” should not be confused with features of the transcendental thing in itself, which is no empirical objects at all. When empirical representations have logical validity, they are still representations of empirical objects.

\(^{41}\)We can also find this idea in the *Jävesche Logic*. There he argues (presumably against the rationalists) that representations of sensibility and understanding are to be evaluated by distinct standards:

A cognition can be perfect either according to laws of sensibility or according to laws of the understanding; in the former case it is *aesthetically* perfect, in the other *logically* perfect. The two, aesthetic and logical perception, are thus of different kinds: the former relates to sensibility, the latter to the understanding. The logical perfection of cognition rests on its agreement with the object, hence on *universally valid* laws... aesthetic perfection consists in the agreement of cognition with the subject and is
Yet none of this implies that sensations and intuitions cannot contribute to the representation of the object. Kant makes it clear right away that at least some of the aesthetic properties of the representation are necessary components of the cognition of the object, even though this aspect of the representation is constituted by the relation of the representation to the subject. He explains:

In the cognition of an object of the senses both relations are present together. In the sensible representation of things outside me the quality of the space in which we intuit them is the merely subjective aspect of my representation of them (through which what they might be as objects in themselves remains undetermined), on account of which relation the object is also thereby thought of merely as appearance; space, however, in spite of its merely subjective quality, is nevertheless an element in the cognition of things as appearances. (5:189)

Kant is here distinguishing two “merely subjective” aspects of our empirical representations, yet arguing that both are necessary for the representation of appearances.42 There are the qualities which we represent as filling space, and the space itself. Presumably the qualities Kant has in mind here are the sensory qualities which we predicate of everyday sensible objects: their colors, tastes, textures, etc. All these qualities are known to us because these are the qualities we encounter in sensation. Kant goes on to make explicit that sensation represents, or “expresses” these qualities:

**Sensation** (in this case external) likewise expresses [drückt... aus] the merely subjective aspect of our representations of things outside us, but strictly speaking [it expresses] the material (the real) in them (through which something existing is given), just as space [expresses] the mere *a priori* form of the possibility of their intuition. (5:189)

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42Kant is not explicit in this passage on the different statuses of space and quality. We know from the Transcendental Aesthetic though that the basic difference is that the representation of space is *a priori* (hence universally valid), while the qualities which fill space are *a posteriori*. grounds on the particular sensibility of man. (9:37)
It isn’t perfectly clear how we are supposed to read the qualification following
“strictly speaking” (eigentlich), but it is hard to read this clause as anything other
than a revision of the prior clause. There is a sense in which sensation “expresses”
(drückt... aus) the subjective aspect of our representations of objects, but really it
expresses some feature of the objects themselves.\textsuperscript{43} I suggest that Kant wants us to
read the first clause as a claim about (what I have been calling) the metaphysical sta-
tus of sensation, while the second clause is about its cognitive function. Considered
merely as psychological phenomenon, a sensation possesses a specific sensory quality,
and the fact that we sensorily undergo that quality (as opposed to some other) is
just as much a fact about the constitution of our sensory apparatus as about the
object which occasioned the sensation. But what the sensation is in itself (as mere
psychological state) is distinct from how it might function in the representation of an
object (or, as Kant puts it here, what it expresses “eigentlich”), and Kant seems to
be arguing that sensations function to represent the material or the “real” in existing
things. So, for instance, if I have a sensation of a particular shade of yellow, then the
fact that I have a sensation with that particular quality (as opposed to the quality of
redness, or of a loud shriek), is due to the fact that my sensory apparatus is consti-
tuted such that when certain kinds of light rays bounce off certain kinds of objects,
they interact with my sense organs in such a way that I have yellow sensations. The
light rays or surface properties of objects are not themselves yellow, they just cause
me to have yellow sensations. Nevertheless, Kant wants to argue, I represent that
yellow as a feature of the object I perceive (and not as a mere modification of my

\textsuperscript{43}It might be objected that I am mistaken to read the \textit{derselben} as referring to \textit{Dinge} instead of
\textit{Vorstellungen der Dinge}. If this is right, then “strictly speaking” sensation represents the material
of sensible representations, not of the objects of those representations. Although both readings are
grammatically possible, I think Kant must mean to refer to \textit{Dinge} with the \textit{derselben} because the
\textit{derselben} must refer to whatever is referred to by the \textit{ihrer Anschauung}. Since we have spatial
intuitions of things, not of representations, the \textit{ihrer} must refer to \textit{Dinge}, and hence so too must
the \textit{derselben}.
sensory apparatus). The yellow quality in my representation in some way represents the object which caused the representation.

Thus the position of section VII is that sensations are A-subjective because the particular qualities which they happen to possess result from the constitution of the sensory apparatus, and are not determinations of the objects as they are in themselves. Nevertheless, these same sensations function to represent the material of the objects in space, and hence they contribute to the cognition of the object as appearance.

We find verification of this interpretation of the representational function of sensation in the opening sections of the first part of *Critique of Judgment* proper. There Kant distinguishes external sensations, to which he attributes a form of object-directedness, from those sensations which contribute nothing to the cognition of the object. The latter are sensations insofar as they are pleasurable or displeasurable, “by means of which nothing at all in the object is designated [bezogen werden], but in which the subject feels itself as it is affected by the representation” (5:204). The primary contrast here is between sensations which contribute to the cognition of the object, and those which do not. A few pages later, he makes this contrast explicit:

If a determination of the feeling of pleasure or displeasure is called sensation, then this expression means something entirely different than if I call the representation of a thing (through sense, as a receptivity belonging to the faculty of cognition) sensation. For in the latter case the representation is related to the object, but in the first case it is related solely to the subject, and does not serve for any cognition at all, not even that by which the subject cognizes itself. (5:206)

44 Cf. *Prol.* 4:289-90: “Undoubtedly, I should say that the representation of space is not only perfectly conformable to the relation which our sensibility has to objects—that I have said—but that it is completely like the object—an assertion in which I can find as little meaning as if I said that the sensation of red has a similarity to the property of cinnabar which excites this sensation in me.” As in *Critique of Judgment*, both sensory qualities and spatiotemporal determinations are described as A-subjective.
Kant goes on to claim that the feeling of pleasure and displeasure should simply be called “feeling” (Gefühl), in contrast to sensation proper, which is “an objective representation of the senses” (5:206). Now note that in making this contrast, Kant has not backed off from his claim that sensations (in either of the senses described here) fall under the aesthetic properties of our representations and hence are A-subjective. They are the result of the way we are affected by objects, and do not correspond to what the objects are in themselves. Nevertheless, sensations can be called “objective” in those circumstances in which the sensation contributes to the cognition of objects.

Kant gives an illuminating example of how we should distinguish sensation which does and sensation which does not contribute to the cognition of an object. He says, “the green color of the meadow belongs to objective sensation, as perception of an object of sense; but its agreeableness belongs to subjective sensation, through which no object is represented” (5:206). What is most noteworthy here is that the green color both is “of the meadow” and yet “belongs to sensation.” This indicates that the quality of the sensation—which, strictly speaking, is in itself a modification of sensibility produced by the affection of something on my senses—is represented as a property of an object in space, and hence is represented as something entirely other than what it is in metaphysical fact (viz., mere psychological state). In other words, the metaphysical status of sensation as mere psychological state should in no way be thought to determine the representational function it plays. It thus turns out that one does not contradict oneself in calling a sensation both subjective and objective, so long as these terms are qualified appropriately. Despite its A-subjectivity, a sensation can be called objective when it contributes to the referring to or intending of an object in the world. This is a different sense of the objective/subjective contrast than what Kant described earlier in the second introduction to *Critique of Judgment*. I will refer
to the senses of subjectivity and objectivity which pick out the intentional objects of the sensation “I-subjectivity” and “I-objectivity.” A representation is I-subjective when it directs the subject’s attention to its own current representational state. Likewise, a representation is I-objective when it directs the attention towards an object distinct from the subject and its representations. The most important point to note here is that there is nothing inconsistent in claiming that a given sensation is both A-subjective yet I-objective.

2.2.2 Sensation in the Anthropology

So in the Critique of Judgment, Kant’s position is that although all sensations are necessarily A-subjective, they can simultaneously be I-objective insofar as they designate features of the objects of representations. We can see a similar point being made in Kant’s Anthropology From A Pragmatic Standpoint. This work is admittedly not a work in transcendental philosophy, dealing instead with matters that would properly be treated in empirical psychology. Nevertheless, in seeing how Kant understands some of the details about how the different sensory modes contribute to cognition at the level of empirical psychology, we can make some inferences about the transcendental function of sensation in general.

In the section “On The Five Senses”, Kant initially introduces the concept of sensation as follows: “A representation through sense of which one is conscious as such is especially called sensation [heißt besonders Sensation] when the sensation [Empfindung] at the same time arouses the subject’s attention to his own state” (7:153).\(^\text{45}\) The wording here is very similar to that of the Stufenleiter passage of the

\(^{45}\)It is doubtful that the use of both the Latin and German terms for “sensation” is meant to indicate any sort of contrast or meaningful distinction. It is common in Kant’s lectures for terms to be introduced and defined in terms of their Latin names, but then discussed with the German equivalents.
first *Critique* (A320/B376) where Kant seems to define sensation as a representation which relates only to the subject (i.e., is exclusively I-subjective, never I-objective). However, the qualifier “besonders” indicates that Kant is merely saying that one of the most common ways in which the term ‘sensation’ is used is to refer to representations which make us aware of our own subjective state. But this does not imply that this is the only way that we can use the term. And as we’ll see, even in the *Anthropology*, Kant thinks that there are certain modes of sensation in which there is no consciousness of the subject’s sensory modification at all, and only awareness of the object of perception.

Kant’s initial division of the five senses is into subjective and objective senses. He writes,

*Three* of them are more objective than subjective, that is, as empirical intuitions they contribute more to the cognition of the external object than they stir up the consciousness of the affected organ. *Two*, however, are more subjective than objective, that is, the representation obtained from them is more a representation of enjoyment than of cognition of the external object. (7:154)

Now strictly speaking, Kant is referring to the senses (*die Sinne*) themselves as objective or subjective. But he prefaced this division of the senses by saying that he was referring to the senses “in so far as they refer to external sensation [*äußere Empfindung*].” Hence we can read Kant as making the assertion that some sensations (those of sight, touch and hearing) are more objective than subjective, while others (those of taste and smell) are more subjective than objective. It is interesting that Kant does not claim that sensations are either completely objective or subjective, but rather that they are either more or less objective or subjective. They are more

46Cf. *Metaphysik Dohna* (28:673): “The outer senses are five, some are more objective, belong more to the cognition of the object than to the modification of the sensation of the subject. Sensation can also become a part of cognition of something real, which exists outside me.” Also *Metaphysik Mrongovius* (29:882): “Feeling, seeing, and hearing are more objective than subjective.”
objective the more they contribute to the cognition of the object, and more subjective
the more they are representations of the enjoyment (or its opposite) of the quality
of the sensation. Clearly then, the subjectivity and objectivity Kant has in mind in
this account is what I have labeled I-subjectivity and I-objectivity.47

The claim that sensation will be more or less I-objective (or I-subjective) is
consistent with what was said in Critique of Judgment. There Kant claimed that
the green sensation of the meadow was objective insofar as we use it to cognize
the meadow, but subjective insofar as we enjoy this quality (5:206). This indicates
that any given sensation is not restricted to playing only one function, but that it
can function in different ways, representing either the object of cognition, or the
subject in its sensory modification. For example, the sense of hearing is initially
characterized as the means by which “a distant object to a large extent is cognized”;
yet by means of beautiful sounds (e.g., music) “feelings” can be communicated at a
distance and can contribute to “social pleasure” (7:155). One and the same type of
sensation (in this case, sound) can contribute either to locating an object in space
(e.g., I can locate the passing car on the street by its sound alone when I cannot see
it), or simply to the pleasure or displeasure in the very having of the sensation.

Kant’s most revealing discussion in this section is in his account of sight. Sight
is a “mediate” sense (since the object of the sensation is distant from the body), and
it is used to “determine a point for the object in space.” Clearly then sensations
of sight contribute to the cognition of objects. Further, sight is that sense whose
“organ feels least affected,” and “thus sight comes nearer to being a pure intuition,
the immediate representation of the given object, without admixture of noticeable

47Further, the sensation is said to function objectively in the cognition of the object when there
is some relation to empirical intuition. This claim shows that Kant is still working within the same
theory as that outlined in the Critique, where, as we’ve seen, Kant claims that empirical intuitions
relate to their objects through sensation (cf. A20/B34).
sensation” (7:156). Now in saying that sensations of sight are like pure intuitions, Kant is speaking loosely. Kant said in *Critique of Pure Reason* that intuitions are “pure” when they have no sensory content at all, not when they have no sensation which is noticeable as such. His point here, though, is that in the representations which result from the sense of sight, we are typically not at all aware of the fact that we are undergoing sensory modification because the sensory modifications which we are undergoing contribute entirely to the representing of the object, and do not cause the subject to represent itself. For example, if I see a yellow object, I could reflect on the fact that I am undergoing a certain sensory modification and thereby become aware of my sensation as such. But in most cases I won’t do this and instead the yellow is just a quality which I represent on the surface of the object. Kant’s point then is that vision gives sensations which function almost exclusively I-objectively.

Thus the position in the *Anthropology* is that sensation either directs the subject’s attention inward, in which case it is called “subjective,” or it directs the attention outward, in which case it is called “objective.” In the one case the subject is aware of the sensory state as such, while in the other the subject is aware of a quality in an object in space. This is in line with the position in *Critique of Judgment*, according to which sensations are either representations of things, or representations of the enjoyment of things. Both of these texts thus give us reason to reconsider those passages from the *Critique* which seemed to indicate that sensations could only represent the subject’s internal sensory states, and were “never objective.”

### 2.2.3 Summary

So we can summarize the theory described in these two texts as follows: There are two different senses in which we might understand the contrast between objective and subjective as these terms are applied to representations (and sensations
specifically). On the aesthetic/logical version of the distinction, “subjective” and “objective” describe features of the relation between the content of a representation and its object. Insofar as the content of a representation pertains to how the object is given to subjects like us, the representation is A-subjective; and insofar as the content of a representation is a determination of the object for thought, it is (logically) objective. Yet on the intentional version of the distinction, these terms describe that towards which the representation is directed. A mental state is I-objective when it contributes to the cognition of an object in virtue of drawing the subject’s attention to the object; a representation is I-subjective when it directs the attention towards the subject’s own mental state.

Both of these distinctions are relevant to analyzing the semantic content of a representation. The aesthetic/logical version of the distinction describes the the content of the representation in terms of whether it is determined by the way in which an object is given in sensibility, or by the way in which an object is thought by the understanding. The intentional version of the distinction picks out that to which the representation refers. A representation is I-subjective when it refers to the subject, and I-objective when it refers to a body in space.\(^{48}\)

Sensations are always A-subjective. The range of qualities exhibited in sensation is grounded in contingent facts about the physiology of the human sensory apparatus. When I see an object, I see it in colors (rather than, say, taste it in sounds), not because the object has that quality independently of my representa-

\(^{48}\)Earlier (§1.4.3) I made a distinction between two different modes of intentionality, which I labeled I-intentionality and E-intentionality. The reader may have noticed that in describing the intentional-object version of the subjective/objective distinction, I have not specified which of these two modes of intentionality I think Kant is using when this distinction is applied to sensations. The reason for this is that the answer to this question is very complicated, and I will not be able to address it adequately until we have looked more closely at the relation between sensations and intuitions. This is because, as I will show, it is only due to the special relation between sensations and intuitions that there can be any sense in which sensations can acquire any semantic or representational significance at all.
tion, but simply because that is the kind of sensor I am (I respond to light by experiencing color qualities). Yet sensations are only sometimes I-subjective. For while it is possible that a sensory stimulus might direct my attention to the fact that I am receiving the stimulus, it need not necessarily do so. The A-subjectivity of a sensation is compatible with either the I-subjectivity or the I-objectivity of that sensation. And in fact, in normal cases of perception of the world, sensations almost always direct my attention directly towards the objects of perception, and I completely ignore the sensory stimulus as such.49

2.3 Revisiting the First Critique

In §2.1 I showed that there are three fundamentally different sets of claims that Kant makes about sensation. Sometimes they are characterized in causal terms as the effects of objects on the senses (E-sensations). Sometimes they are characterized as subjective representations of the subject’s current sensory state (S-sensations). And sometimes they are characterized as objective representations of the material in physical bodies (O-sensations). This account was problematic because (on the assumption that E-, S-, and O-sensations are merely different ways of describing the same thing) Kant seemed unable to decide whether sensations are unconscious and non-representational, nor what they might refer to should they turn out to be representational. In §2.2 I showed that Kant will apply the terms “subjective” and

49There is a third distinction involving the terms subjective and objective that should not be confused with either of the distinctions outlined in this section. This is the distinction between the subjective or objective validity that representations can have. A representation is subjectively valid when what is represented is valid of its object only for the individual subject doing the representing. A representation is objectively valid when what is represented is valid of the object universally and necessarily for all subjects. Sensations are A-subjective and merely subjectively valid (because, e.g., different perceivers might experience different color qualities when seeing an object). Spatiotemporal determinations, by contrast, are A-subjective, yet are objectively valid of their objects (because there is simply a fact of the matter regarding something’s spatiotemporal determinations). (Cf. A28, B44, Prol. §§18-19.)
“objective” to representations in two very different senses: Sometimes the distinction differentiates between the aesthetic and logical properties of a representation, and sometimes the distinction differentiates between the intentional objects of a representation. This left us with three possible ways to describe any given sensation: as A-subjective, I-subjective or I-objective.

In this section I will bring together the results of the last two sections in order to lay the foundation of an interpretation of the theory of sensation in the *Critique*. Many of the interpretive problems encountered in §2.1 disappear once it is noticed that both versions of the subjective/objective distinction are at work in the *Critique*, and once the relation between E-, S- and O-sensations has been clarified. The interpretation I will give has two main components. *First*, I think that there is not an ontological distinction between the entities picked out by what I have labelled E-, S-, or O-sensations. These all refer to the same mental entities, but they refer to these entities at different moments\textsuperscript{50} in the cognitive process. E-sensation are to the immediate effects of objects on the senses, considered in abstraction from any combination into higher representational forms. Sensations considered as E-sensations are mere mental states; as such they are neither conscious nor representational.\textsuperscript{51} Yet once these mental states have been combined by the imagination into empirical intuitions, these mental states can take on a representational function. There are two types of

\textsuperscript{50}I of course do not mean to refer to “moments” in any temporal sense. Rather, the different moments in question are the different components of cognition which we can separate (at least in thought) when we analyze cognition through transcendental inquiry.

\textsuperscript{51}Someone might reasonably ask here why Kant is so sure that E-sensations exist at all, given that they are not consciously accessible and don’t do any representational work on their own. Sellars (*Science and Metaphysics*, Ch. 1) thinks that there is an implicit transcendental argument which infers the existence of (what I call) E-sensations from the fact that we have experience with sensory content. My own view is that Kant simply assumes them to exist without argument. Although Kant never makes such an argument explicit, I agree that something like this must be at work in Kant’s thought. Given that (as I will soon discuss) there are sensory representations which are the products of synthetic combinations (viz., intuitions), there must be some sensory matter which is already there to be combined, prior to the synthesis.
empirical intuitions: intuitions of bodies in space (outer intuitions), and intuitions of the current sensory state of the subject (inner intuitions). When sensory states are combined into outer intuitions, they function as O-sensations, and when they are combined into inner intuitions, they function as S-sensations.52

Second, I claim that the different senses in which sensations can be objective or subjective correspond to the three different characterizations of sensations in the Critique. O-sensations are I-objective and S-sensations are I-subjective. Given what has been said about these concepts, this should not be surprising. When Kant characterizes sensations as representations (or at least as the matter thereof) of objects which are distinct from the mind and its own contents, he is describing them as I-objective. When, by contrast, he characterizes sensations as representations of the subject’s own sensory state, he is describing them as I-subjective. Further, although sensations under all three descriptions are A-subjective, usually when Kant refers to the A-subjectivity of sensations, he is referring to them as E-sensations, i.e., sensations considered in themselves, in abstraction from any composition into higher cognitive representations. E-sensations are the immediate results of the affection of objects on the senses, and since the qualities displayed by these modifications of sensibility are determined by the way in which the human sensory apparatus is affected by objects, they are properly described as A-subjective. O-sensations and S-sensations are also A-subjective, but Kant does not typically describe them as such because when he discusses sensations qua O- or S-sensations, he is dealing with their representational function in cognition, not their metaphysical status as modifications.

The most important aspect of the interpretation on offer here is the claim

52My purpose in this chapter will only be to show that O- and S-sensations are combined into outer and inner intuitions respectively, and thereby take on a representational function. How exactly this works for Kant, how, that is, collections of sensations can become imbued with representational content in intuitions even though considered on their own and in themselves they are completely non-representational, will be the primary topic of the next chapter.
that sensations are assigned an I-objective function. Since Kant so frequently refers to sensations as subjective, or as representations which relate to the modification of the subject, most commentators have overlooked this essential component of Kant’s account of empirical cognition. Most interpreters, that is, understand Kantian sensations either as E-sensations or S-sensations, and most do not acknowledge what I have referred to as O-sensations. For instance, Thompson and Aquila under-stand Kantian sensations as mental states that draw the subject’s attention inward to its own state, hence sensations for them are essentially S-sensations. Wolff, Pippin, McDowell, Kitcher, George and Waxman, on the other hand, un-

53 Thompson takes the Stufenleiter passage to be Kant’s final word on his understanding of the basic representational categories, claiming that sensations are perceptions which relate solely to the subject, while intuitions are perceptions that also relate to objects in space (“Singular Terms and Intuitions in Kant,” p. 323).
54 Aquila only sees evidence of E- and S-sensations in the Critique. Acknowledging that Kant sometimes describes sensations as the effects of objects on the senses (E-sensations), and other times as awareness relations to the subject as modified (S-sensations), he holds that “there is an essential connection with one’s awareness of the sense organs whose modifications lead, to it. The internal state is called ‘sensation’ precisely in virtue of its ability to call our attention to the altered state of the sense organs” (Representational Mind, p. 59).
55 “The material element [of perception] which is purely subjective and cognitively valueless, is sensation (colors, tastes, hardness, etc)” (Kant’s Theory of Mental Activity, p. 73).
56 Pippin takes it to be central to Kant’s theory that sensations “are not a mode of representation at all” (Kant’s Theory of Form, p. 31).
57 “[Sensations] lack intentionality, and they must be distinct from anything that has intentionality” (Having a World in View, p. 113). McDowell’s view is however somewhat more nuanced than this passage might suggest. He thinks that Sellars is on the right track when he locates the sensory given in a pre-conceptual place outside the normative order, but he also thinks that we can only make sense of this pure non-intentional sensory given in a mere abstraction, and that in fact, there is never any sensation completely on its own, independent of the conceptualizing powers of the understanding (see p. 121).
58 Kitcher takes sensations to be essentially “the effects of objects on the faculty of sensibility,” and she claims that the matter of intuition is “derived from” sensations (Kant’s Transcendental Psychology, p. 36).
59 George claims that Kant held a form of sensationism according to which sensations “are non-intentional mental states in which no object, other than the state itself, is present to the mind” (“Kant’s Sensationism,” p. 230). Clearly then he understands Kantian sensations to be E-sensations, but he also seems to acknowledge something like S-sensations when he gives a nod to the fact that sensations can themselves be present to the mind, and hence the objects of inner observation reports.
60 “Sensations are raw, utterly formless, representational primary matter” (Kant’s Model of the Mind, p. 65).
understand sensations as essentially tied up with the pre-cognitive causal process, and so they understand sensations primarily as effects, i.e., E-sensations. What I hope to show is that empirical representations refer to individual actual objects only because the sensations involved in these representations function to represent qualities in the objects.

To defend this interpretation, I will show that it is both supported by Kant’s important claims about sensation, and that by reading certain problematic passages in accordance with my interpretation, most of the interpretive puzzles discussed in §2.1 can be seen to be based on a simple lack of adequate terminological precision. I will first show that we can see both conceptions of subjectivity at work in different parts of the *Critique*. Although many commentators presume that most references to sensation as subjective are meant to indicate an I-subjective function for them, I will show that Kant more commonly refers to them as A-subjective. Since A-subjectivity is compatible with I-objectivity, there is no contradiction when Kant claims that sensations are subjective representations which represent objects distinct from the subject. In this light, passages which earlier appeared problematic will be seen to be benign. Along the way, I will argue that sensations can only have an I-subjective or I-objective function in the context of their combination into empirical intuitions. The full story of how empirical intuitions, together with their sensory matter, intend their objects will be explained in detail in the next chapter.

The first order of business is to show that Kant really does employ both conceptions of subjectivity in his characterizations of sensation in the *Critique*. We saw in §2.2 that in other critical period writings, a sensation is A-subjective when the representation is determined by the way in which the object must be given in sensibilities like ours, and it is I-subjective when the sensation refers to or intends the sensing subject. It is clear that at least sometimes Kant will employ the inten-
tional notion of subjectivity to sensations in the *Critique*. This is most plain in the *Stufeneleiter* passage wherein he describes sensation as “a perception that refers to the subject as a modification of its state” (A320/B376). Many commentators have taken this to be Kant’s official word on sensation, and this has led them to assume that whenever Kant refers to sensations as subjective, he means it in this intentional sense. A closer look reveals that this is not the case. It turns out that the *Stufeneleiter* passage is the only unambiguous reference to sensations as I-subjective.

The clearest evidence that Kant employs the concept of A-subjectivity in the *Critique* comes in the Transcendental Aesthetic, where Kant wants to distinguish space from sensation and to show that only space is valid of appearances *a priori*. He writes,
is “a priori objective” because the spatial determinations which we represent in appearances are necessary and valid for all beings which share our forms of intuition. Sensation and space are thus similar in that both are A-subjective representations which relate to something external. But the contrast between them is that space relates to something external with a priori objectivity. The contrast is thus not that space does, while sensation does not, refer to external objects, but rather that only space does so a priori. So sensations here are not subjective in the sense that they refer to the subject’s current sensory state. Rather, they are subjective because the particular qualities displayed in sensation are contingent on the constitution of the human sensory apparatus. They are, as he goes on to explain, “mere alterations of our subject, which can even be different for different people” (A30/B45).

This passage is worth quoting in its entirety. After distinguishing sensation from the intuition of space and time as a posteriori and a priori, he writes that,

The aim of this remark is only to prevent one from thinking of illustrating the asserted ideality of space with completely inadequate examples, since things like colors, taste, etc., are correctly considered not as qualities of things but as mere alterations of our subject, which can even be different for different people. For in this case that which is originally itself only appearance, e.g., a rose, counts in an empirical sense as a thing in itself, which yet can appear different to every eye in regard to color (A30/B45).

Kant goes on to contrast this empirical sense of a thing in itself with the “transcendental concept” of a thing in itself. What is interesting about this account is that Kant manages to retain the basic Lockean distinction between primary and secondary qualities within the framework of the empirical realism counterpart to Kant’s transcendental idealism. Empirical objects have the spatiotemporal determinations that we represent them to have necessarily and universally, while the sensory qualities we represent in them are contingent and may vary between subjects. Transcendental objects have neither type of property and it is only when things in themselves ground appearances that we represent objects which have spatiotemporal properties and sensory qualities. This indicates that the sense in which both sensations and the intuitions of space and time are A-subjective is closely tied into the transcendental theory of the relation between appearances and things in themselves. In chapter 5, I will address the relationship between Kant’s transcendental idealism and the sensory component of his theory of cognition.

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62 Note that the “a priori objectivity” described here does not correspond completely to what I described as I-objectivity in section 3. The a priori objectivity mentioned here surely entails I-objectivity, but what Kant wants to emphasize is that space and time are valid a priori for all human subjects. A priori objectivity is thus I-objectivity plus necessary universal validity. All this remains compatible with the intuitions of space and time also being A-subjective. For although the representations of space and time are necessarily valid for all human subjects, these representations depend on the forms of sensibility through which human subjects relate to objects.

63 This passage is worth quoting in its entirety. After distinguishing sensation from the intuition of space and time as a posteriori and a priori, he writes that,
indicates that the sensory qualities we perceive in objects are not (like space) objectively valid of those objects because any given individual might perceive different qualities in those objects.

Clearly then Kant is invoking different notions of subjectivity to describe sensation at various points in the *Critique*. I next want to show that if we remain sensitive to the distinction between these two different senses in which sensations can be said to be subjective, we will see that Kant’s theory entails an I-objective role for sensation that is consistent with its A-subjectivity. Kant thus does not contradict himself in saying both that sensations are subjective, yet that they function in the representations of objects. According to the interpretation that I want to defend has it that in most cases of normal everyday perception, sensations function in the representation of physical bodies in space: they are I-objective. The passages that are most problematic for this interpretation are the Anticipations of Perception and the *Stufenleiter* passage, to which I’ll now turn.

Kant has the most to say about the relation between sensations and objects in the B-edition additions to the Anticipations of Perception. In the official formulation of the principle itself (which Kant takes to be necessary *a priori* for all experience), Kant indicates that the “real” (*das Reale*) in an appearance (which is just Kant’s understanding of physical matter) is represented by sensation:

In all appearances, the real, which is an object of sensation, has an intensive magnitude, i.e., a degree. (B207)

This statement of the principle seems to straightforwardly entail that sensations are I-objective. Things, however, are quickly complicated in his summary of the argument for the principle. After defining perception as a consciousness that contains sensation (“Bewußtsein... in welchem zugleich Empfindung ist”), and claiming that the objects of these perceptions are appearances, he goes on to argue that appearances contain
(enthalten) “the real of sensation”: 

[Appearances] contain in addition to the intuition the materials for some object in general (through which something existing in space or time is represented), i.e., the real of the sensation, as merely subjective representation, by which one can only be conscious that the subject is affected, and which one relates to an object in general. (B207)

I initially suggested in section §2.1.2 that this passage indicates that all sensations are S-sensations (see p. 63 above). Now we are in a position to see that this reading of the passage is merely superficial. The superficial reading of this passage would interpret it as claiming that sensations are representations of the fact that the sensing subject is being affected by some object, and that these sensations are also somehow contained in appearances, which represent physical bodies. Sensation is related to an object only “überhaupt” because when sensation makes me aware of my current sensory state, I am thereby aware only that something affected me: the sensation is merely the result of this affection, it alone does not represent what did the affecting. This would be a problem for my interpretation because I want to show that sensations are often intentionally directed at bodies in space, and that this intentionality is immediate, i.e., not had only by way of a prior introspective intentional directedness towards the subject’s current sensory state. Fortunately, there is an alternative reading available.

Note first that Kant is not claiming that sensation simpliciter is contained in appearance, is merely subjective, and is related only to an object in general, but that the real of sensation is. I suggest that “the real of sensation” is supposed to refer to what I labelled above (in §2.1.1) as E-sensations, viz., sensations as brute effects on the subject (what I described as phenomenal “lightings up” of sensibility). Recall that Kant believes that in addition to corresponding to the reality in an object, sensation itself has its own reality, and this reality is simply the intensive phenomenal
quality of the sensation (e.g., redness with a certain degree of brightness). The phrase “das Reale der Empfindung” should thus be taken to refer to a sensation qua simple mental state possessing an intensive phenomenal quality and considered in abstraction from any cognitive function the sensation might play. It is that “through which” something in space can be represented because (as I will explain in detail in the next chapter) when collections of these sensations are synthesized into empirical intuitions, they can together represent objects in space. But “the real of sensation” on its own and in abstraction from this synthesis is that by which one can be conscious that one is affected, because when we introspectively attend to this real of sensation, we recognize that we are undergoing some sort of sensory alteration.\(^64\)

Furthermore, contrary to the superficial reading, Kant cannot mean that the real of sensation represents “that the subject is affected”; this is a proposition, hence a judgment, and hence a representational content that can only come through the understanding, not through mere sensations in sensibility.\(^65\) What then does Kant mean when he says that the real of sensation is that “by which one can only be conscious that the subject is affected, and which one relates to an object in general”? Simply that the real of the sensation, when introspectively observed, could be taken

\(^64\)Wolfgang Schwarz shares this reading of the term “real of sensation.” He writes:

> Realität means Sachheit, re-ity (from Latin res). ‘What corresponds in empirical intuition to sensation is reality.’ Although reality ‘indicates a being,’ the logical function exercised by this category is distinct from that of the category of existence. Intuitions contain the real of sensation, of which one can be conscious only as a state of the subject’s being affected in reference to objects generatim. (“Kant’s Categories of Reality and Existence,” *Philosophical and Phenomenological Research*, Vol. XLVIII, No. 2, Dec. 1987.)

When we attend to the real of sensation as such, we recognize that it is the result of our being affected by some object or other.

\(^65\)In fact, much of the argumentation in the Analytic of Principles, is meant to demonstrate the necessary conditions on our ability to be aware that our empirical self is in some particular state. These arguments make it clear that determinate cognitive states involving explicit self-awareness require the full array of the understanding’s functions, and that such self-awareness could never be had through representations of mere sensibility.
as evidence both that the subject is affected, and that something (in general) did the affecting. This is very different from saying that the real of sensation did the representing.\textsuperscript{66} To be sure, an (inner) intuition of the sensory state will be necessary before the understanding can make the judgment, but this does not require that the representation with the content ‘that the subject is modified’ is identical to the sensory state itself.

If we read Kant in the summary of the argument for the principle of the Anticipations to be referring to sensations qua primitive, non-intentional sensory states, then we can make sense of another apparently problematic passage which comes just a few lines down. There he says that “sensation in itself is not an objective representation, and in it neither the intuition of space nor that of time is to be encountered” (B208). According to the superficial reading, this claim means that sensations are never I-objective. This is not how the passage needs to be taken though. Note that Kant makes a point to refer to sensation “\textit{an sich}.” This indicates that he is referring to sensation in abstraction from any higher synthetic activity, and hence that he is referring to sensation merely as the brute sensory impressions resulting from the affection of objects on the senses. In other words, he is referring only to their metaphysical status as simple mental entities. Now there are two possible senses in which sensations in themselves might be said to be “not objective.” Either they do not represent objects, or their content is determined by the constitution of the subject instead of by a real determination in the object. It is not clear which of these Kant intends in this passage, but neither of these readings would be problematic.

\textsuperscript{66} In saying that the occurrence of a sensory state in the empirical self could be taken as evidence that something affected the subject, Kant is \textit{not} claiming that this is in general how we come to cognize the physical bodies which affect our senses. In fact, as Kant argues in the Refutation of Idealism, we only have the ability to be aware of our sensory states because we already possess the ability to cognize bodies in space. (As Wilfred Sellars would put it, “seems” talk is parasitic on “is” talk.) Kant’s point is just that, in general, we \textit{could} infer from the fact that we have a sensation to the fact that some affecting object brought it about.
for my interpretation. Sensations in themselves surely cannot represent any objects because this would require synthetic activity. As I will argue in detail in the next chapter, if sensations are to have any function in the representation of objects, it will be in virtue of their being contained in intuitions (i.e., exactly when they are not considered “in themselves”). If, on the other hand, sensations in themselves are “not objective” because they are A-subjective (i.e., their qualities are grounded in the constitution of the receptive subject, not the object itself), then this would not be surprising at all, because we already knew that sensations are always subjective in this aesthetic sense.

Kant’s discussion of sensation in the Anticipations thus wavers between two different characterizations. In the formulation of the principle itself, sensations are described in terms of their cognitive function and they are characterized as I-objective O-sensations. In his argument for this principle though, Kant describes sensations only with respect to their metaphysical status as caused mental states, i.e., E-sensations. These mental states are A-subjective. But since they are considered in themselves, independently of any combination into higher representations, they are characterized here as neither I-objective nor I-subjective.

The only passage that cannot be easily reconciled with my interpretative claim that sensations often function in the direct representation of the objects is the Stufenleiter passage. There, recall, Kant defined a sensation as “a perception that refers to the subject as a modification of its state” (A320/B376). A natural way to take this is as saying that sensations are only ever I-subjective, and never I-objective. Although I think that this is the correct reading of the passage, I also think that it cannot be Kant’s official word on the taxonomy of representations because it is irreconcilable with other core theses of the Critique. After defining sensation as a perception that refers to the subject, Kant goes on define an intuition as an “objective
perception,” thereby indicating that sensations are distinct from intuitions in virtue of the difference between their intentional objects. There are two problems with this claim. The first is that it contradicts Kant’s other definition of perception. The first line of the Anticipations of Perception defines perception as “empirical consciousness, i.e., one in which there is at the same time sensation” (B207). This is inconsistent with the Stufenleiter claim that only subjective perceptions involve sensation. Second, in claiming that sensations are both distinct from intuitions, yet that they refer to the subject, Kant contradicts one of the theses of the Critique, viz., the thesis that a representation can only acquire a referential relation to something in virtue of a rule-governed synthesis of collections of mental states. Kant claims in the first sentence of the Transcendental Aesthetic that representations can only relate to objects through intuitions, and this holds whether the object in question is the subject itself or entities in space.\(^67\) It cannot both be the case, as indicated by the Stufenleiter passage, that sensations are wholly distinct from intuitions, yet that they refer to the subject. Given that there is this incompatibility between the Stufenleiter passage and important claims from the Transcendental Analytic, one of the two must take precedence, and I think it is clear that it must be the Transcendental Analytic. The Transcendental Analytic contains all of Kant’s core theory about the nature of cognition. The Stufenleiter passage, on the other hand, is buried in the Transcendental Dialectic, and Kant only bothers to give this taxonomy of representations at all because he is concerned to justify his highly specific use of the term Idee (a concept of pure reason to which no object can be given in intuition). His point in the Stufenleiter passage is simply to show that ideas are merely one type of representation, and that this term should not be used (as for instance with Locke

\(^{67}\)“In whatever way, and through whatever means a cognition may relate to objects, that through which it relates immediately to them, and at which all thought as a means is directed as an end, is intuition” (A19/B33).
or Berkeley) as synonymous with “representation.” The *Stufenleiter* passage can thus safely be ignored because it conflicts not just with my interpretation of Kant’s theory of sensation, but with the core of his theory of cognition as well.

Hence the claims in the *Stufenleiter* passage must be revised somehow. There are two possible ways that such a revision might be made. One option would be to read the “refers to” (*bezieht auf*) in the claim that a sensation is a perception “that refers to the subject as a modification of its state” simply as “is”: “sensation is a perception that is a modification of the subject’s state.” The claim would then have nothing to do with the intentional directedness of sensation, but would rather be a description of the metaphysical status of sensations (qua E-sensations), which, as mental states, are modifications of the subject. This reading would not, however, be consistent with Kant’s claim to be giving a taxonomy of *representations* (which by definition have objects), and not simply mental states in general. Another possible revision of the *Stufenleiter* claim would read “inner intuition” where Kant writes “sensation.” That is, a perception that refers to the subject as a modification of its state is an intuition of the current sensory state of the subject. This would explain why sensations were described as I-subjective. Whether either of these revisions could reconcile the claims in the *Stufenleiter* passage with the Transcendental Analytic is unimportant for my purposes. What is important is the conclusion that we cannot accept the doctrine of the passage at face value, and therefore we need not accept this isolated definition of sensations as essentially I-subjective.

With this one problematic passage defused, we are now free to read the passages which seem to assign an I-objective function to sensation exactly as such. I already pointed out that the passage on the *a priori* objectivity of space at A28/B44 made implicit reference to sensations as I-objective, and that the B-edition formulation of the principle of the Anticipations of Perception made explicit reference to
sensations as I-objective. The passages discussed in §2.1.3 (p. 65ff.) also indicate an I-objective function for sensation. When Kant says that empirical intuitions relate to their objects “through sensation” and that sensation “corresponds to the matter of appearance” (A20/B34), he should be taken to mean that intuitions are capable of referring to actual (not merely possible) objects because the sensory component in them refers to the material in the object of the intuition. The clearest instance of an assignment of an I-objective function to sensation appears in the passage from the A-edition Fourth Paralogism cited in §2.1.3. There it was claimed that “sensation is that which designates a reality in space and time” and that, in general, a perception “represents something real in space” only because perceptions [as outer intuitions] are sensations “applied to an object” (A374). This passage makes it very clear that Kant thinks that we are able to cognize objects in space only because sensations are “related to” or “designate” real objects in virtue of their combination into outer intuitions.

A final note is in order regarding the relations between E-, O- and S-sensations. The difference between these is functional, not ontological. Mental states which are initially impressed on the subject (E-sensations) can be combined into inner intuitions, and hence become S-sensations, or into outer intuitions, and become O-sensations. The mental states that constitute an inner or outer intuition as S- or O-sensations are numerically identical to the E-sensations initially impressed on the subject by affecting objects. This should not sound mysterious. The bricks constituting a wall are numerically identical to the same bricks prior to the construction of the wall, despite the fact that the bricks at the earlier time, do not function as a wall, while the latter do. And even though those bricks happen to have been used in the construction of a wall, they could just as easily have been used to, say, pave
2.4 Conclusion

In this chapter I have shown that, despite Kant’s repeated insistence on the subjectivity of sensations, sensations nevertheless can have an I-objective function. Mental states that are initially received as mere unconscious affections can come to representationally refer to qualities in bodies in space. Now if Kant’s theory really does include what I have termed S- and O-sensations, i.e., sensations which are representational and intend something (whether the mind itself or objects distinct from the mind), thereby making them more than mere mental states, then it can only be because these sensations are involved in intuitions. Kant makes it explicit from the beginning of the Transcendental Aesthetic that it is only through intuitions that there can be any cognitive reference to objects (A19/B33). Thus if sensations are to have any intentional function, it can only be because of an involvement with intuition. So far I have only explained that this general claim must be true, but I have not said anything about what exactly the relation between sensation and intuition is. In the next chapter I will focus on this issue, arguing that empirical intuitions are capable of representing actual bodies in space because intuitions assign spatial locations to the sets of qualities given in the manifold of sensations. In other words, an unorganized collection of mere sense impressions (E-sensations) becomes an organized collection of O-sensations in virtue of being synthesized into an intuition and being represented as sensible qualities which fill a spatial region.

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68 This metaphor will prove especially apt in the next chapter where I argue that the relation between sensation and intuition is constitutive: intuitions are constituted by collections of sensations.
Chapter 3

Empirical Intuition and the Objects of Perception

The leading question of the previous chapter asked whether Kantian sensations should be considered representational states which can in some way refer to objects, or are instead mere mental states with no representational content. I argued that Kant commits himself to the claim that sensations can possess a representational relation to objects, and I made the tentative suggestion that this reference to objects can occur in virtue of the relation between sensations and empirical intuitions. However, I haven’t yet said much about what this relation amounts to. In this chapter I will explain in detail how this works, and by the end of the chapter we will have a clear picture of how Kant thinks that reference to empirical objects is secured in empirical cognition.

Investigating the way in which sensations, and the intuitions that contain them, enable reference to empirical objects will quickly embroil us in philosophical problems that go straight to the heart of Kant’s conceptions of the relation between mind and world, and of the ontological status of the objects we perceive in this
world. Rather than put these problems off until a later chapter, I think it best to face them head-on. The problems I have in mind have to do with two central, yet seemingly contrary, lines in Kant’s thinking about the relation between empirical representations and their objects, viz., appearances, i.e., the things we will come to know as material substances perduring in space and time. On the one hand, Kant affirms what I will call a direct realism according to which (at least some of) our empirical representations refer directly to physical objects in the world, and they do so without the need of any prior or concurrent reference to internal states of the mind.¹ The world as it is in itself, in other words, is more or less just as we represent it to be. Yet on the other hand, Kant also affirms some kind of phenomenalism, according to which the objects we know as physical bodies are really just a species of representation, something that cannot exist independently of its being represented by us, and something which Kant will go so far as to say is merely “in us” (A372). The world, in other words, is nothing like we what represent it to be. Taken at face value, these theses are inconsistent. It cannot both be the case that we enjoy representational relations that refer directly to physical objects in the world beyond and distinct from our representations, and that the objects of our representations are themselves only so many representations. One or both of these claims must be modified or qualified.

The reason I think it appropriate to address this dilemma here in a chapter about the relation between sensation and empirical intuition is that all reference to real objects bottoms out, for Kant, in empirical intuition.² Hence if there is to be a

¹I recognize that my claim that Kant is a direct realist may sound absurd, since Kant is considered by many to be a paradigmatic example of an anti-realist, given his skepticism about knowledge of things in themselves. It will be noticed, though, that in the interpretation I argue for I carefully restrict the scope of Kant’s direct realism to range only over the phenomenal entities (i.e., physical bodies) of which Kant clearly affirms that we have objectively valid knowledge.

²As Lucy Allais has pointed out, this claim is not free from controversy, and some have argued that reference to objects can only be secured through concepts. However, she makes a convincing
solution to the tension between Kant’s direct realism and his phenomenalism (both of which are theses about the relation between representations and their objects), it must be sought in the theory of empirical intuition. In what is to follow, I will argue for an interpretation of Kant’s account of empirical intuition that unambiguously presents Kant’s theory of perception and empirical cognition as a certain kind of phenomenalism. Yet I will also show how the demands placed on any interpretation by his avowal of direct realism can be met by my interpretation.

The thesis of the chapter will take the form of a final definition of what it is to be presented in intuition with an empirical object which is at once a material substance in space, and yet dependent for its existence on its being represented. This definition will emerge from an analysis of both the metaphysical status and semantic (i.e., representational) content of empirical intuition. As a first pass (we don’t yet have all the necessary distinctions in play) we can say:

To have an empirical intuition is to be intentionally directed towards a collection of sensations which have each been assigned a spatiotemporal location by the imagination’s figurative synthesis; this collection of sensible qualities is identical to what will become knowable (through conceptualization and judgment) as an empirical (i.e., physical) object.\(^3\)

What I take to be most surprising about my interpretation is the way in which I understand sensation figuring into the semantic structure of empirical intuitions. Most commentators have failed to notice that Kant explicitly states more than once in the case that (non-conceptual) intuitional reference to objects is necessary for determinate conceptual reference to objects (“Kant, Non-Conceptual Content and the Representation of Space,” *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, vol. 47, no. 3 (2009) p. 383-413). I take one of the primary goals of this chapter to be to show how intuitions secure reference to objects.

\(^3\)My discussion in this chapter will focus only on outer intuitions, i.e., intuitions of physical bodies in space and time, and not on inner intuitions, or intuitions of the (merely temporal) state of the empirical ego. Much of what I say about outer intuitions will hold also for inner intuitions, except of course the essentially spatial aspect of outer intuitions.
Transcendental Aesthetic that empirical intuitions essentially involve the assignment of sensations to locations in space (he thinks they are represented “außer und neben einander” (A23/B38)). I will argue that these remarks are not mere obiter dicta but are instead necessary for understanding what goes on when we have an intuitive awareness of an object. That towards which the subject is directed in an intuition is just a collection so many spatially organized sensations, and it is this collection of sensations—or at least the qualities thereof—that the subject will come to conceive as a physical, material substance existing in space and time. This claim is surprising because it entails not just that sensations correspond to appearances, but also that there is some sense (sorely in need of explication) in which sensations constitute appearances, and in this sense, appearances depend for their existence on their being the objects of sensory representations. Clearly this claim is consistent with the phenomenalism half of the story (even if the specific breed of phenomenalism hasn’t yet been explained). But what about the assertions of direct realism?

I think we can incorporate Kant’s direct realism into his phenomenalist model of the mind-world relation by distinguishing the two different senses of “relation to an object” at work in Kant’s assertions of phenomenalism and direct realism. Recall that in the previous chapter I differentiated between two different senses in which we might refer to the intentionality of a representational state. I used the term ‘E-intentionality’ (for “extrinsic”) to refer to the real relation between two (really extant) relata—the representation on the one side and its object on the other—in virtue of which the one can be said to refer to the other (not merely purportedly, but in fact). ‘I-intentionality’ (for “intrinsic”) on the other hand refers simply to the representational purport, or the content of a representation. I-intentionality is monadic, not relational, and so a representation has this content independently of any relations that may or may not obtain between the representation and an object.
that conforms to that content. In general, I will speak of E-intentional referents, but I-intentional contents (although there is a sense in which I-intentional contents generally purport reference to objects distinct from their being represented).

This distinction between these two senses of intentionality will earn its spurs in this chapter. I will argue that the sense in which empirical intuitions involve an awareness of sensations is a matter of E-intentionality, but that this does not determine the content, or I-intentionality of empirical intuitions. Although empirical intuitions involve an E-intentional relation to internal mental states (viz., the synthesized manifold of sensation), the I-intentional content of intuitions presents only spatiotemporally arrayed sensible qualities. Empirical intuitions present objects, but they do so in a contentfully minimal way: they are non-conceptual, and so they do not represent their objects as anything. Since their I-intentional content is then merely a brute awareness of sensible qualities arrayed in space and time, when these objects are handed over to the understanding and come to be judged (and thus cognized) for the first time, the understanding will apply concepts pertaining to spatial (physical) objects, not concepts pertaining to merely temporal mental states.

What we will begin to see in this chapter, and see more fully in the remainder of the dissertation, is that Kant’s direct realism is a thesis about some necessary features of the I-intentional content of our representations, even if the story we tell from the “higher” perspective of transcendental inquiry is a phenomenalist story.

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4 This distinction is similar to, but not quite the same as two related distinctions in twentieth century philosophy. Frege’s contrast between Sinn and Bedeutung tracks a distinction between the referent of a representation and the content through which the referent is intended (see Frege’s Über Sinn und Bedeutung; see also Evans’s Varieties of Reference, ch. 1). I don’t use Frege’s terms, however, because many take Fregean Sinne to be necessarily conceptual, but I will discuss nonconceptual modes of I-intentionality in this chapter. Similarly, the contemporary distinction between expressions de re and de dicto track the distinction between expressions whose truth-values require successful reference to an object (de re), and those which express mere claims about a subject’s propositional attitudes about an object (de dicto). I won’t adopt this terminology from the philosophy of language either, because I will be discussing both I- and E-intentionality in non-discursive contexts.
about a mind that, as Kant will say frequently, “has only to do with [its] representations” (A190/B235). That is, even though Kant’s theory of mental activity tells us that the objects of intuition (and hence of experience generally) are just so many constructions of spatially organized sense data, this fact about our cognitive machinery does not enter the content of our perceptual experience, and so Kant can still say with a straight face that it is a necessary feature of our perceptual states that they relate immediately to mind-independent physical objects. According to the interpretation I will defend, the intentionality of intuitions (and, subsequently, empirical representations generally) is *constructed* through rule-governed activities of the cognitive faculties.\(^5\)

The defense of this interpretation of Kant’s theory will proceed as follows. In §3.1, I will explain the textual basis for attributing to Kant some kind of direct realism and some kind of phenomenalism. This will allow us to see in what exactly the tension standing in need of resolution consists. In §3.2 I will present my interpretation of the theory of empirical intuition itself. In §3.2.1, I will explain how Kant understands the metaphysical status of intuitions qua mental events by looking at what he has to say about the matter and form of these representations. In §3.2.2 I will turn to explicating the semantic content of empirical intuitions. There I will argue that empirical intuitions are to be understood as non-conceptual representations of sensible qualities (which correspond to sensations) which fill out the space in the perceivable vicinity of the perceiver. In §3.2.3 I will draw on the results of the previous two sections to argue that Kant thinks of empirical intuitions as involving an assignment of sensations to spatiotemporal locations, and that intuitions should thus

\(^{5}\)In this respect, my interpretation is similar to those of James Van Cleve (*Problems From Kant*, ch. 1 and 7), Farid Masrour (“Phenomenal Objectivity and Phenomenal Intentionality: In Defense of a Kantian Account,” forthcoming in *Philosophical Issues*, 2011) and Rolf George (“Kant’s Sensationism,” *Synthese* 47, 1981).
be understood as involving an E-intentional directedness to these spatially ordered sensations. Lastly in §3.3 I will show how the interpretation of empirical intuition I have outlined can resolve the tension described in §3.1. This will give us, finally, a clear picture of how sensations and empirical intuitions secure representational relations to empirical objects; this in turn will lay the groundwork for the discussions to follow in the subsequent chapters where I address what sensation contributes to our conceptualization of these objects by the understanding.

3.1 Two Kantian Theses About Our Relation to Objects

Throughout the *Critique*, Kant can be seen making two radically distinct claims about the relation between our representations and their objects. On the one hand, he will affirm that the objects of experience (with which we are in direct perceptual contact) are the mundane and familiar three-dimensional, physical, causally-interacting bodies which happily go about their Newtonian business independently of their being perceived by me or any other subject. Yet on the other, he will affirm that the only objects of experience are *appearances* (*Erscheinungen*), which are equated with a certain class of representations and are said to depend for their existence on our representing minds. In this section I will bring out the tension between these two theses, which I label his “direct realism” and his “phenomenalism” respectively. After discussing the textual basis for these two positions separately, I will sketch what would need to be done to bring about a reconciliation between these two aspects of Kant’s theory.
3.1.1 Phenomenalism

Let’s say that the term ‘phenomenalism’ refers to any theory of experience which holds that the objects of perceptual experience are mental representations. This is a thesis about the relation between the subject and its object, but depending on how one interprets this “object of” relation, one could arrive at any of several specifications of the phenomenalist thesis. A semantic phenomenalism could assert that meaningful reference to physical objects reduces to meaningful reference to internal mental states. On such a view, whether I realize it or not, what I mean when I think or speak of the physical world always bottoms out in reference to states of my own sensing mind. An epistemological phenomenalism could make a claim about the objects of knowledge. A strong epistemological phenomenalism might assert that the only possible objects of knowledge are our own internal mental states; a weak epistemological phenomenalism might assert that we can only have immediate knowledge of these states. The strong version could yield a Humean skepticism about the mind-independent world. Locke and Descartes accept versions of the

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6 Berkeley gives a classic expression of this position early in Principles §3. He argues that if we “attend to what is meant by the term exist when applied to sensible things,” we’ll realize that we always refer back to perception: “The table I write on, I say, exists, that is, I see and feel it; and if I were out of my study I might perceive it, or that some other spirit actually does perceive it.” Ayer (The Problem of Knowledge, p. 118) gives an early twentieth century version of a similar position: “Every empirical statement about a physical object... is reducible to a statement, or set of statements, which refer exclusively to sense-data.”; I. Berlin, (Refutation of Phenomenalism, p. 1): “[Phenomenalists] agree that the proposition that something is a material object must in principle be capable of being translated into or deduced from a proposition or propositions about the direct experience... of a real or imaginary empirical observer.”; Chisholm describing C.I. Lewis (“The Problem of Empiricism,” p. 512): “Lewis... defends the thesis that the meaning of any statement which refers to a material thing may be fully conveyed in statements which refer solely to sense-data or the sensible appearances of things.”

7 See Locke’s Essay, IV.1: “Since the Mind, in all its Thoughts and Reasonings, hath no other immediate Object but its own Ideas, which it alone does or can contemplate, it is evident, that our Knowledge is only conversant about them.”; Berkeley’s Principles, I.1: “It is evident to any one who takes a survey of the objects of human knowledge, that they are either ideas actually imprinted on the senses, or else such as are perceived by attending to the passions and operations of the mind, or lastly ideas formed by help of memory and imagination.”; see also Hume’s Treatise, I.v.ii: “Of Skepticism With Regard to the Senses.”
weak model according to which knowledge of non-mental existence is inferred from knowledge of mental existence. An *ontological phenomenalism* could assert that physical objects are metaphysically constituted by internal mental states.\(^8\) This is the radical thesis that physical objects are not represented by mental states, but instead are identical to collections of them. And an *intentional object phenomenalism* could assert that physical objects are no more than the intentional objects of certain complex representational states, and that they do not have any existence apart from their being represented by these states. According to this thesis, empirical objects merely “inexist” (to use Brentano’s admittedly inelegant term) within the content of our representations.

These four theses,\(^9\) as well as any number of further precisifications of them, are not in general mutually entailing, and it is possible to assert one of them without being committed to others.\(^10\) Ultimately I will argue that Kant’s theory is best understood *only* as a version of intentional object phenomenalism, but as we will see

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\(^8\)Berkeley’s idealism is famously grounded in such an ontology of objects: “Thus, for example, a certain colour, taste, smell, figure and consistence having been observed to go together, are accounted one distinct thing, signified by the name *apple*. Other collections of ideas constitute a stone, a tree, a book, and the like sensible things” (*Principles*, §1). Hume also flirts with a similar position, but he is a bit more difficult to pin down: “The idea of a substance as well as that of a mode, is nothing but a collection of simple ideas, that are united by the imagination, and have a particular name assigned to them, by which we are able to recall, either to ourselves or others, that collection” (*Treatise*, I.i.vi). Also Ayer (*The Problem of Knowledge*, Pelican Books, 1956, p. 118): “[Phenomenalism is] the thesis that physical objects are logical constructions out of sense-data, or in other words, that the sceptic’s gap is to be bridged by a reduction of the way things are to the way they seem.”

\(^9\)Other writers have given similar taxonomies of phenomenalism. Van Cleve distinguishes only between “analytic” and ontological phenomenalism, which correspond roughly to what I’ve called semantic and ontological phenomenalism (*Problems From Kant*, p. 71). Aquila distinguishes at least three different forms. “Predicate” phenomenalism asserts that the predicates we use to think objects only present the object as it appears. According to sense data phenomenalism, the objects of experience are internal sensory states which are identical to the appearances. And according to intentional object phenomenalism, the objects of experience are intentional objects. These three correspond (roughly) to my semantic, ontological and intentional object phenomenalisms respectively.

\(^10\)Of course these theses are, *ceteris paribus*, consistent with each other (arguably Berkeley, for one, held all four versions together).
shortly, he makes some claims that could be taken in several of the directions I’ve just outlined.\textsuperscript{11}

The most obvious way in which Kant commits himself to some sort of phenomenalist thesis is his consistent use of the term “appearance” (“Erscheinung,” or the Greek equivalent “phenomenon”) to refer to the objects of our empirical representations (and of experience generally).\textsuperscript{12} Appearances are always appearances \textit{to a subject}, and this fact alone already indicates that the objects of perception are essentially mind-related. Some have denied that Kant’s description of empirical objects as appearances implies any phenomenalist thesis on the ground that Kant could be taken to mean simply that we experience objects as they appear to us, yet that this does not entail that what appears to us is something internal to the mind.\textsuperscript{13} After all, mind-relatedness does not entail mind-\textit{dependence} in any strong, ontological sense. However, I think that the overwhelming body of textual evidence goes against such readings. Remarks from across the entire \textit{Critique} could be brought in here, but I will focus on three of the most relevant sections: the A-edition Transcendental Deduction, the Second Analogy of Experience, and the A-edition Fourth Paralogism.

Arguably Kant’s most radical innovation in the \textit{Critique} lies in his reworking of our understanding of the relation between representation and its object. The first

\textsuperscript{11}It is worth noting one important distinction between these different characterizations of phenomenanism. When phenomenalism asserts that the objects of experience are internal mental states, this can be construed either as a claim about the subject and its mode of access to objects, or as a claim about the status of the objects themselves. The case could be made that semantic and epistemic phenomenalisms fall into the former category, while ontological and intentional object phenomenalisms fall into the latter category. For the former are primarily claims about the subject and what it has access to, while the latter are claims about the metaphysical status of the objects themselves.

\textsuperscript{12}This terminology is set from the beginning of the body of the \textit{Critique} when he defines intuition as that through which “cognition relates to an object” and then establishes that “the undetermined object of an empirical intuition is called \textit{appearance}” (A19/B33-A20/B34).

\textsuperscript{13}See especially Langton’s \textit{Kantian Humility}, Allison’s \textit{Kant’s Transcendental Idealism}, McDowell’s \textit{Woodbridge Lectures}, and Allais’s “Kant’s One World.” These writers try to make the case that Kant’s assertions of appearances’ dependence on the mind does not entail their immanence in the mind.
half of this story came in the Transcendental Aesthetic and the argument for the ideality of space and time. However the full scope of the discovery does not appear until Kant attempts to give a transcendental deduction of the basic concepts through which we cognize an object. Kant’s argument that the categories are both applicable to objects and necessarily valid of them is possible only because Kant has discovered that the forms of the objects of our representations are dependent on these very representations. Kant’s characterization of this dependence relation already entails some version of the phenomenalist thesis. Keeping in mind that “appearances” are the only possible objects of human intuition (this was established in the Aesthetic), Kant claims that, “Appearances are not things in themselves, but rather the mere play of our representations, which in the end come down to determinations of inner sense” (A101).\[14\] Taken at face value, this would seem to be a version of ontological phenomenalism: the objects of experience are reducible to determinations of inner sense, and hence the only objects we experience are really just states of our own minds. This impression might appear to be strengthened by Kant’s summary at the end of the chapter:

But if, on the contrary, we have to do everywhere only with appearances, then it is not only possible, but also necessary that certain a priori concepts precede the empirical cognition of objects. For as appearances they constitute an object that is merely in us, since a mere modification of our sensibility is not to be encountered outside us at all. […] all these appearances and thus all objects with which we can occupy ourselves are all in me, i.e., determinations of my identical self. (A129)

Other remarks from the chapter though seem to describe something closer to an intentional object phenomenalism:

It is clear, however, that since we have to do only with the manifold of

\[14\]See also: A108-109: “Appearances are the only objects that can be given to us immediately, and that in them which is immediately related to the object is called intuition. However, these appearances are not things in themselves, but themselves only representations.”
our representations, and that X which corresponds to them (the object), because it should be something distinct from all of our representations, is nothing for us, the unity that the object makes necessary can be nothing other than the formal unity of the consciousness in the synthesis of the manifold of the representations. Hence we say that we cognize the object if we have effected synthetic unity in the manifold of intuition. (A105)

The premise of the argument here is about what we have access to in consciousness, about that with which “we have to do,” viz., representations. The notion that we have access only to our own representations hints at the idea of a “veil of perception” thesis about perceptual experience, and hence it indicates some kind of phenomenalism. But note that Kant is not claiming that cognition of an object is simply a matter of a certain mental state—one numerically identical to the object itself—occurring within the subject. Rather, the cognition of an object consists in a certain mode of synthetic activity. Although Kant does not say enough for me to rest my case on this passage alone, I think the best way to read this claim is that the cognition of an object entails not that the object exists in the mind, but rather that it is intended by the mind (or rather, it “inexists” within the content of our representations). The subject’s experience of an object is not a relation between a mind and an extant thing, but rather simply the mind undergoing certain rule-governed synthetic representational states.

We find similar claims in Kant’s argument for the principle of causation in the Second Analogy. He repeats the claim that we have cognitive access only to our representations, and that X which corresponds to them (the object), because it should be something distinct from all of our representations, is nothing for us, the unity that the object makes necessary can be nothing other than the formal unity of the consciousness in the synthesis of the manifold of the representations. Hence we say that we cognize the object if we have effected synthetic unity in the manifold of intuition. (A105)

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representations (A190/B235), and then goes on to give an analysis of what would be necessary to distinguish a temporal sequence of representations from a temporal sequence in the object of these representations. He answers in part:

Here that which lies in the successive apprehension is considered as representation, but the appearance that is given to me, in spite of the fact that it is nothing more than a sum of these representations, is considered as their object, with which my concept, which I draw from the representations of apprehension, is to agree. (A191/B236)

The appearance, i.e., the object, is said both to be constituted by representations (be the “sum” of them), yet also to be the object of these representations. If one reads the constitution claim as an assertion of ontological phenomenalism—i.e., as a claim that appearances are ontologically equivalent to collections of the mind’s representations—then Kant would seem to be making the strange claim that the objects of experience are representations of themselves. On the other hand, if we read this claim as an assertion that the appearance is dependent on the sum of representations of it (as would be entailed by intentional object phenomenalism), then there is no funny-business regarding self-referential objects.¹⁸

Kant will go on to argue that the only reason we can have objectively valid knowledge of the temporal orders of causal events is because the objects cognized and the order itself of the event are determined by the fact that our minds are necessitated in synthesizing representations in one way rather than another. His characterization of objectivity in terms of a rule-governed necessity of synthesis makes clear that Kant is committed to a version of intentional object phenomenalism. The passage is worth quoting in its entirety:

¹⁸The latter reading is also suggested by the final sentence of this paragraph: “That in the appearance [an der Erscheinung], which is the condition of this necessary rule of apprehension, is the object” (A191/B236). The object is not simply a mereological sum of representational states, but is instead the intentional object of these representations which the understanding takes itself to be beholden to when it synthesizes the representations in one way rather than another.
We have representations in us, of which we can also become conscious. But let this consciousness reach as far and be as exact and precise as one wants, still there always remain only representations, i.e., inner determinations of our mind in this or that temporal relation. Now how do we come to posit an object for these representations, or ascribe to their subjective reality, as modifications, some sort of objective reality? Objective significance cannot consist in the relation to another representation (of that which one would call the object), for that would simply raise anew the question: How does this representation in turn go beyond itself and acquire objective significance in addition to the subjective significance that is proper to it as a determination of the state of mind? If we investigate what new characteristic is given to our representations by their relation to an object, and what is the dignity that they thereby receive, we find that it does nothing beyond making the combination of representations necessary in a certain way, and subjecting them to a rule; and conversely that objective significance is conferred on our representations only insofar as a certain order in their temporal relation is necessary. (A197/B242)

After first repeating the claim about what we have access to in consciousness, viz., only representations, which are ultimately mere determinations of inner sense [innere Bestimmungen], Kant goes on to explain how objectivity can arise out of these subjective states. We saw above that Kant sometimes uses language that suggests he is working with an ontological phenomenalism, but here Kant seems to explicitly rule this model out. “Objective significance [Bedeutung] cannot consist in the relation to another representation.” The objectivity in a representation does not consist in a real relation between the representing subject and some other mental state. Instead, the objectivity of a representation lies in the necessity of the content of that representation. According to Kant then, a representation is objective when the subject takes the content of that representation to be necessitated by the object represented (as opposed to by the whim of the representing subject)19; yet insofar

19The objectivity in question here is stronger than the “I-objectivity” discussed in Chapter 2. The “objective significance” Kant refers to here is minimally I-objective, but it is also the objective validity that comes when all subjects are necessitated in representing the object in the same way and according to the same rules.
as this necessity is ultimately traceable to the pure forms of the understanding (as shown by the Transcendental Deduction and the Second Analogy itself), the object toward which the representation is directed must be merely an intentional object, i.e., that which is articulated by the content of the representation, not something transcendentally real existing independently of the representation.

Just as Kant argued in the Second Analogy that the only reason that the concept of causality is applicable to objects with a priori necessity is because these objects, the appearances, are a species of our representations, so too Kant will argue in the A-edition Fourth Paralogism that only by understanding appearances as a kind of representation can he avoid a collapse into “empirical idealism.” Kant is a transcendental idealist (space, time and the objects therein are mere appearances) and an empirical realist (we have immediate knowledge of objects in space and time), while his opponents are transcendental realists (space and time and the objects therein exist independently of any minds) and empirical idealists (we have knowledge only of our own mental states and not of objects in space). Transcendental idealism and transcendental realism are ontological and metaphysical theses about the status of objects in space and time; empirical realism and empirical idealism are epistemological claims about the status of our knowledge of these objects. Kant takes his position to be superior because it alone can secure immediate cognitive access to objects in space.

For because [the dualist, i.e., the transcendental idealist] allows this matter and even its inner possibility to be valid only for appearance—which separated from our sensibility, is nothing—matter for him is only a species

20 “Empirical idealism” is a catch-all term that applies to the model of the mind-object relation that begins with Descartes and Locke in the modern tradition and reaches its culmination in the empiricisms of Berkeley and Hume. According to these theories, perception is only possible as a relation between the perceiving subject and entities within in the mind. On these theories then, unlike with Kant, we could never say that we directly perceive a spatial object, because we can only perceive non-spatial mental objects.
of representations (intuition), which are called external, not as if they related to objects that are external in themselves but because they relate perceptions to space, where all things are external to one another, but that space itself is in us. (A370, emphasis added)\textsuperscript{21}

But now external objects (bodies) are merely appearances, hence also nothing other than a species of my representations, whose objects are something only through these representations, but are nothing separated from them. (ibid.)

The way that Kant characterizes his transcendental idealism might make it seem as though the difference from his predecessors’ empirical idealism were merely verbal. In fact, this is how many of Kant’s earliest critics read him,\textsuperscript{22} and this misreading is arguably why Kant felt the need to completely rewrite the Paralogisms, and reformulate the argument against empirical idealism (titled the Refutation of Idealism in the B-edition). I would argue that Kant did not rewrite this section because he changed his mind about the content,\textsuperscript{23} but rather because he was worried he would be read as what I have called an ontological phenomenalist, instead of as an intentional object phenomenalist as he intended. Once again, some of his language does give the impression that appearances are ontologically equivalent to collections of representations. But were this Kant’s view, then he would be no different from the empirical (or “dogmatic”) idealists (who were also transcendental realists) whom he criticizes. But we don’t have to read these passages (and others like them) from the Fourth Paralogism in this way. Space is “in us” not in the sense that it is an entity existing in the mind, but rather in the sense that it is only what is represented

\textsuperscript{21}Cf. A375: “Of course space itself with all its appearances, as representations, is only in me; but in this space the real, or the material of all objects of outer intuition is nevertheless really given, independently of all invention” (A375).

\textsuperscript{22}See Jacobi’s “On Transcendental Idealism” (in English in Kant’s Early Critics, ed. Brigitte Sassen, Cambridge University Press, 2000).

\textsuperscript{23}At least he says as much Preface to the B-edition (Bxxxvii-Bxxxix), where he claims that he hadn’t changed his mind either about the proofs nor the conclusion of the books, but instead only wanted to improve the presentation thereof; regarding the revision of the Paralogisms, he complains only of “Mißdeutung.”
by the subject’s form of intuition, and hence has no reality apart from its being represented. And appearances “are nothing separated from” representations in the sense that these objects are nothing beyond their that which is intended by these representations.

The passages I’ve enumerated here seem to me fully adequate to justify the following series of equations: appearances are the only objects of experience; appearances are identical to the things we come to know as physical bodies; appearances are a species of representation; therefore, physical bodies are a species of representation. Thus it is clear that Kant was some kind of phenomenalist, and I have given some indication as to why I think he should be read specifically as an intentional object phenomenalist, i.e., as claiming that appearances are merely that which is articulated, described, and purported by the content of certain representational states. However, the persistence of interpretations which reject any phenomenalist reading (and which attempt to explain away the characterization of appearances as representations by appeal to merely epistemic readings of Kant’s transcendental idealism) indicates that these passages are not sufficient to convince everyone of Kant’s phenomenalism (much less of the specific kind of phenomenalism I attribute to him). Rather than becoming mired in the complicated morass surrounding such large-scale questions, I will let my claim that Kant should be read as an intentional object phenomenalist rest on the reconstruction of his theory of intuition given in §3.2.

3.1.2 Direct Realism

In addition to affirming a phenomenalist thesis about the objects of experience, Kant also affirms a direct realism regarding our relation to these objects. Let’s say that Kant’s direct realism asserts that, 1) in experience, I have direct access to the objects I perceive, and that 2) in normal circumstances these objects are more
or less as I take them to be. 24 Taken just as stated, the “direct” part of direct realism is consistent with what Kant will call “dogmatic idealism,” i.e., the claim that the only possible objects of experience are immaterial mental states. If, as Berkeley would have it, the only possible objects of perception are our own ideas, then we surely have immediate access to those. But it is important to note that Kant is a direct realist with respect to physical bodies, i.e., material substances perduending in space and time. Any interpretation of Kant’s theory of cognition must accept this aspect of his view.25 Hence I will take Kant’s direct realism to be the thesis that,

In perception we are immediately conscious of material substances existing in space and time, and this consciousness is not dependent on any prior or concurrent awareness of internal states of our own mind.26

This is a claim about what the objects of experience are (physical bodies) and what our mode of access to them is (immediate, or direct). To say that a representation relates to its object immediately is to say that the object itself is present to the mind in virtue of the representations relating of the mind to the object.27 Unlike a

24The first clause of the formulation gives the “direct” part, and the second the “realism” part. My emphasis in this chapter will be on the “direct” half of the thesis because it is what is most significant (for my purposes at least) for Kant’s claims about our mode of access to these objects. The sense in which Kant is a realist is that he holds that the objects of our representations are more or less just as we take them to be. The crucial difference between his realism (which is also a transcendental idealism) and a traditional realism is that the realistic correspondence between representations of objects and the objects themselves only holds in the empirical realm, i.e., only among phenomena.

25Kant’s direct realism must also be contrasted with a direct realism regarding things in themselves, as Kant is not even an indirect realist when it comes to consciousness or knowledge of these entities.

26It might be objected that I should not state the thesis in terms of “immediate consciousness,” but rather in terms of “immediate knowledge.” One of Kant’s grand projects in the Critique is after all to show us what we know and how we know it, and knowledge of empirical entities is one of the surest places where we can have knowledge. We’ll see though, that Kant’s clearest assertions of his direct realism in the A-edition Fourth Paralogism and in the B-edition Refutation of Idealism both refer not to immediate knowledge, but to immediate consciousness (see, for starters, A372 and B275-6).

27Lucy Allais (“Kant, Non-Conceptual Content and the Representation of Space,” Journal of the History of Philosophy, 47 (3) 2009) interprets the immediacy of intuition’s relation to an object in
mediated representation, immediate representations do not require reference to other mental states to secure reference to their objects.\textsuperscript{28}

Two places where Kant clearly commits himself to direct realism are the A-edition Fourth Paralogism (which is surprising, as we’ll see, given its strong assertion of phenomenalism), and the B-edition Refutation of Idealism. Note first though that as early as the beginning of the Transcendental Aesthetic Kant implicitly commits himself to the claim that we have direct conscious access to the objects of perception: “that through which cognition relates itself immediately \textit{unmittelbar}... is intuition” (A19/B33). Some form of direct realism is thus already implicitly at work in the very notion of intuition.\textsuperscript{29} If we have intuitions, then we are in an immediate relation to the objects of those intuitions. Given that Kant goes on in the next paragraph to designate appearance as the object of intuition, and subsequently reveals appearance to be that which we come to know (through understanding) as material substance, the claim that we have empirical spatial intuitions at all implies an immediate cognitive relation to the object we’ll come to know as physical bodies.

\textsuperscript{28}Two ways that a representation could fail to immediately relate to physical objects in space would be if 1) the representations were conceptual and so could only express general marks of the singular object by way of another representation’s (viz., an intuition’s) reference to the object, or 2) if the representation referred directly to internal mental states.

\textsuperscript{29}Allais (2009) makes a similar point. As I understand the thesis, Kant’s direct realism is essentially a denial of Cartesianism internalism. Allais remarks that “Kant’s rejection the Cartesian conception of experience... is most clearly seen in his refutation of idealism (B274-79, Bxxxix-Bxli), but, I argue, can also be seen in his notion of intuition” (p. 390n).
We saw above that the A-edition Fourth Paralogism contains an unambiguous assertion of phenomenalism. The objects we experience are really just internal determinations of inner sense, and they have no existence outside the mind. It thus comes as a surprise that in many of these exact same passages, Kant affirms a direct realist thesis regarding our access to physical bodies.

Thus the transcendental idealist is an empirical realist, and grants to matter, as appearance, a reality which need not be inferred, but is immediately perceived. (A371, emphasis added)

Every outer perception therefore immediately proves something real in space, or rather is itself the real; to that extent, empirical realism is beyond doubt, i.e., to our outer intuitions there corresponds something real in space. (A375, emphasis added)

Kant wants to show that his theory can overcome skepticism (the “scandal of philosophy” (Bxxxix)) by showing that our knowledge of material substance does not rest on any inference from internal mental states to outer objects that are, strictly speaking, imperceptible. Thus he proudly declares himself for direct realism and states that our consciousness of spatial objects is immediate. Of course the way he attempts to arrive at this conclusion has long baffled and frustrated readers. We have immediate access to spatial objects because these objects are just representations in us. If we are only in immediate conscious relation to spatial objects because space and all the objects in it are no more than representations in my own mind, then

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30 "Outside," that is, when this word is taken as “mind-independent,” as opposed to merely as “in space” (cf. A373).
31 Kant famously labels this aspect of his theory “empirical realism.” What I refer to as Kant’s “direct realism” is only a component of his empirical realism. Empirical realism includes the claim that we are immediately conscious of the objects of experience, but it also includes the entire story of the a priori forms of sensibility and understanding which are at work in cognition, and I take these latter issues to go far beyond the direct realist thesis about the immediacy of our cognitive relation to objects.
32 See also A371-2: we are “immediately conscious” of “external things”; and A377: our “persuasion” of the existence of matter is “grounded on immediate perception.”
Kant’s reply to skepticism seems to have magnified the scandal, not diminished it.\(^{33}\) It is because of these sorts of claims that Kant’s earliest readers were put off by the “higher idealism” they found in Kant, which they took to be far too removed from common sense to be plausible.\(^{34}\) More problematic than the idealism charge though is the worry that the position sketched is straightforwardly inconsistent. Kant wants to affirm both that,

1) we are immediately conscious of objects in space;

and that,

2) the objects mentioned in 1) are mere appearances, which are a species of representation.

Now since material bodies are held by Kant to be \textit{substances}, i.e., entities that persist eternally in space and time and must be conceived only as subjects of predication, never as accidents (see the First Analogy, A182/B224ff.), it follows from 1) that these bodies must exist irrespective of whether they are represented by a subject (for no body is perceived by me eternally). Hence,

3) the objects mentioned in 1) are mind-independent, material substances.

On the other hand, appearances are said to be mere determinations of inner sense (as we saw in section 1.1), and as representations, their \textit{esse} is \textit{percipi}. Hence from 2) it follows that,

4) the objects mentioned in 1) are mind-dependent, immaterial accidents.

\(^{33}\)As Collins puts it, “to many readers of Kant, the supposed rejection of idealism achieved in this fashion looks like a bad joke” (\textit{Possible Experience}, University of California Press, 1999, p. 61).

\(^{34}\)See for instance the Feder/Garve review of 1782 and the Garve review of 1783 (both in English in \textit{Kant’s Early Critics}, ed. Brigitte Sassen, Cambridge University Press, 2000.).
Clearly something has gone wrong. The assertions of phenomenalism and direct realism that got us into this predicament occur within the same pages, sometimes within the same sentence.\textsuperscript{35} Kant was surely not so blind to the important issues he was discussing as to utter “P and not-P” in one breath, so we must assume that there is an implicit equivocation at work in these claims about the objects of experience and the way in which we are conscious of them. Before I explain where I think this equivocation lies, let’s look at the other place in the \textit{Critique} where Kant describes his direct realism, viz., the B-edition Refutation of Idealism (B274ff.).

For the 1787 edition of \textit{Critique of Pure Reason}, Kant completely rewrote the Paralogisms chapter (possibly in part because of the opportunity for misinterpretation offered by the passages enumerated above); the argument against skepticism is removed from that section, and reformulated as the Refutation of Idealism (which occurs after the “Postulates of Empirical Thinking in General”). Once again we find Kant arguing that his theory entails an immediate consciousness of the physical bodies populating our spatiotemporal neighborhood.\textsuperscript{36} His argument for this claim, however, no longer rests on a reduction of physical bodies to a species of representations (appearances). Instead, Kant seems to ignore this aspect of the theory entirely in his proof. Now Kant gives the more radical argument that the only way we could be conscious of determinate states of our own minds is if we were also aware of determinate states of bodies in space.\textsuperscript{37} The theorem itself runs,

\textsuperscript{35}For instance, A371: “these external things—namely, matter in all its forms and alterations—are nothing but mere representations, i.e., representations in us, of whose reality we are immediately conscious.”

\textsuperscript{36}And once again, he puts forward the argument in order to undermine the claim that we only refer to bodies in space by way of awareness of internal states of the mind.

\textsuperscript{37}This formulation of the argument is “more radical” because Kant now brings in a dependence relation of consciousness of internal states of the mind on consciousness of external states of physical objects. In the Fourth Paralogism, Kant made the more modest claim that the consciousness of both external and internal states was immediate, and that neither was dependent on the other. With this newly asserted dependence relation, Kant has “turned idealism’s own game against it” (B276).
The mere, but empirically determined, consciousness of my own existence proves the existence of objects in space outside me. (B275)

The claim is no longer that we have immediate consciousness of spatial entities which are really just states of my mind. Instead, spatial objects are explicitly distinguished from states of my mind, and determinate consciousness of the latter is said to be possible only because of determinate consciousness of the former.

The argument for this thesis draws on the full resources of the Analogies of Experience, and these issues would take us too far afield of our central concern with the nature of our consciousness of objects. We should focus for now of what is to be made of Kant’s conclusion that “here it is proved that outer experience is really immediate” (B276). I will have more to say about the Refutation in Chapter 5, but note for now that there is a basic disharmony between the Refutation and the systematic context of the Critique as a whole, especially the claims regarding the status of spatial entities as mere appearance. As we saw in §3.1.1, Kant says that physical bodies are really just appearances, which are a species of representation, and hence ultimately merely determinations of inner sense. But this would seem to mean that my experience of physical bodies is really just a kind of experience of states of my own mind. Thus the argument of the Refutation should not be able to get off the ground: we can only be aware of internal states of the mind if we are already aware of external states of bodies, but external states of bodies just are internal states of the mind, and so inner experience would turn out to be dependent on (a certain species of) itself. This fairly obvious inconsistency with Kant’s transcendent idealism has led some38 to claim that the only way to salvage the argument for the Refutation is by abandoning transcendent idealism altogether. I think that such a radical revision should be avoided if possible, and I think that a reconciliation is possible between

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38 E.g., Paul Guyer (1987).
the direct realism of the Refutation and the phenomenalism of his transcendental idealism. I will turn now to explaining how I think this reconciliation is to be made.

3.1.3 First pass at a solution

To recap, we’ve seen that Kant commits himself to two theses regarding the objects of experience. According to his phenomenalism, the physical objects we perceive in experience are really just a species of representation, and so their existence is somehow internal to the mind. According to his direct realism, we are immediately conscious of material substances which exist independently of our representations. These theses came to a head when we tried to make sense his claims in the Fourth Paralogism and the Refutation of Idealism. It appeared that the former’s insistence on a reduction of physical bodies to representations “in us” was incompatible with Kant’s assertions of the substantiality of these same objects argued for in the Analogies. And it appeared that the problem with the latter was that the argument for direct realism either required abandoning his idealism (and his phenomenalism along with it), or collapsed into the nonsensical assertion that our consciousness of our own mental states presupposes a consciousness of our own mental states.

Clearly something has to give, and I think the solution to our problems lies in specifying how exactly Kant’s assertions of phenomenalism and direct realism should be read. My claim, in a nutshell, is that Kant’s phenomenalism is an intentional object phenomenalism according to which the objects of perceptual experience are merely the intentional objects of certain complex representational states, and they have no existence in their own right.\footnote{This claim about the status of the objects of experience is an ontological claim, but this intentional object phenomenalism should not be confused with what I described above as “ontological phenomenalism.” This latter view is the claim that the objects of experience are ontologically reducible to mere mental states. The intentional object phenomenalism discussed now is the view that the objects of experience are ontologically reducible to what is intended by certain mental}
mere representations, he does not mean that they are instances of representings, but rather that they are representeds, and that they do not exist apart from their being represented.\footnote{Of course, Kant will still require that a full account of empirical realism will allow for us to make objectively valid judgments about spatiotemporal empirical objects that exist independently of us and our representations of them. They are, as Pereboom puts it, “recognition independent” (“Kant on Intentionality,” op. cit.). This should not be taken to be inconsistent with the claim that really these entities have no existence in their own right, because the judgments of mind-independent existence described by his empirical realism are to be understood only in terms of the necessity of representing things in a certain way. Hence, we represent the intentional objects of our experience as though they were the sorts of things that exist independently of us and our representations, even though, considered from the transcendental perspective of Kant’s idealism and his theory of cognition, these things have no ontological status beyond their being the contents of certain representational states.}

Kant’s phenomenalism then is a thesis about the ontological status of the objects of experience: they are mere intentional objects. His direct realism, by contrast, should be read as specifying certain necessary features of the semantic content of these intentional representational states. When Kant says that we are immediately conscious of objects in space that are external to us, he means that the representational content of our intuitive representations purports to refer directly to such objects. This is not an assertion of a real relation between a representational state and some extant entity (either an internal mental state or an external spatial object). Rather all that is being described in Kant’s direct realism is the content of these representations, i.e., their representational purport. In these respects, Kant’s phenomenalism and his direct realism are theses about what I called “I-intentionality” in the previous chapter. And insofar as this direct realism is taken to follow with transcendental necessity from Kant’s system, Kant is arguing that the immediacy of our consciousness of spatial objects is a necessary feature of the I-intentional content of experience.\footnote{The purpose of the Transcendental Deduction and the Principles of Pure Understanding is to show that we can only have objectively valid cognition of an object if we conceptualize it through the schematized categories, thereby representing the thing as a material substance, distinct from me, in space.}
We saw that the claim of the Fourth Paralogism seemed to affirm that the objects of experience were both internal modifications of inner sense, yet also material substances in space. My suggestion is that we read the first claim as an ontological and metaphysical assertion about the transcendental ideality of physical bodies; on my reading, these entities are merely what is I-intended in objectively valid empirical cognition, even though independent of this cognition there are no really mind-independent material substances. If we then read the second claim as an assertion about necessary features of the intentional content of empirical cognition (viz., that we necessarily represent the objects of experience as material substances existing independently of us in space), then the apparent inconsistency with the first claim vanishes. There is nothing contradictory about claiming “We necessarily represent things (in empirical cognition) as P, even though, really, not-P.”

Likewise, the Refutation does not have to be read as inconsistent with Kant’s transcendental idealism. The dependence of the consciousness of inner states on the consciousness of outer states does not entail a real relation to (transcendentally real) bodies in space that exist independently of my representing them. Instead, this dependence relation is one of the transcendentally necessary features of empirical cognition: I could not have representations with intentional content about the states of my own mind if I did not also have representations with intentional content about objective states of bodies in space.\(^{42}\)

\(^{42}\)It might be objected here that this interpretation is too deflationary. Kant offers the Refutation as a reply to the skeptic, and most have taken Kant’s goal to be to demonstrate the existence of objects in space, not the mere necessity of our representation of this existence. I will reply to this objection in full in chapter 5 when I treat the Refutation more fully. In short, my reply is that the skepticism Kant wants to undermine is an epistemic one, not an ontological one. Kant is not trying to show that external objects exist, but rather that we can have certainty with respect to them, i.e., can have objectively valid cognition of them. Insofar as his transcendental theory of experience can secure this, Kant’s goal is met.
In this section I take myself to have shown that there is a tension between two of Kant’s most central claims about the objects of experience. On the one hand, his phenomenalism (which is a component of his transcendental idealism) implies that the objects of experience are mere representations, and have no existence apart from their being represented by us. On the other, his direct realism (which is a component of his empirical realism) implies that the objects of experience are material substances existing independently of us. I have given a sketch of an interpretation that attempts to resolve this tension by showing that the senses in which the “objects of experience” described in these two assertions are distinct. The phenomenalist thesis asserts a metaphysical and ontological claim about the status of objects as mere intentional objects; and the direct realist thesis makes a claim about necessary features of the content of the representations intending these objects. On this interpretation then, the two theses are consistent. My explanation of how this interpretation resolves the tension between Kant’s phenomenalism and his direct realism, however, is meant only to provide an initial note of plausibility and potential fruitfulness to the interpretation. Since phenomenalism and direct realism are theses about our cognitive relation to objects just as much as about the objects themselves, in order to convince ourselves that the model I have sketched is correct, we will need to examine the specific details of what Kant has to say about how relations to objects are secured in cognition. This will require reconstructing Kant’s theory of empirical intuition. For, “in whatever way and through whatever means a cognition may relate to objects, that through which it relates immediately to them, and at which all thought as a means is directed as an end, is intuition” (A19/B33). Empirical intuitions (i.e., intuitions that contain sensation) secure all reference to objects in empirical cognition. I will argue in the next section that the seeds of Kant’s phenomenalism, his direct realism, and the key to the resolution of the two, are to be found in the theory of
empirical intuition.

3.2 Empirical Intuitions

The task of the present section is to explain how exactly Kant thinks that intuitions and sensations can secure a cognition’s reference to an object. In Chapter 2, I distinguished two different ways by which we can analyze a mode of representation. We can consider, first, its metaphysical status as a psychological event displaying a certain matter and form, and second, its cognitive function of intending a certain content and eventually contributing to knowledge. In this section I will discuss both aspects of intuition in order to explain how intuitions secure reference to empirical objects. I will first (§3.2.1) argue that empirical intuitions are materially constituted by sensations, and that their form is the synthetic unity that results from the activity of the imagination in combining sensory material. Next (§3.2.2), I will explain what the general structure of the representational content of empirical intuitions is for Kant, arguing that empirical intuitions nonconceptually I-intend sensory qualities arrayed in space. Finally, (§3.2.3), I will explain how the metaphysical status of intuition described in §3.2.1 makes possible the cognitive function described in §3.2.2. This will leave us with an account according to which empirical intuitions involve a demonstrative E-intentional relation to mere collections of internal sensory states, yet still I-intend spatial entities distinct from the mind; only the latter will come to be identified with physical bodies and the objects of experience proper.

3.2.1 What are empirical intuitions?

When Kant officially introduces the concept of an intuition at the beginning of the Transcendental Aesthetic, he describes intuition in relation to the concepts of
matter (which has something to do with sensation) and form (which has something to do with space and time). Hence I will begin my analysis of the relation between sensation and intuition by clarifying Kant’s understanding of the matter and form of empirical intuitions. Kant holds, I will argue, that an empirical intuition is literally constituted out of a manifold of sensations. Its form is the synthetic activity which unites these sensations together and represents an object in space.

We’ve already seen (in ch. 2) that Kant does not make discerning his understanding of sensation an easy task for the reader. This unclarity carries over into the relations that sensations are said to bear to other types of representations. Many commentators agree that Kant’s considered view is that sensation is the matter of empirical intuition. However, while Kant is willing to refer to sensation as the matter of appearance (A42/B59-60), as the matter of perception (B207, A166/B208), or as the matter of experience generally (A223/B270), there is no place in the \textit{Critique} where Kant explicitly and directly states that sensations are the matter of intuition. Nevertheless I agree that this must be Kant’s considered view, and he does give us several hints that point in this direction. Impressions (\textit{Eindrücke}), which I identified with E-sensations in chapter 2, are said to be contained in intuitions (A99), and intuitions are said to represent their objects “through sensation” (A20/B34). At A22/B36, Kant suggests that intuition is composed of two distinct parts, namely their pure form and “everything that belongs to sensation.” The closest he comes to directly identifying sensation with the matter of intuition is at A267/B323, where

\begin{quote}
43 That intuition which is related to the object through sensation is called \textbf{empirical}.[...] I call that in the appearance which corresponds to sensation its \textbf{matter}, but that which allows the manifold of appearance to be intuited as ordered in certain relations I call the \textbf{form} of appearance” (A20/B34).
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
44 Stated in the terms I used in chapter 2, empirical intuitions are constituted out of collections of E-sensations which are combined together in a synthetic act. In virtue of constituting an outer or inner intuition, the E-sensations become either O-sensations or S-sensations, respectively.
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
45 See, for instance, Aquila, \textit{Representational Mind} chs. 2-3, or Pippin, \textit{Kant’s Theory of Form} ch. 2.
\end{quote}
Kant writes “the form of intuition (as a subjective condition of sensibility), precedes all matter (the sensations).” The only places I am aware of where Kant will positively state that the matter of intuition is sensation are in the *Metaphysik Mrongovius* (1783) and the *Fortschritte* (1793). In the first, he says, “Empirical intuition has two parts: matter and form, and empirical concepts likewise. The matter of everything empirical—of empirical intuition, is sensation; the form is shape” (29:795). In the second, he writes that “the empirical in perception, the sensation or impression (*impressario*), is the matter of intuition” (20:266). While it is unfortunate that Kant doesn’t just come out and say it in the *Critique*, these claims taken together seem to me sufficient to establish that the matter of intuition (and, apparently, of experience generally) is sensation. Assuming that this claim is correct, we must ask what it means.

We saw earlier (in §1.4.2) that there are two different senses in which Kant will employ the matter/form distinction. There is a general use of this distinction, which applies to things generally (including representations), and a specific use which applies only to representations. According to the first (the mereological version), the matter of a thing is whatever set of entities constitutes that thing, while the form is the relations and organizations that obtain among those entities in virtue of constituting that thing. Here the matter and form of a representation pertain to its metaphysical status as a mental state. According to the second (the semantic version) the matter of a representation is the object to which the representation refers, while the form is whatever determination is represented in the object. Here the matter and form of a representation pertain to its cognitive function as an intentional mental state.

*Cf. also 29:800: “With every manner in which we are affected there are two parts: matter, i.e., the impression of sensation, and form, i.e., the manner in which the impressions are unified in my mind. Otherwise I would have millions of impressions but no intuition of a whole object.”*
Neither the mereological version nor the semantic version jibes completely with the pairing of sensation with space and time as the respective matter and form of intuition. There is plenty of textual evidence to suggest that Kant thinks that intuitions are constituted out of manifolds given through sense, and thus it makes perfect sense on the mereological version of say that sensation is the matter of intuition. The connection between intuition and what I have called E-sensation is made explicit early in the Analytic of Concepts when it is said that “all intuitions, as sensible, rest on affections” (A68/B93), i.e., on E-sensations. In the A-deduction, in his discussion of the synthesis of apprehension, Kant remarks that “Every intuition contains a manifold in itself,” and this manifold is equated with “the succession of impressions” (A99). A similar remark is made a few pages later when Kant assigns to the productive imagination the task of bringing “the manifold of intuition into an image.” To do this the imagination must “antecedently take up [aufnehmen] the impressions into its activity, i.e., apprehend them” (A120). Having an empirical intuition thus requires collecting sensations together into an apprehension, which indicates that intuitions are constituted out of sensory impressions. And towards the end of the B-Deduction, Kant refers directly to the “composition of the manifold in an intuition,” connecting this with “empirical consciousness” (B160). All this indicates that Kant understands intuitions as representations which are composed (at least in part) out of more basic mental states. And this in turn indicates that the sense in which sensation is the matter of intuition is mereological. Sensations are the matter of intuition in the same way that bricks are the matter of a wall, or innings are the matter of a baseball game.

So we can make some sense of the claim that the relation between sensation and intuition is mereological: these are what the imagination “takes up” when it combines the manifold into an intuition through what he elsewhere labels the “fig-
urative synthesis” (B151). But it can’t literally be the case, on the mereological reading, that *space* and time are the forms of intuition, if this is taken to mean that intuitions themselves are spatial, rather than simply representations of spatial things. Intuitions are, after all, *mental* states, and as such the only possible form they could have is existence through some duration of time. It does not make sense to say that intuitions also have a spatial form, for to say so would be to make the mind itself extended, and there is no reason to think that Kant held such a radical position.\(^{47}\)

Conversely, it would make perfect sense to say that space and time are the forms of intuition on the semantic version of the matter/form distinction. Kant’s entire point in the Transcendental Aesthetic is to show that the fundamental task of intuition is to represent objects possessing spatial properties. On this reading, to say that space and time are the forms of intuition is just to say that in having an intuition we represent an object with spatiotemporal determinations. However, it does not make sense on the semantic version of the distinction to say that sensation is the matter of intuition, for this would be to say that the object of the intuition is sensation. Kant unequivocally assigns appearance to intuition as its object right off the bat in the Transcendental Aesthetic (A20/B34), and so if sensation were also the object of intuition, then we would have to make sense of the implicit identification of sensation and appearance. Now below (§3.2.3) I will argue that there is a sense in which our attention to appearances can be construed as an attention to collections of sensations which are represented as arrayed in the representation of space. However, I will also show that Kant does not think that we ever represent these collections of sensations *as such* when they are represented spatially. Were sensations the objects of

\(^{47}\)Kant does claim (infamously) that space is “in us” (A373), but by this he means only that the ontological status of space is exhausted by its being represented by the mind. Such a reading is the only way to make the “in us” claim consistent with the assertion from the Aesthetic that “time can no more be intuited externally than space can be intuited as something in us” (A23/B37). Space is in us in virtue of its transcendental ideality, but we nevertheless must intuit it as outside of us.
intuition in this stronger sense, i.e., were it the case that the representational content of an empirical intuition picks out something that the mind implicitly takes to be a merely internal and subjective mental state (what I called "semantic phenomenalism" in §3.1.1), Kant’s position would reduce to a form of the skeptical idealism (and transcendental realism) he meant to critique.\footnote{Specifically, Kant would be faced with all the solipsistic and skeptical worries that plagued the empiricist’s model of the mind. Kant was of course self-consciously trying to avoid such a model, arguing instead that in empirical cognition, we are immediately conscious of objects in space, not of internal mental states.}

At this point we seem to be faced with an impasse. Neither the mereological version nor the semantic version of the matter/form distinction can be reconciled completely with the claims that sensation is the matter of intuition and space the form. Since I am aware of no other ways to understand the matter/form distinction, one of these two claims must be revised somehow. I think the preponderance of evidence points in favor of us reading Kant’s claims about the matter and form of intuition in terms of the mereological view. First of all, the mereological version of the distinction is the one that can apply to things in general, as well as representations specifically, and this suggests that we take this version of the distinction as the default reading. This move is further supported by the fact that there are no places in the \textit{Critique} in which Kant explicitly defines matter and form in terms of the semantic version.\footnote{The citations I gave in ch. 2 sec. 1 above are from the J"asche Logic, which is inconsistent on the question anyway, and from a late \textit{Reflexion} (see 9:33, 9:101, R6350).} Furthermore, all of the examples of matters and forms given in the discussion of the distinction in the Amphiboly are given in terms of the mereological version.\footnote{And importantly, one of these examples specifically refers to a mode of representation, viz., judgment. “In every judgment one can call the given concepts logical matter (for judgment), their relation (by means of the copula) the form of the judgment” (A266/B322). If I judge that the S is P, then the two concepts, S and P, are the matter of the judgment because they are that out of which the judgment is composed. And the ‘is’ marks the form because the two material concepts are related to each other as subject to predicate by the copula.} All this suggests that without some strong reason to do otherwise,
we should read claims about matter and form in the *Critique* with the mereological version of the distinction.

What then should we make of the claim that space and time are the forms of intuition, given that this cannot be literally true on the mereological version of the distinction? I think we should simply say that Kant is speaking loosely here, and take Kant to mean that space is the form of what is represented by the intuition; the form of the intuition itself is something different. If intuitions are constituted out of collections of sensations (the matter of the intuition), then the form of the intuition will be whatever relations the sensations stand in in virtue of constituting that intuition. These relations will be those effected by the synthetic activity of the productive imagination that forges the intuition out of the raw manifold of sensory impressions.\(^{51}\) Strictly speaking then, the form of an intuition is not space, but rather the synthetic combination of sensations into a representation of something spatial; this is, after all, that in virtue of which the collections of sensations can be said to constitute one single intuition.\(^{52}\)

It must be admitted that when I say that *really* the form of intuition is not space, but rather that synthetic activity which represents space, I am effectively saying that Kant didn’t really mean it when he said that space is the form of intuition. This might be taken as a *prima facie* weakness of my reading. Note however that

\(^{51}\)The primary place where Kant discusses this is in section 24 of the B-edition Transcendental Deduction. There he describes how a “transcendental synthesis of the imagination,” which is a function of the understanding, acts on sensibility to produce intuitions.

\(^{52}\)Richard Aquila makes a similar point about space and time as what is intended in representation, rather than being an actual form of the representation itself: “Kant also speaks of Space and Time as *Anschauungen* and as *Vorstellungen* [...]. Surely he does not mean that space and time are mental states, or aspects of them. They are, rather, (intentional) objects of such states (albeit objects of a universal pervasiveness), and exist only as such objects” (“Is Sensation the Matter of Appearance?” in *Interpreting Kant*, ed. Moltke Gram, University of Iowa Press, 1982, p. 26-27). In his *Representational Mind* (1983), he spells out what intuitive form is, if not space and time literally: “Intuitional form, then, in virtue of informing a representation, constitutes it as the awareness, either sensory or merely imaginative, of an at least possibly real region of space” (p. 54).
there are just as many passages in the Transcendental Aesthetic in which space is said to be the form of appearance, i.e., that which the intuition represents.\textsuperscript{53} For instance at A20/B34, it is the “form of appearance,” not the form of intuition, “which allows the manifold of appearance to be to be intuited as ordered in certain relations.” A couple paragraphs later at A22/B36, when Kant describes his method in the Transcendental Aesthetic, he claims that when we abstract from the understanding and from sensation, “nothing remains except for pure intuition and the mere form of appearances.” In distinguishing the form of appearance from pure intuition, Kant is indicating that the mere form of appearance, i.e., space, is what is intuited by a pure intuition. Space should only be said to be the form of intuition in the sense that pure intuition represents the possible forms that appearances can take. And lastly, a few pages later, Kant asserts that “space is nothing other than merely the form of all appearances of outer sense” (A26/B42).

I thus think the best way to make full sense of the relevant passages from the Transcendental Aesthetic about the matter and form of intuition and appearance is with the following model. We can distinguish a (mereological) matter and form of both intuition and appearance. The matter of intuition is sensation while its form is the synthetic combination of this matter into an intuitive representation.\textsuperscript{54} The

\textsuperscript{53}Sellars objected that Kant accidentally allows two distinct spatial forms of sensibility into his theory. On the one hand, there is the spatial organization of the representation itself, and on the other, that of the object of representation (\textit{Science and Metaphysics}, ch. 1). I don’t think that Kant ever meant to indicate that intuitions as such have spatial form, but rather only that their objects do. My reading of Kant’s claims about the matter and form of intuition allow for this.

\textsuperscript{54}Daniel Warren gives a similar reading of the matters and forms of intuition and appearance (\textit{Reality and Impenetrability in Kant’s Philosophy of Nature}, Routledge, 2001, p. 11.). And interestingly, Husserl’s account of the matter and form of conscious processes looks remarkably similar to the position I here impute to Kant. In his 1913 \textit{Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology, Vol I} (tr. by F. Kersten, Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1983), §85 “Sensuous \(\mathcal{A}_p\) indicative \(\mu\)”, Husserl argues that “we can essentially distinguish two things: 1. all mental processes designated in the \textit{Logische Untersuchungen} as ‘primary contents;’ 2. the mental processes or their moments which bear in themselves the specific trait of intentionality” (p. 203). Husserl wants to state generally about empirical consciousness what I have stated specifically about empirical intuitions, viz., that their matter is the more basic mental states which constitute them, and their form is the way in
matter of the *appearance* is simply the physical stuff out of which the appearing object is made, and the form of the appearance is the spatiotemporal organization of this physical stuff. Although Kant doesn’t have the semantic version of the matter/form distinction in mind in the Transcendental Aesthetic, we could still give an account of what this would be for an intuition: the matter (object) of an intuition is the appearance, while the form is the set of spatiotemporal determinations represented in the appearance.

An example may be useful here. Let’s say I have an intuition of a rubber ball. We have both a representation (the intuition) and an object of the representation (the appearance, i.e., the ball). The matter (in the mereological sense) of the intuition is the set of sensations caused by the ball, while the form is the combination of those sensations into the ball-intending intuition. The matter (again in the mereological sense) of the ball itself is the rubber which constitutes it, while the form is the spherical shape and size of the ball. The matter (in the semantic sense) of the intuition is the appearance, the ball, while the form is the spherical shape, size, color (if I see it) and hardness (if I touch it) which the ball is represented as possessing.

An empirical intuition, considered as representational mental state, is composed of a collection of sensory states combined by the imagination. Before moving on to consider the representational content of intuitions, I must first address a concern that may have already occurred to the reader. If empirical intuitions have a form in virtue of their sensory matter being combined in a certain way, then how can we make sense of the notion of a *pure* intuition? An intuition is said to be

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55The claim that sensations are caused by appearances will be heavily revised in §5.2.1. This will require appealing to the full framework of Kant’s transcendental idealism, and the relations between appearances and things in themselves. This, however, is an issue that can be safely bracketed for now, so I intentionally ignore these complications when I claim that the sensations are caused by the ball.
pure when there is no sensory content whatsoever. They are, as Kant will sometimes say, purely formal (e.g., B207). But if the form of a representation is nothing beyond the relations that obtain among the material of the representation, then it would seem that there cannot be a form without some matter to take that form. Kant leaves no question as to whether we have pure intuitions. We must have them because Kant thinks that such intuitions are conditions on the possibility of the a priori applicability of geometry to the physical world.

I think the solution here is that pure intuitions do have a matter, they just don’t have a sensory matter. This becomes apparent in section 10 of the B-edition Transcendental Deduction. There, Kant wants to show that the pure intuitions of space and time are given over to the understanding, and that these pure intuitions are to be the matter of the pure concepts of the understanding. In explaining this, Kant appeals to the notion of a “pure a priori manifold.”

Transcendental logic [...] has a manifold of sensibility that lies before it a priori, which the transcendental aesthetic has offered to it, in order to provide the pure concepts of the understanding with a matter, without which they would be without any content, thus completely empty. Now space and time contain a manifold of pure a priori intuition [...] Only the spontaneity of our thought requires that this manifold first be gone through, taken up, and combined in a certain way [aufgewisse Weise durchgegangen, aufgenommen, und verbunden werde] in order for a cognition to be made out of it. [...] A synthesis is pure if the manifold is given not empirically but a priori (as in space and time). (A77/B102-3)

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have no matter whatsoever. Rather they are merely formal because they represent no more than the possible spatial and temporal relations that can obtain in and among objects. Pure intuitions nevertheless contain a “pure a priori manifold.” By this we should take Kant to mean that the content of a pure intuition of space or time presents an infinity of possible locations in space or moments in time. The representations of these possible locations in space-time are the pure manifold, and these constitute the matter of a pure intuition. This matter may as well be “merely formal” (pure) because since there are no sensory qualities occupying these locations, none of them are qualitatively distinguishable from any other, and the locations are nothing more than the mere possibility of an object at that location.

3.2.2 What Do Empirical Intuitions Represent?

We just saw that one of the relations between sensation and intuition is mereological: intuitions are materially constituted by sensations. This showed us something important about the metaphysical status of intuitions. Next I’ll examine the generic cognitive function of intuitions in order to determine what, in general, the representational content of an empirical intuition is. We will see that the I-intentional content of an empirical intuition is a non-conceptual consciousness of sensible qualities filling out the space in the perceptual vicinity the perceiver. We will then be in a position to see in §3.2.3 how the metaphysical structure of intuitions as compositions of sensations makes possible this I-intentional content, and this in turn will allow us to see how both Kant’s direct realism and his phenomenalism are grounded in his account of intuition.

When intuitions are initially defined in the Transcendental Aesthetic, they are said to be representations with objects, and these objects are specified as appearances. As readers familiar with the structure of the Critique are aware, the first
half of the treatise includes a long series of explanations of how our representations of empirical objects gain increasing degrees of determination and complexity such that we eventually end up with full-blown experiences of physical bodies in space which interact with each other in accordance with (something close to) Newtonian physics. At this early stage of the account (i.e., in the Transcendental Aesthetic) however, intuitions are said to relate to appearances merely “indeterminately” (A20/B34). This raises the question of how exactly we should understand the I-intentional content of intuitions. What exactly is it that an intuition represents when it relates indeterminately to an appearance? And if we consider a complete experience of a state of affairs in the world, one that includes judgment, conceptualization, and an intuitive presentation of an object, what contribution does the intuition make in the content of that experience?

The first point to make with respect to this content is that it is non-conceptual. This is what Kant means when he says that the relation of the intuition to its object is “indeterminate.” It is judgment after all, the faculty of concepts, which renders representations determinate. A representation is indeterminate when it does not specify (through concepts) what sort of thing its object is. Further clear evidence that Kant took intuitions to be non-conceptual is his claim in the introduction to the Metaphysical Deduction, where he distinguishes concept and intuition as two fundamentally distinct modes of representation of the two fundamentally distinct representational faculties (understanding and sensibility) (A68/B93), and his claim from the A-Deduction that we can imagine intuitive creatures that have no concepts at all (A89-90).

59See Kant’s discussion of the role of judgment in the Schematism section. There he says that the judgment’s following of the rule laid down by a schema “has as its aim... the unity in the determination of sensibility” (A140/B179), and accordingly a schema is described as “a rule for the determination of our intuition in accordance with a certain general concept” (A141/B180).
Now depending on who you ask, the claim that intuitions are non-conceptual is either an obvious and non-negotiable immediate consequence of Kant’s initial division of labor between sensibility and understanding, or a gross oversimplification of this division which is ultimately unsustainable. Because the preponderance of textual evidence points to a non-conceptualist interpretation of intuitions, and because I have not seen an argument that shows that non-conceptual intuitions are philosophically unacceptable, I side with the former party. However there have also been many prominent scholars in recent years who have held various versions of the latter. Rather than get distracted by a long detour about arguments for and against conceptualist readings here, I direct the reader’s attention to Appendix A to Part I, where I present a fuller argument in favor of nonconceptualist readings of Kant’s theory of intuition. For now, rather than defend the claim that intuitions are non-conceptual, I will investigate what their content is, if not conceptual.

We know that the objects of intuition are appearances (A20/B34), and we know that appearances will eventually come to be identified with material bodies in space (see Axioms, Anticipations, and Analogies). So there must be some sense in which intuitions can be said to refer to bodies. Yet since intuitions are non-conceptual representations, we should expect their representational content to be relatively minimal. After all, in order for a representational state to represent its object as the sort of thing it is, i.e., in order for the object to be represented determinately, concepts are necessary. So intuitions cannot represent their objects as the sorts of things they are. This implies that the representational content of intuition is not simply minimal; it is also, in a sense, impaired, for an intuition on its own cannot classify its object and specify the sort of thing it is. This is what Kant tells

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60 See, for instance, Sellars (Science and Metaphysics), McDowell (Having The World In View), Ginsborg (Was Kant a Non-Conceptualist?), Paul Abela (Kant’s Empirical Realism), and Derk Pereboom (Kant On Intentionality).
us with the claim that “intuitions without concepts are blind” (A51/B75). This is a very famous remark and many different readings of the “blindness” claim have been given. The conceptualist will take the blindness metaphor to indicate that intuitions without concepts don’t refer for they cannot “see” anything and so can’t refer. I think a better reading is that intuitions without concepts are blind in the sense such intuitions do not know, so to speak, what they are faced with.\textsuperscript{61} This reading is supported by a similar thought from the Jäsche Logic:

If a savage sees a house from a distance, for example, with whose use he is not acquainted, he admittedly has before him in his representation the very same object as someone else who is acquainted with it determinately as a dwelling established for men. But as to form, this cognition of one and the same object is different in the two. With the one it is mere intuition, with the other it is intuition and concept at the same time (9:33).

Kant’s point is that if a human who had never encountered a European dwelling were to see one for the first time, he would not know what sort of thing he would be looking at, and hence would not have any concepts ready to apply to the thing. The representation would be “mere intuition.” Nevertheless, he would still have a representation whose object was the house. This contrasts with the European who knows what sort of thing the house is, and can cognize it through intuition and concept together.\textsuperscript{62}

\textsuperscript{61}Stephanie Grüne arrives at a similar conclusion in her discussion of Kant’s claim that “Anschauungen ohne Begriffe sind blinde” (Blinde Anschauung: Die Rolle von Begriffen in Kants Theorie sinnlicher Synthesis, Vittorio Klostermann GmbH Frankfurt am Main, 2009). She argues that the blindness claim could be taken either is the sense that they are not judged (i.e., combined with concepts), or in the sense that they are without objects altogether. According to the first interpretation, “intuitions represent objects without in any way classifying them” (p. 30, my trans.). According to the second, intuitions “represent no object” (ibid.). She argues, for reasons similar to my own, that unless one reads the blindness claim in terms of the first interpretation, Kant ends up contradicting himself at important points elsewhere in the \textit{Critique} where he clearly asserts that intuitions represent objects, and are cognitions (in the broader sense of that term).

\textsuperscript{62}It should be noted that Kant’s example does not work perfectly. Even though the “savage” has no useful empirical concept to apply to the house, he will presumably still be applying general
All this suggests that intuitions represent the same objects that concepts do (or that concepts and intuitions together do), but that the I-intentional content by which intuitions represent their objects is different in kind from that involved in conceptual representations.\(^6\) Hence we can say that, in general, outer empirical intuitions represent bodies, but they do not represent bodies as such. The ability to represent a body as a body (or to I-intend it as a body) requires the ability to apply the predicate ‘is a body’, and this in turn requires the ability to apply all the predicates involved in the concept of body (‘is material’, ‘is substantial’, ‘causally interacts’, etc.). These are all of course conceptual capacities.\(^4\)

So if the objects of empirical intuitions are bodies, but they are not I-intended as such by intuitions, then what is their I-intentional content? The answer to this question is implicit in the entire Transcendental Aesthetic. As we’ve seen, empirical intuitions have two components—their spatial and temporal form and their sensory matter—and these two components together determine their I-intentional content. Kant distinguishes these two aspects of the content of empirical intuition when he explains his method of discovering the pure form of sensibility:

\(^{63}\)We can be assured that the difference between the intentional content of intuition and concept is a difference of I-intentionality because the difference as just described is a difference between the way in which the object is represented, not a difference in the objects themselves.

\(^{64}\)Allais (2009) arrives at a similar conclusion. She argues that intuitions (without concepts) are capable of presenting qualities of objects to consciousness, but not as qualities, nor even as objects: “On the one hand, a quality could be presented in a creature’s perceptual experience (could be available to be attended to, could make a difference to the way things look to the creature, and could have implications for how the creature will act) and, on the other, the property could feature in experience in a way that involves it being recognized as a property—as something that other objects could have. If a creature can discriminate a thing on the basis of redness... we need not think that it perceives the thing as being red in the sense that it recognizes the redness of the thing as a property that other things could share... concepts are necessary to represent an object as an object” (401).
We will therefore first isolate sensibility by separating off everything that the understanding thinks through its concepts, so that nothing but empirical intuition remains. Second, we will then detach from the latter everything that belongs to sensation, so that nothing remains except pure intuition and the mere form of appearances, which is the only thing that sensibility can make available <i>a priori</i>. (A22/B36)

After we separate off the conceptual component of our experience, but before we look exclusively at the pure form of sensibility, we have empirical intuitions with a sensory material content and spatial formal content. If space and time are not concepts, as Kant attempts to demonstrate, then the spatiotemporality that we find in our representations of physical bodies must be grounded in the intuitional component of cognition. And if sensation is the matter of experience contained in intuition, then we should also say that the aspect of our experience in which we find sensible qualities which are given immediately in sensation (e.g., the color or sound just as it is given to me in sense) is located in intuition. In short, that aspect of our experience of objects in virtue of which we are presented with these objects as spatial and temporal, and that aspect of our experience in virtue of which we have sensory consciousness, are both due to the I-intentional content of empirical intuitions. Hence there is a formal and <i>a priori</i> non-conceptual component to intuition (space and time), as well as a material and <i>a posteriori</i> non-conceptual component (sensation).

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65 “Space is not a discursive or, as is said, general concept of relations of things in general, but a pure intuition” (A24/B39). The same is said of time at A31/B47. This doctrine goes back to at least the <i>Inaugural Dissertation</i> (cf. 2:402).

66 Recall that in chapter 2 I argued that sensations as they are initially impressed on the sensing subject (E-sensations) already possess determinate qualities of determinate intensities (even though, qua mere impression, these are not accessible to consciousness). E.g., my sensibility is constituted in such a way that I have E-sensations with a certain mode of phenomenal redness when affected by certain kinds of photons. I am now making the further claim that the qualities represented by the empirical intuition are the same qualities as those possessed by the E-sensations.

67 The sensory component of experience is of course closely connected to the spatiotemporal component of experience. We cannot represent the sensory qualities in a body unless we can represent these qualities as arrayed in a determinate spatial and temporal arrangement. And we cannot represent the shape or duration of something unless there is a sensory material to instantiate and fill in that shape and duration. Matter and form in the object of intuitive representation are thus interdependent; in an empirical intuition, the one cannot be represented without the other.
of these aspects of our experience are non-conceptual modes of awareness, but the objects they represent can of course come to have conceptual determinations applied to them.\textsuperscript{68}

What all this implies is that the objects to which empirical intuitions put the subject in a relation are the things that will come to be characterized as physically interacting substances, but at the level of mere intuition are present to the subject merely as a set of sensory qualities arrayed in space. The I-intentional content of empirical intuition thus turns out to be very minimal. It is merely a brute consciousness or awareness of qualities placed in certain locations in space. A brief example may be useful here. Let’s say that I have a visual intuition of a red ball. We can distinguish two non-conceptual contents of the representation. First, there is the spatial shape of the ball. It has parts and it occupies a region of space. The intuition does not invoke the predicates ‘is spherical’, ‘is 3”-wide’, etc. These predicates can only be I-intended through the activation of conceptual capacities. It does however direct the subject’s attention to an object which can be correctly judged to have these properties (once the intuition is handed over to judgment).\textsuperscript{69} Second, there is the color of the thing. Because I am undergoing a sensation whose quality is redness and which has been synthesized into an outer empirical intuition, I represent redness in the object. Again, the intuition is not representationally robust enough to attribute predicates like ‘is red’ to the object. Nevertheless the intuiting of the sphere is a representational directedness of the subject towards a colored object in space.\textsuperscript{70}

\textsuperscript{68}The most basic concepts that can be applied to the matter and form of the objects of intuitions are concepts of extensive magnitude and intensive magnitude (as described in the “Axioms of Intuition” and the “Anticipations of Perception”). Intensive magnitudes are discussed at length in Chapter 4.

\textsuperscript{69}In general, and other things being equal, I would say that an intuition whose content represents an $x$ which is F will be in most cases sufficient to justify the belief that ‘$x$ is F.’ How this justification relation can work will quickly enmesh us in the depths of the epistemology of sensory knowledge, and so these concerns must be put off until Chapter 4.

\textsuperscript{70}Another way to put the point is that an empirical intuition represents (de re) an $x$ which is F,
It might be objected that, without concepts, sensory qualities could not be represented in space, because representing sensory qualities in space requires a conceptual interpretation of the sensory data. Really, we have only a 2-dimensional retinal imprint of the object, so if intuitions are non-conceptual, they can’t represent their objects in 3-dimensional space. However, this objection rests on exactly the sort of model of perception that Kant wants to distance himself from, viz., one according to which representations with outer purport are based on mental states without outer purport. (This would be an instance of epistemological or semantic phenomenalism.) Kant’s entire point in saying that spatiality is fundamental to our intuitions of outer objects is that intuitions place us in immediate relations to real objects in space. Hence an empirical intuition is no mere representation of a flat retinal imprint, but rather of a full 3-dimensional entity. It is true that some processing of the sense-data must take place to produce an intuition’s content, but this need not be a conceptual interpretation.

One might reasonably demand that more be said about what sort of awareness exactly intuitions involve. If I make it a condition on the content of empirical intuitions that they do not conceptually represent anything as the sort of thing that it is, then what sense is there to the claim that there is any awareness at all? What this question is really asking is whether it makes sense to speak of degrees of

but not (de dicto) x as being F.

Arguably, the content of the intuition represents both the perceived front of the object as well as, implicitly, the unperceived back of the object. I won’t go into these phenomenological issues here, but see Merleau-Ponty (Phenomenology of Perception, 1945) and Sellars (“The Role of Imagination in Kant’s Theory of Experience,” 1978) for discussions of these issues. See also Patricia Kitcher for a discussion of the claim that without an a priori representation, we would not be able to form 3-dimensional intuitive representations of objects (Kant’s Transcendental Psychology, Oxford University Press, 1990, ch. 2).

See Appendix B for further discussion of this nonconceptual “interpretation” of sensation and the determination of the specific contents of intuitions.

Sellars and McDowell argue that there is no sense to the claim. See my discussion of this in Appendix A.
cognition which are below the conceptual. Kant seems to acknowledge the possibility of such degrees in the *Stufenleiter* passage when he distinguishes both intuition and concept as modes of cognition (A320/B376). However, that passage does not spell out in any way what nonconceptual awareness would amount to. The story is elaborated somewhat in Kant’s other famous taxonomy of modes of cognition in the *Jäsche Logic*. There he distinguishes seven degrees of cognition.

The *first* degree of cognition is: *to represent something*;

The *second*: to represent something with consciousness, or *to perceive* (*percipere*);

The *third*: to be acquainted with something (*noscere*), or to represent something in comparison with other things, both as to *sameness* and as to *difference*;

The *fourth*: to be acquainted with something *with consciousness*, i.e., to *cognize* it (*cognoscere*). Animals are *acquainted* with objects too, but they do not *cognize* them.

The *fifth*: to understand something (*intelligere*), i.e., to cognize something *through the understanding by means of concepts*, or to *conceive*....

The *sixth*: to cognize something through reason.[...]

The *seventh finally*: to *comprehend* (9:64-5).\(^7\)

Kant says that all of these are related to “the objective content of our cognition in general” (9:64). Concepts do not enter this story until the fifth level, even though the very first level already involves representation, and consciousness (*Bewußtsein*) appears at the second. The second level is to represent with consciousness and the third is to represent with acquaintance (*kennen*). The fourth is called cognition, and is a combination of the second and third: conscious acquaintance. Given that in the *Stufenleiter* passage and elsewhere intuitions are referred to as modes of cognition,

\(^7\)A similar hierarchy is given in the *Dohna-Wundlacken Logic*. There “to be acquainted with something” is defined as “so to cognize that one is acquainted with it in comparison with others as to their identity and diversity” (24:730). As in the *Jäsche Logic*, consciousness and acquaintance are said to be distinct from cognition through concepts.
I think that intuitions should be placed at this fourth level of this hierarchy. One would like to hear more about what Kant means by “acquaintance,” but the little he gives us is instructive. He says that in being acquainted with an object, I am able to represent its relation of sameness and difference to other objects. One way to represent the sameness or difference of objects is of course through the use of concepts; I represent sameness when I apply the same concept to two objects, and difference when I apply a concept to one, and its negation to another. Intuitions also perform a similar task, albeit in a different way. Intuitions can represent the identity or difference between two objects by representing them at the same time but at different places; and they can represent something as self-identical in virtue of representing it as spatiotemporally continuous over time. In general, representing two objects as identical or different requires the ability to represent them both together in a single consciousness. This indicates that one of the essential aspects of the content of empirical intuition is the fact that it is a representation of a multiplicity (the manifold of intuition) within a single consciousness.

To summarize, the best way to understand the I-intentional content of empirical intuitions is this: they are non-conceptual yet conscious “acquaintances” of sensory qualities filling out distinct locations in 3-dimensional space and time. Incidentally, Bertrand Russell famously also uses the (English) term ‘acquaintance’ to describe our awareness of the immediate objects of perception (“Knowledge by Acquaintance and Knowledge by Description,” *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, 11 (1910-11), 108-128). Of course, he argued that we never have acquaintance with physical objects (as Kant does), but instead only of sense data in the mind.

Kant appeals to this function of intuition in his polemic against Leibniz in the “Amphiboly” chapter. He argues that Leibniz’s *principium identitatis indiscernibilium* goes awry because it only allows intellectual conditions of individuation, not sensible ones, e.g., space (cf. A263/B319ff.). In his *A Study of Concepts*, Christopher Peacocke argues that the only way that we can make sense of the applicability of empirical concepts to our experience of the world is if we isolate a nonconceptual component of experience which justifies the application of specific concepts to specific experiences (*A Study of Concepts*, MIT Press, 1992, ch. 3). Although this is not an argument that Kant ever gives, it bears some affinity to his basic insight that our empirical concepts only have application to real individual objects in the world in virtue of the intuitions to which the concepts are applied (cf. A20/B34). We have general concepts, but we don’t have license to apply them to...
in turn, informs us of the primary cognitive function of empirical intuitions. Their task is to secure the most basic and immediate referential relation to an object, and thereby “give” the object to the higher faculties of cognition. The content representing sensory qualities arrayed in space is what the understanding will take up and apply concepts to in judgment. Empirical intuition provides the material for this judgment.

One might object that the mental states I’ve described here are so representationally minimal that they should not be called “contentful” at all, but should instead be regarded as “mere registrations” of the environment. Jose Bermúdez also argues that perception in humans and many higher animals contains a nonconceptual component. His discussion of this topic is especially useful because he gives a set of criteria for what exactly is required for a state of an agent to count as content at all. Bermúdez argues that in deciding for or against the existence of nonconceptual content, we should first define the notion of “content” independently of that of concepts, and then ask whether we can isolate anything that counts as content without requiring the involvement of concepts. He gives four criteria which are together


79 He decides in the affirmative, claiming, as indicated by his title, that both perceptual experience and subpersonal computational states of the subject count as nonconceptually contentful on his individual objects in the world unless we first represent the object immediately and directly through intuition. What is more interesting however is the way Peacocke describes the nonconceptual content he thinks is necessary for perceptual experience. He refers to this nonconceptual content as “scenario content,” which he explains as a nonconceptual representation of the spatial structures in the immediate vicinity of the perceiver. He argues that there is a basic representation of spatial orientation relative to the perceiver that involves an origin point at the perceiver’s location, and a set of axes to define directions in space. Given this basic spatial orientation, the full scenario content represents what is filling out the space around the perceiver (p. 63ff). “For each point... identified by its distance and direction from the origin, we need to specify whether there is a surface there and, if so, what texture, hue, saturation, and brightness it has at that point, together with its degree of solidity” (p. 63). The content of Peacocke’s scenario content is thus remarkably similar to the content of Kantian intuitions as I understand them. The content of both types of representation are the structure of space and time filled in with sensible qualities, and both Kant and Peacocke take this nonconceptual perceptual content to be part of the “objective content of an experience” (p. 67), and to be necessary for the application of concepts to the world in experience.
necessary and sufficient for mental states to count as contentful:

1. They should serve to explain behavior in situations where the connections between sensory input and behavioral output cannot be plotted in a lawlike manner.
2. They should admit of cognitive integration.
3. They should be compositionally structured in such a way that their elements can be constituents of other representational states.
4. They should permit the possibility of misrepresentation.\textsuperscript{80}

The first criterion demands that a state only be contentful if appealing to it is necessary to explain an organism’s teleological and intentional behavior. The reason for this is that we want to be able to distinguish between systems that display a mere nomological covariance with their environment, and those that can be truly said to respond to their environment through a representation of it.\textsuperscript{81} Mercury rising or my skin sweating is a reliable response to a certain kind of stimulus, but it does not satisfy this criterion because the covariance is too rigid and is best explained by a mechanism that does not require appeal to intentional representations. My cranking up the air conditioning, however, is best explained by appeal to representations involving desires and beliefs about how to bring about those desires.\textsuperscript{82} The second and third criteria go together. The “interconnectivity” requirement comes from the idea that it wouldn’t make sense to call something a representational content if that content had no influence on other representational contents. Representations are the sort of

\textsuperscript{80}Bermúdez, p. 351-352.
\textsuperscript{81}Ibid., p. 346-348.
\textsuperscript{82}I think that this first criterion is the weakest of the four. This is because it seems to make an essential connection between contentfulness and teleology. This would indicate that only teleological systems are contentful, and that states of such a system only have content insofar as they can be appealed to in the explanation of a behavior. This would rule out by definition the possibility of a cognizant intellect which was in no way teleologically oriented. Perhaps such a being is impossible, but whether this is the case is a substantive question that should not be established by definitional fiat.
things that affect or are affected by other representations.\textsuperscript{83} Bermúdez brings in the “compositionally” requirement as a condition on the interconnectivity requirement. One representation can only affect the content of another representation if there is some means by which the content of one can be taken up into other representations, and this requires that representational content be the sort of thing that can be recursively broken down and recombined.\textsuperscript{84} The fourth criterion gives voice to the idea that a state should only count as representationally contentful if there is a sense in which the representation really is of the environment. This requires that there be some sense in which the representation is more or less “correct.” Whereas we can only make sense of something being correct if we can conceive what it would mean for it to be wrong, it follows that contentful states must be the sort of thing that could, under certain circumstances, get things wrong.\textsuperscript{85}

I have argued that empirical intuitions are nonconceptual representations of sensible qualities arrayed in three-dimensional space and time. I think that referring to the content of these representations as content is justified on Bermúdez’s account of representational content. 1. Representations of sensible qualities arrayed in space are highly relevant in the explanation of intentional behavior. All sophisticated interactions of agents with the objects around them require the representation of their physical surroundings, and this requires that there be demonstrative reference to these surroundings. Since concepts on their own can only refer to objects generally, intuitions are required to secure reference to individual objects, and we can only respond to and manipulate objects because of this reference. 2. Representations of sensible qualities arrayed in space admit of cognitive integration. For these sensible qualities will provide the referents of empirical judgments about the objects intuited.

\textsuperscript{83}Ibid., p. 349.
\textsuperscript{84}Ibid., p. 349-351.
\textsuperscript{85}Ibid., p. 345.
It is only because I am aware of these qualities in this place that I can come to refer (through understanding) to this cup and the concepts which are valid of it. Clearly then intuitional content is integrated into a larger cognitive whole. 3. Representations of sensible qualities arrayed in space are compositionally structured and can be contained in other representations. If I have an intuition of the array of qualities present before me, it will be possible, through additional discursive capacities, to divide the content of the intuition into distinct objects, such that I can judge that “this is a cup” and “this is a desk” and “this cup is on this desk.” 4. Intuitions can misrepresent. This claim may sound controversial at first, for Kant is famous for asserting that “the senses do not err; yet not because they always judge rightly, but because they do not judge at all” (A293/B350). Note however that to misrepresent is not necessarily to err, especially when error is defined as false judgment, or as asserting of the world that things are one way when they are another. Since intuitions on my interpretation are not conceptual, they are not robust enough to have a content that can assert anything at all. But this is consistent with claiming that intuitions can in some cases represent things in a way that does not coincide with how they really are. This can happen in many types of perceptual illusions. When the roadrunner paints a tunnel entrance on the cliff wall, the pursuing coyote intuits an array of qualities that does not correspond to the way things really are. In this case, he intuits (and hence I-intends) an open space rather than a flat surface. This is not yet an error, because the intuition doesn’t assert that things are one way or the other. It is only when the coyote judges “This is a tunnel through which I shall pursue my nemesis” that an error occurs. If these criteria are correct and exhaustive, then it seems clear that intuitions as I have characterized them are contentful.
3.2.3 How do empirical intuitions represent?

So far we’ve learned that empirical intuitions are constituted by collections of sensations which are combined into an intentionally-directed unities by the synthetic activity of the imagination (this is their metaphysical status as mental states). And empirical intuitions secure a reference to physical objects through a non-conceptual awareness of sensible qualities filling out the perceivable space around the perceiver (this is their cognitive function). Our final task is to determine how the metaphysical status of intuitions enables and makes possible their cognitive function. This will put us in a position in §3.3 to see how the interpretation of empirical intuition on offer here grounds both Kant’s direct realism and his phenomenalism, and does so in a way that the two theses turn out to be consistent.

The thesis of §3.2.1 was that sensations constitute empirical intuitions, and that of §3.2.2 was that the I-intentional content of empirical intuitions represents sensible qualities filling out the spacetime region in the vicinity of the perceiver. We can make these claims a bit more precise. The results of §3.2.1 entail that any empirical intuition, $\text{Int}$, will be constituted by a collection of E-sensations, $s_1, ..., s_n$, which each intrinsically possess a specific sensory quality in some determinate degree, $q_1, ..., q_n$. And §3.2.2 entails that if $\text{Int}$ is an intuition of an object in space (an outer intuition), then this will be in virtue of the I-intentional content of $\text{Int}$ representing $q_1, ..., q_n$ occupying or “filling” some set of locations $l_1, ..., l_n$. Put simply, the qualities of the sensations which constitute the intuition are the very sensible qualities that the intuition represents filling the space around the perceiver.

We are now in a position to combine these results and take one step further. It can be shown that Kant has in mind a mechanism whereby the metaphysical

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86See Chapter 1, section §1.4.1 (p. 58ff.), where I discuss the metaphysical status of sensation. I argued there that sensations as they are initially impressed on the subject (E-senstations) are qualitative, sensory excitations of the sensibility.
constitution of the intuition makes possible its I-intentional content and hence its cognitive function generally. I claim that Kant holds that \( \text{Int} \) represents \( q_1, \ldots, q_n \) at \( l_1, \ldots, l_n \) in virtue of the imagination assigning the sensations themselves, \( s_1, \ldots, s_n \), to \( l_1, \ldots, l_n \).\(^{87}\) That is, Kant thinks that the sensations themselves are represented at spatiotemporal positions.\(^{88}\) Intuitions can represent qualities arrayed in space because the productive imagination arranges the \( a \text{ posteriori} \) sensations that possess these qualities within the \( a \text{ priori} \) representation of space. I think that this gives full sense to the claim that sensations constitute empirical intuitions. An empirical intuition is that mental event whereby the productive imagination arranges sensations within the representation of space (and time) and directs the subject’s attention to the qualities of these sensations.\(^{89}\) And, I would argue, an intuition is no more than this. This leaves us with the (somewhat surprising) result that outer intuitions essentially involve some kind of reference to internal mental states (the sensations), even though this reference is entirely excluded from the I-intentional content of the intuition. The intuition is able to I-intend external objects in space because it E-intends internal states in the mind.

To defend this interpretation, I will first discuss a few passages in which Kant makes it clear that sensations are represented in space. Then I will discuss

\(^{87}\)It might reasonably be asked whether there is any rhyme or reason to the particular spatiotemporal assignments given to any given set of sensations by the imagination. That is, is there any guiding principle which determines, even if only partially, how any given set of E-sensations ought to be interpreted such that certain representational contents will result rather than others? For instance, is there a reason why I represent a red patch over here, rather than a red patch over there? I discuss this question and answer it in the affirmative in the second Appendix to Part I.

\(^{88}\)In virtue of \( s_1, \ldots, s_n \) being assigned spatiotemporal positions, they take on the function of O-sensations. If these sensations had instead been synthesized into an intuition representing the current mental state of the subject, then they would instead be represented as qualities within the sensing subject itself, and so would take on the function of S-sensations.

\(^{89}\)This portion of my analysis bears some similarity to Aquila’s discussion of the relation of the form of intuition to its matter. He argues that sense perceptions can come to have representational purport because they are “informed” by intuitional form, and are thereby imbued with intentional content (Representational Mind, p. 49-57).
two interpretations of Kant’s claims from Falkenstein and Aquila. After rejecting Falkenstein’s account as textually unsustainable, I will argue that Aquila comes close to the correct interpretation, but makes one important misstep. And lastly I will present my interpretation, arguing that it best explains how intuitions can be said to relate immediately to objects in space, and can make sense of some of Kant’s ambiguity in his characterizations of appearances.

It is surprising that hardly anyone who has written on Kant’s theory of sensation seems to have noticed that Kant claims that in forming an empirical intuition, we represent sensations in space. But this is precisely what he says twice in the Transcendental Aesthetic. In explaining the a prioricity of the representation of space, he argues that this pure intuition must be present prior to our ability to represent sensations as arrayed in space.

Since that within which the sensations can alone be ordered and placed in a certain form cannot itself be in turn sensation, the matter of all appearance is only given to us a posteriori, but its form must all lie ready for it in the mind a priori, and can therefore be considered separately from all sensation. (A20/B34)

Kant’s point here is that spatial form and sensory matter have very different origins, the one given a priori and the other a posteriori. Yet sensations are related to space as content to vessel. Space is said to be something within which sensations are ordered. A few pages later he repeats this claim, making it even more explicit that sensations are represented in spatial arrays.

For in order for certain sensations to be related to something outside me (i.e., to something in another place in space from that in which I find myself), thus in order for me to represent them as outside and next to one another, thus not merely as different but as in different places, the representation of space must already be their ground. (A23/B38)

Sensations do not simply correspond to and relate to objects in space, they are
themselves represented in space ("als in verschiedenen Orten vorstellen"), and in spatial relations to each other ("als außer und neben einander... vorstellen"). Kant’s uses of the term als is significant. Sensations are not literally in space (this would be impossible, for sensations are mental states), rather they are represented as being located in space (outside and next to one another). The position sketched (all too briefly) in the Transcendental Aesthetic is thus that sensations both relate to objects in space, and are themselves represented as being in space. We find a related claim in Prolegomena §24. This section corresponds to the Anticipations of Perception of the Critique. He says that the “physiological principle” of the categories of quality, subsumes the strictly empirical element, viz., sensation, which denotes the real in intuitions, not indeed directly under the concept of quantity, because sensation is not an intuition that contains either space or time, though it puts the object corresponding to sensation in both space and time. (4:306)

The claim that sensation denotes (bezeichnet) the real in intuition is meant to indicate that the presence of sensation in intuition makes the difference between an empirical and hence concrete intuition instead of a pure and merely formal one. Sensations are also said to correspond (correspondirenden) to objects in space and to put (setzt) these objects in space. And as early as the mid-1770s, Kant can be found referring to “placing [sensations] next to one another in intuition” (R4674). These often overlooked passages clearly indicate that Kant held that sensations are in some sense spatial, and I would argue that the most straightforward reading of these claims is that empirical intuitions involve assigning a spatial position to sensations in representation.

Most commentators have ignored these passages, or at least the parts of them

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Falkenstein agrees with this reading, arguing that sensations “have (a degree of) reality and designate or denote the real in intuition by being that in intuition that has reality” (Kant’s Intuitionism, p. 116).
which indicate that sensations are represented in space. Three writers who have noticed these claims are H.J. Paton, Lorne Falkenstein and Richard Aquila. Paton unfortunately doesn’t do much more than simply note that Kant makes these assertions. The only determinate gloss he gives of the idea (of which I am aware) comes in his discussion of the Anticipations of Perception. His take is similar to mine, albeit expressed in a very brief and undeveloped form. He writes, “The transcendental synthesis of imagination by which we construct our phenomenal world in space and time is not merely a synthesis of empty times and spaces, but a filling of time and space with what is given to us in sensation, or a synthesis of sensation with space and time.”

In his detailed and careful commentary on the Transcendental Aesthetic, Lorne Falkenstein presents one of the only recent close analyses of Kant’s account of sensation. Falkenstein agrees that “[t]he texts do indicate that Kant took sensations to be spatially arrayed components of intuitions.” Falkenstein’s view is motivated by the passages cited above at A23/B38 and Prol. §24 where Kant describes sensations as spatially arrayed. He takes these and related passages to indicate that “sensations are entities that occur at locations in space and time” and that “the matters of intuition must be such that they are always localized in space and time, since space and time are the forms in which these matters are presented.”

Falkenstein wants to offer a physiological account of Kant’s theory, according to which sensations are physical states of the body of the perceiver. The basic issue for Falkenstein is whether sensations are mental states or physical states. Is the effect

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93 Ibid., 111.

94 Ibid., 111-112.
of the object on the representative capacity referred to at A20/B34 a “psychic capacity” or a “physiological capacity that makes representation possible”?\textsuperscript{95} Given his conviction that sensations are spatially located, he opts for the second interpretation:

> Whatever intuitions turn out to be, they have to be extended and, whatever sensations turn out to be, they have to be located. If sensations are in addition specified as ‘effects’ on the representative capacity..., then there is going to be something in us that counts as an extended intuition.\textsuperscript{96}

So Falkenstein’s view is that sensations are the effects brought about by an impression of physical forces on the physical nervous system. Sensations for him are located in space, but not in the same locations as the objects to which they correspond. Instead, they are located in the sensitive surfaces of our sensory organs. Visual sensations are located on the retinas, taste sensations on the tongue, and so on. Note that he is not claiming that sensations are merely represented \textit{as though} they are in the physical body of the perceiver; rather, sensations are for him \textit{literally} in space because they are physical, not mental.

I don’t think this interpretation can stand up to close scrutiny. \textit{First}, the only direct textual evidence to which he can appeal to show that Kant held sensations to be literally located in the sensitive surfaces of the body is from the \textit{Anthropology}. The passages he refers to in the \textit{Critique} only explicitly say that sensations are \textit{represented} as existing in space (or that they are “placed” there), an important qualification that Falkenstein’s short quotations ignore.\textsuperscript{97} In the \textit{Anthropology} (7:153ff.) Kant claims that “the senses of bodily sensations \textit{[die Sinne der Körperempfindung]} are met with on the whole only where there are nerves,” and he goes on explain how sensations are brought about by physical and chemical interactions in the sense organs. Falkenstein

\textsuperscript{95}Ibid., 119
\textsuperscript{96}Ibid., 119-120
\textsuperscript{97}At A23/B38, Kant doesn’t say that sensations \textit{are} outside me, but are “related to” something outside me, and I “\textit{represent} them as outside and next to one another.” And \textit{Prol.} §24 states that sensation “puts the object in space.”
takes these claims about “the senses” (die Sinne) being located in the physical body to imply that the sensations (die Empfindungen) they produce are located in space, but this inference is hardly justified.98 “Die Sinne” is afterall just shorthand for the sensory apparatus broadly construed, referring either to the physical organs, the mental faculty of sensibility, or to both together.

Second, the claim that sensations are non-mental physical phenomena would have problematic consequences for the rest of Kant’s theory of cognition. If sensations are physical events, then so too are intuitions. This is because an empirical intuition is not something above and beyond the particular form and the particular matter that make it up; intuitions just are particularly formed matters. If sensations are physical, then ordered collections of sensations are also physical. (This is an inference that Falkenstein draws himself). It seems then that, despite Kant’s many indications to the contrary, intuitions are not representations at all. Further, the question of how intuitions get taken up into consciousness so that representations of appearances can be formed remains unclear. Perhaps the idea is that in addition to physical intuitions in the body, there are mental effects of these intuitions, and it is the latter that represent the appearance. This claim seems unlikely as an interpretation of Kant, however, because he never acknowledges the need for any further intermediary between an intuition and its appearance. The representational task is simply assigned

98It is in fact somewhat surprising that Falkenstein would rely so heavily on the Anthropology. For just a few pages after those that Falkenstein cites, Kant makes some claims that directly contradict some of the core interpretive claims of Falkenstein’s book. Much of his interpretation is centered around the claim that the strict difference between sensibility and understanding is that the former is purely receptive, with absolutely no synthetic, combinatory, or productive role whatsoever (see his ch. 1, p. 52ff.). Yet at 7:174, Kant explicitly refers to “the productive faculty belonging to sensibility” and its ability to “construct forms” and “associate.” Further, Falkenstein holds that space is in no way produced by anything in the mind (neither sensibility nor understanding) (see his ch. 2, p. 72-88), but is just rather the order displayed by the sensory given. Yet at 7:167, Kant says that “pure intuitions of space and time belong to the productive faculty [of imagination].” If the Anthropology contradicts some of his core interpretive claims, then it cannot be treated as reliable evidence for others.
to intuition, suggesting that intuitions are not physical, they are mental. For these
two reasons it becomes clear that Falkenstein’s radical interpretation of the spatiality
of sensation should be rejected.

Richard Aquila presents a philological interpretation of Kant’s claims about
the spatiality of sensations. Aquila first notes the puzzle posed by Kant’s claims
about the spatiality of sensation, as well as the occasional claims that sensation is
the matter of appearance (not just of the representation of the appearance). He
then argues that the question whether Kant uses the term Empfindung to refer to
properties of bodies in space (and not, in some instances, to the mental effects of
these properties) could go either way on textual considerations alone. A main source
of the confusion comes from the fact that it was (unfortunately) common practice
to use the term Vorstellung, as well as specific modes of Vorstellungen, to stand for
both the mental act itself, as well as what is intended by that act. The term, that
is, is ambiguous between ‘that which represents’ and ‘that which is represented.’
E.g., die Anschauung might refer either to the mental act of intuiting, or to the the
object represented by the act. So when Kant claims that sensations are in space and
constitute the matter of appearance, he might be taken to mean simply that what is
represented by the sensory state is in space. Whatever corresponds to the sensation
(the mental state) in the intentional objects of the intuition can itself be called
sensation in this different sense. He writes, “Insofar as appearances, qua intentional
objects of sense presentation, contain an aspect which corresponds to the presence
of sensation in a sensory state, it would not be inappropriate to extend the term
Empfindung to signify this aspect.” That is, when Kant asserts that sensations

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100 Ibid., p. 20. He cites Adelung’s statement of this distinction as between, “(1) Die Handlung
des vorstellens; (2) Was vorgestellt wird.”
101 Ibid., p. 27.
are ordered in space, he doesn’t use the term *Empfindung* to refer to the mental effects of objects acting on the senses, but to those aspects of the affecting objects themselves which cause internal modifications in us. So the term *Empfindung* has an ambiguous reference in Kant, referring sometimes to a mental state, other times to the physical causes of these mental states.

I agree with the majority of Aquila’s analysis. His claim that the objects of experience, appearances, are to be understood only as intentional objects coincides with my interpretation of Kant as an intentional object phenomenalist.\(^{102}\) And I also agree with his claim that Kant sometimes uses the term *Empfindung* to refer to the matter constituting the object of the intuition. Where I disagree with him is how he construes the sense in which sensation is sometimes referred to as the object of representation. On his view, when the term ‘*Empfindung*’ refers to something in space or to the matter of appearance, its referent is something numerically distinct from when the term refers to the internal, mental result of affection on the senses. *Empfindung* read as *was empfunden wird* becomes synonymous with the physical matter constituting phenomenal substance. I don’t think that we are forced to read Kant as using the term with an ambiguous reference in this way. For one thing, Kant already has phrases to designate physical matter in terms of its relation to sensory effects in the perceiver. He frequently refers to this matter as what “corresponds” to sensation, or as the “object” of sensation. It would be strange indeed if “*was der Empfindung correspondiert*” (A20/B34) or “*was ein Gegenstand der Empfindung ist*” (B207) referred to the same entity as the simple expression *Empfindung*. We should say that *Empfindung* is just an occasional shorthand for one of these longer expressions. Further, Kant’s clearest assertion (already quoted in English above) that something he calls *Empfindung* is represented in space does not allow of such

\(^{102}\)Elsewhere (*Representational Mind*, 1983) he argues at much greater length for this thesis.
By first describing *Empfindungen* as that which is related to something outside me, Kant makes clear that the term is supposed to be referring to a mental state involved in an intentional relation (and not an object of the representation which merely corresponds to the sensation). But then Kant uses the anaphoric *sie* to refer back to these same *Empfindungen* as what is represented outside me in space. Aquila’s suggestion that the “sensations” referred to in space are distinct from the “sensations” internal to the mind thus cannot make sense of this passage because the two entities are clearly equated here. We would have to read Kant instead as saying that sensations are related to something outside me in virtue of being represented in space.

Nevertheless I agree that we must make some sense of the claim that sensations (which are a species of internal mental states) come to be represented in space, and even come to be identified with the matter of appearance. My own interpretation of Kant’s claims about the spatiality of sensation can still incorporate a sense in which *Empfindung* is used to designate the matter of appearance, but it does not require that *Empfindung* in this sense be equated with physical matter. Here’s how I see this working. If 1) empirical intuitions are materially constituted by sensations, 2) they I-intend the space in the vicinity of the perceiver filled out by the qualities of these sensations, and 3) they involve (as the passages from the Aesthetic suggest) representing sensations in space, then it would seem that Kant’s point is that 3) is supposed to be the mechanism whereby the content described in 2) can arise. That
is, empirical intuitions represent (I-intend) the qualities of the manifold of sensations in space because empirical intuitions just are the assigning of spatiotemporal locations to the sensations. This then also gives full sense to the claim that empirical intuitions are materially constituted by sensations: An empirical intuition just is that activity by which sensations are assigned locations in spacetime by the imagination. Keeping in mind that, in general, representations should be understood not as things existing in the mind, but rather as events occurring in the mind, we now see what sort of event an intuition is: it is the assigning of collections of sensations to locations in spacetime. And the intuition is just this assignment of sensations to locations, together with the consciousness of the represented qualities as occupying these locations.

This model of empirical intuition explains how reference to empirical objects is first secured in cognition. We are capable of having representations whose I-intentional content purports to be about empirical objects in space because qualities of the sensations enter into the I-intentional content of intuitive states. This “seeping” of the qualities of the sensory states into the content of I-intentional representations of physical bodies is made possible by the E-intentional reference to these sensory states themselves. In the same way that when I look at Botticelli’s Venus and say of a collection of pigments on canvas, “That is Venus,” when I cognize an external object in perception, I say of a collection of sensations, “That is an external, spatiotemporal entity.”

If this interpretation is correct, then two related objections stand in need of

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103 NB: The interpretation on offer here does not entail that the only way to I-intend an external object in space is by first E-intending a collection of sensations. Rather, this only occurs in those cases in which I am directly and immediately aware of the object in sensory consciousness, i.e., when I see, hear, or touch it. I can cognize objects that I don’t sense (given sufficient epistemic justification, e.g., by checking the weather report of a city I am not in), but in the case where there is no sensation, there is only I-intentional content representing external objects (e.g., “It’s raining in Chicago today”), but no E-intentional relation to sensations, or to anything else.
satisfactory replies: *First*, if intuitions represent the qualities they do in the spatiotemporal locations they do because the sensations possessing those qualities are represented in those very locations, then are we forced to say that sensations (i.e., internal mental states) are the objects of intuition after all?\(^{104}\) *Second*, if sensation is the matter of appearance, and appearances are identified with what we come to know as physical substance, and sensations are mere internal mental states, then are we forced into a version of ontological (and Berkeleyan) phenomenalism according to which physical objects are numerically identical to mental states of a certain sort? What both of these questions are getting at is the worry that the phenomenalist implications of the theory of experience I've emphasized undermine Kant’s claims to direct realism regarding external objects.

The answer to both questions is a qualified “no” (or, depending how one reads it, a highly qualified “yes, but that’s okay”). With respect to the first question, we must be careful to keep separate the two different senses in which a representation might be said to refer to something.\(^{105}\) There is I-intentionality, which is the intrinsic feature of the mental state in virtue of which it has content with representational purport; and there is E-intentionality, which is the extrinsic relation that a mental state might bear to a distinct extant entity. The only sense in which sensations could be said to be the objects of intuition is in this latter E-intentional sense. The synthetic activity of the imagination in combining the manifold of sensation into an intuition does put the perceiving subject in a real relation to sensory excitations occurring within the activated sensibility. This, however, is only a description of what is taking place at level of the psychological processes which enable and produce the *content* of empirical representations. The fact that empirical intuitions necessarily

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\(^{104}\) Recall that this suggestion was dismissed as implausible in the discussion of the semantic reading of the matter and form of intuition (see p. 129).

\(^{105}\) See §1.4.3 above.
involve an E-intentional relation to internal mental states does not undermine our earlier result that their I-intentional content refers only to sensible qualities in space (external to me). As Johannes Haag writes on this issue, “Properties of sensation are not represented by us in sensible perception as properties of sensation, (i.e., as mere subjective modifications of subjects), rather as properties of the represented objects.” Thus even though the I-intentional content of an empirical intuition refers to the qualities possessed by sensations, it does not refer to the sensations themselves, and a fortiori it does not refer to anything as a sensation nor as an internal mental state.

Similarly with respect to the second question, the occasional claim that sensation is the matter of appearance need not be taken to mean that sensation is to be identified with what makes up physical bodies. When Kant characterizes sensation as the matter of appearance, he is describing the metaphysical status of representations as mental events, and emphasizing that an appearance is dependent for its quasi-existence on sensations being ordered in spatiotemporal arrays. I can only I-intend sensible qualities arrayed in spacetime because I can E-intend the sensations possessing these qualities. Hence at the metaphysical level of what takes place within the thinking subject (in abstraction from the content of any of its representation) appearances can be said to be constituted by sensations. But again, this does not entail that the appearance as it is I-intended by empirical intuitions, i.e., as what we come to know as a physical substance existing independently of us in spacetime, is constituted by a collection of internal mental states. We can thus say that, even though sensation turns out to be the matter of appearance in this specific sense,

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^{106} \text{Erfahrung und Gegenstand, Vittorio Klostermann, 2004, p. 135 (my translation).}
\]

\[107\text{The point could also be stated in terms of a distinction between de re and de dicto semantic structures. In empirical intuition, there is representation de re of the sensations which constitute the intuition, but this does not entail that the de dicto content of the intuition involves predicates pertaining to being a mental sensory states.}\]
physical objects are not to be equated with collections of sensations. ‘Being a physical substance’ pertains to the intentional content of a representation; ‘being a mental state’ pertains to the mental vehicle by which this content is represented. Physical substances are no more identical to collections of sensations than the *Critique of Pure Reason* is identical to a bunch of ink shapes on bound pieces of paper.

Related to this second objection, one of the advantages of my interpretation is that it can make sense of one of the more frustrating aspects of Kant’s account of the status of appearance. Consider the following four assertions, each of which Kant makes repeatedly:

1. Sensations are the matter of appearance (A167/B209; *Prol.* 4:284, 4:307).
2. Appearances are a species of representation (A113, B147, A370).
3. Sensations are the matter of representations of appearances (A167/B209, A42/B59-60, A50/B74).
4. Appearances are the objects of empirical representations (A20/B34, A42/B59, A246/B303).\(^{108}\)

The first and second are a natural pair, as are the third and fourth. But these two pairs are in tension and how they could be reconciled is not immediately clear. Aquila tried to solve this puzzle by saying that *Empfindung* is used with an ambiguous reference.\(^{109}\) However, I think Kant’s apparent inconsistency in these claims should be explained by appeal to different ways in which Kant wants to refer to appearances. On the one hand, Kant is a transcendental idealist who asserts that appearances are not things in themselves, and they depend for their existence on the subject and its sensible and intellectual forms of cognition. Yet on the other, he is an empirical

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\(^{108}\) This claim is also implicit throughout the Analogies sections, for the arguments therein all turn on the ability to distinguish between changes in appearances and changes in representations of appearances.

\(^{109}\) Op. cit., p. 27.
realist who asserts that appearances are the objects of cognition, and are entities which we necessarily represent as existing independently of ourselves. Claims 1 and 2 are made by the transcendental idealist in explaining the dependence of objects of their being represented, and Claims 3 and 4 by the empirical realist in trying to secure the reference of our experience to its objects. But these claims are not inconsistent. Claim 2 makes a metaphysical assertion, while Claim 4 makes a semantic assertion. While it is a true claim of transcendental philosophy that appearances have a merely phenomenal status, when we represent these entities in cognition, we do not take them as such, but conceive them rather as physical objects. We can give corresponding explanations of Claims 1 and 3. Transcendental psychology reveals that intuitions direct the subject’s attention (E-intentionally) toward sensations arrayed within the representation of space and that these sensations end up being what we take to be appearances; hence sensations can be said to constitute appearances (Claim 1). Yet since this arraying of sensations in the representation of space is only the mental vehicle whereby a representational content referring to mind-independent physical objects can be given, it is also correct to say that sensations constitute the material through which we can refer to appearances (now construed as they are I-intentionally purported, viz., as physical objects) (Claim 3).

3.3 Empirical Intuitions and the Objects of Experience

I began this chapter with a discussion of two of Kant’s core theses about the relation between representations and their objects. According to his phenomenalism, the objects of experience are mere representations in the mind, and have no existence apart from this. According to his direct realism, the objects of experience are material
substances existing in space separate from me and my representations. These two claims would seem to directly contradict each other, but I suggested that if we look for a sense in which there is an equivocation involved in the expression “objects of experience,” then we might be able to keep both claims consistently in one theory. And I further suggested that the place we should look in getting clear on how exactly Kant understands the relation between experience and its objects would be in the theory of empirical intuition. For empirical intuitions are that on which all cognition depends for any concrete reference to individual objects. If Kant’s phenomenalism and his direct realism, both of which are claims about the objects of experience and our relations to these objects, are to be made consistent, then we must be able to see them as consistent from the earliest level of cognition at which there is any representational relation to an object, i.e., at the level of intuition. Now that we have seen in §3.2 how empirical intuitions make possible the reference of cognition to concrete real objects, we are in a position to return to the problem of the relation between phenomenalism and direct realism. I will show that the model of empirical intuition I have argued for lends itself to a consistent interpretation incorporating both Kant’s phenomenalism and his direct realism.

My basic thesis is that both Kant’s phenomenalism and his direct realism are claims about the I-intentional content of experience. First off, I think we should interpret his phenomenalism as an intentional object phenomenalism. When Kant argues repeatedly that the objects of experience are representations, or are dependent for their existence on being represented, and have no (transcendentally real) existence apart from this, he should be read as claiming that the objects of experience are merely the intentional objects of certain kinds of representational states. It isn’t that to be a physical object is to be a mental state, or that the semantic value of thoughts about physical objects reduces to thoughts about mental states. The sense in which
appearances are a species of representation is that they are what is I-intended by our objective empirical representations.\textsuperscript{110} Kant’s phenomenalism is a thesis about the ontological status of physical entities I-intended by our representations in cognition, but it does not entail that these entities are to be equated with mental states.

Second, I think we should interpret the directness of his direct realism as a thesis not about a relation between the mind and something really distinct from the mind (as a naive and transcendentally realist form of direct realism would have it), but instead as a thesis about certain necessary features of the content of our representations. When Kant says that the immediate objects of experience are physical substances which interact with each other in spacetime and exist separately from their being represented by me, his point is that when we cognize objects in the world, we necessarily represent them as spatial, as substantial, as distinct from me and from each other, etc., and that our representations’ I-intentional reference to objects do not depend on any prior I-intentional reference to mental states.\textsuperscript{111} These are all features of the I-intentional content of our empirical cognition which Kant takes himself to have demonstrated to be transcendentally necessary conditions on our ability to cognize objects.

If these interpretations of Kant’s phenomenalism and his direct realism are correct, then these two components of his theory are consistent. Kant’s phenome-

\textsuperscript{110}Reading Kant as an intentional object phenomenalist marks a close affinity between my interpretation and that of Van Cleve and Aquila. According to Van Cleve, appearances are “virtual objects,” which have no existence in their own right and “exist” only in the sense that they they are what is intended by the content of certain representations: “to say that a virtual object of a certain sort (e.g., a patch of red) exists is shorthand for saying that a certain kind of representation occurs” (Problems From Kant, p. 8-9). Aquila, likewise, argues that for Kant, “the immediate objects of sense perception is an intentional object” (Representational Mind, p. 27). And though he agrees with this version of the phenomenalist thesis, he denies that this entails what I have called ontological phenomenalism (p. 35).

\textsuperscript{111}This way of reading Kant’s direct realism thus respects the difference between Kant and his early modern predecessors. Thinkers such as Locke or Descartes thought (to use my terminology) that we could only have I-intentional reference to external objects by making a tacit inference based on I-intentional reference to the subject’s own mental states. Kant rejects this model.
nalism makes an ontological claim about the status of the objects I-intended by our representations, while his direct realism makes a claim about the semantic content of these representations, and neither undermines the other.

3.3.1 Intuition and phenomenalism

We can see both of these claims about the relation between representation and object to follow from the theory of empirical intuition as I have reconstructed it. Let’s look at Kant’s phenomenalism first. If all empirical cognition relates to objects through intuition, then if the objects of empirical intuitions are mere intentional objects and have no existence apart from this, then phenomenalism as I have described it would be present already at the level of intuition. We can lay out the argument schema as follows:

P1. Intentional object phenomenalism is the thesis that the objects of empirical cognition are mere intentional objects, and have no existence apart from this.

P2. Kant’s theory of empirical intuition entails that the objects of empirical intuition are mere intentional objects, and have no existence apart from this.

P3. The objects of empirical intuition are numerically identical to the objects we know through concepts and judgment as physical, material substances, i.e., the objects of empirical cognition generally.

∴ Therefore, Kant’s theory of empirical intuition entails intentional object phenomenalism.

I take it as uncontroversial that the argument is valid. P1 is definitional, so it is not up for dispute. P2 and P3 would be the controversial premises, but both are easily defended, given the analysis already presented in this chapter.

112 Its form is: \( x \) is the thesis that \( Fa \); \( y \) entails \( Fb \); \( a = b \); therefore, \( y \) entails \( Fa \), and thus entails \( x \).
P2 follows from the analysis of empirical intuition given in the previous section. To say that the objects of empirical intuition are merely intentional objects and have no existence apart from this is to say that these objects are I-intended by the intuition, but not E-intended by it (for these objects could only be E-intended if they were transcendentally real in addition to being represented as real). Now empirical intuitions I-intend sensible qualities arrayed in space. This takes place not in virtue of the mind being in a real (E-intentional) relation to a sensible object which really is in space. Instead, it represents these sensible qualities in space because the synthetic activity of the imagination has assigned spatiotemporal locations to the manifold of sensation within the \textit{a priori} representation of spacetime. The only sense in which empirical intuitions put the subject in an E-intentional relation to anything is that they involve a primitive awareness of the manifold of sensations: empirical intuitions can be said to E-intend sensations even though they do not I-intend these sensations as such (i.e., represent them as sensations). So intuitions do not involve any E-intentional relation to objects in space, and we can say that the objects of intuition are \textit{mere} intentional objects.\textsuperscript{113}

P3 follows from the claim that all empirical cognition relates to objects through intuition, and from the fact that Kant consistently refers to the objects of intuition, concept, and judgment with the same term: \textit{Erscheinungen}.\textsuperscript{114} It might

\textsuperscript{113}The case could be made that anyone who takes a strong or metaphysical interpretation of transcendental idealism—according to which things in themselves are not spatiotemporal and are ontologically distinct from the entities we represent in space—ought to be led to an intentional object phenomenalism with respect to the objects of empirical intuition. For Kant would not be an intentional object phenomenalist only if empirical intuitions not only I-intended objects in space, but also E-intended them. But the only way this could be true would be if there were transcendentally real objects in space (really, not merely purportedly) which existed in a real relation with the subject. Insofar as this possibility is ruled out by the Transcendental Aesthetic, the objects of intuition remain mere intentional objects.

\textsuperscript{114}Appearances are defined initially in the Aesthetic as the objects of empirical intuitions, and then these very same appearances are said to be that of which the pure principles of understanding (i.e., the principles argued for in the Axioms, Anticipations and Analogies) are objectively valid.
be objected, however, that the interpretation of Kant’s theory of cognition as a form of intentional object phenomenalism may undermine the possibility of an identity between the objects of intuition and those of concepts.\textsuperscript{115} The reasoning would go as follows. If the objects of our representations are no more than the intentional objects of representations, then objects are individuated only by the I-intentional content of these representations. What else could there be, after all, by which we could say of two objects that they were identical or distinct, if these objects are all and only what is intended by the representations referring to them? But if objects are individuated and distinguished only by virtue of the I-intentional content representing them, then, given the radical heterogeneity between the contents of intuitions and concepts (which Kant himself not only acknowledges but emphasizes\textsuperscript{116}), there would seem to be no ground for ever asserting an identity between the object of an intuition and that of a concept.

Let’s say that an intuition, $Int$, I-intends a collection of sensible qualities $q_1, ..., q_n$ in spatiotemporal locations $l_1, ..., l_n$. We can say that the I-intentional object of $Int$ is the $x_1$ which is constituted by $q_1, ..., q_n$ at $l_1, ..., l_n$. And let’s say that an empirical concept $Con$ intends the predicates “is $P$,” “is $Q$,” etc. The I-intentional object of $Con$ is the $x_2$ which is $P, Q$, etc. I grant that Kant’s theory requires that it is possible that $x_1$ be identifiable with $x_2$ (such that concepts can be applied to objects given in intuition), and therefore any interpretation of his theory must allow for the possibility of this identification. Fortunately, I think that the interpretation I’ve offered can make such an equation. My disagreement with the objection lies in the premise that the objects of representations can only be individuated (and thereby identified) through the I-intentional content of the representation. It is true

\textsuperscript{115}A version of this objection was suggested to me by Eric Watkins.  
\textsuperscript{116}See his discussion of this issue in the schematism chapter (A137/B176ff).
that simply by appeal to the I-intentional content of intuition and concept no grounds can be found for making an identification of the objects of the two.\textsuperscript{117} However, there are at least two other means by which $x_1$ and $x_2$ could be identified in Kant’s system as I understand it.

The first has to do with Kant’s revision of the very notion of an object of experience (his so-called “Copernican Revolution”). As I discussed in chapter 1,\textsuperscript{118} an object for Kant is not to be understood as a thing in itself with fully determinate qualities that exist as a unity in the world, waiting for a subject to come along and cognize them. The “unity” of all the determinations that an object can be validly represented as possessing is not to be sought in something external to the mind; rather, this unity is grounded only in “the thought of something in general $= X$” (A104). The thought of this “$X$” is identified with “the formal unity of the consciousness in the synthesis of the manifold of representations” (A105). Thus it is possible that $x_1$, which is $q_1, ..., q_n$ at $l_1, ..., l_n$ can be identified with $x_2$ which is $P$, $Q$, etc. when all these predicates can be synthesized together, in accordance with a rule, as so many determinations of some “$X$” which the mind implicitly takes (or “I-intends”, as I’ve put it) to be independent of the representations of it. In short, intentional object phenomenalism does not commit us to the claim that objects are only individuated by the I-intentional content of their representations. Instead, two representations with different contents can represent the same object if it is possible that the determinations of the two representations can be combined together in accordance with rules that necessitate their combination.

\textsuperscript{117}The objection could be put even more strongly. If the individuation and identification of the objects of our representations were simply a matter of the representations’ I-intentional content, then it could be argued that any difference in the I-intentional contents of two representations implies a difference in the objects of those representations. Thus the cup seen from the right could never be identified with the cup seen from the left because the visible qualities associated with the two intuitions would differ, and the two intuitions could not be said to be of the same object.

\textsuperscript{118}See §1.4.3, p. 45-48 above.
Second, the theory of empirical intuition I’ve given has some resources for securing a common reference to objects of intuitions and objects of concepts. This lies in the demonstrative reference implicit in the E-intentional relation of intuitions to sensations which enables their I-intentional content. $Int$ can represent $q_1, ..., q_n$ at $l_1, ..., l_n$ because of an E-intentional relation to sensations $s_1, ..., s_n$ which possess $q_1, ..., q_n$. The I-intentional object of an intuition could thus be analyzed as:

that $x_1$ which is $q_1, ..., q_n$ at $l_1, ..., l_n$ (where “that” depends of a demonstrative (E-intentional) reference to $s_1, ..., s_n$).

Likewise, we can say that $Con$ is only able to refer to an object in sensory perception at all because of the very same demonstrative reference to these sensations. The I-intentional object of $Con$ could be analyzed as:

that $x_2$ which is $P, Q$, etc. (where “that” depends on a demonstrative (E-intentional) reference to $s_1, ..., s_n$).

We can make sense of an identity between $x_1$ and $x_2$, and thereby of the possibility of intuitions and concepts referring to the same object, because both empirical intuitions and empirical concepts involve a demonstrative reference to the sensations constituting the intuition. Note that since the demonstrative reference in question is an E-intentional relation, none of what I’ve just said undermines the claim that what is purportedor by intuitions and concepts in outer experience never requires the representing (I-intending) of internal mental states as such.

The claim that two representations with distinct I-intentional content could yet be said to refer to the same object in virtue of a sameness in their E-intentional referents should not sound so surprising. We come across cases all the time in which I-intentional contents are divorced from E-intentional relations. Consider the following example: a few years ago a young child saw my (obese, shaggy) cat and exclaimed
excitedly “Doggy!” The girl E-intentionally referred to a cat, but I-intended a dog. Later that day, when a woman referred to the same (male) cat as pregnant, she E-intentionally referred to a male, but I-intended a female. Despite the differences both between the I- and E-intentionality in the two cases, and between the I-intentional contents of the girl and woman, both could be said to have referred to the same thing. The case is similar with respect to the I- and E-intentionality of empirical representations. In intuitive consciousness, there is a demonstrative reference to internal mental states, but these are taken to be external features of the physical world.119

Thus according to my interpretation, the E-intentional relation to the sensations which are collected and organized by the synthetic activity of the imagination are a condition on the possibility of I-intentional relations to objects, and even though the entities occupying the referent position in this E-intentional relation are internal mental states, the I-intentional content of empirical representations can still purport external physical states.

3.3.2 Intuition and direct realism

Turning now to Kant’s direct realism, we can see this thesis to also be a consequence of the theory of empirical intuition I’ve argued for. If direct realism is the claim that our representational relations to objects in space is direct, and not mediated by any representation of internal mental states, then so long as the relation to objects in question here is a matter I-intentional purport, direct realism is secured by the theory of intuition. The argument for the claim that a direct realism about

119The primary difference between this case and the story about my cat is that the girl and the woman were wrong. Since Kant reconceptualizes what is to count as truth and error in judgment (viz., as necessity of synthesis in accordance with the categories), the necessity of our taking sensible qualities to exist external to us does not commit Kant to a global error theory regarding the veridicality of our experience.
the I-intentional content of empirical cognition follows from the theory of empirical
intuition works as follows:

R1. Direct realism is the thesis that empirical cognition involves a di-
rect (I-intentional) representational relation between the cognizing sub-
ject and material bodies in space.

R2. Kant’s theory of empirical intuition entails that empirical intuitions
yield a direct (I-intentional) representational relation to their objects.

R3. The objects of empirical intuition are numerically identical to the
objects we know through concepts and judgment as physical, material
substances, i.e., the objects of empirical cognition generally.

∴ Therefore, Kant’s theory of empirical intuition entails direct realism.

R1 is definitional, R2 was argued for in §3.2.2, and R3 is the same as P3, which was
argued for just above (p. 167). Hence, given what was said about the immediate
objects of empirical intuitions, a direct realism regarding the I-intentional content of
empirical cognition follows.

It might be objected that the interpretation of Kant’s direct realism that I’ve
given (i.e., of it as a claim about necessary features of the I-intentional content of
empirical cognition) trivializes the assertion; we don’t really have immediate access
to bodies in space, we only think we do. In reply to this worry, I appeal to what
Kant was attempting to demonstrate in those passages (cited in §3.1.1) where he
asserts a direct realist thesis. Kant was trying to show that the model of the relation
between the mind and its objects on offer in the Critique marked an advance over the
Cartesian model of the mind, which was shared by rationalists and empiricists alike.
According to these thinkers, the only immediate objects of perception were internal
mental states, and we only had (mediate, indirect) intentional reference to entities
beyond the mind’s own states in virtue of our immediate awareness of these mental
states. In the face of this epistemic hurdle standing between the subject and the world, the empiricists were led to various forms of skepticism and immaterialism,\textsuperscript{120} and the rationalists to extravagant metaphysics.\textsuperscript{121} Kant’s primary concern in the Fourth Paralogism (A-edition) and the Refutation of Idealism (B-edition) is with the skeptic’s worry that we can never secure knowledge of the indirectly inferred cause of our directly perceivable internal sensory states. Since these causes of our internal mental states can only be cognized as appearances in space and time, and not things in themselves, Kant’s direct realism could only be read as a thesis internal to his empirical realism, and only as a claim that we are capable of objectively valid cognition of appearances. We could have expected Kant’s reply to the skeptic in the Fourth Paralogism and the Refutation of Idealism to show that we have knowledge of things in themselves only if we willfully ignored Kant’s claims about epistemic humility, emphasized in the rest of the \textit{Critique}.\textsuperscript{122} And so, if my interpretation of direct realism seems disappointing in the strength of what it asserts, I can at least reply that nothing stronger was to be expected or hoped for.\textsuperscript{123}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textit{\textsuperscript{120}}Locke thought that we could never, strictly speaking, have knowledge of material bodies because of the inherent uncertainty in the inference from sensations to external causes of them (see his \textit{Essay}, Book 4). Berkeley believed that an analysis of the mental status of the objects of perception should led us to reject even the possibility of material substance (see his \textit{Principles} and \textit{Three Dialogues}). And Hume took our (mere) belief in the existence of external objects to be the result of a “compromise” between the imagination and the understanding whose basis is psychological, not epistemic (see “Of Skepticism with Regard to the Senses” in his \textit{Treatise}).
\item \textit{\textsuperscript{121}}Descartes could only secure objectively valid knowledge of material entities in space through a long and circuitous appeal (which most commentators take to be viciously circular anyway) to the benevolence of God to secure the veridicality of our perceptual states and clear and distinct ideas (see his \textit{Meditations on First Philosophy} and his \textit{Discourse on Method}). Malebranche’s assertion that all perception is really just “vision in God” required appeal to faith to ground the legitimacy of our objective perceptions of the world (see his \textit{Search After Truth}). Leibniz had to appeal to pre-established harmony as the guarantor of the veridicality of the representations of “windowless” monads (See his \textit{Monadology}).
\item \textit{\textsuperscript{122}}Also, both passages are about knowledge of objects in \textit{space} and things in themselves are not spatial.
\item \textit{\textsuperscript{123}}I go into more detail about Kant’s reply to the skeptic in the final chapter ($\S$5.1.2).  
\end{itemize}
I’ve given an argument that Kant should be understood as an intentional object phenomenalist. In §3.1.1 I mentioned that there were several other ways in which the general phenomenalist thesis (that the immediate objects of experience are mental states) might be specified, and I indicated that these theses are not, on their own, at all mutually exclusive. I think the case can be made, though, that intentional object phenomenalism is the only form of phenomenalism to which he subscribes. Semantic phenomenalism asserts that the semantic content of thoughts about external objects reduces to thoughts about internal mental states. Such a thesis would be incompatible with his transcendental theory of experience generally, according to which the semantic content of our experience reduces to applications of the schematized categories to physical objects in space. The same can be said of epistemic phenomenalism, which asserts that the only immediate objects of knowledge are mental states. Kant argues that the immediate objects of knowledge are the objects given in intuition, and these, as we’ve seen, are objects in space, not in the mind. Lastly, ontological phenomenalism asserts that the objects of experience are ontologically reducible to mental states. It might be thought that, given Kant’s claim that sensation is the matter of appearance, and my interpretation of his theory which takes the E-intentional referents of intuition to be collections of sensations, that we would be forced to say that Kant is also an ontological phenomenalist. While I concede that the E-intentional referents of intuitions are (ontologically) metaphysical states, since the primary sense in which Kant wants to speak of the objects of our experience is in terms of the I-intentional objects purported by the content of our representations, we should not say that the objects of experience are reducible to mental states on Kant’s account. Given Kant’s transcendental analysis of the necessary features of our representations of empirical objects, we should only say
that these are metaphysically reducible to compositions of phenomenal substance,\textsuperscript{124} i.e., matter as described by the physicist. The basic metaphysical structures of the objects of experience bottom out in their dynamic interactions in space, their infinite divisibility, their possession of extensive and intensive magnitudes, etc., and hence they are not the sort of entities that can be ontologically identified with or reduced to mental states.

### 3.4 Conclusion

We now have a complete picture of how sensations make possible a representational relation to objects in empirical cognition. Sensations do not simply inform our empirical representations, they also, in a very literal sense, constitute these representations, and they even stand in for the I-intentional objects of these representations through their function as the E-intentional objects of intuitions. This analysis of the function of sensation in outer intuition finally gives full sense to the conclusion of Chapter 2, according to which Kant assigns an “objective” function to sensations insofar as they “correspond to,” “designate,” and “represent” the matter in appearance.

We have seen that on the model of the mind-object relation that emerged, Kant’s theory of sensation and empirical intuition is closely intertwined with his idealism regarding external objects and also his empirical realism claims about our access to these objects. Our empirical intuitions enable representational contents presenting bodies in space only because these intuitions involve representing the qualities of the subject’s own sensory states as though they were qualities of external bodies in space. Since Kant rules out the possibility of transcendentally real spatial

\textsuperscript{124}These transcendentally necessary features are those laid down in the chapter on the pure principles of the understanding in the \textit{Critique} and in the \textit{Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science}. 
bodies, it follows that these bodies are only the I-intentional contents of representation, and that they cannot possibly be their E-intentional objects. I labelled this thesis Kant’s “intentional objects phenomenalism.” At the same time, since empirical intuitions present their I-intentional contents directly and immediately (and do not rely on any I-intentional reference to internal mental states), Kant’s empirical realism is also justifiably called a direct realism.

One of the most common responses to the sort of interpretation I’ve offered here is that the term “realism” is being used in such an attenuated sense that it is no longer appropriate to use the term at all. Realism, whatever else it might mean, is at the very least the thesis that, in general, things are more or less as I represent them to be (and they are not, importantly, mere mental states). On the model I’ve presented, there are no such things as truly (not merely purportedly) mind-independent spatiotemporal objects, even though in sensory consciousness we say of entities which are not themselves spatiotemporal objects (viz., sensations) that they are spatiotemporal objects. It would seem that the terms “anti-realism” and even “fictionalism” are far more appropriate to my interpretation than any kind of “realism.”

I will give my final statement on the status of Kant’s idealism, realism, as well as the “fictionalism” question in Chapter 5 when I discuss the relation between sensation and the representation of mind-independent existence and actuality. First though, it will be necessary to complete the account of how sensations can be said to constitute our representations of empirical objects. So far we have only looked at the relation between sensation and sensibility. Thus we have only interpreted the function of sensation within pre-conceptual representations; hence we have seen that empirical intuitions represent bodies, but they are not capable of representing them (conceptually) as bodies. It turns out that sensation is centrally important to Kant’s
account of how the mind comes to represent its objects as the sorts of things they are, viz., as real and actual entities in space and time. This will be the task of Part II, where I treat the relation between sensation and the understanding. Thus next in Chapter 4 I will investigate the relationship between sensation and the pure concept of reality, i.e., the most basic concept by which the mind can represent its object as a something. In Chapter 5, I will discuss how Kant thinks sensation allows us to represent an object as actual.
Appendix A:  
Nonconceptualism and Intuitions: A Defense

In chapter 3, I gave an interpretation of Kant’s theory of intuition that presupposed, with minimal argument, that intuitions represent nonconceptually. Here I will present a fuller argument, with the acknowledgment that the debate has many more intricacies than I am able to deal with exhaustively here. I will limit myself to addressing what I take to be the most relevant textual considerations, and to discussing the Sellarsian/McDowellian equation of intentionality (and hence of contentfulness) with conceptuality.

Conceptualism regarding intuitions is the claim that intuitions are essentially conceptual. Let’s say that intuitions are essentially conceptual if there cannot be an intuitive representational state that does not involve a conceptual component which articulates the content of the intuition. For instance, according to this claim, I cannot intuit a red object without making use of the concept ‘red’. The strongest textual evidence that Kant holds intuitions to have a conceptual component comes from the B-edition Transcendental Deduction. It is said that in the Transcendental Aesthetic, it might have seemed that intuitions were entirely separate from conceptual activity, but that that was only because Kant wanted to simplify his task at that early stage of the discussion. Once the relation of sensibility to understanding is receiving its proper treatment in the Transcendental Deduction, Kant brings in all the complexities surrounding the issues, and wants to argue that intuitions are not the progeny of sensibility alone, but instead require a conceptual component to carry out their representational task. Two claims in particular are taken to be clear evidence that intuitions must be conceptual. In section 15, Kant remarks on the possibility of the combination and synthesis of representations, including the combination of the manifold into an intuition.
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 under the general title synthesis. (B130)

The conceptualist reading of this passage is straightforward. If intuitions are the product of synthesis, and all synthesis is carried out by the understanding, and the understanding is fundamentally the faculty of concepts, then intuitions have a conceptual component. An even more direct connection between intuitions and concepts was drawn when Kant introduced the notion of the pure concepts of the understanding, i.e., the categories. In a famous remark, Kant claims that,

The same function that gives unity to the different representations in a judgment also gives unity to the mere synthesis of different representations in an intuition, which, expressed generally, is called the pure concept of the understanding. (A79/B105)

Clearly, it will be said, these passages show that Kant never meant the distinction between sensibility and understanding to be absolute. Judgments and intuitions both involve a conceptual component.

I don’t think that these passages are sufficient to show that intuitions are conceptual. I think the preponderance of textual evidence simply points in the other direction. It is true, it must be admitted, that the distinction between sensibility and understanding is not so absolute that the two have no point of contact at which

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1For instance, Wilfred Sellars ultimately takes the claim at B130 to imply a conceptualist interpretation of intuitions (Science and Metaphysics: Variations on Kantian Themes, Ridgeview Publishing Company, 1967, ch. 1) because he thinks that we can only make sense of an intuitive intentional relation to an object if we take them to be synthesized through conceptual activity. Likewise, Ginsborg argues that while the exact letter of the passage at B130 could be read consistently with either a conceptualist or a non-conceptualist interpretation, it must ultimately be interpreted along conceptualist lines because we can only make sense of the applicability of the categories to intuitions on the supposition that intuitions are formed in part by the synthesis involving the pure concepts of the understanding (“Was Kant A Non-Conceptualist?”).
to cooperate. As Sellars says, “Intuition turns out to be Janus-faced, and the understanding to have its own mode of receptivity.”\(^2\) This is hardly surprising though. One of the basic tenets of the critical project is that neither sensibility nor understanding alone is sufficient for cognition, and that it is only from the cooperation of the two that experience of the world is possible. But even if the operations of the faculties themselves are not absolutely separate, Kant wants to leave in place a strict distinction between the characteristic representations of each faculty, and this separation is not restricted only to the Transcendental Aesthetic. In the introduction to the Metaphysical Deduction, Kant explains that the understanding, here described as the faculty of concepts and judgments, is “not a faculty of intuition” (A68/B93). He goes on to articulate the fundamental differences between the two faculties and their characteristic representations:

> Besides intuition there is no other kind of cognition than through concepts. Thus the cognition of every, at least human, understanding is a cognition \([Erkenntnis]\) through concepts, not intuitive but discursive. All intuitions, as sensible, rest on affections, concepts therefore on functions.... Concepts are therefore grounded on the spontaneity of thinking, as sensible intuitions are grounded on the receptivity of impressions. (A68/B93)

The conceptualist cannot easily explain away this passage. In the first sentence, intuition and concept are distinguished as fundamentally different modes of cognition.\(^3\)

\(^2\)\textit{Science and Metaphysics}, p. 2. The interesting point of interaction between the two faculties is, for Sellars as for me, the imagination, which is a function of the understanding operating on sensibility. However, as I will argue shortly, although the understanding qua imagination is responsible for the formation of intuitions, it carries out this task without the involvement of concepts.

\(^3\)Kant is inconsistent on whether intuitions or concepts alone can count as \textit{Erkenntnisse}. In passages like this, he indicates that they can (see also, A320/B377). But in others, cognition is said to require both together, with neither alone being sufficient for cognition. “The understanding is not capable of intuiting anything, and the senses are not capable of thinking anything. Only from their unification can cognition arise” (A51/B75). The best explanation of Kant’s inconsistency on this issue is that he has strong and weak notions of cognition at work. A cognition in the weak sense is any representation that involves an objectively valid intentional relation to an object. Since both intuitions are concepts do this on their own (and considered independently of the other), they
Kant then explicitly states that concepts, which are modes of discursive cognition, are not intuitive. Lastly, he repeats the claim that the two modes of representation have their genesis in two fundamentally distinct faculties. Furthermore, intuitions and concepts are characterized (both here and elsewhere) as fundamentally different types of representations. Intuitions are representations which relate to their objects immediately and singularly. Concepts, by contrast, relate to their objects mediately and generally (for concepts apply to possibly many objects, intuitions to only one).

Intuitions and concepts thus represent their objects in fundamentally different ways.

To say that intuitions contain a conceptual component would be to say that they represent their singular objects immediately, but by way of the mediation of general conceptual representations. To be sure, intuitions are conceptualizable, that is, concepts can be applied to the objects given in intuition, and thereby render the representation of these objects determinate. But that Kant thinks that intuition does not as such involve a conceptual component must be taken as the official doctrine of the Critique.

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4 E.g., see A320/B377: “[A cognition] is either an intuition or a concept (intuitus vel conceptus). The former is immediately related to the object and is singular; the latter is mediate, by way of a mark, which can be common to several things.” Metaphysik Mrongovius, 29:888: “Intuition is an immediate representation, concept is representation mediated by a feature.” Jäsche Logic, 9:91: “An intuition is a singular representation (repraesentatio singularis), a concept universal (repraesentatio per notas communes) or reflected representation (repraesentatio discursiva)... A concept is opposed to intuition, for it is a universal representation insofar as it can be contained in various ones.”

5 Another place where Kant makes it clear that intuitions do not essentially involve a conceptual component appears in section 13 of the Transcendental Deduction (common to both editions) at A89/B122-A91/B123: “The categories of the understanding... 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.... For appearances could after all be so constituted that the understanding would not find them in accord with the conditions of its unity.... Appearances would nonetheless offer objects to our intuition, for intuition be no means requires the function of thinking.”
Note also that the two passages from the Transcendental Deduction which seemed to lend some credence to the conceptualist interpretation do not unambiguously imply that intuitions are conceptual. When Kant claims that the understanding is at work in all synthesis, including the synthesis of the manifold of intuition (B130), he should be taken to be referring to the activity of the productive imagination. The imagination is treated as a separate faculty which relates sensibility to understanding in the A-edition,⁶ but in the B-edition it is described as a sub-function of the understanding.⁷ Wherever it is placed though, its task with respect to intuition is simply to form the manifold of given sensory data into the representation of an object in space. There is no reason to think that Kant is committed to thinking that this can only happen if concepts are involved in the very formation of intuitions. Instead, the productive imagination should be understood as a non-conceptual synthesizing

⁶“...We therefore have a pure imagination, as a fundamental faculty of the human soul, that grounds all cognition a priori. By its means we bring into combination the manifold of intuition on the one side and the condition of the necessary unity of apperception on the other. Both extremes, namely sensibility and understanding, must necessarily be connected by means of this transcendental function of the imagination, since otherwise the former would to be sure yield appearances but no objects of empirical cognition, hence there would be no experience” (A124).

⁷“...That which determines the inner sense is the understanding and its original faculty of combining the manifold of intuition, i.e., of bringing it under an apperception.... Under the designation of a transcendental synthesis of the imagination, it [understanding] therefore exercises that action on the passive subject, whose faculty it is, about which we rightly say that the inner sense is thereby affected” (B153-4).
function of the understanding.\textsuperscript{8}

And when Kant says at A79/B105 that the functions of the pure concepts of the understanding are at work in giving unity to intuitions, he is \textit{not} saying that intuitions essentially involve a categorial component. He says that the pure concepts give “unity” to the “mere synthesis.” He is distinguishing between the “unity” that intuitions can come to have and the “mere synthesis” which intuitions already have.\textsuperscript{9}

We know from the results of §3.2.1 that this “mere synthesis” is a combination of sensations which constitute the intuition. Distinguishing this mere synthesis of

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{8}Lucy Allais and Beatrice Longuenesse both interpret the claim that the understanding is involved in the synthesis of the manifold in an intuition in ways that do not imply a conceptual component in intuitions. Allais argues that Kant does not want to commit himself to the claim that \textit{all} synthesis of representation requires conceptualization. She writes,

\begin{quote}
synthesizing is not the same as conceptualizing.... [I]t does not follow from the claim that the intuition of [rational adult] perceivers involves synthesis in accordance with concepts that synthesis, \textit{per se}, requires concepts (understood as constituents of judgments) or that intuitions are not representational unless they are synthesized in accordance with concepts (\textit{Journal of the History of Philosophy}, 47:3, July 2009, “Kant, Non-Conceptual Content, and the Representation of Space,” p. 392.).
\end{quote}

She goes on to connect the synthesis of intuition with the understanding, which she takes to be a mode of non-conceptual synthesis. Longuenesse also connects the “mere synthesis” of intuitions with the imagination as a non-conceptual exercise of the understanding. She says that we can distinguish two aspects of the activity of understanding corresponding to the two aspects of \textit{concepts} and \textit{rules} we encountered in the A Deduction. According to the first aspect, the understanding is \textit{a rule giver for the syntheses of imagination}... According to the second aspect, the understanding is \textit{reflective or discursive}. It reflects sensible syntheses under concepts (\textit{Kant and the Capacity to Judge}, Princeton University Press, 1998, p. 396.).

In other words, on her view, the first task of the understanding is to generate intuitions in accordance with rules so that the second aspect of the understanding has something to conceptualize. Longuenesse’s suggestion that concepts are somehow distinct from rule-governed synthesis is almost certainly off the mark, but I agree with her assessment that we should understand the activity of the imagination in intuition formation as a non-conceptual synthesis.

\textsuperscript{9}We find a similar distinction between synthesis and the unity of synthesis (the former pertaining to intuition and sensibility, the latter to the determination thereof by understanding) in the Schematism section: “The schema is in itself only the product of the imagination; but since the synthesis of the latter has as its aim no individual intuition but rather only the unity in the determination of sensibility, the schema is to be distinguished from an image” (A140/B179). And again at A155/B194 Kant writes, “The synthesis of representations rests on the imagination, but their synthetic unity (which is requisite for judgment), on the unity of apperception.”
\end{footnotesize}
sensations from the “unity” given them by concepts thus indicates that intuitions do not as such contain a conceptual component, but that they can be combined with concepts to yield more robust and contentful representational states. In other words, all the A79/B105 passage really says is that intuitions are the sort of things that can have concepts applied to them and can thereby come to have a unity that they did not previously have; this does not mean that intuitions are essentially or necessarily conceptual.10

One further reason for thinking that Kant would not accept a conceptualism regarding intuitions is the implausibly high standard it places on the ability to represent the world, which would seem to result in an unrealistic gap between our cognitive abilities and that of other animals species. On the one hand, it seems unlikely that (most) higher non-human animals are concept possessors and users (as evidenced by their lack of recursive syntactic linguistic abilities). Yet on the other, it would be sheer unprincipled chauvinism to deny that these animals have any representational content at all. Instead, it is apparent that, despite their lack of conceptual capacities, they still perceive the world and interact with it through their representations of it. Attributing a perceptual nonconceptual content to these animals provides a way of treating them as perceivers with representational states, but without attributing conceptual rationality to them.11

10Longuenesse offers a similar interpretation of this passage. According to her, there is a basic function of the understanding which explains both the synthesis of sensations into intuitions, and that of concepts into judgments.

What Kant is saying, then, is that the “same operation” that produces this (dis-cursive) synthetic unity in judgments also produces the (intuitive) synthetic unity of the sensible manifold, in order to subsume this manifold under concepts in judgment. And the (intuitive) synthetic unity of the sensible thus produced is in turn the means by which a transcendental content is introduced into the pure concepts of the understanding (Kant and the Capacity to Judge, p. 201).

Thus for her, far from concepts making intuitive representations possible, (pure) intuitive representation is necessary for the contentfulness of the categories.

11For an argument along these lines, see: Peacocke, Christopher, “Nonconceptual Content De-
This is a view that Kant seems to have shared. As Steve Naragon has pointed out, Kant held that animals have desires, have a sensible faculty, and act in accordance with representations, even though they do not share in human rationality. Now I think it would drastically oversimplify things to say that Kant’s theory of animal consciousness is that they have intuitions but not concepts. A full account of such a theory would require spelling out the sense in which animals can desire, and what role the imagination plays in animal thought. The important point for present purposes is that Kant believes that animals lack a rational faculty of judgment and concept usage, but that they still enjoy a mental representation of their immediate environment. Thus Kant acknowledges in animal minds a content closely analogous to the content of human empirical intuition as I understand it.

I’ve given what I take to be sufficient textual reasons for thinking that Kant’s stated view does not commit him to conceptualism about intuitions, and instead seems to assert the opposite. Leaving aside the question of what Kant actually said on the matter, there remains the objection that Kant ought to have asserted conceptualism about intuitions, because this is the only philosophically satisfying view. I’ll focus on Sellars’s formulation of this objection.


13 Kant says in the *Dohna lectures* that “animal behavior occurs according to laws of the power of imagination, which nature has laid in them” (28:689-90, quoted in Naragon op. cit.).

14 Pierre Keller and H.J. Paton attribute similar positions to Kant regarding the cognitive status of animals. Keller points out that Kant attributes an associative power of the imagination and a perspectival awareness of objects to animals, but insists that this does not imply any form of rational self-consciousness in the animal (*Kant and the Demands of Self-Consciousness*, Cambridge University Press, 1998, p. 33-35). Paton argues (*pace* Kemp-Smith) that animals “have acquaintance with objects, though they do not know them” (*Kant’s Metaphysic of Experience*, Vol. I., p. 334).

15 Sellars, p. 4. Perhaps his use of this language of “sheer receptivity” comes from the opening
although Sellars (somewhat surprisibgly) never explicitly refers to sensations in his
discussion, it becomes clear from the way he describes them that (what he calls) intu-
itions of sheer receptivity are what Kant calls sensations,\(^\text{16}\) while the representations
that go beyond sheer receptivity are intuitions proper.

Sellars thinks that non-sheerly-receptive intuitions (I'll just call them “intu-
itions” from here on) are necessarily conceptual. In addition to appealing to passages
like those from the Transcendental Deduction cited above, Sellars argues that the
only way there can be an intentional relation between an intuition and its object is
if we impute a conceptual content to the intuition. His argument for the claim goes
something like this: We can distinguish between two senses in which a mental state
can be related to an object: causally and intentionally. Both kinds of relation will
be expressed in the form ‘\(R\) of \(x\).’ However, the “of” is doing different work in the
two cases. In the causal sense \(R\) represents \(x\) because \(x\) caused \(R\) to occur, while
in the intentional sense \(R\) represents \(x\) because \(x\) is the intentional object of \(R\). In
the former case, the relation marks a causal dependence of the representation on the
object, while in the other it is an intentional relation from the representation to the
object. We can map these two relations between mental state and object on to the
difference between sensations and intuitions. As Sellars sees the difference, in the one
case we have mental states like “impression of a red triangle,” and in the other “con-
ception of a red triangle.”\(^\text{17}\) “Only the latter,” he concludes, “is ‘intentional’ from
the point of view of the philosophy of mind, where the intentional is that which be-

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\(^{16}\)He equates them with Kantian “matter” and also with raw “impressions”, which are “brute facts” (p. 7), all of which are terms used to characterize sensations qua the effects of objects on the senses (i.e., what I called “E-sensations” in §2.1.1).

\(^{17}\)Sellars, p. 22.
longs to the conceptual order.”\textsuperscript{18} In short, if intuitions have intentional objects, and intentionality requires conceptuality, then intuitions are conceptual. The difference between these two maps onto two of the possible relations between representation and object introduced in chapter 1.\textsuperscript{19} “Impression of” corresponds to the causal relation between representation and object, while “conception of” refers to what I there called “I-intentionality.”\textsuperscript{20} Sellars’s claim is thus that all I-intentionality is conceptual; a representation cannot purport to refer to an object unless it does so by way of conceptualizing that object.\textsuperscript{21}

Sellars is motivated by the need to find a sense in which intuitions can be related to their objects that goes beyond the merely causal (which, as we know from his discussion of the “myth of the given” in \emph{Empiricism and Philosophy of Mind}, is not sufficient to explain the mind-world relation). He doesn’t, however, consider the possibility that there could be a mode of the ‘R of x’ schema that is not conceptual without being merely causal, i.e., a non-conceptual I-intentionality. The options for him are causal impression or intentional conception, that’s it, and if intuitions are to have intentional objects, they must intend through conceptual activity. The reason for this restrictive distinction is that Sellars thinks an expression of the form ‘Jones has a representation of a red triangle’ can only count as an intentional use of the “of” if the expression were analyzable into ‘Jones represents a red triangle \textit{as} a red triangle.’ Representing something \textit{as} something almost certainly requires some form of conceptual activity. Representing \textit{as} requires the ability to specify determinate

\textsuperscript{18}Sellars, p. 22.
\textsuperscript{19}See §1.4.3 above.
\textsuperscript{20}As a reminder, recall that I defined I-intentionality as the intentional purport of a representation (independently of successful reference to its purported object), while E-intentionality was defined as that feature of a representation in virtue of which it successfully refers to some object (independently of the way in which this object is purported).
\textsuperscript{21}McDowell also interprets Kant as equating intentionality with conceptuality, but doesn’t offer much more of an argument for the claim than does Sellars (\textit{Having a World in View}, ch. 6.).
features of the object of the representation, and such specification can only happen through the use of concepts. After all, I can only explain what something is if I can explain what sort of thing it is. Being able to specify what sort of or type a thing is requires specifying which of its features can be shared with other things, and this ability requires concepts.

Of course, Sellars doesn’t want to completely erase the distinction between intuition and judgment. Both are conceptual for him, but the difference is simply that the concepts involved in intuitions represent particulars, while those used in judgments represent general sortals. He says, “intuitive representings are, in a generic sense, conceptual, though not sortal or attributive.” We can thus distinguish between three “levels” or “stages” in Sellars’s reconstruction of Kant’s theory. Using Sellars’s example, let’s say that someone has a representation of a cube. According to him, this can mean any of the following:

1. There is no intentional content; a cube simply caused a non-intentional mental state to occur.

2. There is an intentional state with the particularized conceptual content ‘this-cube.’

3. There is an intentional state with the sortal conceptual content ‘This is a cube.’

The first corresponds to sense impressions (what I’ve called E-sensations), the second to intuitions and the third to judgments. Both the intuition and the judgment involve a conceptual component, and these are the only places in which intentionality occurs, i.e., the only place where there is representational content. But why should we think that the only possible intentional relations are those in which the subject represents something as something? As Allais has argued persuasively (in response to Myth of

the Given objections from Sellars, McDowell, Abela and Ginsborg), there seems to be a wide-open space for a relation between representation and object which is not merely causal, and really is a relation in which the subject is aware of its object, and intentionally directed towards it, but without involving the use of concepts.\footnote{See Allais (2009).}

The second item in Sellars’s hierarchy conflates what should be two distinct possible representational states. There should instead be four items on the list:

1. There is no intentional content; a cube simply caused a non-intentional mental state to occur.

2. There is an intentional state which phenomenologically but nonconceptually presents a cube occupying a place.

3. There is an intentional state with the particularized conceptual content ‘this-cube.’

4. There is an intentional state with the sortal conceptual content ‘This is a cube.’

The second item on my list is the intuition proper, while the representation with the content ‘this-cube,’ which Sellars takes to be the content of the intuition, is really an intuition with a concept applied to it.\footnote{There is a sense in which the content ‘this-cube’ is judgmental, for it involves subsuming something (the intuition) under a general concept. The contents described in lines 3 and 4 will thus both require the synthesis intellectualis described at B151. The difference between the two is that the first presents an individual which instantiates certain conceptual predicates but makes no claim and has no truth value; the second presents a certain state of affairs, or proposition (which can be true or false). I think that Kant thinks that an object can only be represented in the second kind of representation (a full judgment) if it is first represented in the first sort of representation (a conceptualized intuition); however this topic is beyond the scope of the present discussion, so I won’t go into it here.} The difference between the two views is that Sellars takes intuitions to be essentially conceptual, and to only have their intentional properties in virtue of their conceptuality, while I do not. Sellars does not acknowledge the second item on my list because he does not think that there can be intentionality without conceptuality. I take the model of empirical intuition
defended in chapter 3 to demonstrate that we can make sense of a nonconceptual mode of intentionality, and insofar as the model I defended is intelligible, Sellars’s equation of intentionality and conceptuality is not sustainable.
Appendix B:
Sensory Determination of the Content of Intuition

I argued in Chapter 3 that empirical intuitions involve the assignment of spatiotemporal positions to the sensations given through our being affected by objects. I showed that empirical intuitions are constituted by collections of sensations, and that these intuitions represent (I-intend) the qualities of the sensations filling out the spatiotemporal region of the perceiver. It may have occurred to the reader to wonder what, if anything, determines which sensible qualities end up represented as occupying which locations. How, if at all, do facts about brute sensory impressions (E-sensations) determine which qualities are represented in which spatial relations? Addressing this question will give us a nice segue into the epistemological issues with which we’ll be concerned in Part II. I will argue that Kant implicitly commits himself to the view that the content of an empirical intuition is dependent on determinate facts about sensations as they are initially impressed on the subject (E-sensations); the imagination’s figurative synthesis can be understood as a function which outputs intuitional content given determinate manifolds of sensation as input.

Now there certainly are determinate facts about E-sensations. Any given one is said to have a degree of reality, and to have some specific quality (e.g., redness), and in virtue of its being a part of a manifold of sensations, it can be said to bear some determinate relations to other sensations. This however leaves open the question whether the content of an intuition (or any empirical representation generally) is determined by these facts about the sensations. It might after all be the case that the content of the intuition is in no significant way connected to determinate facts about the sensations as such. Thus it is a substantive question whether determinate facts about the manifold of E-sensations determines in any interesting way the content of
experience.\textsuperscript{1} The question is an important one because it reduces to the question whether sensations are in any way epistemically significant. If the objects we know are the same as the objects we intuit, then what we know is determined by the specific content of our intuitions. Thus if intuitive content is determined by facts about the sensory given, then sensations play an (indirect, yet nevertheless significant) epistemic function in cognition. In trying to get clear on this aspect of the relation between sensation and empirical intuition, there are two different possible analogies we might consider, and ask which is closer to Kant’s understanding of this relation. The two analogies are lego blocks and puzzle pieces.

A building made out of legos is what it is in virtue of all the individual blocks being connected together and arranged in a certain way. E.g., a lego house is such in virtue of all the pieces being connected together into a house shape. When a builder comes along, she begins with a big pile of blocks, and starts snapping them together into whatever structure she desires. All the legos being more or less the same and interchangeable, it is possible to construct them into a short and wide prairie style house or a tall modernist skyscraper. Nothing about the lego pieces themselves nor the specific structure of the pile in which they are initially presented to the builder determine the structure they come to compose. The blocks do constitute the matter of the building, but there is nothing about the blocks (or the way in which they are given) that determines the particular form that the building must take. The blocks are only necessary for the form of the building insofar as there must be some blocks present out of which the form can be constituted.

Now consider a jigsaw puzzle. Here we also have a mereological relation in

\textsuperscript{1}For instance, let’s say I have a cognition with the content that there is a cup on the desk in front of me. The question is whether the sensations constituting the intuitive component of the experience determined the content of the experience. Could I, that is, have only had an experience with this content if I had the particular E-sensations I did (or some other relatively similar ones), or would any old group of E-sensations do, so long as there were at least some?
which a set of pieces are connected together to make up a whole object. In this case though, it matters which arrangement the pieces get put into. Each piece has a privileged and “correct” position within the whole, and any given set of pieces cannot be constructed into more than one image. The matter (i.e., the puzzle pieces) is not simply necessary for the form represented by the image in that there must be something out of which to make the image (but it matters not what). Instead, the matter is also necessary for the form in that the particular form constituted out of that matter is what it is, at least in part, in virtue of being constituted out of that specific matter.

Which of these analogies is closest to the relation between sensation and empirical intuition? Is sensation merely the raw stuff out of which any intuition whatsoever could be constructed, or is there something about the sensations as they are initially received (prior to any synthetic activity) in virtue of which there is a “best” way to put them together into the intuition? I will argue that the jigsaw puzzle model is the better analogy, but first I want to consider arguments from the other side.

In his careful study of Kant’s theory of empirical cognition, Paul Abela offers an interpretation of the role of judgment in cognition which he calls the “all-or-nothing” view.\(^2\) According to this interpretation, “without the Principles [of Pure Understanding] in play, nothing, not even a bare sensory given, can be an object of cognition.”\(^3\) That is to say, there can be no knowledge and in fact no cognitive or intentional relation to anything independently of the exercise of the basic functions of the understanding. Unless I cognize something in terms of extensive\(^4\) and intensive\(^5\)

\(^2\) _Kant’s Empirical Realism_, Oxford University Press, 2002.
\(^3\) Abela, 85. These principles are those outlined in the chapter titled The Systematic Representation of All Synthetic Principles of Pure Understanding (A158/B197-A235/B287).
\(^4\) See Axioms of Intuition, A162/B202ff.
\(^5\) See Anticipations of Perception, A166/B207ff.
magnitudes, and as an actual or possible\(^6\) causally interacting substance,\(^7\) I cannot cognize it at all. Since the principles of judgment first and foremost characterize the cognition of objects in space, and are only secondarily and derivatively applied to internal mental states, it follows, he claims, that the cognition of objects in space is epistemically and semantically prior to any cognition or even awareness of internal mental states. This last claim is a version of what I referred to in chapter 3 as Kant’s direct realism. Abela argues that this priority of object-relatedness in cognition has strong implications for the role that sensation could play in perception. Specifically, he wants to argue that sensation, considered as the raw data resulting from the impressions of objects on the senses, can determine neither the semantic nor epistemic content of empirical representations. That is, sensation does not determine what object we take ourselves to represent, nor what we might know about that object.

The view Abela is most concerned to argue against is an interpretive schema he calls the “Lockean-Kant Interpretation.” According to this view, the first half of the *Critique of Pure Reason* should be read as an account of how the subject moves from an awareness of inner subjective states to an awareness of outer objective states. Within the Lockean-Kant model, “the epistemic analysis is animated by an inquiry into how it is that we move from determinate inner representations to knowledge of independently existing empirical objects.”\(^8\) Abela thinks it cannot be the case that cognition begins with knowledge of the way we are affected by objects and then moves up to knowledge of the objects themselves. The cognition of the object comes first.\(^9\) Abela does not deny the existence of sensations, nor that they might be in

\(^6\)See Postulates of Empirical Thinking in General, A218/B265ff.
\(^7\)See Analogies of Experience, A176/B218ff.
\(^8\)Abela, p. 96. Elsewhere he gives a nice and pithy summary of this model: “We metaphorically point inside to the sensation as the basis for the belief” (p. 92). Stated in the terms I introduced in chapter 2, the Lockean-Kant interpretation I-objective representations are epistemically dependent on I-subjective representations.
\(^9\)This isn’t to say that he thinks we cannot cognize our sensations as the effects of objects
some sense necessary for cognition. However, he thinks that sensations are not the sort of things that can have propositional content nor carry with them beliefs about the world, and hence they cannot be semantically or epistemically significant. As he sees it, “the dispute between the Lockean and the All-or-Nothing interpretation centres on whether it makes sense to include a private, ‘in-the-head’ conception of mental content as an epistemologically significant feature of cognition independent of considerations of reference and truth.”

Abela’s basic interpretive assumption that we cannot ascribe to Kant any view according to which we move from representations of inner states of the subject to representations of outer states of the world is almost certainly a good one. Abela is correct that Kant makes it clear at several important points in the *Critique* that he understands things working the other way around. But Abela’s claim that sensations can therefore have no epistemic function whatsoever is not correct. Abela’s argument for this claim is based on a false dichotomy. He sets up a scenario in which sensations either operate as the objects of inner observation reports (thereby grounding inferences to beliefs about external objects), or they play no epistemic role at all. This ignores a third option, namely that pre-cognitive facts about sensations as initially received (E-sensations) might determine the content of the representations they come to constitute, and that this determination might happen in a way that

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affecting us. We can do this, but only after we have cognized the broader objective causal network of interacting mind-independent things, of which our bodily sensory apparatus is a part. As he says, “sensations have a causal role, but *within* the representational framework, not epistemologically prior to it” (p. 77).

10 Abela, p. 95. It is clear that Abela’s reading of Kant is inspired to some extent by Sellars and McDowell. Both of these thinkers want to make a strict separation between the merely causal (non-epistemic) order and the normative, or conceptual order. Sellars will speak of the necessity of all epistemically significant contents being situtable within the conceptual space of reasons. The idiosyncratically Kantian version of this space of reasons is simply what Kant refers to as the form of “nature,” i.e., the sum total of all objectively valid experiences of the physical world. That is, for Kant, in order for a representation to count as epistemically significant, or in any way relevant to belief, we must be able to situate the object of the representation within the dynamic world order.

11 Most explicitly in the Refutation of Idealism (discussed in §5.1.2).
does not entail that sensations are the objects of inner-observation reports, nor that they are construed as representations with belief-laden content.

Part of the reason for Abela’s failure to acknowledge such a role for sensation in Kant’s theory of empirical cognition is that his “all-or-nothing” interpretation contains a radical claim about what it means to say that there can be determinate facts about a thing. The “all-or-nothing” interpretation claims that without the determining activity of the understanding and the employment of the categorial functions of judgment, the subject can be aware of no truths of the matter about anything. One could, without too much controversy, just leave things at that. Abela, however, wants to make the much stronger claim that without the activity of the basic functions of judgments in play, not only can we not know determinate facts about things, but there also cannot be any determinate facts about things. For him, to suggest that there are pre-judgmental facts about sensation, and that these facts cause or inform the formation of empirical representations, violates this principle. As he sees it, if there are to be any facts of the matter about sensation, these facts will only be determined by the understanding, in conformity with its rules and principles.\textsuperscript{12} Sensations themselves cannot inform the subject of facts about

\textsuperscript{12} Abela states this radical thesis in response to a view that is very similar to my own (p. 98-102). He describes the attempt to save an epistemically significant role of the sensory given by appealing to a transcendental given which has determinate structure prior to any synthesis, but is thereby cognitively inaccessible and therefore postulated merely on transcendental grounds: “Although we cannot represent to ourselves any order in this given matter, we are urged to accept, as a ‘transcendental fact’ that this material must have determinate intrinsic structure” (p. 99). According to this view (with which I agree), “If the given were, [as Abela himself would have it] in itself, a genuine ‘blooming, buzzing chaos,’ a mere flux of ever-changing material, then the rules for synthesis, applied consistently, would… produce an equally chaotic product when we ‘convert’ it into empirical intuition” (p. 100). Abela rejects this inference. Since truth for Kant is a matter of judgment in accordance with the pure principles, and since the transcendental given is postulated at a level prior to any activities of the understanding, then it makes no sense to say that there is any “truth to the matter with respect to [the transcendental given]” (p.101). He concludes that if there is no truth to the matter with respect to the transcendental given, then we cannot say that it is in any way relevant to cognition, which is essentially a game of truth. (See also p. 58-66 on Abela’s claim that Kant rejects the notion of any sort of “determinate given.”)
themselves. To the extent that sensations function in our sensory consciousness of objects, it will be the understanding that determines the form they are to take and the content of the representations containing them, not the sensations themselves. In this sense, Abela’s understanding of the role of sensation in cognition is like the lego model—the determinate form given to the matter is determined by the builder, not by the pieces.

I think Abela’s strong version of the “all-or-nothing” interpretation is almost certainly incorrect. To assert that without the principles of judgment in play there could be no determinate facts of the matter about anything is surely not a position to which Kant could subscribe. Things in themselves are cognitively inaccessible to us. According to Abela’s interpretation, there could be no determinate facts about these things because we will never be able to cognize them through the basic functions of judgment. But things in themselves are argued by Kant to be not just determinate, but thoroughly determinate (phenomenal things being merely thoroughly determinable).\(^{13}\)

A weakened version of the “all-or-nothing” interpretation is more plausible, but I think it too cannot be accepted. Such a weakened version would state that without the basic conceptual functions of judgment in play,\(^{14}\) there can be no cognition of nor any intentional relation to any object.\(^{15}\) That is, a representational state can have an object only if that representational state involves the full arsenal of the basic concepts of the pure principles of understanding. I have already shown (in Chapter 3 and Appendix A), however, that we should not make an equation between the conceptual and the intentional, and that there is in Kant a mode of

\(^{13}\)See A571/B599-A577/B608.

\(^{14}\)I.e., those outlined in the Systematic Representation section (A158/B197-A235/B287).

\(^{15}\)Whether it would still be appropriate to call such a view an “all-or-nothing” interpretation is not obvious.
I-intentionality which is not conceptual, viz., intuition.

A weaker weakened version of the “all-or-nothing” principle would state that without the basic functions of judgment in play, there can be no *determinate* cognition of nor any intentional relation to any object. This version of the interpretation I take to be correct. The basic role Kant assigns to understanding is to make indeterminate cognitions determinate through judgment.\(^\text{16}\) Kant repeatedly refers to intuitions as modes of cognition (e.g., at A68/B92-3; A320/B377), yet these are non-conceptual and hence pre-judgmental. This is in line with the claim that the basic functions of judgment are necessary for *determinate* cognition, but that there can still be cognitive relations to objects prior to this judgmental activity. Intuitions present indeterminate objects, and these objects are then handed over to the determining power of the understanding. Correlatively, it would also be correct to say that without the full spectrum of judgmental powers in play, we could have no knowledge nor objectively valid cognition of objects. But this does not entail that objects are not representable at all without these judgmental powers in play.

Abela’s mistake is that he exaggerates the demands placed on Kant’s theory by the Priority Thesis. The Priority Thesis states that our awareness of external objective states does not depend on our awareness of internal mental states. (In the language of Chapter 2, I-objective representations are not in general dependent on I-subjective representations.) Abela misinterprets this in two important respects. First, in holding that there can be no determinate facts about anything independently of the exercise of the faculty of judgment, he incorrectly infers that there can be no pre-synthetic facts of the matter about sensation qua brute impression on the

\(^{16}\) At A20/B34 intuitions are said to relate merely to “indeterminate objects.” Later Kant will assign to understanding the task of determining these objects: “Thinking is cognition through concepts. Concepts, however, as predicates of possible judgments, are related to some representation of a still undetermined object” (A69/B94).
senses (i.e., E-sensations). And from this he infers that sensations are not relevant to the normative and epistemically significant structure of cognition and can thus play no guiding role in determining the content of our representations. Second, in holding that we can only be aware of objects if we cognize them in terms of the full spectrum of physical body concepts laid out in the Analytic of Principles, Abela mistakenly disallows any mode of non-conceptual awareness. To be aware of something is different from knowing it, but Abela mistakenly believes that the conditions on the former are as strict as on the latter.

I’ve already shown why I think the second point is incorrect (see Chapter 3 and Appendix A). With respect to the first however, there is the interesting question of whether and how pre-synthetic facts about sensation may play a determining role (and hence an epistemically significant role) in cognition. For just to say that there are pre-synthetic facts of the matter about sensation does not in itself rule out the lego-model of the role of sensation in intuition. It could be the case after all that though a set of sensations possesses a certain set of qualities, these qualities might not correspond in any way to the content represented by the intuition into which they are formed. The primary motivation for rejecting this possibility, and thereby going with something closer to the jigsaw puzzle model, is that without a guidedness of representation by the world via sensation all claims to a meaningful connection to a mind-independent reality vanish. Thinkers like Abela and McDowell will have it that non-conceptual mental events within the merely causal order can play no determining role in the formation of our representations. But if this is right, then Kant’s theory collapses into a form of solipsism or free-floating coherentism (resembling some of the theories that came in the generation or two after Kant).\textsuperscript{17} For McDowell at

\textsuperscript{17}For instance, in Fichte’s notoriously convoluted and obscure \textit{Wissenschaftslehre} of 1794, he argues that all of our representations can be traced back to the activities of the spontaneous thinking subject. Although he agrees that we necessarily represent the world \textit{as though} it exists
least, this would be a good thing. But I do not think it can be Kant’s considered view. One of the ways in which Kant wants to distinguish himself from Berkeley is by appeal to the thing in itself, and the claim that affection of the subject by things in themselves causes our representations of appearances, and that these appearances correspond to things in themselves.\textsuperscript{18} In order for this correspondence relation to be non-trivial, there must be some informational flow from the affection of things in themselves on the subject up to the formation of representations of appearances, and this informational flow must pass through the intermediary of sensation, which is the immediate effect of this affection.

In other words, we have a sort of transcendental argument for sensory guidedness at work here. There is first the intuition that there must be \textit{something} in virtue of which any given empirical representation represents these particular qualities (and not others) in this particular arrangement (and not another). This content is determined either by the rules and operations of the understanding alone, or by these rules and operations as they are guided by the particular sensory input given as E-sensations. If it is the former, then all talk of correspondence between appearance and thing in itself becomes meaningless because the content and veridicality of rep-

\textsuperscript{18}As indicated, for instance, at A30/B45.
resentations would be determined only by the content of other representations and not through any “friction from the world.” This is certainly not Kant’s position, therefore his view must be the latter.

It must be admitted that this line of argument is highly reconstructive and must be pieced together on Kant’s behalf out of various related pieces of his theory. There have been several prominent scholars in recent decades who have found the need to impute such an argument to Kant. In the remainder of this discussion, I’ll discuss the attempts by Sellars, Pippin and Watkins to locate such an argument in the Critique.

In Science and Metaphysics, Sellars criticizes Kant for not being clear enough about the distinction between sensations and intuitions, and he complains that Kant remained silent about a necessary consequence of his view. If space and time are the forms of intuitions, but not of sensations in themselves (i.e., as they are initially received), then there must be a different order obtaining among sensations, which yet somehow corresponds to the spatial order which will be represented in the intuition. According to Sellars, for every spatial property represented by an empirical intuition there will correspond a space-like property (which is not actually spatial) in the pre-conscious sensory manifold. Likewise, for every phenomenal quality represented in the body, e.g., color, there will be a color-like property (which is not actually colored) in the sensory manifold. Sellars does not think that such a view is incoherent,

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19James Van Cleve gives a similar argument in his Problems From Kant (Oxford University Press, 1999). Approvingly summarizing C.D. Broad, he asks, “Is the difference in my perceptions due solely to the initiative of my own mind, or is it due directly to some nonspatial difference in the things in themselves that gave rise to the sensations?”; the first option is dismissed as “incredible,” and an explanation in terms of the second is then sought (p. 156).

20Sellars says that “[s]uch a Kant would have distinguished between: (a) the non-conceptual representations of outer sense proper which, although conveniently described as impressions of spatial complexes, are strictly speaking non-spatial complexes of unextended and uncolored impressions; (b) the intuitive (but conceptual) representations of extended structures located in space” (p. 28).

21He writes, “On the one hand, there would be the intuitive (but conceptual) representation (intuitive or discursive (A68/B93)) of objects and events. On the other hand, there would be
but he complains that Kant needed to be more upfront about these two “forms of receptivity”; Kant failed “to distinguish clearly between the “forms” of receptivity proper and the “forms” of that which is represented by the intuitive conceptual representations which are “guided” by receptivity.”

In distinguishing between a form (and, implicitly, a matter) of the pre-conceptual sensory given and a form (and matter) of the object represented by an intuition, Sellars wants to make room for a sensory guidedness which can be traced back to a pre-conceptual and pre-intentional level. The view he has in mind is, I believe, something like the following. If, contrary to fact, we had cognitive access to the given E-sensations that occur at any moment within sensibility, call them $s_1, \ldots, s_n,$ we would notice that each of $s_1, \ldots, s_n$ had a specific quality with a specific degree of intensity, call them $q_1, \ldots, q_n$. Furthermore, all of $s_1, \ldots, s_n$, in virtue of existing within the same manifold, will stand in some set of relations to each other, call it $R$. These are just so many matters of fact about the sensory manifold. Sellars suggests that Kant must think that these matters of fact about the sensory manifold are somehow causally responsible for the representational content of the intuition that they come to constitute. Presumably Sellars has the productive imagination in mind regarding what combines the sensory given into the intuition. However this the attributes of and relations between the impressions of pure receptivity. Though, as has been pointed out, we conceive of certain of these attributes and relations as counterparts of spatial attributed proper, they would not literally be the spatial attributes and relations in terms of which we conceptually represent physical objects and events. (That color and color relations should have been given a similar treatment is clearly part of the burden of my argument)” (p. 29).

22Sellars, p. 29.

23Note that the matter and form in question is not the same as either of the matter/form pairs discussed in Chapter 3 (§3.2.1, p. 125ff.). There I distinguished the matter and form of intuitions as mental states, and of appearances as the objects of intuitions. The matter and form that Sellars is referring to here are of the sensory manifold itself, considered in abstraction from its synthesis into intuition. That is, it is the matter and form of a manifold of E-sensations considered as such.

24The determination of the content of intuition by the sensory given must be merely causal because since the sensory given is pre-conscious and pre-synthetic, the sensory given cannot be a part of the normative and conceptual determination of representational content.
is supposed to work, Sellars’s claim is that the content of the empirical intuition corresponds (in some non-trivial sense) to the matters of fact about the pre-conscious sensory given. The intuition will represent qualities in its object, \( q_1^*, ..., q_n^* \) which correspond to the qualities of the sensory given. And \( q_1^*, ..., q_n^* \) will be represented at the particular locations they are because they will thereby stand to each other in a set of spatial relations \( R^* \) which corresponds to the relations \( R \) obtaining at the level of the sensory given. (through some isomorphism between \( R \) and \( R^* \)) In this way, even Sellars will allow that there is a non-conceptual constraint on the formation of empirical representations, and that the sensory given is therefore epistemically relevant. If this is how Sellars understands things working for Kant, then I think his reconstruction is correct. We can only make sense of a determination of the content of a representation by sensation if there are determinate facts of the matter about sensation which are in some sense responsible for the content of the representations we come to form.

In Robert Pippin’s treatment of the relation between sensation and form in Kant’s theory of cognition, Pippin follows closely Sellars’s reconstruction.\(^{26}\) He agrees that there must be some analogical relations between the sensory given on the one hand and the order represented by sensory representations on the other. The former is inaccessible to consciousness, but we infer that it is there by way of a transcendental inference to some mode of contact with the world which guides our empirical representings. However, Pippin interprets this guidedness in a highly attenuated sense. He argues that the only thing that could count as a guiding constraint on the formation of our representations is a guidedness in accordance with the basic

\(^{25}\)See Van Cleve (op. cit. ch. 10) regarding some of the complications surrounding the notion of isomorphisms between relations in appearance and relations among pre-cognitive impacts on the sensing subject.

functions of understanding, viz., the categories and their corresponding principles. But this implies that “we are so guided by our sensory experience only to the extent that we follow our own rules for what counts as guidedness.” This aspect of his reconstruction places Pippin’s theory much closer to Abela’s than might initially appear. While it initially sounded like Pippin thought Sellars’s account would describe a substantive constraint of mind-independent reality on the representation thereof, we are instead “back where we started, with sensations described as the undifferentiated material of experience or as so indirectly related to our spontaneity as, in either case, to be unintelligible in any guiding role.”

Stated in terms of the lego- and jigsaw-models, while we may be able to cognize the situation as though sensation provides a substantive constraint on intuition formation (jigsaw-model), strictly speaking, it is always the understanding dictating to sensations what significance they can have (lego-model). Pippin is not so bothered by this result, arguing that Kant has “reinterpreted the only sense ‘guidedness’ could have for finite creatures like us.” I don’t think that this is a satisfying position though. The sensory guidedness of our representations is thus merely ersatz. Pippin promised to walk us “between the Scylla of idealism (a self-determining, wholly ‘internal’ model of experience) and the Charybdis of foundationalist epistemologies (with the postulation of ‘givens’ that cannot do the work they are meant to perform).” Instead though, we’ve been tossed to the Scylla with a wink and the reassurance that we shouldn’t worry because we couldn’t have hoped for anything better anyway. This ersatz and merely apparent constraint is not sufficient to avoid

27 Pippin, p. 51.
28 Abela himself notices the affinity between his view and Pippins (Kant’s Empirical Realism, p. 52-3).
29 Pippin, p. 51.
30 Pippin, p. 51-52
31 Pippin, p. 50
the charge of self-determining idealism.

Eric Watkins picks up the Sellarsian thread also, but he follows it in a different direction than Pippin.\(^\text{32}\) Responding to McDowell’s accusation that in postulating an implicit theory of empirical guidedness in Kant Sellars inadvertently falls prey to the very myth of the given that he himself first warned us about, Watkins argues that there is a legitimate epistemological role for the given to play, and that this role is no myth. Granting that “sensations are simply the naturalistically describable causal effect of objects on us, and concepts and judgments that use them involve epistemic facts,”\(^\text{33}\) Watkins wants nevertheless to show that there is a sense in which the occurrence of the former can influence the activity of the latter. He thinks we can make sense of an empirical guidedness of cognition by sensations when we recognize that concepts are essentially functions: a concept is “a unifying function that requires an input for the formation of a new kind of representation as output.”\(^\text{34}\) Neither the input (sensation) nor the function (concept) determine on their own the output (conceptualized empirical representation), but they do both play a role. The same input with a different function would yield a different output, and the same goes for a different input with the same function. Understanding the relation between sensations and empirical cognition in this way allows for a response to the accusation that allowing sensation an epistemic function falls into the myth of the given. This is because treating sensations as natural inputs to functions that yield normative outputs does not require treating these sensations themselves as both normative and natural. On Watkins’s take on the Sellarsian reading, we can make both of the following claims without inconsistency: 1) Only conceptual activities are


\(^{33}\text{Watkins, p. 520.}\)

\(^{34}\text{Watkins, p. 521.}\)
normatively significant within the space of reasons, and thus can be the bearers of beliefs or judgments; and 2) conceptual activities are brought about initially because of non-normative facts about the sensory given.

I think Watkins’s response to McDowell is basically right. One does not fall into the Myth of the Given by assigning a constraining or guiding role to sensation, so long as this constraint can be accounted for without treating sensations as the bearers of normative content. However, I would make two important additions to his sketch of how the theory might look. Firstly, it can’t be quite right that the functions taking sensory data as inputs are *individual* concepts. On Watkins’s model, concepts are treated as what logicians refer to as “characteristic functions,” i.e., functions which give ‘yes’ or ‘no’ answers when a given input is or is not a member of some set. So the concept *dog* will yield a ‘yes’ output when presented with a sensation of a dog, but a ‘no’ output when presented with a sensation of a cat. The problem with this understanding of concepts is that it cannot explain how the *correct* concepts get chosen as the appropriate function to interpret a given input. For instance, if I see a dog walk unexpectedly by, there must be some reason why I think ‘dog’ rather than ‘not cat’ or ‘not house’ or ‘not *Critique of Pure Reason.*’ The fact that I immediately think ‘dog’ indicates that there must be some more basic function that sorts through all available concepts and then comes up with the characteristic function (concept of *dog*), such that the latter can then give its quick ‘yes’ or ‘no’ response. Positing this extra layer of functions seems unnecessary when we could account for the same work being done by one function whose task it is to assign concepts to inputs. Hence instead, I think we should think of the function linking sensory data to concepts as a faculty which performs recognitional and sorting functions on the given data, and then picks out the appropriate concept(s) from its entire stock of concepts. Probably, Kant would assign this task to the understanding in the guise of the “intellectual
synthesis” of the imagination.35

Secondly, it would help to be more precise regarding what sort of inputs are given to what sort of functions in order to yield intuitive and conceptual representations of objects. We wouldn’t want to say that sensations as such are the input to conceptual functions because this would bypass the important role of intuition. (Although Watkins describes the situation in this way, he doesn’t want to commit himself to the claim that that is the only possible story that could be told.) Empirical intuitions, which, as we’ve seen, are ordered collections of sensations, are what are given as input to the intellectual synthesis. Sensations are the input to a different function, namely, what Kant calls the figurative synthesis, i.e., “the synthesis of the manifold of intuition” (B151). First sensations are formed into intuitions, which are representations of qualities arrayed in space, and then these intuitions are conceptualized by the understanding. Thus the model should include not just one input-function-output triad, constituted by sensation, concept and affirmation or negation outputs. On my reading there are two such triads. First sensations are input to the figurative synthesis to yield intuitions. Then, intuitions are input to the intellectual synthesis to yield conceptualizations of objects given in intuitions.

In short, I think that the correct interpretation of the sensory determination is closer to the jigsaw-model because only by appeal to it can a meaningful link to mind-independent reality be secured. It is important to note one respect in which the analogy to jigsaw pieces is imperfect. With a jigsaw puzzle, each piece has only one correct place in the entire image, and each whole puzzle will display only one correct image. Things are not so with sensations in empirical intuitions. For any given sensory manifold there will be several different possible intuitions that could be the result of their synthesis into an intuition. Let’s say for instance that I am looking

35Cf. B151 on the intellectual and figurative syntheses.
at a penny from a sharp angle, but I don’t know that that is what I am looking at. It is possible that in this situation I will form a representation of an elliptical object which I am facing directly instead of a circular object which I am facing at an angle. These would be two distinct intuitions (both external) with distinct contents, but formed out of the same set of sensations. Similarly, if for some reason at that moment I decided to reflect on my perceptual situation, I might come to represent my sensations as such and form an inner intuition of my own sensory state. Again, this would be an intuition with a content very different from the first two, yet one still made from the same set of sensations.

The issues addressed in this Appendix mark the first tentative forays into epistemology proper. The specific determinations that we come to cognize in objects depends on the contents initially presented in empirical intuition. This content, in turn, depends on the data initially given in the manifold of sensation. Sensations are thus epistemically significant because they determine the range of conceptual contents that can legitimately be applied to objects sensed in intuition. In Chapters 4 and 5 I will address some of the issues regarding the extent to which sensations determine the application of concepts of reality and actuality to sensed objects.
Part II

Understanding
Chapter 4

Sensation, Reality, and Intensive Magnitudes

The role of sensibility is to give objects to the mind, and the role of understanding is to think them. In Part I, I explained how sensations make possible an intentional reference to objects in representation, thereby giving the mind objects to think. We saw there that collections of sensations are synthesized into empirical intuitions, which are nonconceptual representations of sensible qualities arrayed in space. Empirical intuitions are not sufficient for thought about an object because they only present sensible qualities brutally and individually, not as instances of general kinds. The ability to recognize the properties of an object as instances of general kinds is necessary for thought because without this recognition the content of the representation cannot be taken up recursively into more complex representations and be combined with other representations or compared with other objects. This cognitive ability requires the application of concepts to the mere sensible qualities given in intuition. In this chapter I will discuss the most basic concept necessary for representing an empirical object—the concept of reality. For it is in virtue of a thing’s
realities that it is distinguished as something rather than nothing.\textsuperscript{1} Kant claims that
to apply the concept of reality to an empirical object in perception, i.e., to make
a judgment that an object possesses a certain type of reality, requires the presence
of sensation.\textsuperscript{2} Although it is true that \textit{all} empirical concepts require sensation for
their formation, the concept of reality is privileged in this sense because this concept
is necessary for the application of any other empirical concept. One cannot specify
in judgment what sort of thing an empirical object is, nor what features it shares
with other things, without first specifying, even if only tacitly, what it is in virtue of
which the object is something rather than nothing.

The category of reality, which occurs under the heading of “quality” in the
table of the categories, is the only category whose schematized definition refers ex-
plicitly to sensation. Sensation and reality are said to “correspond” to each other,
and sensations are necessary for the application of the concept of reality to an object.
Kant’s fullest treatment of the category of reality, and of its relation to sensation,
occurs in the section titled Anticipations of Perception. There he argues that it is
necessary \textit{a priori} that all objects of experience, i.e., all appearances in time and
space, will be realities possessing determinate “intensive” or “continuous” magni-
tudes (following Kant, I’ll use these terms interchangeably). I’ll refer to this claim
as the “principle of intensive magnitude.” What is most puzzling about the argu-
ment for this principle is that it seems to rest only on the claim that sensations also
possess intensive magnitudes. That is, we know \textit{a priori} that realities in objects are

\textsuperscript{1}Cf. 28:411 (\textit{Metaphysik Vigilantius}): “Reality means that whose concept contains a being,
negation that [whose concept] contains a nonbeing” (my translation).

\textsuperscript{2}My discussion in this entire chapter will be focussed on judgments made when in the sensory
presence of an object. That is, I am concerned with determinations of the reality of an object
\textit{while it is perceived by me}. It is of course possible to make judgments of the reality of an object
independently of the simultaneous perception of that object, but this is only possible if the epistemic
grounds of that judgment can be traced back to sensations, whether in the subject’s own memory
or in someone else’s.
intensive magnitudes because we know \emph{a priori} that sensations are. While it is clear \emph{that} Kant is making such an inference, \emph{how} this inference is supposed to work is not spelled out in any detail in his discussion of the principle.

It is disappointing that this argument gets so little treatment in the literature, for Kant makes it clear that the principle of intensive magnitudes has an important connection with his physical theory of matter (articulated originally in the \textit{Physical Monadology} (1756), and then in revised form in the \textit{Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science} (1786)). The principle of intensive magnitudes lays the groundwork for the dynamical conception of matter according to which density and solidity are not absolute and immutable features of bodies, but instead result from the interaction of opposed repulsive and attractive forces. In contrast to the prevailing theories of the time, the density of a completely filled volume can vary. The Anticipations of Perception is thus one of the only passages of the \textit{Critique} which might yield results that go beyond the purely philosophical and entail claims that would force a revision of the physical theory of his time.$^3$

As the Anticipations chapter has not been thoroughly discussed in the literature, the argument for the principle of intensive magnitudes has not been given the attention it deserves, nor has it been given an adequate reconstruction. My goal in this chapter is to give such a reconstruction. Drawing on the interpretation of empirical intuition defended in chapter 3, I will argue that Kant can only arrive at

\begin{itemize}
\item The other principles of pure understanding, e.g., those in the Analogies, also describe necessary features of bodies. But the fact that bodies are substances, or that they interact in accordance with lawlike regularity was already more or less agreed upon be scientists and natural philosophers during Kant’s time. All he added was the transcendental necessity of these features of objects and the claim that we know them as synthetic \emph{a priori} truths. The principle of intensive magnitudes, however, if defensible, would amount to a novel scientific (not merely philosophical) result. As far as I am aware, the only other claim from the \textit{Critique} that also entails a scientifically substantive result is the claim from the discussion of the Second Antinomy that matter is infinitely divisible (which, incidentally, like the principle of intensive magnitudes is also grounded in a consideration of continuity).
\end{itemize}
his transcendental principle of the continuity of realities in objects if he takes this physical continuity to be metaphysically dependent on the continuity displayed by sensations. This is in contrast to the interpretation of some commentators who argue that Kant argues from the continuity of sensations to the continuity of realities in objects by way of an inference to the cause of the sensation: since sensations are intensive magnitudes, the object that caused them must also be an intensive magnitude. I will argue that if this were Kant’s argument, it would be a complete failure. The continuity of sensation does not depend on the continuity of realities in objects; instead, I will argue, the reverse is true. Physical objects must be represented as possessing intensive degrees of reality because the sensations themselves, which initially stand in for these objects in intuition, possess intensive degrees of reality. That is, when we judge a degree of reality in an object perceived in sensory consciousness, we are saying of the sensations that they are physical realities in space, possessing determinate degrees. This result, I will argue, is further evidence for reading Kant as an intentional object phenomenalist: The objects of experience are to be understood as mere intentional objects\(^4\) which are constructed out of received sensory data as interpreted by the \textit{a priori} forms of cognition; the realities in these objects are represented as continuous magnitudes because the sensations out of which the representations of these objects are constituted are themselves continuous magnitudes. Just as some of the features of a building material determine some of the structural features of the building, so too certain metaphysical features of sensory matter determine features of the objects represented in sensory consciousness.

The discussion will proceed as follows. Since the goal of the chapter is to understand the \textit{a priori} component of all judgments of reality, we must first get

\(^4\)Recall that in Chapter 3 I argued that Kant’s empirical objects have no ontological status beyond their being what is articulated by the content of certain complex representational states.
clear on what it means to make a judgment of reality. Hence in §4.1 I will analyze what constitutes the content of a judgment of reality. I will argue that there are four different classes of entities to which Kant thinks the category of reality has legitimate empirical application: physical properties,\textsuperscript{5} physical substances, conscious states, and consciousness itself. Since my concern is primarily with judgments of realities in physical objects, I will focus on the first two of these, and the relation between them. In §4.2 I will offer my reconstruction of the argument of the Anticipations. After sketching the argument structure as Kant presents it, I will argue that the biggest puzzle of the argument has to do with the inference from the continuity of sensation to the continuity of realities in objects (§4.2.1). In §4.2.2 I will articulate and reject one interpretation of this inference, and in §4.2.3 I will present my own interpretation of how I think it works. Lastly, in §4.3, I will further articulate this interpretation in response to several objections.

### 4.1 Judgments of Reality

Before we can examine the relation between sensation and judgments of reality, we must first be clear about what it means to make a judgment of reality in the first place. In this section, I will first examine the concept of reality itself, and then the different types of realities that the concept can be applied to. This will leave us with an account of what the content of a judgment of reality is, and we will then be in a position to examine the Anticipations’s argument about the relation between sensation and judgments of reality.

\textsuperscript{5}I use the term ‘physical’ here in the normal contemporary sense, referring to material bodies in space and time. Kant will often use the term \textit{Physik} as synonymous with the greek ψυ&kappa;νή, or “nature,” which refers to the contents of the entire world insofar as they are potential objects of scientific classification. In this sense, the “physical” would include the mental (as does Kant’s \textit{Natur}), but I will refer to the physical in the contemporary, restricted sense.
4.1.1 The Category of Reality

The concept of reality (Realität, or sometimes simply das Reale) is the first category under the heading of quality (A80/B106) and it corresponds to the affirmative form of judgment (A70/B95). Kant frustratingly declines the opportunity to define the categories when he introduces them in §10 of the *Critique*, but we get something close to a definition in the Schematism chapter. There he says that “Reality is in the pure concept of the understanding that to which a sensation in general corresponds, that, therefore, the concept of which in itself indicates a being (in time)” (A143/B182). Because of the reference to sensation and to time, this definition cannot be taken as a definition of reality *simpliciter*, but instead as the definition of the schematized concept of reality, i.e., the concept insofar as it is considered in relation to the human forms of sensibility and to the possibility of its application in empirical cognition. We can infer how Kant expected us to understand the unschematized (i.e., pure) concept of reality through his understanding of the corresponding affirmative form of judgment. In the *Jäsche Logic*, Kant writes that “in the affirmative judgment the subject is thought under the sphere of a predicate” (9:103). By this he means simply that in affirmative judgments the predicate is stated positively of the subject, e.g., ‘Socrates is a man.’\(^6\) Given the parallelism between the forms of judgment and the categories,\(^7\) we can understand the category of reality to be the concept of something insofar as it possesses a positive determination (i.e., a feature which marks a being or presence, as opposed to a nonbeing or absence), and in general, a concept

\(^{6}\)This is in contrast to both negative and infinite judgments, which are the other two “qualitative” forms of judgment. In negative judgments, a privative predicate is attributed to the subject (e.g., “Socrates is unmanly”). In infinite judgments, a subject is said to lie in the “infinite” sphere outside the sphere of the predicate (e.g., “Socrates is not a woman”).

\(^{7}\)The connection between the affirmative form of judgment and the concept of reality is made explicit in Meier’s translation of Baumgarten’s *Metaphysics*: “A true [wahrhaftig] affirmative determination is a reality (realitas)” (Baumgarten, Alexander Gottlieb, *Metaphysik, üb. von Georg Friederich Meier*, 1783, §31).
will fall under the category of reality if it is a concept of a positive determination (e.g., weight, redness, happiness, etc. as opposed to weightlessness, colorlessness, or unhappiness, etc.).\textsuperscript{8} The idea gets its fullest expression in Kant’s discussion of God as \textit{ens realissimum} and ground of \textit{omnitudo realitatis} in the Transcendental Ideal (A571/B599ff.):

Through this possession of all reality, however, there is also represented the concept of a \textbf{thing in itself} which is thoroughly determined, and the concept of an \textit{ens realissimum} is the concept of an individual being, because of all possible opposed predicates, one, namely that which belongs absolutely to being, is encountered in its determination. (A576/B604)

God is said to be the “most real being” because the idea of God is the idea of a thing that possesses every possible positive (i.e., affirmative) determination that a thing can have. Reality, then, is the concept of a thing in virtue of which that thing has being, i.e., in virtue of which it \textit{is} as opposed to \textit{is not}, or is something rather than nothing.\textsuperscript{9}

One important point to make about Kant’s use of the term “reality” is its difference from the terms “actuality” (\textit{Wirklichkeit}), “existence” (\textit{Dasein} or \textit{Existentz}) and “being” (\textit{Sein}). In many contemporary ways of speaking these terms are used interchangeably, and are all simply ways of expressing about a thing that “it is.” Kant, however, wants to keep the concept of reality separate from these other concepts. The ground of this distinction comes out most clearly in his discussion of the impossibility of an ontological proof for the existence of God. According to such

\textsuperscript{8}Which predicates are to count as “positive determinations” in the relevant sense will be a matter of empirical investigation in most cases. For instance, physical theories have been in agreement since antiquity that heat is a real property of an object. But whether cold is to be understood as an equal and opposed real property, or instead the mere privation of heat, was in dispute during Kant’s time. Kant himself gives evidence in support of the former thesis (since refuted of course) that cold is a real determination (\textit{Negative Magnitudes} (1763), 2:185ff.), hence the proper object of a judgment of reality. Any judgment which attempts to determine the intensive magnitude of coldness is thus erroneous.

\textsuperscript{9}Cf. R6338a: “Definition: The quality of a thing is the determination that represents it as a something or as a mere absence, i.e., whose concept contains a being or non-being.”
a proof, the concept of God is taken to analytically entail the concept of existence (or being or actuality), and thus from God’s possibility is supposed to follow his actuality. Against this argument, Kant famously objects that “Being is obviously not a real predicate, i.e., a concept of something that could add to the concept of a thing” and that “the actual contains nothing more than the merely possible” (A598-9/B626-7). The reason for this is that “not the least bit gets added to the thing when I posit in addition that this thing is” (ibid.). Kant makes this point using his famous example of the difference between 100 actual thalers and 100 imagined thalers; both concepts contain the exact same set of determinations, and positing the existence of the money in no way alters the concept of it nor increases its content.10

Reality, on the other hand, is a “real” predicate.11 To say of something that it has some sort of reality is to make a difference in the content of the concept of that thing, and thereby to say something substantive about it, as opposed to about the contingent and synthetic relation between the concept of the thing and the concept of the world. Specifically, to say that something has reality is to say that it possesses a certain positive (as opposed to privative) determination. The relation between reality and actuality is that something can only be actual, i.e., be in existence, insofar as it possesses at least some positive determinations, i.e., realities.12 To say of something

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10Of course to say of something that it is actual is not by any means a vacuous assertion. In saying that something is actual, we are making a substantive claim about the world and what is in it. Kant’s point is that the judgment that something is actual does not alter our concept of the object, but instead alters our concept of the world and what is contained in it.

11To be precise, reality is a real predicate only when applied to empirical objects. Since noumenal entities cannot be given in intuition, we passive, finite cognizers are capable of applying no real predicates to them.

12Kant makes this point explicit in his metaphysics lectures (Metaphysik Vigilantius, 1794-5): “Finally reality consists objectively in materiality [Sachheit] or something positive – and that which is positive is perfect – and an object must have something positive, and can have many positives or perfections. A merely negative thing, i.e., something which would have nothing positive at all, is a direct contradiction, for even the being of the thing already involves something positive, otherwise, if this were also negative, it would be no thing, since here the object is considered only materially.” (29:1001).
that it is actual is to say that some collection of realities are instantiated in the world (and bear a certain relation to our cognitive capacities, as we’ll see in Chapter 5); to say of something that is is real is to say something about what kind of entity the thing is. In general, the \textit{being} of a thing (which is a genus higher than both actuality and reality) is constituted by the sum of realities which make that thing up. This is why Kant will often equate the term \textit{Realit"{a}t} with \textit{Sachheit} (which can be translated either as “thinghood” or “materiality”).\textsuperscript{13} The reality of a thing is the material out of which that thing is constituted.

A further difference is that while existence and actuality are all or nothing affairs (something either exists or it doesn’t), reality comes in \textit{degrees}, that is, it is quantified in terms of “intensive magnitudes.” Kant explains intensive magnitudes, and their contrast with extensive magnitudes, in terms of part-whole relations. A magnitude is “extensive” when it can be apprehended through the successive addition of homogeneous units; hence extensive magnitudes are necessarily thought of as multiplicities (cf. A161/B201ff.). Kant says that in representations of extensive magnitudes, “the representation of the parts makes possible the representation of the whole (and therefore necessarily precedes the latter)” (A162/B203). Paradigmatically, when we determine the spatial size and shape of something (or its temporal duration), we determine its extensive magnitude. Intensive magnitudes, on the other hand, are those “which can only be apprehended as a unity, and in which multiplicity can only be represented through approximation to negation = 0” (A168/B210). Because they can only be grasped “as a unity,” they are grasped as wholes first, and any

\textsuperscript{13}A transcendental negation, on the contrary, signifies non-being in itself, and is opposed to transcendental affirmation, which is a Something, the concept of which in itself already expresses a being, and hence is called reality (thinghood \textit{[Sachheit]}), because through it alone, and only as far as it reaches, are objects Something (things)” (A574/B602). “Reality of a thing, according to the sense of the word, is the \textit{materiality} \textit{[Sachheit]} of the thing, therefore something positive in itself” (\textit{Metaphysik Vigilantius}, 29:998). See also A143/B182 and R3063.
multiplicity (or “parts”) within these magnitudes can only be thought through the imagined possibility of a continuous decrease in the magnitude towards “negation.”

This epistemological point about the priority of the apprehension of the whole is meant to indicate something about intensive magnitudes themselves, viz., that they are magnitudes that (unlike extensive magnitudes) are entirely and wholly present at a point (whether in space or time). Intensive magnitudes cannot be made smaller through division or separation, but only through diminution. And in general, the intensive magnitude of a given entity will vary completely independently of its extensive magnitude, such that, for instance, two bodies of vastly different sizes can yet have the same “degree” of heat throughout.\textsuperscript{14}

The full significance of these claims won’t be drawn out until my discussion of the argument of the Anticipations. For now, the important point to take with us is the idea that to say of something that it possesses a certain reality is not simply to say that it has that positive determination, but also that it has it to a certain degree.\textsuperscript{15} Two things possessing the same type of reality can differ in terms of the degree to which they possess that reality. The sun and a candle share ‘luminescence’ as one of their positive determinations, but the one has it to a much greater degree than the other. The same could be said of gold and pyrite, which both possess the positive determination ‘density,’ but to different degrees. In general, then, any judgment of a reality in an object will involve the application of a 2-place predicate to that object: a specification of what kind of reality is instantiated and a specification of the degree

\textsuperscript{14}Cf. \textit{Metaphysik Vigilantius}, 29:999: “A drop of boiling water is indeed less than a full kettle, but both are equally hot.”

\textsuperscript{15}Kant was not the first modern philosopher to say that reality comes in degrees. Descartes’ famous “causal” argument for the existence of God relies on the notion that the “perfections” contained in the “objective realities” of our ideas can be ranked in terms of degrees. Similarly, Spinoza, in his account of power, identifies realities with perfections, and says that both of these concepts are functions of the degree of causal power possessed by an entity.
Note that Kant’s claim is not simply that two things can differ in their degrees of reality. This is a claim that Descartes or Spinoza would agree with. For instance, according to Descartes, substances and accidents are both real, but substance is more real than accident (because of the asymmetric ontological dependency relation between them). Kant’s claim is stronger than this. He is claiming that any given kind of reality (whether substantial or accidental, as we’ll see shortly) can vary in terms of its reality. So it isn’t just that material substance has more reality than, say, color. Kant will also say that some bits of matter have more reality than other bits.

Thus far we’ve seen that the concept of reality describes a thing insofar as it a) possesses a positive determination b) to a certain (intensive) degree. This highly abstract conception of the concept of reality is merely formal and does not tell us anything substantive about its possible use in cognition. For this, we must look at Kant’s discussion of the category as it is used in judgments about the empirical world. In general, an empirical reality will be any positive determination that can be apprehended in empirical cognition through sensation. What sort of positive determinations does Kant have in mind? The examples he gives throughout his work are few but varied, and their range is instructive in trying to determine what will count as a reality in Kant’s theory. In the Critique he refers to the perceivable qualities of objects as examples of degrees of realities: “Every color, e.g., red, has a degree, which, however small it may be, is never the smallest, and it is the same with warmth, with the moment of gravity, etc.” (A169/B211). Warmth is the most

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16Kant will sometimes refer to intensive magnitudes as “continuous” magnitudes or even “flowing” magnitudes (A170/B211). This terminology is not meant to indicate that such magnitudes are never static. Rather, the point is that their determinate degrees can only be specified through the representation of the possibility of their continuous decrease to nothing.
straightforward example here. The quantity of heat in a volume of matter can vary continuously even though the volume itself remains fixed. The term “moment of gravity” presumably refers to the strength of the attractive force of one massive body acting on another. What it would mean for the color on an object (not to be confused with the sensation thereof) to have a degree would depend on Kant’s ontology of color, which, to my knowledge, is nowhere specified. He might have in mind something about the reflectance properties of the surface, or he might be thinking of light compositions as functions of surface properties and illumination conditions, or perhaps something else. Either way, his point is that this is the sort of property whose value can vary on a continuum of possible degrees.

In addition to these properties of bodies, Kant also indicates that the very material of bodies themselves is a mode of reality and comes in degrees. This is implicit in Kant’s treating of “the matter of appearance” and “the real of appearance” as synonymous. Both are said to “correspond” to sensation (A20/B34; A165; B207, A175/B217, A581/B609, A723/B751), and both are said to be that in virtue of which an object fills space (B18, A174/B216, A413/B440, MFNS 4:496). Hence not only the properties of phenomenal substance, but also the material underlying these properties display intensive degrees of reality.

And lastly, Kant claims that mental states possess degrees of reality. Kant will refer to “the real of sensation” (B207), indicating that the qualities displayed by sensations are themselves realities, and the argument of the Anticipations (as we’ll soon see) is premised on the notion that sensations are mental events bearing intensive magnitudes. Further, he will argue in his metaphysics lectures that “knowledge, representations, yes even the consciousness of human beings have many degrees, without one being able to determine the smallest” (Metaph. Vig., 29:1000). And in the Critique he will go so far as to argue (against Mendelssohn) that the
very existence of the substance of the soul itself can gradually vanish and cease to be: “For even consciousness always has a degree, which can always be diminished; consequently, so does the faculty of being conscious to one self, and likewise with all the other faculties” (B414).17

These examples of types of realities fall into four separate classes along two separate distinctions. First, there are realities of outer sense (warmth, color, material substance) and realities of inner sense (sensation, consciousness, the existence of the soul itself). Second, there are (what I’ll call) substantial realities (material substance and the soul considered as substance18) and accidental realities, i.e., realities which are properties or determinations of substances (warmth, color, sensation). And so among the various modes of reality found within the empirical realm, we have: 1) physical substance, 2) physical properties,19 3) mental substance, and 4) mental properties. As my task in this dissertation is to explain the function of sensation in the cognition of empirical objects, I’ll focus in the remainder of this section on the first two items on this list as well as the reality of sensation itself.

4.1.2 Substantial reality

The claim that the matter itself out of which external phenomenal substance is composed is a reality possessing an intensive magnitude marks a sharp break from some of Kant’s rationalist predecessors. The claim contradicts both the cartesian and atomist mechanist schools. According to the cartesian mechanists, matter is to be equated directly with extension. The quantity of matter in an object would thus...
be a strict function of extrinsic magnitude. As Descartes puts it, “The nature of body consists not in weight, hardness, color, or the like, but simply in extension.”

Further, he considers “unintelligible” the notion that the quantity of a body be determined by anything but extension. Given the identification of extension and matter, the existence of a universal plenum (i.e., a space in which there is no vacuum, i.e., no absence of matter) follows analytically. The atomists (e.g., Gassendi and Boyle), by contrast, rejected the identification of matter and extension, and instead posited a modern version of Democritean atoms, which were said to exist within extension, yet were ontologically distinct from it. They thus rejected the existence of a plenum, and asserted instead that every point in space would either be absolutely empty (if no atom were there) or absolutely full (if an atom were there).

What both of these schools shared was the claim that density, strictly speaking, is an absolute feature of matter, and not something that could come in degrees. Any two volumes of equal size occupied completely with matter would necessarily have the same quantity of matter. Both sought to explain the appearance of differences in density (what they called “rarefaction”) in terms of bits of material which were each absolutely dense. According to the Cartesian school, one body is more rarefied (apparently less dense) than another just in case it is more porous, i.e., has holes through which smaller pieces of matter can pass. These holes are necessarily always filled with smaller bits of matter, but insofar as these smaller bits move freely

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21 Ibid., §7.

22 These “modern Democritean atoms” are of course nothing like what we have described “atoms” since the 20th century. The atoms of the early moderns were indivisible in the strict sense that they could be divided by no natural power. The notion of a sub-atomic particle would have been as nonsensical to the early moderns as the notion of a round square.

23 Another way to put the point is that they thought that no possible force or pressure on a volume of matter could ever crush that volume into a smaller one, such that the quantity of matter remained the same, while the volume changed.
through the porous object, they do not contribute to its measured weight. Similarly, the atomists could simply appeal to the ratio of atoms to void within any given volume to explain why one chunk of matter could weigh more or less than another of equal size.

Kant makes his disagreement with these schools clear in his discussion of intensive magnitudes in the Anticipations. There he argues that the mechanists, assume that the real in space... is everywhere one and the same, and can be differentiated only according to its extensive magnitude, i.e., amount [Menge]. It is false to assume that the real in appearance is always equal in degree and differs only in aggregation and its extensive magnitude, especially when this is allegedly asserted on the basis of a principle of understanding a priori.” (A173-5/B215-6; cf. MFNS 4:532-3)

Kant’s fullest critical-period discussion of his theory of matter is found in his Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science of 1786, in which he attempts to...

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24Ibid., §6.
25The rejection of the identification of quantity of matter with extensive magnitude has its roots in Kant’s precritical writings. In the Physical Monadology of 1756, Kant shows his Leibnizian/Wolffian pedigree and argues that material substance is constituted by simple (indivisible) centers of force called monads. In language anticipating that found in his critical period writings on the subject, Kant refers to simple monads “filling space” (1:480) through the force of “impenetrability” (also called “repulsion”), which is “that property of a body, in virtue of which a thing in contact with it is excluded from the space which the body occupies” (1:482). In addition to the repulsive force, monads also possess an attractive force, which is a “striving” [conatus] opposed to repulsion (1:484). Kant argues that without an attractive force to check the repulsive force, any given bit of matter would expand to an infinite volume (1:483-4). And in addition to these two “moving forces,” Kant also argues for a force of inertia in monads, which is the power of a body to resist motion. Kant argues that the volume of any given monad (its extensive magnitude, to use the critical period language) will be determined by the attractive and repulsive forces active in a body: its volume is determined by the distance from the center at which the attractive and repulsive forces are equal. The forces themselves, however, are intensive magnitudes. Kant agrees with the received view that attraction operates according to an inverse square law, but he speculates that the repulsive force will operate according to an inverse cube law (1:484). Because of the different rates at which the two forces decrease as a function of distance from center, “there must be some point on the diameter where attraction and repulsion are equal” (1:485). (Kant goes so far as to speculate that all monads will have the same volume, even though their forces differ greatly from each other (1:485) but this claim relies on the ungrounded speculation that the ratio of attractive and repulsive forces will be constant from monad to monad.) Kant argues that the attractive and repulsive forces of bodies “will be entirely different in different elements” (1:485), and he argues that differences in the density
begin constructing a bridge from the abstract and completely *a priori* doctrine of the *Critique of Pure Reason* to an empirical (yet transcendentally grounded) science of material substance. Here we find much in common with the account of the earlier *Physical Monadology*, with the basic difference that Kant has rejected the need for monads. Instead, matter is diffused throughout space by virtue of the activity of its repulsive force. Kant argues that,

> Matter fills its space through the repulsive forces of all of its parts, that is, through an expansive force of its own, having a determinate degree \([\text{Grad}]\), such that smaller or larger degrees can be thought to infinity. (4:499)

The fact that this force is quantified in terms of its *Grad* indicates that Kant understands it as an intensive magnitude, and since Kant often equates what fills space with the real in space, this force should be understood as a reality. As in the *Physical Monadology*, Kant goes on to argue that there must be another intensive force—attraction—in addition to repulsion, because otherwise there would be no possibility of bodies with determinate sizes (4:508-9). 26 “Density” is then said to result from the balance of the two forces in any given volume of matter such that the greater the proportion of repulsive force in a volume, the greater will be its resistance to be-
of bodies (the rarefaction of the mechanists) “cannot be fully explained without reference to the specific difference in the inertia of their elements” (1:486). Furthermore, the elasticity of a body, i.e., the compression that results when two repulsive forces come in contact, varies as a function not of size or shape, but of the degree of repulsion present in the contacting bodies (1:486-7). Although in this precritical writing we do not see an equation of the moving and inertial forces of bodies with “the real” in space, we do see forces which are intensive magnitudes, and a connection between these intensive magnitudes and the “filling of space.” This filling of space by intensive forces remains in Kant’s physics through the critical period.

26Kant’s argument for the necessity of both an attractive and a repulsive force in matter goes farther in the *Metaphysical Foundations* than in the *Physical Monadology*. In the earlier writing, he simply claimed that without an attractive force, no determinate volume or boundary could be given to a body. Now he is making the more radical claim that matter would not be possible at all without both forces in play. If matter had only a repulsive force, then any given bit of matter “would disperse itself infinitely” (4:508) until it filled the entirety of the universe in undifferentiated homogeneous emptiness. And if there were only an attractive force, then all matter in the universe “would coalesce into a mathematical point” (4:511). The mutual limitation of the two allows for the possibility of distinct bodies with finite volumes.
ing compressed (which is the same as its “relative impenetrability”) (4:525-6). The density at any given point is another intensive magnitude (though it is dependent on the other two), for Kant characterizes this as “the degree of the filling of a space with determinate content” (4:525). According to the theory of matter that results from this account of the primitive forces, the quantity of matter (i.e., mass) of any given body will be the product of its extensive magnitude and average relative impenetrability (mass = volume × average density).

The strong connection between the dynamical theory of matter of the *Metaphysical Foundations* with the account of reality as the real in space in the *Critique* is made clear in Kant’s summary of the results of the chapter on dynamics.

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27Kant explains that the term density (*Dichtigkeit*) is ambiguous between two different senses. According to one sense (that preferred by the mechanists), the density of a body is a function of its rarefaction, such that one calls “one matter denser than another when it contains less emptiness, until finally that in which no part of the space is empty is called perfectly dense” (5:525). Density for them is just a function of degree of porosity (for the cartesians) or proportion of void (for the atomists). A volume is said to be absolutely or “perfectly” dense when no part of the volume is empty. Any two perfectly dense bodies will necessarily have the same weight according to the mechanists. Kant rejects the notion of perfect density in favor of “relative” density, such that there can be two volumes in which there is no empty space, yet the two bodies have different masses. “In the dynamical system [i.e., Kant’s] of a merely relative impenetrability there is no maximum or minimum of density, and yet every matter, however rarefied, can still be called completely dense” (ibid.).

28One might have thought that the moving forces were to be understood as forces of the matter itself, which underlies the forces. However Kant’s characterization of substantial realities raises the question whether there is anything to matter beyond the attractive and repulsive forces active at any given point. Rae Langton has gone so far as to argue that there is not: “Matter must have causal powers, in virtue of which it fills space, produces sensations in us, and has parts that can interact with each other. Indeed there is nothing more to matter than this causal power, this *enduring action*” (Kantian Humility, p. 169). Earlier, she had concluded that “matter, the phenomenal substance of the First Analogy, is *force*” (p. 51). I think there is something to this suggestion. The case could be made that in order for phenomenal substance (matter) to be something above and beyond its forces would mean that there was an aspect of the empirical thing in itself which was not sensible. After all, something is sensible only if it can causally affect us. By hypothesis, the matter which underlies forces is not itself a force, and therefore it is not a possible object of experience. But empirical objects are also appearances and hence they necessarily conform to the conditions on the possibility of experience. So the substance which supposedly underlies the moving forces both would and would not be a possible object of experience. Given this contradiction, it would seem we should say that the distinction between perceivable accidents and imperceivable substance belongs only to (an unkantian) transcendental realism, and that Kantian phenomenal substance is nothing above and beyond the moving forces active throughout space.
first the real in space (otherwise called the solid), in the filling of space through repulsive force; second, that which in relation to the first, as the proper object of outer perception, is negative, namely, attractive force, whereby, for its own part, all space would be penetrated, and thus the solid would be completely destroyed; third, the limitation of the first force by the second, and the determination of the degree of filling of a space that rests on this. (4:523)

This summary directly mirrors the three categories of quality originally given in the *Critique*. The filling of space through the repulsive force is the (unlimited) reality of a piece of matter; the attractive force, which opposes the repulsive force corresponds to the category of negation; and the resulting partial cancelation of the one by the other which results from their mutual limitation corresponds to the category of limitation. Although Kant says here that the real in matter corresponds only to the repulsive force, I do not think that we should take this to imply that when we make a judgment about the reality of a bit of matter and determine its degree that we are determining the degree only of the repulsive force active at a point. This is for two reasons. First, as Kant himself acknowledges, the repulsive force alone is not sufficient for the possibility of material bodies; attraction is needed also, otherwise all matter would “disperse to infinity” (4:508). Second, and more to the point, Kant’s characterization of attraction as “negative” is misleading, for it implies that the attractive force is a (privative) non-being, the mere absence of repulsion. But this is not what Kant wants to say. Attraction is negative in relation to repulsion, but this just means that it is an opposed force which can cancel the repulsive force. Nevertheless it is still a real force in matter, and hence marks one of the basic ways in which any given bit of matter is distinguished as a something rather than a nothing. Thus I think we should understand a determination of the degree of reality at a point in matter to be a judgment of the density, i.e., relative impenetrability of that bit of matter. Thus a judgment of the reality in a piece of material substance is a judgment of the
relation between the repulsive and attractive forces operative within the volume.\textsuperscript{29}

Hence material substances are constituted by forces which are realities and intensive magnitudes.

4.1.3 Accidental realities

If the force which constitutes material substance is the reality that results from the interaction of attractive and repulsive forces, then the question naturally arises whether there is a need for any other realities in the system of nature as Kant understands it. It might be thought, after all, that nature just is the collection of material substances interacting with each other in accordance with causal regularities. It might then be thought further that all of the sensible qualities we perceive in things, e.g., their colors, magnetic properties, temperatures, etc., are not realities in their own right, but instead are grounded in and identified with submicroscopic features (textures and motions and so on) of the matter described in the dynamics section of the \textit{Metaphysical Foundations}. This is, after all, how the Kantian physicist would describe material nature.

As we’ve seen though, Kant clearly does enumerate other physical realities in addition to the forces constituting matter as such (substantial reality). He lists color and warmth (A179/B211) along with impenetrability (repulsion) (A21/B35, A173/B215) and gravity (attraction) (A168/B210) as examples of realities. Thus

\textsuperscript{29}Unfortunately, Kant does not tell us enough to determine how exactly we should understand this relation between attraction and repulsion. One suggestion would be that the density of an object is determined simply by a ratio of the strength of the two powers. This however would imply that a body A with an attractive force of 1 and a repulsive force of 2 would have the same density as a body B with an attractive force of 10 and a repulsive force of 20. B would seem intuitively to possess more reality than A, even though the ratio of the two forces is the same. Since Kant does not explain how his abstract conceptions of the two primitive forces would connect up with our basic empirical interactions with matter (e.g., how the relation between the two forces determines something as simple as the observed weight of a body), we can only speculate on what such an account would look like.
not just the primitive forces in matter itself, but also the sensible properties of this matter are the proper objects of judgments of reality. I'll refer to these sensible intensive qualities of matter which are distinct from the attractive and repulsive forces of a body as "accidental realities." One might think that accidental realities should be understood as basic and irreducible properties of matter in the same way that substantial realities are. After all, Kant famously argues that all of the sensible features of an object are dependent on the subject's capacity for representation. This would seem to level the playing field, so to speak, regarding the metaphysical status of the realities in an object. If both color and extension depend on human sensibility being the way it is, why make a distinction between their metaphysical status in the object? This can't be Kant's view though, because he does want to leave in place a distinction between objective and subjective features of an object. He says, "colors are not objective qualities of the bodies to the intuition of which they are attached, but are only modifications of the sense of sight, which is affected by light in a certain way" (A28). The claim is that sensible qualities like color are not "objective" determinations of objects because they are dependent on contingent relations between sensing subjects and features of objects. This is in contrast to the extensive features of bodies, as well as their substantial realities, both of which Kant takes to be "objective qualities" of body, and hence predicates that all competent human judges will agree on, and that would figure into an ideal and complete science of physical nature.

I think the best way to understand the status of accidental realities of material substance is in terms of a Lockean distinction between primary and secondary qualities. Accidental realities, like Lockean secondary qualities, are understood as powers or dispositions to produce sensations in humans. Substantial realities, like

\[30\text{See Locke's Essay, Bk. II, Ch. 8, §§8-10.}\]
Lockean primary qualities, are also considered powers, but (unlike accidental realities and secondary powers) these powers do not vary as a function of their relation to individual human perceivers. Further, there is a dependence relation between both primary and secondary qualities and substantial and accidental realities. Just as secondary qualities depend on the relation between primary qualities and perceivers, accidental realities depend on the relation between substantial realities (and the extensions in which they are distributed) and perceivers.\textsuperscript{31} Substantial realities, together with extensive magnitudes, constitute what we might call “Kantian primary qualities” and the remaining accidental realities “Kantian secondary qualities.”\textsuperscript{32}

One might object that this interpretation of the distinction between substantial realities and accidental realities is not available because Kant himself already arrives at a different conclusion regarding the relation between his view and Locke’s primary/secondary quality distinction. In the Prolegomena he attempts to explain the meaning of transcendental idealism in terms of Lockean secondary qualities. He points out that philosophers have been content to treat qualities like “warmth, color, taste, etc.” to “have no existence of their own outside our representations,” and he simply adds that the qualities Locke classified as primary should in fact be just as secondary as the others: “all of the properties that make up the intuition of a body belong merely to its appearance” (4:289). The features of objects that I’ve labeled substantial realities are classified along with accidental realities as instances of Lockean secondary qualities. The distinction that Kant is discussing in this passage is

\textsuperscript{31}Kant makes it clear that there is this dependence relation in his theory in the Anthropology. There he says that we can trace the causes of sensations corresponding to accidental realities to mere “mechanical and chemical influence” (7:157). As the objects of physics and chemistry are in theory definable purely in terms of extensive magnitudes and substantial realities, it follows that accidental realities depend ultimately on the powers of bodies to produce sensations in the subject.

\textsuperscript{32}Rae Langton comes to a similar conclusion in her analysis of the primary/secondary distinction in Kant: ‘First, there are spatial properties of ‘extensive magnitude,’ shape, size and the geometrical properties; and second, there are the two forces of impenetrability and attraction. All other properties of physical bodies are derived from these’ (Kantian Humility, p. 170).
between properties of noumenal things in themselves and properties of phenomenal appearances. Along these lines, extensive magnitudes, substantial realities and accidental realities will all be classed as secondary qualities. However, if we consider instead the distinction between those determinations of an empirical object which will be valid for all human perceivers and those which will not, we find a domain in which something like the distinction between primary and secondary qualities retains its familiar use, within Kant’s empirical realism.

Kant makes it clear that he acknowledges such a distinction when he contrasts the ideality of space with the (mere) subjectivity of what is given in sensation: “In this case that which is originally itself only appearance, e.g., a rose, counts in an empirical sense as a thing in itself, which yet can appear different to every eye in regard to color” (A30/B45). By an “empirical thing in itself” Kant can only mean a phenomenal object insofar as it has determinations that will be acknowledged universally by all healthy human judges. These objectively necessary determinations are set in contrast to those which depend on contingent relations to individual perceivers, and hence which can vary from person to person. Although the contrast in this passage is between (what Kant will come to describe as) extensive magnitudes, which are objective, and accidental realities given through sensation, which are subjective, I suggest that we should class both extensive magnitudes and substantial realities together as properties of the empirical thing in itself. This is because extensive magnitude and physical density (i.e., substantial reality) constitute the object insofar as it is a proper object of physics as the most fundamental objectively valid science of the natural world.

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\(^{34}\)If substantial reality were not classified as an objective determination of the object, then the only objectively valid science of the empirical world would be geometry (the science of extensive magnitudes). Insofar as Kant accepts the possibility of physics as an *a priori* and objectively valid
So the claim is that Kantian accidental realities are to substantial realities as Lockean secondary qualities are to primary qualities. The parallels between the two distinctions are threefold. 1) Substantial realities and primary qualities are features of objects as they are in themselves (with the qualification from Kant that this is an *empirical* thing in itself) while accidental realities and secondary qualities are features of objects with respect to contingent relations to perceivers. 2) Both Kantian realities and Lockean qualities are described as *powers*. 3) Both accidental realities and secondary qualities supervene on substantial realities and primary qualities respectively.

We are now in a position to specify what the content of a judgment of reality in an object is. To apply the concept of reality to an empirical object is to specify the degree of intensity of a positive determination of the object, either the physical density (or the attractive or repulsive forces determining density) of the object in the case of substantial realities, or the power of the qualities which supervene on the substantial realities to cause sensations of a certain sort in a perceiver. Before we move on to examine both the conditions on the possibility of applying this concept, as well as the transcendental necessity of doing so, we must first return to the mental correlate of these physical realities, viz., the real of sensation.

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35Daniel Warren (*Reality and Impenetrability in Kant’s Philosophy of Nature*, Routledge, 2001) provides an insightful argument for the claim that all realities must be understood as causal powers. According to him, intensive magnitudes must be construed as causal powers (or “grounds”) because this is the only way that we can make sense of the possibility of the comparison of different intensive magnitudes. Since “we do not represent intensive quantities as composed of smaller parts... the most straightforward way of making out the idea of addition [of intensive magnitudes] is lacking” (p. 26). His solution is that we can make sense of the comparison (and addition) of intensive magnitudes “by reference to the effects,” specifically, be reference to the effects which are measurable by extensive magnitudes (ibid.). His example is that we measure the intensive magnitude of a degree of heat by measuring the extensive magnitude of the expansion of the mercury. Hence on this view, intensive magnitudes are not determinable in their own right, but require the determination of an extensive magnitude which is caused by the intensive magnitude.
4.1.4 The real of sensation

Sensations, in addition to corresponding to realities in objects, are also themselves proper targets of judgments of reality. As he puts it in the *Metaphysik Mrongovius*, “internally the real is the sensations, externally that which corresponds to them” (29:862). To judge the reality of any given sensation, or “the real of sensation” (B207), is to specify what quality it instantiates, and to what degree. While physical realities “fill” space as well as time, sensations, being mental phenomena, fill only time. This is not to say, however, that sensations require some duration in order to instantiate a reality, as the real of any given sensation is wholly present at an instant.\(^{36}\) Thus, says Kant, “apprehension, merely by means of sensation, fills only an instant” (A167/B209).

In chapter 3, I referred frequently to the “sensible qualities” of sensations, and I argued that these sensible qualities constitute the representational content of empirical intuitions.\(^{37}\) These sensible qualities, considered independently of any judgment that might be made about them (or the objects of which they are qualities), are simply theoccurent sensory excitations with which we are utterly familiar as the products of our various sensory modalities. They are what some contemporary theorists refer to as “qualia” (though I will not use this term because of the anachronistic theoretical associations it brings along). I would argue that we should identify the real of sensation with what I’ve described as the sensible qualities of sensations. It is these qualities, after all, that distinguish one type of sensation from another (e.g., redness from sweetness), and these qualities vary on a continuous range of possible degrees of intensity. Thus to specify what sensible quality a certain sensation instantiates is to make a determination of the reality of that sensation, i.e., to specify its

\(^{36}\)The same could be said of any instance of a physical reality at a point in space.

\(^{37}\)See §3.2.
quality and its degree of intensity.

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To summarize, we’ve seen now what it means to make a judgment of reality about an object or about a sensation. To judge a reality in an object is to specify that it instantiates a positive ("real") determination to a specific degree. This positive determination can be either the physical matter of the object itself, given as a function of density (or as a specification of the attractive or repulsive forces determining this density), or it could be a derivative “secondary” quality of the object, given as a function of the degree of that quality’s disposition to influence the senses. In either case, these realities are only known through their degree of influence on the sense, and hence to make a judgment of reality in an object is implicitly to judge the object to have some degree of causal force. To judge the reality of a sensation is to specify what quality it instantiates, and to what degree of intensity. With these results in place, we can now investigate Kant’s claims that it is transcendentally necessary that judgments of reality are made about objects of experience, and that this transcendental necessity follows from the fact that sensations are realities with intensive magnitudes.

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38One might worry about this claim that it seems to conflate the category of reality with that of cause. Kant seems to want to make a clear distinction between reality as a “mathematical” category and causality as a “dynamical” category, and it would seem that importing a causal notion into the concept of reality unacceptably blurs this distinction. I think such a worry is unfounded though, because the sense in which causal forces are invoked in determinations of reality is different from judgments of causality proper. In judgments of causality, the subject judges there to be a necessary (i.e., rule-governed) relation between two events. In judgments of reality, however, the subject determines a feature just of the object (not a relation between two objects, must less two events). When I say of an object that it has certain realities, although I take this to entail that it has the disposition to cause sensations in me, I nevertheless am making a determination just of the object, not of its relation to me. In short, to determine a reality is to make a monadic predication of an object, while to make a judgment of causality is to make a relational predication about two events.
4.2 Anticipations of Perception

In the Anticipations of Perception, Kant attempts to demonstrate that, as a matter of transcendental necessity, any possible object of experience will possess an intensive magnitude, i.e., a degree of reality. The original statement of the principle of intensive magnitudes asserts that “In all appearances the sensation, and the real which corresponds to it in the object (realitas phenomenon), has an intensive magnitude, i.e., a degree” (A165). In the B-edition reformulation Kant emphasizes that the real in the appearance is the “object” of the sensation: “In all appearance the real, which is an object of sensation, has intensive magnitude, i.e., a degree” (B207). I take the real in appearance here to refer to any of the above enumerated types of reality (whether substantial or accidental). Most commentators are in agreement that the two formulations are not importantly different. The new formulation does mark an improvement over the older, however, in that it clarifies the connection between sensation and the real in the appearance—the latter is specified as the object of the former. Having already seen (in Chapters 2 and 3) what it could mean to say that the real in an appearances is the object of sensation, we now want to determine why Kant thinks that this representational correspondence between sensation and reality entails a necessary feature of the objects possessing these realities. What is the argument for the claim that it is a transcendental condition on the possibility of experience that the objects of experience possess intensive magnitudes of reality which “correspond” (whatever that might turn out to mean) to the intensive magnitude of sensation? And why does Kant think himself licensed to make an inference about necessary features of physical objects based only on facts about our sensory states? I’ll first lay out the argument as Kant presents it, showing where interpretive work needs to be done (§4.2.1). Then I’ll discuss and reject one
seemingly plausible interpretation of the argument (§4.2.2) before defending my own interpretation (§4.2.3). Where others have thought that Kant takes the intensive magnitudes of sensations to causally depend on the intensive magnitudes of external objects, I will show that the reverse is true, and that the intensive magnitudes represented in the objects of perception depend on the intensive magnitudes of the sensations that correspond to these objects. It will turn out that the somewhat surprising direction of this dependence relation will only make sense in the context of the intentional object phenomenalism articulated in the previous chapter.

4.2.1 The Argument

Kant added a paragraph length summary of the argument of the Anticipations in the B-edition of the *Critique*, and this paragraph is the clearest explanation of the argument that we get from him. I quote it at length, and then explain how it should be carved up.

[1] Perception is empirical consciousness, i.e., one in which there is at the same time sensation. [2] Appearances, as objects of perception, are not pure (merely formal) intuitions, like space and time (for these cannot be perceived in themselves). [3] They therefore also contain in addition to the intuition the materials for some object in general (through which something existing in space and time is represented), i.e., the real of the sensation, as merely subjective representation, by which one can only be conscious that the subject is affected, and which one relates to an object in general. [4] Now from the empirical consciousness to the pure consciousness a gradual alteration is possible, where the real in the former entirely disappears, and a merely formal (*a priori*) consciousness of the manifold in space and time remains; thus there is also possible a synthesis of the generation of the magnitude of a sensation from its beginning, the pure intuition =0, to any arbitrary magnitude. [5] Now since sensation in

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39 As far as I can tell, nothing in the new paragraph contradicts anything in the A-edition content. This summary is useful though because, since the body of the Anticipations contains several digressions on issues not directly relevant to the argument Kant intends to give, it shows us what Kant takes to be essential to the argument for the principle.
itself is not an objective representation, and in it neither the intuition of space, nor that of time is to be encountered, it has, to be sure, no extensive magnitude, but yet it still has a magnitude (and indeed through its apprehension, in which the empirical consciousness can grow in a certain time from nothing =0 to its given measure), thus it has an intensive magnitude, [6] corresponding to which all objects of perception, insofar as they contain sensation, must be ascribed an intensive magnitude, i.e., a degree of influence on sense. (B207-208)

The first three sentences assert that both perceptual episodes, as well as the objects of these episodes, possess a matter and a form, and the matter, at least, is associated in both cases with sensation (sensation itself in the case of perception, and “the real of sensation” in appearances). The fourth sentence makes a psychological observation about the possible continuous diminution of any sensation. And the last long sentence makes the inference from sensations themselves possessing intensive magnitudes to the objects themselves possessing such magnitudes. For ease of reference, I’ll summarize the argument as follows:

1. Perceptions are conscious mental events that involve sensation. (Given what we know about empirical intuitions, Kant is asserting here that perceptions include a matter in addition to a form.)

2. Appearances are the objects of perception, and also possess a matter and a form.

3. The matter of appearance is the real of sensation.

4. Any given sensation is capable of gradual diminution (or increase) to (or from) the complete absence of sensation, and hence the range between any given sensation and the complete absence thereof is continuous.

5. Thus sensations have intensive magnitudes.

6. And therefore the objects corresponding to sensations have intensive magnitudes.
I treated the complex relations between the matter and form of intuition (here appearing in the guise of “perception”\textsuperscript{40}) and of appearance in my discussions of the objectivity of sensations in chapter 2 and of the intentional content of empirical intuitions in chapter 3. We learned that empirical intuitions involve the assignment of a collection of sensations to spatiotemporal positions in the perceivable vicinity of the perceiver, and that through this assignment a representational relation to appearance is first secured. Lines 1 and 2 summarize these results.

Line 3, the claim that “appearances... contain... the materials for some object in general,... i.e., the real of sensation” (B207), may strike the reader as problematic. If taken literally, it seems to imply the sort of phenomenalism that Kant elsewhere wants to distance himself from, i.e., an ontological phenomenalism which identifies physical objects with mental states. Kant cannot mean here that appearances, i.e., physical objects, are literally constituted by sensations. He already has an answer to what constitutes appearances as the objects of empirical cognition: this is the physical matter described by his transcendental physics (discussed briefly in §4.1.2 above). The strangeness of the claim in line 3 vanishes, however, if we import some of the results from chapter 3. There I argued that empirical intuitions are nonconceptual representations of sensible qualities arrayed in space, and that these sensible qualities (which constitute the appearance as undetermined object) are identical to the qualities possessed by the sensations constituting the intuition. Thus if we consider the appearance only insofar as it is the object of an intuition, then we can say that this object is materially constituted by sensible qualities which are identical to the qualities of the sensations constituting the intuition. Note that in line 3, the matter of appearance is not equated with sensation but with the real

\textsuperscript{40}We are justified in reading “intuition” for “perception” here because outer intuitions, qua sensation-containing representations, are a species of perception, and because the perceptions in question here are, like outer intuitions, representations of appearances.
of sensation. If my identification of “the real of sensation” with what I referred to in chapter 3 as their “sensible qualities” is correct, then the claim that the matter of appearance, as object of intuition, is the real of sensation, i.e., the sensible qualities of sensation, is not so surprising. The claim was already implicit in the theory of empirical intuition: the objects of intuition are constituted by the qualities displayed by sensations (even though they are not represented as such in the intuition).

One might object to this reading of line 3 on the grounds that it requires treating the appearance only insofar as it is the object of intuition. The Anticipations occurs within Kant’s long discussion of the role of understanding in cognition and the application of concepts to appearances, hence it could be claimed that we should not treat appearances here merely as the objects of intuition. In response, I argue that lines 1-3 of the argument are meant to (re-)establish the background necessary for the argument proper. Kant is simply repeating the theory of empirical intuition which he had already explained in the Aesthetic. After all, the arguments for the principles of pure understanding do not treat understanding in isolation from sensibility; rather, their purpose is to show how forms of understanding can be combined with sensibility, and hence how concepts can be applied to the objects given in intuition. In lines 1-3, Kant is reminding the reader how he understands the representational content of intuition, and the relation between this and sensation. This puts him in a position to treat the objects of intuitions (appearances) as also objects of judgments of reality in lines 4-6. Thus I argue that the real argument of the Anticipations does not begin until line 4 and the claim about the imaginable diminution of sensation. This reading is supported by Kant’s use of the word “now” (“Nun...”) at the beginning of line 4: Kant frequently uses this word to indicate that he is beginning an argument.

So lines 1-3 summarize the theory of empirical intuition defended in chapter 3. Intuitions have a matter and form, as do their objects (appearances), and the matter
of appearance is determined by the sensible qualities displayed by the sensations constituting the intuition. Our attention now is on the last half of the argument and the claim that the psychological fact about sensations described in 4 (their diminishability) can count as a priori justification of the metaphysical fact about appearances asserted in 6. The claim is that the sort of magnitude possessed by both sensations and the reality in objects corresponding to the sensations is of a different sort than that described in the Axioms of Intuition, which precedes the Anticipations. There Kant had argued that all appearances have a determinate size, and that this size can be determined by enumerating the quantity of discrete, homogeneous spatial units it takes to make up the extent of the object in question (A161/B202-A166/B207). Extensive magnitudes thus determine the quantity of the spatiotemporal form of the object. Where the “extensive” magnitude of appearances described in the Axioms was one of denumerable units, the “intensive” magnitude of the reality of appearances described in the Anticipations is instead one of continuous degree. An intensive magnitude, or “degree” (Grad) does not consist of separable parts (as do extensive magnitudes), yet it can still be assigned a determinate value, which expresses the intensity of the thing measured, or how different from nothing or pure negation that thing (or its property) is. Thus intensive magnitudes determine the matter of an object that fills out its mere form, i.e., that in virtue of which the object is something rather than nothing.

In lines 4-5, Kant is asserting that it is a simple, brute and a priori fact that sensations will always have intensity values that are degrees on a continuous scale of

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41 Strictly speaking, what Kant describes in the Anticipations as “continuous,” we would nowadays call merely “dense.” According to set theory, the difference in cardinality between a dense ordering and a continuous one is the difference between the cardinality of the natural numbers and rational numbers ($\mathbb{N}_0$) and that of the reals ($\mathbb{N}_1$). Nothing in Kant’s argument depends on whether the range of intensities that Kant describes is dense or fully continuous, so I will continue to follow Kant’s terminology and refer to this range as “continuous.”
possible such degrees. This claim is an assertion of a mere psychological fact, and Kant does not give any indication that he took the claim to be controversial or open to debate. Not everyone has been willing to go along with him so easily though. Jonathan Bennett, for instance, disputes the apriority of the fact that sensations are capable of continuous variation on the grounds that the claim is not a necessary fact. Referring to Kant’s assertion of this fact, he writes,

This, however, merely says that our sensations are like that: it states an empirical fact, and has no place in Kant’s apparatus of a priori principles. He provides no arguments for the impossibility of a world in which nothing is ever dim or in-between, in which there is only one level of pain, say, and only three degrees of saturation for each colour.\textsuperscript{42}

It is true that Kant provides no argument for the alternative scenario described by Bennett, but he is mistaken to think that Kant needs to. Although Kant is claiming that it is certain \textit{a priori} that sensations (in us) come in continuous possible degrees, he is not saying that this is a \textit{necessary} fact. That is, although the fact of the continuity of sensation is given \textit{a priori}, this fact is merely brute, and no argument can be given for it. It may sound somewhat strange to assert of a fact that it is both contingent, yet also \textit{a priori}. Note however, that this would by no means be the only place in the \textit{Critique} where such claims are made: that space and time are the forms of human intuition is both an \textit{a priori} yet contingent fact. Space and time just happen to be the forms of human sensibility, but it did not have to be this way, and Kant allows the possibility of other creatures with different forms of sensibility.\textsuperscript{43} If we are not bothered by the contingent status of this fact about the

\textsuperscript{42}Kant’s \textit{Analytic}, Cambridge University Press, 1966, p. 172.

\textsuperscript{43}Kant suggests in the Aesthetic that even though it might be possible that “all finite thinking beings must necessarily agree with human beings” with respect to space and time as the forms of intuition, “we cannot decide this,” i.e., for all we know, there are other possible forms of intuition (B72). See also \textit{Metaphysik Mrongovius}, 29:857: “The present sensible world thus rests merely on our senses. Had we other senses, then the world would appear quite otherwise to us; we would see a new world.”
forms of intuition, then we need not be bothered by the continuity of sensation having
the same status. The appropriate question to ask about the assertion that sensations
come in a continuity of possible degrees is not whether this claim is necessary, but
simply whether it is true.\(^{44}\)

Daniel Warren worries about this latter question.\(^{45}\) He notes that the only
argument Kant seems to give for the claim that sensations come in degrees is the fact
that we can imagine the continual diminution of sensations to nothing (expressed in
my lines 4-5). Let’s call this the “diminishability thesis.” But elsewhere, Kant seems
to argue in the opposite direction, i.e., from the continuity of possible degrees of
sensation to the possibility of their gradual diminution.\(^{46}\) Warren is not optimistic
that a justification for this claim can be found, and he suggests that Kant had simply
not fully thought out his theory of intensive magnitudes when he wrote the Critique,
and hence that this aspect of the theory remains incomplete and ungrounded.\(^{47}\)

Warren’s pessimism is, however, premature. The lesson we should take here
is that the possible continuous diminution of sensation is simply equivalent to the
claim that sensations possess intensive magnitudes, and hence that the former claim
(line 4) is not a proof of the latter (line 5) since no justification of the former is given.
However, the case could be made that Kant did not think that either of these claims
stood in need of further justification. In his introductory remarks to the System of
Principles chapter, Kant distinguishes the epistemic status of the principles of the

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\(^{44}\)This is not to say that the principle of the Anticipations becomes a merely contingent or
empirical principle. Rather, it is still a necessary principle, but the scope of the principle must
be kept in mind: For humans, it is necessary that sensations and their objects display intensive
magnitudes; this does not rule out the possibility of other finite minds with different forms of
sensible intuition, for whom realities and sensations are not intensive magnitudes.


\(^{46}\)In the Schematism, Kant asserts that “every sensation has a degree or magnitude” and infers
from this to the possibility of descending “in time from the sensation that has a certain degree to
its disappearance” (A143/B182-3).

\(^{47}\)Warren, p. 16.
Axioms and Anticipations from that of the Analogies and Postulates. He writes,

It will soon be shown that as far as the evidence as well as the *a priori* determination of appearances according to the categories of *magnitude* and *quality* are concerned (if one attends solely to the form of the latter), their principles are importantly distinct from those of the two others: while the former are capable of an intuitive certainty [*intuitiven Gewißheit*], the latter are capable only of a discursive certainty, though in both cases they are capable of a complete certainty. (A161-2/B201)

The “dynamical” principles (those of the Analogies and Postulates) have discursive certainty because their proofs rest on an analysis of the conditions on the possibility of applying these concepts to objects in the empirical world. For instance, the Second Analogy rests on an analysis of what is necessary for the capacity to cognize something as an event in nature. But the “mathematical” principles (those of the Axioms and Anticipations) require only intuitive certainty because their proofs rest on the structure of intuition, which is given *a priori* as a brute matter of fact. In the Axioms, this is the possible synthesis of homogeneous units in pure intuition. In the Anticipations, it is the continuity of possible intensities of any qualities that might fill an intuition. That Kant has only the continuity of the intensities of the matter of intuition in mind here (not the specific qualities that might display these intensities) is indicated by the parenthetical caveat that it is the *form* of the category of quality that has intuitive certainty; this is consistent with his remark in the Anticipations that only this feature of sensation is knowable *a priori*, not the specific qualities of the sensations, which can only be known *a posteriori* (A167/B209). Kant’s point then, is that the continuity of sensation, as what we might call the form of sensation,\(^48\) is given as a brute fact which is obvious upon introspection, and stands in as

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\(^48\) Intensity can only be considered the “form” of sensation by way of analogy to space and time as the forms of intuition, because intensity cannot be an *a priori* “form of sensibility” in the same way that space and time are. Daniel Warren considers and rejects this possibility, rightly I think, on the grounds that we can have pure representations of space and time without anything filling
little need of proof as the claim that we perceive objects displaying spatiotemporal form.

In short, we should understand the transition from lines 4 to 5 not as a justification of the claim that sensations come in continuous degrees, but as an elaboration of what this means. Kant’s claim in lines 4-5 should be taken as an \textit{a priori} premise which asserts that sensations are the sort of thing that can vary in intensity (whether in fact or in imagination) continuously on a densely ordered range of possible such intensities. No proof beyond the introspectively accessible empirical content of our representations can be given for this claim, and for better or worse, Kant does not think he needs to say anything further.

Our argument can now be abbreviated as follows: Since sensations correspond to the real in appearance (1-3) and sensations have intensive magnitudes (4-5), it follows that the real in appearance has intensive magnitude (6). That is, given the close connection between sensation and the matter of appearance, Kant decides he is entitled to infer from the fact of the continuity of sensation to a fact about what corresponds to sensation in the object, viz., reality, the matter of appearance. Why does Kant take himself to be entitled to make this last move? Granting that sensation comes in a continuum of possible degrees, why can we infer that the “object” of sensation—the matter of appearance—must also come in a continuum of possible degrees? This inference could be made in either of two ways. The continuity of sensation could ground the inference to the continuity of reality in objects because

\textit{them, but we cannot have pure representations of intensity without something intensive} (Reality and Impenetrability, p. 14). Nevertheless, in analyzing sensations into their quality and their intensity, Kant does seem to be importing a version of the form/matter distinction, which is ubiquitous across his philosophy. Kant will often claim that the \textit{a priori} elements of cognition are formal, while the \textit{a posteriori} elements are material. He had suggested that all of the material element could be traced to sensation, but now we see that this can be traced back yet one step further. If Kant’s claim that the fact that sensations are intensive magnitudes is \textit{a priori} is correct, then really, the only entirely \textit{a posteriori} and material elements in cognition are the specific qualities which our sensory modalities happen to display.
either 1) the continuity of sensation depends on the continuity of realities, or 2) the continuity of realities depends on the continuity of sensations. In the first case, the argument is an epistemic one: we are justified in inferring the continuity of appearance from that of sensation because the latter is taken as evidence of the former. In the second case, the argument is metaphysical because it asserts that the continuity of appearances depends on (i.e., is not simply evidenced by) the continuity of sensations. Taken at face value, the second of these may seem implausible, for it asserts that a physical fact depends on a psychological fact. Nevertheless, I will argue that this is Kant’s view. Before explaining the interpretation I have in mind though, I will discuss problems with the first interpretation.

4.2.2 The Inferred Cause Interpretation

Kant argues from the claim that sensations are intensive magnitudes to the claim that realities in objects are intensive magnitudes. One way this inference might work is as an inference to the only possible cause of the continuity of sensation. The argument would run thus:

1. Sensations are continuous intensive magnitudes.
2. Continuous intensive magnitudes could only be caused by other continuous intensive magnitudes.
3. Realities in objects are the causes of sensations.
4. ∴ Realities in objects are continuous intensive magnitudes.

I’ll refer to this argument as the Inferred Cause interpretation. Line 1 here is assumed as an a priori datum and is equivalent to the claim implicit in lines 4-5 of my first pass at reconstructing the argument (p. 237 above). Lines 2 and 3 are both controversial.

49 A third logical possibility is that the continuity of the two are independent, and neither explains the other. This interpretation is not available to us because Kant clearly thinks there is such an explanatory relation, otherwise he wouldn’t have made the argument from sensation to reality in the object.
Although I will argue later that line 3 is not, strictly speaking, true, I will focus for now on line 2.

In Guyer’s reconstruction of the argument of the Anticipations, he seems to presuppose that something like the argument I’ve sketched is what Kant intended. On his view, the inference from the continuity of sensation to the continuity in the matter of the appearance is an *evidential* one (this is my term, not Guyer’s). As he understands the view, Kant first observes that sensations, which result from the affection of objects on the senses, have intensive magnitudes, and then infers that the causes of these sensations must also have intensive magnitudes. He says that according to “the inference of the *Critique*... if a degree of intensity is assigned to a sensation, *only* a degree of efficacy can be assigned to the reality which produces it.” In other words, the fact that sensations come in determinate continuous degrees provides evidential warrant for the fact that the causes of these sensations themselves come in continuous degrees. Falkenstein also seems to endorse something like the Inferred Cause interpretation. He argues that,

> The real of appearance is a ‘consequence’ of the real of sensation in the sense that we ascribe a certain degree of reality (a certain attractive force or impenetrability) to the appearance corresponding to the degree of reality (the intensity of sensible quality) evidenced by the sensation. We make this ascription because we take the reality of the appearance to be the cause of the reality of the sensation, so that, in ascribing reality to the appearance as a consequence of the reality of sensation, we are reasoning back from effect to cause.

Since the continuity of sensation can only be explained by a continuity in the cause of sensation, we can establish the principle of the Anticipations as an *a priori* transcendental principle.  

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50 *Kant and the Claims of Knowledge*, p. 200

51 *Kant’s Intuitionism*, p. 117.

52 I should mention that this part of the argument of the Anticipations—the inference from the continuity of sensation to the continuity of realities—is not the primary focus of Guyer’s criticisms.
There is some textual evidence for this reading. As we’ve seen, sensations are repeatedly defined as the *effects* of objects on the senses, and in the last line of the “proof” cited above Kant seems to equate realities having intensities with them having an influence on the senses. However, despite multiple references to a causal relation between realities and sensations in his account of intensive magnitudes, there is not much textual support for the Inferred Cause interpretation. Although he clearly equates the intensity of a reality with its degree of influence of the senses at B208, it would seem that he is here only specifying what it means to understand a physical reality as having an intensive magnitude. To say of an external object that it has an intensive magnitude is to say that it has a degree of influence on the senses. Since this “influence” relation is not mentioned anywhere in the argument before the end of the conclusion, it should not be taken as essential to reaching the conclusion. The only other place in the Anticipations where Kant refers to reality as the cause of sensation is at A168/B210 where he says that realities in appearances can be “regarded” as the cause of sensation, but he immediately goes on to clarify that this remark is tangential to the task at hand because the concept of causality is not to be discussed until the Analogies (A169/B210). Thus not only is the supposed causal relation between sensations and appearance not essential to Kant’s argument, he does not even say that physical realities are the causes of sensations, but only that they can be so construed.

Not only does it lack a firm textual basis, the Inferred Cause interpretation faces significant internal problems. One significant objection to the view (a version in his reconstruction of the argument. He is more concerned with the worry that the continuity of sensation has no *a priori* basis. I’ve argued above that Kant did not think he was required to give such an argument because the premise of the continuity of sensation has “intuitive certainty.” Guyer thinks that this premise only has an empirical basis, and so he thinks the argument fails before we even get to the question of the inference from the continuity of sensation to that of realities in objects.
of which Guyer himself levies against Kant) is that there is no *a priori* guarantee that the only explanation for the continuity of sensation is a continuity in the objects which cause the sensations. As Guyer points out, Kant himself will often explain the difference between two sensations of the same type by appeal to facts about the extensive magnitudes of their putative causes.\(^{53}\) If intensive magnitudes can be made to vary simply due to a variation in the extensive magnitude of the object affecting the subject, then the inference from intensive sensation to intensive physical reality is invalid.\(^{54}\) Likewise, assuming that space itself is continuous (and Kant believes that it is\(^{55}\)), then the causal effect of an unchanging luminous object (e.g., a candle flame) will change as a function of distance from the perceiver (by the inverse square law); in this case, the *effect*, and therefore the sensation would vary continuously even though the intensity of the *cause* itself remained constant. In sum, since there are explanations of the continuity of sensation that are completely independent of any continuity in the reality of the object causing the sensation, the inference from the continuity of sensation to that of the matter in the object cannot work.

In addition to the fact that it leaves us with a clearly bad argument, there are other considerations that speak against the Inferred Cause interpretation. One problem with this reading is that it seems to be inconsistent with what Kant says about the epistemic value of introspective observation reports. Arguing from observed effects to inferred causes only yields knowledge when there is just one possible cause of the observed effect. Insofar as this is not the case, at best we can only have more or less probable beliefs about the causes of observed effects. And it is clear that


\(^{54}\)As Guyer puts it, “If the causal power of the object in producing a sensation of a certain degree can be reduced to a multiplicity of parts, then intensive magnitudes in sensations are caused by extensive, and not intensive, magnitudes in reality” (p. 200).

\(^{55}\)“Space and time are *quanta continua*, because no part of them can be given except as enclosed between boundaries (points and instants), thus in such a way that this part is again a space or a time” (A169/B211).
any given sensation (defined by a certain quality to a certain degree) could have any number of causes. One and the same sensation of a grey quality could be caused by looking at a grey car in sunlight, or a blue car under street lamps at night. One and the same force of resistance on my palm could be caused by either an object with density $d$ and volume $v$, or a different object with density $2d$ and volume $.5v$.

Kant himself makes it clear (in a discussion of the causes of sensations no less) that arguments from effects to causes are never certain: “the inference from a given effect to its determinate cause is always uncertain, since the effect can have arisen from more than one cause” (A368). It would thus seem that any attempt to establish an a priori principle on the basis of an inference from an effect to its cause would fail to meet Kant’s own standards.

Lastly, if the Inferred Cause interpretation were what Kant intended with the argument of the Anticipations, then the principle would rest on an empirical premise, and so could not have a proper place in Kant’s transcendental theory. For if the continuity of sensation is dependent on the continuity of its cause, then we can only be aware of the continuity of sensation subsequent to our being affected by intensive magnitudes in empirical objects in experience. We could not know a priori that all objects of experience will be intensive magnitudes because we can only make this inference subsequent to the a posteriori reception of sensation. In addition to being empirical (hence not transcendental), the principle would also not be universalizable. There would always be the possibility that we would encounter an object that would fail to induce continuous sensations in us, which would be in violation of the principle.

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56Guyer (Kant and the Claims of Knowledge, p. 205) and Wolff (Kant’s Theory of Mental Activity, p. 238) both conclude as much.
4.2.3 The Constructivist Interpretation

What is immediately striking to anyone attempting to reconstruct the argument of the Anticipations is the apparent lack of any serious effort to defend the principle. We saw that there is a “proof” added to the B-edition, and this seems to end in the required principle, but the inference from sensations having intensive magnitudes to realities having intensive magnitudes nowhere receives an explicit defense. Things are even worse in the original version of the argument. Twice Kant begins sentences that assert the principle with words that would seem to indicate that he is concluding an argument (“Thus every reality...” (A168/B210), “Accordingly every sensation, thus also every reality...” (A169/B211)) but nothing in what precedes these sentences can be taken as an explanation of why the continuity of the one implies the continuity of the other. Instead, all we get is an explanation of what intensive magnitudes are, what it means for realities and sensations to have intensive magnitudes, and a sketch of an argument that sensations have them (the diminishability thesis). The assertion that realities also have these degrees thus appears unargued and dogmatic. This has led Wolff to ask, unoptimistically, “Even if he can demonstrate as an a priori principle that all sensation has intensive magnitude, how will he make the transition to the principle that matter or substance also has intensive magnitude?” Without attempting an answer on Kant’s behalf, he concludes that “the Anticipations, like the Axioms, fall outside the chain of ar-

\[57\] In the first case it is preceded by a definition of intensive magnitude, in the second by a tangential discussion of the term “moment.”

\[58\] He doesn’t seem to do much better in his critical period metaphysics lectures. In the *Metaphysik Völckmann*, he simply equates the fact of the diminishability of sensation with the fact that realities in objects are intensive magnitudes: “Everything, e.g., which is in space has extensive magnitude and thus also everything represented in the succession of time, which, namely, in space and time is actually [wirklich] reality, or what can be sensed; for where there is none of this, we call it an empty space, an empty time; and all reality of appearance has also degrees, i.e., any given sensation can be regarded as another sensation which grows up from zero in time, just as it could also again disappear to zero” (28:425, my translation).

\[59\] *Kant’s Theory of Mental Activity*, Peter Smith Publisher, 1973, p. 238.
argument from consciousness to causation.”

Guyer similarly concludes that “though Kant’s principle of intensive magnitude undoubtedly had deep roots in his study and teaching of physics, it does not have a clear place in his transcendental theory of experience.”

I think much of this pessimism regarding the salvageability of the Anticipations comes from a failure to appreciate the full sense of the “correspondence” between sensation and realities in objects. On the Inferred Cause interpretation, this correspondence is merely a causal relation. Sensations correspond to realities because they are caused by them. I’ve argued in chapter 3 that this reading of the correspondence relation drastically underappreciates the full range of claims that Kant makes about this correspondence relation. Sensations correspond to the real in appearance because they represent the real in appearance by virtue of their synthesis into outer intuitions. I argued there that an (outer) empirical intuition is the result of the imagination’s sorting of the data given in sensation and assigning these sensations to locations in space; the content of the resulting intuition is a nonconceptual representation of sensible qualities arrayed in space. I also argued that from this interpretation of empirical intuition follows an “intentional object phenomenalism” according to which appearances, and therefore also the real in them, are merely the intentional objects of certain kinds of representations, and they are ontologically dependent on their being represented in cognition.

I propose that we use these results regarding the correspondence between sensation and appearance to help make sense of the argument for the principle of intensive magnitudes. According to the Inferred Cause interpretation, the continuity of sensation is taken to be evidence for continuity in the object; sensations have con-

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60 Ibid.
61 Guyer, p. 205.
tinuous magnitudes because the realities in appearances which are thought to cause
the sensations have continuous magnitudes. I suggest that this gets things exactly
backwards. I propose that Kant did not take the continuity of sensation to be *evidence* for continuity in the object; rather the continuity in the object depends on
the continuity of sensation. Realities in phenomenal objects come in degrees because
the sensations corresponding to them come in degrees, not the other way around.
This dependence relation is possible because of the status of physical objects as mere
phenomena, i.e., mere intentional objects (as argued in chapter 3). Real objects in
space are *constructed* in representation by our cognizing faculties. This construction
begins when intuition posits sensible qualities (which constitute the appearance) in
spatial arrays, and continues when this object is made more determinate through
the application of concepts (in the first instance, concepts of reality). The intensive
magnitudes of substantial and accidental realities in objects depend on that of
sensation because the real of sensation (which is itself an intensive magnitude) con-
stitutes the appearance. Hence appearances have intensive magnitudes because they
are constructed in intuition out of intensive magnitudes (the real of sensation) which
are then conceptualized as such in judgments of reality. I’ll spell this argument out
in more detail, and then defend it against objections in the next section.

The argument I have in mind can be sketched as follows:

1. Sensations are intensive magnitudes, which is to say that sensations
display sensible qualities with determinate continuous intensities.
2. These sensible qualities are identical to the qualities represented by
the empirical intuition constituted by these sensations.
3. The qualities represented by the empirical intuition are the objects of
the understanding’s judgments of reality.

∴ The realities in objects which correspond to sensations are continuous
intensive magnitudes.

Line 1 simply repeats the claim (discussed above) that, in humans, sensations possess
qualities whose range of possible intensities is continuous. The work in the argument is done by lines 2 and 3. The main idea here is that if the objects which come to be conceptualized as realities in appearance are identified with something which, as a matter of fact, is already a continuous intensive magnitude (independently of it being conceptualized as such), then when those objects are conceptualized by the understanding they will be appropriate targets of judgments which determine their intensive magnitudes in terms of continuous degrees. I’ll say a bit more about each of the identifications made in lines 2 and 3.

Line 2 asserts an identification between the qualities of sensation and the qualities represented by empirical intuition. This identification was defended in the previous chapter. There I argued that to say that a collection of sensations, $s_1, ..., s_n$, materially constitutes some intuition, $Int$, is to say that there will be a “mapping” or “assignment” of each of $s_1, ..., s_n$ onto a range of spatiotemporal coordinates, $l_1, ..., l_n$. Every sensation possesses a sensible quality to a determinate degree, so $s_1, ..., s_n$ will each possess some quality and intensity values, $<q_1,i_1>, ..., <q_n,i_n>$. I claimed further, that the content of $Int$ should be understood as a representation which presents to the subject $<q_1,i_1>$ at $l_1, ..., <q_n,i_n>$ at $l_n$, resulting in a three-dimensional sensory image of the intuited object. Importantly though, qua nonconceptual representation, $Int$ does not represent $<q_1,i_1>, ..., <q_n,i_n>$ as “$<q_1,i_1>$”, ..., “$<q_n,i_n>$”, for it cannot represent its object as anything; its representational content is simply a brute sensory awareness of those sensible qualities at those spatiotemporal locations. The intuition thus presents these spatially ordered sensible qualities to consciousness, but without specifying what these qualities

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62 Again, this is just the claim of lines 4-5 from my original reconstruction of the argument of the Anticipations (p. 237 above).

63 The quotation marks designate conceptual contents articulating the quality and intensity through general marks.
are, nor what object should be thought to possess them. Thus the qualities of the sensations are identical (\emph{numerically} identical, in fact) to the qualities of the object represented by the intuition, but the intuition represents these qualities neither as the qualities they are, nor as qualities of sensory states which are internal to the mind of the sensing subject.

Line 3 asserts that the sensible qualities represented in empirical intuitions are identical to the qualities conceptualized in judgments of reality. The object of an empirical intuition, i.e., the collection of sensible qualities arrayed in spacetime, is described as an “undetermined” object (A20/B34). To indicate that an object is undetermined is to imply that it is \textit{not yet} determined, that it is \textit{determinable}. An object is determined when it is not merely brutely present to the mind, but is also represented by the mind as being a certain sort of thing (or as not being some other sort of thing). This of course requires the activation of conceptual capacities which determine the object through judgments. Aside from determinations of the spatiotemporal features of an object of intuition, the most basic concepts that can be applied to an empirical object are concepts of realities, i.e., various instances of substantial and accidental realities. For as we saw in \S 4.1, reality is that in the object by virtue of which the object is something rather than nothing; any other concepts (higher-order concepts like ‘beauty’, or relational concepts like ‘cause’) are only applicable once the object is determined as something real in the world. So if the undetermined object of intuition is a collection of sensible qualities arrayed in spacetime then the most basic determination of this object that understanding could make will be the specification of these qualities as realities (whether substantial or accidental).64 To determine the object through the application of concepts of reality

\footnote{Whether a given sensation will ground a judgment of a substantial reality in the object or an accidental one would be a question for empirical psychology to handle, for it falls beyond what can be determined \textit{a priori}. Kant indicates in the \textit{Anthropology} that only tactile sensations can}
is to represent the sensible qualities constituting the object of intuition as being instances of certain qualities or forces with specific intensive degrees. Hence although empirical intuitions and judgments of reality represent their objects through radically different contents, their objects are identical: they both represent, in their own way, the \(< q_1, i_1 >, ..., < q_n, i_n >\) originally displayed by \(s_1, ..., s_n\) in a spatiotemporal array. Where the intuition merely presents these qualities indeterminately to consciousness, the understanding specifies in judgment how these qualities should be understood as specific and determinate realities in the object.

By identifying the qualities of sensations with the objects of judgments of reality, we gain a reconstruction of Kant’s argument in the Anticipations which has some claim to validity. It simply takes the form: \(a=b, b=c, a\text{ is } F\), so \(c\text{ is } F\). We don’t have to impute to Kant any invalid inference from an observed effect to an inferred cause. Instead, the argument for the intensive magnitudes of the reality in objects depends on the fact that the sensible qualities constituting the intuited object of these judgments are themselves intensive magnitudes. Since, as a matter of fact, these qualities are intensive magnitudes, it is appropriate to assign determinate intensive degrees to them when they are judged to be substantial or accidental realities. Reading the Anticipations in this way allows us to make sense of the apparent absence of any honest attempt to argue for the principle of intensive magnitudes. The reason he doesn’t feel the need to say much about the inference from the continuity of the real of sensation to the continuity of the objects judged to be substantial or accidental realities is that this is not intended to be an inference from a property of one entity to a property of a numerically distinct entity. Rather, it’s one and the same “real of sensation” which is represented once in intuition, then

\footnote{ground judgments of substantial reality, because only these involve the repulsive force itself in direct interaction with the senses. The other sensory modalities only have access to accidental qualities (cf. 7: 153ff.).}
again through concepts.

Johannes Haag arrives at a similar account of the claim of the Anticipations.\textsuperscript{65} Responding to an objection from Martin Heidegger and Hermann Cohen that Kant’s distinction between the intensive magnitude of a sensation and the real that corresponds to it is unprincipled (and therefore “unkritische”), Haag replies that, strictly speaking, there is no such distinction at all.\textsuperscript{66} This is because the intensive magnitude of the sensation is the same intensive magnitude which is “projected” (projizierte) onto the represented object:

Sensation has a degree both as matter in the appearance and as matter in an object, i.e., as a quality [Eigenschaft] projected onto an object in general; it is however not a problematic duplication of entities with intensive magnitudes, for it is one and the same sensation that has this magnitude—considered once as matter in the appearance and once more as quality of a represented object.\textsuperscript{67}

One difference between Haag’s interpretation and my own is his distinction between appearance and the object of representation proper. He takes the appearance to be the content (Gehalt) of intuition, but distinguishes this content from the representation of the object proper, as cognized by the full understanding. He claims that spatiotemporal and sensory features are represented in the object because they are first represented in the appearance, which corresponds to the object. I think distinguishing the appearance from the object proper in this way is unnecessary; Kant continues to refer to the objects of experience as Erscheinungen throughout the discussions of the categories and principles, indicating that the appearances which are objects of intuition are identical to the appearances which are objects of the categories. For present purposes though, I think this disagreement is merely nominal.

\textsuperscript{65} Although he doesn’t provide an explicit reconstruction of the argument, he does offer enough in the way of interpretative remarks to discern how he understands the argument working.


\textsuperscript{67} Ibid., p. 141, my translation.
What both of our interpretations share is, first, an identification of the qualities ("Eigenschaften" for Haag) of sensations with those of the matter of the object of intuition, and then an identification of the latter with the qualities judged in the object itself.68

4.3 Objections considered

4.3.1 The cause of sensation

One objection that might be raised against the constructivist model I’ve described is that it cannot make sense of Kant’s claims about the causal relation between realities in objects and sensations. If a perceived object’s possession of its realities depends on the qualities of the sensations which constitute the intuition of the object, then it can’t also be the case that that object caused the sensations. For this would imply that realities in the object depend on sensations, while sensations in turn depend on realities in the object.69 It would thus seems that either the causal relation between appearances and sensations must go, or the constructivist model must go. One might argue that since Kant clearly refers to the causal relation in the Anticpations, this part of the account must remain in place, and the interpretation I’ve given be scrapped.70

68Haag also indicates that he understands the qualities of sensations, as well as their relation to the content of intuition, in the same way I do. He writes, “The appearance contains matter—and not some mere sensation as modification of the subject. It contains ‘matter’ because in it, properties of a mere subjective modification of the subject as determinable matter of the form of intuition is represented as given. This matter constitutes, determines through the form of intuition, the appearance, insofar as this is the undetermined object of intuition” (ibid., 136-7, my translation).

69Nick Stang has argued that something like this mutual dependence relation is what would really be problematic about the problem of double affection. I agree that this sort of mutual dependence is incoherent, but my solution to the problem is very different from Stang’s (“Double-Affection Vindicated,” unpublished). (For more on this, see §5.2.1 below.)

70Even worse, it might be thought, I myself, in my characterizations of substantial and accidental realities, described them as powers to bring about sensations in subjects.
In reply, I claim that we must simply deny that sensations are caused by appearances, i.e., by empirical objects, and, further, that Kant does not in fact assert in the Anticipations that such a causal relation actually exists. Regarding the textual point first, note that Kant never explicitly says that objects cause sensations. Rather, he says that “all objects of perception, insofar as they contain sensation, must be ascribed [beigelegt] an intensive magnitude, i.e., a degree of influence on sense” (B208, emphasis added). And his later reference to reality as a cause only says that one can “regard” (betrachtet) reality as a cause of sensation (A168/B210). Thus Kant is not claiming that realities in appearances cause sensations, but that these realities may (in some cases, arguably, must) be represented as the causes of sensations. That is, the causal relation between appearance and sensation is merely a part of the content of our representations of objects insofar as we represent these objects in relation to our perception of them. Kant’s references to ascribing sensation-causing properties to realities in objects is thus perfectly compatible with my constructivist interpretation of the argument of the Anticipations, and with my interpretation of Kant’s intentional object phenomenalism generally. Appearances are the intentional objects of cognition; when the category of reality is applied to these intentional objects, part of the intentional content of our cognition represents appearances as causally impinging on the senses. It is consistent to claim both that appearances do not cause sensation and that we necessarily represent appearances (in cognition) as the causes of sensations.

This leaves open the question of what does cause sensations, if not empirical objects. Although it is not possible here to delve into the ontology of things in themselves and the metaphysics of the relation between them and the empirical subject, I would claim that things in themselves are the true causes (or “grounds,” to use a
more neutral term) of sensations. This is why Kant will say that appearances are appearances of things in themselves. Although the objects represented in empirical cognition are completely dissimilar from (non-spatiotemporal) things in themselves, the sensations out of which we initially construct these objects in representation are the direct result of the affection of things in themselves on the subject. (In chapter 5 (§5.2), I will address in more detail the relation between sensations and things in themselves.)

4.3.2 Sensory determination of judgments of reality

Another objection that might be offered against my interpretation could arise from a misunderstanding of the claim that the correspondence between sensation and the real in appearance rests ultimately on an identification of the quality displayed by the sensation and the object judged in an application of the concept of reality. The objection would go as follows: If the sensible qualities of a collection of sensations constituting an intuition are identical to the object judged in applications of concepts of realities, then the reality I judge in an object will be determined by the qualities and intensities of the sensations constituting the intuition. For instance, if an intuition nonconceptually represents \(<q_1, i_1>\) at \(l_1\), ..., \(<q_n, i_n>\) at \(l_n\) as its object, then the judgment of the reality of this object will apply conceptualized articulations of the intuited qualities (viz., by forming the concepts \("<q_1, i_1>\)\”, \("<q_2, i_2>\)\”, \("l_1\)\”, and \("l_2\)\”, and so on into the judgments \("\text{There is }<q_1, i_1> \text{ at } l_1\)\” and so on). To

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71This reading of the affection relation, while by no means universal in the literature, is far from heterodox. Haag, for instance, takes the same line regarding the difference between the represented cause and the real ("eigentlich") cause: "The matter of intuition is that in the object of representation which corresponds to the properties of sensation. This corresponds to the degree of sensation, whose cause we represent in the object (whose proper [eigentlicher] ground however is the originary affection of receptivity through things in themselves)" (Erfahrung und Gegenstand, p. 139, my translation). Longuenesse, similarly, argues that: "The synthesis speciosa reflected in the category of reality should be understood as an act of ‘filling’ our temporal intuition with a ‘matter’ whose ground is ultimately the thing in itself" (Kant and the Capacity to Judge, p. 302).
claim that the concepts we apply in judgments of reality are strictly determined by the qualities and intensities of the sensory states of the subject is, however, surely false. For example, when I make a judgment about the color of something (a type of accidental reality, as we saw above), I take myself to be judging a relatively permanent feature of the object. If I see a blank sheet of paper in daylight I experience sensations radically different than I would if I had seen it under a dim lamp at night. In the one case I’d have sensations of a very intense light grey, and in the other I’d have sensations of a much less intense pale orange. Nevertheless, in both cases I apply the same concept of ‘white.’ Likewise, if I hear a shout from a block away, the sensation produced in me might be no more intense than a murmur from someone sitting next to me; nevertheless, I still judge the one to be loud and the other quiet.

In response to this objection, I grant the phenomenological datum but deny that anything in the interpretation I’ve given is inconsistent with the relevant phenomenology. What examples like these show is that our conceptual representations of the perceivable realities around us involve a great deal of interpretation of the data given in sensation, and that the representations of realities based on sensation are by no means simple “readings off” of the qualities displayed by the sensations.

Nothing in the interpretation I’ve given should preclude this difference between the quality of sensation and the interpretation of it made in judgment.

Part of the reason why this difference is possible is the nonconceptuality of

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72 This sort of phenomenon is closely related to what psychologists refer to as “color constancy.” When color constancy effects are active, the visual system processes environmental data regarding the illumination conditions under which a perceived object is seen, and incorporates this in its computation of how to represent the color. (See Dorothea Jameson and Leo M. Hurvich, “Essay Concerning Color Constancy,” Annual Review of Psychology 40, 1989, pp. 1-22.) The range of phenomena I have in mind here are much broader than instances of color constancy effects. Color constancy effects take place at the level of subpersonal neural processing, but the range of judgments in which the judgment involves more interpretation than simply “reading off” the quality of the given sensation will include conscious and deliberate evaluations of the “objective” or “correct” quality in an object.
intuitions. Since an intuition represents its object indeterminately, there is nothing in the content of the intuition to constrain the understanding’s judgment in such a way that the only possible judgment is one that matches the reality of the sensation itself.73 The “spontaneity” of the understanding, as Kant calls it, still has room to do work as a rational faculty aimed at conceptualizing the objective world of publicly available objects. Such objective conceptualizations generally require treating objects as relatively stable in their properties. E.g., the surfaces of objects generally remain physically stable through changes in illumination, and the understanding takes this sort of stability into account when “deciding” (so to speak) how best to conceptualize the object. Such interpretations are typically unconscious (and unnoticeably fast anyway), but we can infer that they must take place because of a phenomenology that presents a relatively stable objective world that appears to us through a wildly varying and variegated sensory stream. Generalizing, we can say that if an intuition presents \(< q_1, i_1 >\) at \(l_1\), ..., \(< q_n, i_n >\) at \(l_n\) and this becomes an object of a judgment of reality, the reality-concepts applied to the object will be some “\(< q_1^*, i_1^* >\)” ..., “\(< q_n^*, i_n^* >\)” which are more or less correlated with, but by no means identical to, \(< q_1, i_1 >\), ..., \(< q_n, i_n >\) themselves.74

On a related note, and to help further clarify the account, we can distinguish

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73 To be sure, which sensible qualities are displayed by the sensations constituting some intuition constrain or determine to some extent a range of possible or “reasonable” judgments of reality. For instance, the sensations resulting from the retinal impression of a uniformly yellow triangle on a uniformly red background will never cohere with the judgment ‘There is a blue ball in the grass’. I argued in Appendix B that the “figurative synthesis” of the imagination is responsible for sorting and interpreting sensations into spatial arrays. Which qualities get represented in which location is only partially determined by the given order among the sensory impressions themselves. I would argue further that the “intellectual synthesis” described in parallel to the figurative synthesis (B151) is what is responsible for interpreting the object as given in intuition and applying concepts of reality to this; this activity, like that of the figurative synthesis, is only partially determined by content of the intuition.

74 For instance, I might apply only a single concept of a particular hue of green, “\(< q_g, i_g >\)”, to all of the surface of a green ball, even though the sensations of the ball display a wide range of dark to light greens.
the conceptualization of the sensible qualities of an outer intuition from that of an inner intuition. As I argued in chapters 2 and 3, in theory, any given set of sensations that could be combined into an outer intuition of an object in space could itself become the object of an introspective reflexive awareness of the sensory state itself and as such. Thus there could be two intuitions, one of an outer object and one of an inner object, representing the same \(< q_1, i_1 >, ..., < q_n, i_n >\), in the one case arrayed in space and time, and in the other just in time. One crucial difference between judgments that we might make of two objects is that in the case of outer intuition, the understanding will in general have to perform interpretive work on the given data such that the concepts applied do not match exactly the qualities of the sensations, while in the case of inner intuition there will be a match. For instance, if I judge that the color of the paper changes when I move from one lighting condition to another, I make a mistake, but if I judge that the sensation of the paper in one lighting condition changes when I move to another, I do not.\textsuperscript{75}

4.3.3 Transcendental necessity undermined?

So the judgments made in applications of concepts of substantial and accidental realities to objects given in intuition are constrained only partially by the specific qualities and intensities presented in the intuition. The understanding has interpretive work to do in determining which reality-concept is the most objective in any given case, and so the quality and intensity specified in the concept need not match exactly the quality and intensity presented in intuition. This might seem to

\textsuperscript{75}Furthermore, the concepts I use to describe the qualities presented in inner as opposed to outer intuitions will differ. When I refer to a sensation as such and label it as a “green” sensation, I mean something different than when I refer to a physical surface as use the same word, “green”. This is simply because when I use color vocabulary to refer to properties of external objects I take these properties to be different in kind from the properties of the sensory states in my mind, even if I happen to use the same word to express these different concepts.
open the door for a further objection. It might be argued that with this ever-present possible difference between the quality and intensity of the sensations constituting an intuition and the judgments made about the object of intuition, the transcendental necessity of the principle of intensive magnitudes is lost, and thus the Constructivist model is in no better position than the Inferred Cause interpretation. The problem with the Inferred Cause interpretation was that there was nothing that necessitated inferring a continuous magnitude in the object to be the cause of the continuous magnitudes of sensation. Now the problem would seem to be that nothing necessitates interpreting the continuous magnitudes of the qualities of sensations constituting the object of intuition as continuous. That is, even though the qualities of the objects given in intuition are continuous, since the understanding’s conceptualization of these qualities is an interpretation, it is possible that the objective determination of these qualities will appeal only to discrete, noncontinuous reality-values. Or perhaps it will turn out that the best scientific worldview does not require appeal to intensive magnitudes in bodies at all. A cartesian or atomist, for instance, could surely grant that Kant’s “real of sensation” has intensive magnitudes, but deny that we must interpret these as corresponding to intensive magnitudes in objects. What argument can be given to supplement the view and show that it really is a matter of transcendental necessity that, in objective determinations of the realities in bodies, appeal be made to realities with intensive degrees?

One possible (though ultimately unsatisfying) response to this objection would be to concede that Kant overreaches in trying to prove that objects of experience must have continuous intensive magnitudes. All he has really shown is that there is nothing that would rule out a priori the possibility that realities comes in a continuum of possible degrees. The cartesian and atomist mechanists, in other words, were wrong insofar as they took their results to be derivable a priori, and perhaps also
wrong as an empirical matter of fact (if Kant’s physics is correct), but their position was not empirically impossible nor conceptually incoherent. Thus if Kant’s claim that the reality in objects comes in intensive magnitudes turns out to be correct, he is correct merely empirically, but the theory is not transcendentally necessitated.

Kant himself says some things that would seem to indicate that he was willing to retreat somewhat on the question whether the principle of intensive magnitudes is necessary. In the brief critique of the atomists included in the Anticipations, he does not attempt to show that their postulation of absolute (i.e., non-continuous) density is impossible or even false, but simply that it is not necessary to assume that the only explanation for differences in perceived density is difference in the ratio of filled space to empty space.

Against [the atomists’] presupposition [of absolute density], for which they can have no ground in experience and which is therefore merely metaphysical, I oppose a transcendental proof, which, to be sure, will not explain the variation in the filling of space, but which will entirely obviate the alleged necessity of the presupposition that the difference in question cannot be explained except by the assumption of empty spaces. (A174/B215)

This “metaphysical presupposition” is unjustified because the perceived differences in density could equally well be explained by differences in the intensive magnitudes of matter filling space entirely (with no empty spaces). Kant seems to be suggesting that the atomistic explanation and his own dynamic explanation are equally possible, considered a priori. He goes on to concede that,

My aim here is by no means to assert that this is how it really is concerning the specific gravity of the variety of matters, but only to establish, on the basis of a principle of pure understanding, that the nature of our perceptions makes an explanation of this sort possible. (A174-5/B216)

Thus, it might be argued, at least with respect to what I’ve labelled “substantial
However, this reading of the passage concedes too much. Although Kant is claiming here that his dynamic conception of matter is empirical, and hence contingent, he is not conceding that the principle of intensive magnitudes has mere transcendental possibility, as opposed to full transcendental necessity. For one thing, if Kant were to make such a retreat, it would contradict the rest of the claims from the Anticipations which assert the principle about all objects universally. This is stated in the official formulations of the principle itself, as well as throughout the discussions that follow, for instance when he says that “all appearances whatsoever are accordingly intensive magnitudes” (A170/B212), or that “we can cognize a priori [of appearances] nothing more than their intensive quantity, namely that they have a degree” (A176/B218).

More to the point, if we pay attention to what exactly the principle of intensive magnitudes actually says, we see that it is inconsistent with neither the (empirical) contingency of the dynamic theory of matter, nor the possibility that a form of atomism be true. The principle of intensive magnitudes states that every reality has a determinate degree, or continuous magnitude. This does not entail that every reality is physically capable of changing to other degrees. A reality with a given degree is a continuous magnitude even if this reality happens never to increase nor decrease in intensity. Generalizing, if every piece of matter in the universe turned out (because of some empirical physical law) to possess the exact same degree of density, then the world would be more or less as the atomists describe it, and differences in perceived density could only be explained by appeal to the difference between filled and empty space in a volume. But this would not change the fact that the uniform
density of all the filled spaces was still a determinate intensive magnitude. In short, even if it turned out to be an empirical and physical law of our world that matter cannot vary in intensity, this would not be a transcendental law, and either way, we could still assign an intensive magnitude to the one empirically necessary density of the bodies in this world.

We can apply this result to the objection under consideration. The objection stated, in essence, that,

\[ O: \] Even though the sensible matter of intuition is a continuous magnitude, there is no guarantee that the most objective interpretation of the object of the intuition will involve judgments of continuous magnitudes.

We see now that all the objector is really entitled to is,

\[ O': \] Even though the sensible matter of intuition (in fact) varies continuously in intensity, there is no guarantee that the most objective interpretation of the object of the intuition will involve judgments of magnitudes which (in fact) vary continuously in intensity.

\( O \) is false, \( O' \) is innocuous. \( O \) is false because an empirical object can only be represented as something more than an empty space if at least one concept of reality is applied to the object, such that it is represented as something rather than nothing. Even if the reality-concept applied is not an actually varying magnitude, it will still be a determination of what it is in virtue of which the volume occupied by the object differs from empty space, and there will be some determinate intensity value that can be applied to this filling of space. \( O' \) is innocuous because it asserts only that Kant’s physical theory of matter (as opposed to the transcendental theory) is not a

\[ 76 \] To say, with the atomists, that matter is absolutely solid is by no means to say that it is infinitely solid. If it were infinitely solid, any piece of matter would be infinitely massive, and this is clearly not the case. Rather, the atomist would be committed to the claim that there is some brute cosmological constant, \( d \), which specifies the one intensive magnitude of density that every solid bit of matter in the universe happens to possess. \( d \) would simply be that value which is equal to mass/volume for every volume of matter which contained no empty spaces.
priori. But Kant never claimed that this theory was a priori, because it is a theory that rests on empirical concepts and hence on a posteriori interaction with the world. The only a priori theory is the general transcendental theory of experience, of which the principle of intensive magnitudes is a component.

4.4 Conclusion

Taking together the results of this chapter and the previous one, we now have a robust and detailed picture of how sensations function in making possible representational relations to real objects in spacetime. Sensations are given mental states possessing sensible qualities to determinate degrees. When these sensations are synthesized by the imagination’s figurative synthesis into intuitions, the qualities of these sensations are represented nonconceptually in spatiotemporal arrays. The understanding judges this array of sensible qualities as a physical object in space by applying concepts of accidental and substantial realities, thereby specifying what sort of thing the object is, what makes it something rather than nothing. Once the object is given in intuition and determined with respect to its extensive and intensive magnitudes, the understanding can go on to apply the relational categories of substantial interaction, as well as any number of other empirical concepts.

On the picture that emerged from this interpretation, empirical objects are mere intentional objects which are constructed in representation through the combination of the intuitive awareness of the qualities constituting the appearance with concepts which determine the appearance as a real thing. I have labelled this un-

\footnote{My interpretation thus follows, at least in general outline, Longuenesse’s account of how judgments of reality are possible. She writes, “For the category of reality to be applicable, three conditions must be satisfied: that something affect the senses in sensation, that this sensation/affection be “taken up” apprehended in figurative synthesis, \textit{synthesis speciosa}, and that it be reflected under concepts according to the logical form of quality in judgment” (\textit{Kant and the Capacity to Judge}, p. 298).}
derstanding of the ontological status of Kantian appearances “intentional object phenomenalism.” This interpretation of Kant’s position will be met with strong resistance by many contemporary commentators. Members of the so-called “one-world” school of interpretation (e.g., Henry Allison, Lucy Allais, Rae Langton, and Gerold Prauss, to name but a few) will balk at the suggestion that the only objects of our experience are not identical to the things which really cause our representations (and are not just represented as causal) and really exist external to the mind (and are not just represented as though they exist external to the mind). The primary textual basis appealed to by these writers is Kant’s repudiations of idealism and skepticism, together with his characterization of his own view as an “empirical realism.” These discussions are especially germane to the topic of this dissertation because Kant will often argue for his position by appeal to what we can (and cannot) infer from the presence of sensation in the subject. Sometimes he suggests that we cannot safely infer anything about objects in space from the presence of sensation, yet other times he goes so far as to say that sensations prove the existence of something outside me. In chapter 5 I will address the role of sensation in Kant’s arguments against idealism and skepticism, and show that we can make sense of these arguments in a way that is consistent with the interpretation of the preceding chapters.
Chapter 5

Things “Outside Me”: Actual Objects and Things in Themselves

In this last chapter, I will wrap up two important loose ends that have been hinted at at various points in the preceding chapters, but have not yet received full discussions. Both of these issues have to do, albeit in very different ways, with the relation between sensation and the mind-independence of extra-mental objects, that is, objects insofar as they are considered “outside me.” In the discussion from the A-edition Fourth Paralogism (which I’ve had occasion to appeal to many times by now), Kant distinguishes two different senses in which we might think of objects as being distinct from the mind, or “outside me”:

But since the expression outside us carries with it an unavoidable ambiguity, since it sometimes signifies that, as a thing in itself, exists distinct from us and sometimes merely something that belongs to outer appearance, then in order to escape uncertainty and use this concept in the latter significance—in which it is taken in the proper psychological question about the reality of our outer intuition—we will distinguish empirically external objects from those that might be called “external” in the transcendental sense. (A373)
On the one hand, objects are taken to be outside of and independent of the subject when they are represented in space. These, however, are revealed by Kant’s transcendental idealism to be mere appearances, and, as I have argued, they should be understood as the intentional objects to which our cognition refers. On the other hand though, objects could be taken to be outside of and independent of me when they are transcendentally distinct from the subject, i.e., when they are things in themselves. Although these two senses of the externality of objects are very different and are properly treated in different areas of Kant’s broader metaphysics, both mark important points of intersection with Kant’s theory of sensation. Hence the reconstruction of Kant’s theory of sensation cannot be complete without an analysis of the relation between sensation and things outside me in both the empirical sense and the transcendental sense.

The first issue to be addressed has to do with the “actuality” [Wirklichkeit] of empirical objects. According to Kant’s empirical realism, empirical objects are actual, that is, they exist as material substances in space and time. We saw already in chapter 3 (§3.1.2) that there was some tension between this claim and Kant’s avowed transcendental idealism, which I’ve argued should be interpreted as an “intentional object phenomenalism” (§3.1.3 and §3.3). I suggested that the tension could be resolved if we understood Kant’s empirical realism as a thesis about necessary features of the representational content (specifically, the “I-intentional” content, as I labelled it there) of certain of our cognitive activities. The empirical reality of an object as material substance is exhausted by its being represented as such. In the first section of this chapter (§5.1), I will complete this story by spelling out in greater detail what representational contents are involved when an object is represented as actual (as opposed to merely possible or imaginary). I will first show (in §5.1.1) that the representation of the actuality of an object, like the representation of its reality, de-
pends directly on the data given in sensation: certain patterns of sensations, but not others, allow for or even necessitate the representation of an object as actual. With this interpretation of the Kantian conception of actuality in place, I will apply this interpretation to a reading of Kant’s 1787 Refutation of Idealism (§5.1.2) in order to block the objection that the interpretation of actuality I offer is incompatible with some of Kant’s core views on the mind-world relation. An important conclusion of this discussion will be the result that even though Kant’s transcendental idealism reveals empirical objects to be mind-dependent intentional objects, in normal human cognition we nevertheless necessarily represent these objects as though they exist independently of us and our representations. I suggest that we can thus locate what we might call a “naive transcendental realism” couched inside of Kant’s empirical realism.

The second issue is the relation between sensations and things in themselves, i.e., those entities which somehow correspond to appearances, cause sensations, and are really, not merely purportedly, mind-independent. Although I will not attempt to give a full account of the metaphysical relationship between things in themselves and empirical cognition here, I will address two important points of intersection between Kant’s theory of sensation and his account of things in themselves. The first (§5.2.1) is the supposed doctrine of double-affection, which many commentators have taken to be a problematic aspect of Kant’s account. Kant seems to inconsistently claim both that empirical objects are the causes of sensation and that things in themselves are the causes of sensations. I will show that if we interpret Kant in terms of the intentional object phenomenalism I’ve articulated, that this apparent inconsistency disappears: things in themselves turn out to be the only true causes of sensations. The other point has to do with the very existence of things in themselves (§5.2.2). Many commentators have wondered why Kant took himself to be entitled to claim
that things in themselves exist at all. I will show that Kant has an argument for this existence claim: the existence of appearances entails the existence of things in themselves because the sensations out of which the representations of appearances are constituted could only be caused by things in themselves.

5.1 The Actuality of Empirical Objects

5.1.1 Actuality in Intentional Object Phenomenalism

We saw in the previous chapter that the category of *Wirklichkeit* (or sometimes *Existenz* or *Dasein*) is not to be confused with that of *Realität*. Reality—the concept of an object in virtue of which it is something rather than nothing, and in virtue of which that object fills a space—is a “real” determination of an object because to predicate a reality of an object is to add content to the concept of the object. Actuality, by contrast, is merely a modal category (along with possibility and necessity) and thus to judge that an object is actual is not to add any content to the concept of the object. A merely possible object contains no less reality than it would were it actual, and if we should learn that the object is or has become actual, we do not learn anything new about the object (A234-5/B286). Surely though judgments of actuality are not empty, and when I judge that something is not merely possible, but is also actual, I make a substantive claim. So if judgments of actuality do not inform us about what an object is, what then do they inform us about? According to Kant, modal judgments inform us about the relation between objects and our cognitive faculties:

The categories of modality have this peculiarity: as a determination of the object they do not augment the concept to which they are ascribed in the least, but rather express only the relation to the faculty of cognition.
[....] No further determinations in the object itself are hereby thought; rather, it is only asked: how is the object itself (together with all its determinations) related to the understanding and its empirical use, to the empirical power of judgment, and to reason (in its application to experience)? (A219/B266)

To make a modal assertion about an object is to express the relation that the object (or at least the concept thereof) bears to the operations involved in empirical cognition. Specifically, it has to do with how the object is related to the “conditions of experience” (Bedingungen der Erfahrung), as Kant makes clear in his official formulations of the definitions of the modal categories:

1. Whatever agrees [übereinkommt] with the formal conditions of experience (in accordance with intuition and concepts) is possible.
2. That which is connected [zusammenhängt] with the material conditions of experience (of sensation) is actual.
3. That whose connection [Zusammenhang] with the actual is determined in accordance with general conditions of experience is (exists) necessarily. (A218/B265-6)

The relation between actuality and possibility is illuminating because of the appeal made to the by now familiar distinction between matter and form. An empirical object is possible when it agrees with experience’s “formal conditions” and actual when connected with its “material conditions.”

What Kant means by the “formal conditions of experience” is relatively straightforward. These are the a priori and transcendentally necessary structures that the mind imposes on anything that becomes an object for it, viz., the intuitive forms of space and time as well as the quantitative, qualitative, and relational

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1 The category of necessity will not be important for the discussion to follow, and so for this reason I will not treat it in any detail. Kant says that although no objects of experience are “absolutely necessary”, all actual objects are “hypothetically necessary” (A228/B280). This follows as a consequence of the Second Analogy: if all objects of experience must be conceived as effects which follow with necessity from some antecedent cause, then all objects of experience must be understood as hypothetically necessary insofar as they are necessitated by their cause. (Recall that the form of judgment corresponding to the Second Analogy is the “hypothetical” form of judgment.)
categorial forms. Thus an object is a possible object if it can be represented as possessing a determinate spatiotemporal size and shape (extensive magnitude), determinate qualitative realities (intensive magnitude), and as a caused and causally interactive substance. So, for instance, other things being equal I can represent a hippogriff as possible, but not a spherical cube (which would be inconsistent with the form of intuition) nor an uncaused event (which would be inconsistent with the form of understanding).

The “material conditions of experience,” by contrast, are the sensations that (either directly or indirectly) justify or warrant the representation of some objects, but not others. In this respect, Kant follows his predecessor, Crusius, who held that “the distinguishing feature [Kennzeichnen] of actuality is ultimately always sensation.” One way in which an object can be “connected with the material conditions of experience” is for the object to be directly perceived, i.e., for me to form an empirical intuition of the object out of a collection of given sensations. This is not, however, the only way to represent an object as actual, for I can also represent as actual objects that I could sense, but don’t currently sense, and I could even represent as actual objects that I could not possibly sense. Although “cognizing the actuality of things requires perception,” one need not have “immediate perception of the object” but only “its connection with some actual perception in accordance with the analogies of experience, which exhibit all real connection in an experience in general” (A225/B271). According to the Analogies of Experience, all objects and events together constitute one world because they are all interrelated within a single,

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\(^2\)The transcendent objects of metaphysics (e.g., God or the soul) also cannot be represented as possible because they cannot be given as objects of intuition. This is not to say that the ideas of God or the soul refer to impossible things. The point is simply that we cannot apply the concept of possibility to these things in cognition. The possibility in question here is thus what Kant refers to as “real” possibility; the ideas describe things that are, for all we know, still “logically” possible.

\(^3\)Entwurf, §16, p. 28. See p. 22 above for a discussion of Crusius’s claim.
all-encompassing causal network. Kant’s claim then is that we are justified in representing an unperceived object as actual when the object can justifiably be inferred to be part of the causal basis of what we do perceive.

For instance, I have never seen a beating human heart, but I judge one to be actual in every living human I encounter because I can correctly judge the life of the person to causally depend, at least in part, on the presence of a functional heart. Even objects that are not even perceivable in principle can properly be judged as actual when they must be posited as theoretical entities that explain phenomena we can sense. Thus, Kant will say that “we cognize the existence of a magnetic matter penetrating all bodies from the perception of attracted iron filings, although an immediate perception of this matter is impossible for us given the constitution of our organs” (A226/B273). The behavior of the filings demands a causal basis (as do all perceived events); Kant’s “magnetic matter” is posited as this basis. A more contemporary example could appeal to subatomic bosons as the causal basis of the swerves and spirals traced out on the images produced by detectors sensitive to exploding particles in particle colliders. Even though individual bosons will never be visible to the naked eye, they are correctly judged to be actual because the best interpretation of the data yielded by these detectors requires positing these bosons as the causes of what we see in the images.

It should be emphasized that Kant’s aim in his discussion of modal judgments is not to give an epistemological account of when we are licensed in making judgments of the actuality of empirical objects. In general, inferences from perceived effects to unperceived causes are rarely made with certainty (as Kant himself will emphasize (A368)). Such epistemological worries are beside the point in the Postulates though,

Of course, according to our contemporary theory of electromagnetism Kant was wrong to think that this particular inference to an unperceived theoretical entity was justified. But this just shows that (unsurprisingly) we can be wrong in our judgments of actuality.
as Kant’s concern there is with the semantics of judgments of modality. He makes this explicit when he claims that the principles articulated in the Postulates “are nothing further than the definitions [Erklärungen] of the concepts of possibility, actuality, and necessity in their empirical use” (A219/B266, emphasis added). That is, Kant takes himself simply to be articulating what we mean when we say of an object that it is actual (or possible, or necessary). When I assert that “magnetic matter” or some class of bosons are actual, all I mean is that I represent these objects as the causal basis of certain observed phenomena. The epistemological status of the judgment is a separate matter that Kant is not especially concerned to deal with.

That being said, Kant will still insist that there is a fact of the matter regarding whether something is actual or not. What is interesting about this claim is that the actuality of any given object is exhausted by the definition of actuality given in the Postulates. That is, the actuality of an object just is the connection of the concept of the object with the material conditions of experience and nothing more. This analysis of the actuality of an object reinforces my basic contention that we ought to interpret Kant’s theory of empirical cognition in terms of an intentional object phenomenalism. Kant could have said, but he didn’t, that what it is for an object to be actual is for it to be present in the world, full stop, and no appeal would need be made to the object’s relation to a subject’s cognitive faculties and the material conditions of experience. According to many or most forms of realism regarding the external world, if something is actual or exists, then it is, period, and this has nothing to do with the relations the object might happen to bear to cognizing subjects. Instead of describing actuality in such mind-independent terms, Kant continues his reconceptualization of being-an-object in terms of being-an-object-of-representation (i.e., being an intentional object): the actuality of an object is no more than its
being represented to cohere with the rest of our empirical representations.\(^5\)

This phenomenalistic account of actuality is reinforced in his discussion of the Antinomies where he explicitly connects his transcendental idealism with his understanding of actuality:

That there could be inhabitants of the moon, even though no human being has ever perceived them, must of course be admitted; but this means only that in the possible progress of experience we could encounter them; for everything is actual that stands in one context with a perception in accordance with the laws of the empirical progression. Thus they are real when they stand in an empirical connection with my real consciousness, although they are not therefore real in themselves, i.e., outside this progress of experience. (A493/B521)

Actuality within the phenomenal realm is simply a matter of consistency and connection with everything else that is perceived, i.e., what is revealed in sensation, and this in no way entails the sort of actuality that we might attach to things in themselves (if we could cognize the actuality of such things). I would claim that Kant’s conception of actuality is best interpreted in terms of a coherentism. The actuality of an object hangs on nothing more than the consistency of the concept of the object with the rest of the representation of the empirical world. If the object can be shown, without contradiction, to have a place within the causal framework of the totality of the experienced world, then the object is actual and the representation of it is objectively valid.\(^6\) Note however that the “consistency” with experienced nature required of any putatively actual object is not as weak a condition as it might at first seem. Objects can only consistently be represented as parts of nature if their existence must be posited in order to explain and articulate the causal relations among

\(^5\)Note that the actuality in question here only pertains to appearances. Presumably Kant would say that things in themselves are actual in a way that bears no essential relations to cognitive faculties. But this sort of noumenal actuality (or really just transcendental reality) is not something that mind’s like ours can cognize.

\(^6\)Cf. R5636 (1780-3): “[appearances are] representations whose objective reality consists only in the constancy and unity of the interconnection of their manifold.”
observable events. To say that there was an object for which no causal relations to parts of nature could be cognized would be to say that the object was not a part of nature, nor therefore of the world, at all. For nature just is the totality of causally interactive empirical objects, and hence no object can be actual without being located determinately within this causal framework.

Up to a point, Kant’s coherentist conceptualization of actuality bears some resemblance to what Berkeley has to say about the existence of objects. Berkeley famously argues that all we mean when we say that something exists is either that I perceive it or that I could perceive it, or that someone else perceives it or could perceive it. He writes,

> The table I write on, I say, exists, that is, I see and feel it; and if I were out of my study I should say it existed, meaning thereby that if I was in my study I might perceive it, or that some other spirit actually does perceive it. There was an odour, that is, it was smelled; there was a sound, that is to say, it was heard; a colour of figure, and it was perceived by sight or touch. This is all I can understand by these and the like expressions.\(^7\)

At first glance, there would seem to be some affinity between Kant’s and Berkeley’s analyses of the meaning of existence. Both assert that there is an essential connection between our assertions of the existence of things and the cognitive faculties whereby they come to be represented by us. There remains, however, a crucial difference between them: where existence or actuality for Berkeley depends on the perception or perceivability of the object, for Kant an object is actual when it is simply “connected with” perception. Thus Berkeley’s “to be is to be perceived” is replaced in Kant with “to be is to be perceived or be in a rule-governed causal connection with what is perceived.” Entities which are in principle unobservable (magnetic matter or Higgs bosons) can count as actual on Kant’s theory, but not Berkeley’s. This

\(^7\)Principles of Human Knowledge, §3.
difference is a consequence of the difference between Kant’s and Berkeley’s phenomen- 
enalisms. Berkeley subscribes to what I described in chapter 3 as an “ontological 
phenomenalism” according to which the objects of experience (not just the representa-
tions thereof) are constituted by mental, sensory states. Once again we see that 
although Kant defends a phenomenalist view according to which the actuality of the 
objects of experience depend for their existence on their being represented, Kant is 
not claiming that these objects can be reduced to or identified with the mental states 
that represent them. The features and determinations of the intentional object arti-
culated by a representation are as distinct from the representation as the plot of a 
novel is from the ink and paper used to narrate it. In this way, Kant can claim that 
we have experience of objects distinct from our minds, even though the existence of 
these objects remains mind-dependent. Hence these objects are “outside us” only in 
the empirical, not the transcendental, sense.

5.1.2 Skepticism Regarding the External World

Thus far we have seen that what is essential to the actuality of an object 
is its combination into the systematic representation of the perceptually available 
physical world. An object is actual when the representation thereof fits within the 
causal framework of the entirety of “nature”, which is the ultimate object of all 
empirical cognition. This means that the difference between an illusory object and 
an actual one is not, in the final analysis, an ontological distinction between “really 
real” entities and mere phantasms, but is rather only a matter of the relations the 
object bears to other objects antecedently judged to be actual. “The difference

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8See p. 106 above.
9Of course, another crucial difference between Kant’s and Berkeley is Kant’s belief in the existence of things in themselves. Berkeley will argue that unperceived non-mental objects are impossible, but Kant takes them to be a necessary causal basis of the representations we find ourselves with. (More on this causal story in §5.2.2 below.)
between dream and reality,” Kant says,

is not decided through the quality of the representations that are referred to objects, for they are the same in both, but through their connection according to rules that determine the combination of representations in the concept of an object how far they can or cannot stand together in experience. (Prol., 4:290)

Kant’s point here is a semantic one. The only thing we can mean in saying that objects are actual is that we are unable to represent these objects in lawlike connection with the rest of experience.10

Given this conception of actuality, one might wonder whether Kant is left with any resources to refute the skeptic and prove that we are not brains in vats, at the mercy of Cartesian demons, or enslaved by our robot overlords in the Matrix. If the actuality of an object is exhausted by the coherence of an object with the rest of what is sensed and cognized in experience, then it would seem that not only could Kant not prove that we are not brains in vats, but that he would also have to concede that the objects experienced in these situations are just as actual as the objects experienced in “normal” (i.e., “non-envatted”) life. Assuming that the sensory stimulus fed to my brain by the mad scientist while it floats in a vat displays a sufficient degree of regularity and can thus be synthesized into a coherent representation of a physical world, I will be able to form representations of objects that fit the “material conditions of experience.” Hence, these objects will be actual, at least for me.

Yet, we intuitively want to say that there is a world of difference between the case where our perceptions are for the most part veridical (the non-envatted scenario) and the case where they are the result of a global, systematic deception (the envatted scenario). That is, intuitively, I want to describe the quasi-experience

10Cf. A293/B349: “Truth and illusion are not in the object, insofar as it is intuited, but in the judgment about it insofar as it is thought.”
had by the brain in the vat as of non-actual (merely illusory) objects, and my real experience in the normal case as of actual objects. But if the actuality of an object is determined solely by whether that object can be represented in conformity with the overarching system of nature, then the objects I experience while my brain floats in a vat are just as actual as the objects I experience when I'm not a brain in a vat. And note that the point here is not simply an epistemic one: the problem isn’t that I can’t tell whether the objects I experience are really as actual as I take them to be; rather, the problem is that, for Kant, there is no difference between the actuality of the objects experienced in the “real” world and those experienced while in the vat.

I claim that we should bite the bullet here and acknowledge that Kant does not have the resources to distinguish between the envatted and non-envatted scenarios, at least with respect to the actuality of the objects experienced by the cognizer. On Kant’s model of cognition, the experiences fed to my brain while it floats in a vat are of actual objects to the same extent as the experiences had by a non-envatted brain having the same stream of representations. For if we grant to Kant his transcendental idealism (and grant to me the interpretation thereof as intentional object phenomenalism), then the objects experienced in both the envatted and non-envatted scenarios are no more than intentional objects constructed by the representational activities of the mind. Hence, strictly speaking, the ontological status of the objects experienced in the two scenarios is the same.11

11I should mention that I am assuming a relatively simple “brain in a vat” scenario in which the brain is fed systematic and consistent sensory inputs, and in which the brain in question has no experience either before or after its time in the vat. Various complications could be brought in here to make the actuality of the objects cognized while in the vat less straightforward. For instance, say that after many years of cognition while in the vat, the brain is surgically implanted into a real human body and the subject “wakes up” into the real world (or we can think of Neo from The Matrix being “awoken” out of the matrix). What should we say about the subject’s first few hours of representing objects in the “real” world? On the one hand, the representation of these objects will be radically inconsistent with the system of nature experienced while still in the vat, and hence they could not be represented as actual objects (according to Kant’s account). Yet at the same time, these “new” objects would display their own coherence and regularity. Presumably, after enough
The most important systematically problematic consequence this claim could have for Kant is that it might seem to conflict with his project in the Refutation of Idealism. Kant thought he could put one of the final nails in the coffin of cartesianism by showing that skepticism regarding the external world was unavoidable for that model of the mind, but was no problem for his own critical philosophy. In the Refutation Kant attempts to prove "the existence of objects in space outside me" (B275) by showing that I could only have knowledge of the temporal sequence of my own mental states if I already have an immediate consciousness of a permanent object existing independently of me in space. That the "existence of external objects" in question is closely tied up with Kant’s account of actuality is made clear by the placement of the Refutation: when he added it to the 1787 edition of the Critique, he put it immediately after the discussion of the category of actuality in the Postulates.

The justification of Kant’s entire argument in the Refutation would depend on a thorough analysis of Kant’s account in the Analogies of Experience of time-determination and substance, and such an analysis lies outside the scope of my project here. What is worth analyzing though is what exactly Kant takes himself to be up to in his Refutation. For the way he describes what must be shown in order to refute the skeptic seems to imply that the merely coherentist account of actuality I’ve argued for is inadequate. Kant says that in order to refute the skeptic, it must be shown “that we have experience and not merely imagination of outer things” (B275). And in the proof itself he claims that our immediate perception of a permanent object “is possible only through a thing outside me and not through the mere representation of a thing outside me” (B275). This distinction between experience and imagination of outer things, and between things really outside me and time spent in the “real” world, the subject would have to revise her previous judgments regarding the actuality of the objects she used to experience. There would, however, remain a certain respect in which the subject would simply have been living in two fully distinct, yet equally actual, worlds.
the mere representation thereof could be taken to imply that there is a real difference between simply representing an object as actual and the object being actual in fact (and hence that there would be a real difference between the objects represented in the envatted and non-envatted scenarios). It could imply, that is, that for an object to be actual, it must be ontologically distinct from the cognizing subject, as opposed to simply being represented within the system of nature.

Many commentators have taken this to be Kant's meaning, and have read the Refutation as an attempt to show that we must be conscious of entities that are ontologically distinct from us. Paul Guyer, for instance, while acknowledging that Kant's published statement of the goal of the Refutation is ambiguous, ultimately concludes that "Kant did intend his refutation to establish our knowledge of objects ontologically independent of and not just phenomenologically external to ourselves." 12

Note, however, that we are not forced to read the Refutation as arguing for the thesis that there are entities ontologically distinct from the subject. As Guyer himself suggests, one could take the distinction between experience and imagination, between thing outside me and the mere representation thereof, in a phenomenological sense. According to such a phenomenological reading of the Refutation, these distinctions can be made sense of within Kant's empirical realism and, I would further argue, within his intentional object phenomenalism. It could be claimed that an object that is merely imagined or is merely represented is one which cannot be situated coherently within the broader system of nature. An experience of a thing really outside me, by contrast, is one which can be so situated. According to the phenomenological reading of the Refutation, then, Kant is proving that at least some objects must be

cognized as actual objects in space. Or, to put it the other way around, it cannot be the case that the only objects we cognize as actual are the mental states accessed through inner sense. I could not coherently cognize the temporal order of my own mental states if I did not also cognize a coherent spatial realm of physical objects.

I take the phenomenological reading of the Refutation to be consistent with the text of the Refutation. The question remains, however, why it should be preferred to Guyer’s ontological reading. The primary consideration that I take to speak against the ontological reading is that it puts the Refutation into too strong a tension with the rest of the *Critique*. According to the ontological reading of the Refutation, Kant argues that there are numerically distinct entities of which we are aware in empirical cognition. He could mean two things by this: that we are aware of things in themselves which are numerically distinct from our minds, or that there are spatial objects which are numerically distinct from our minds.

Kant cannot mean that we are immediately aware of things in themselves which are ontologically distinct from our minds. This would contradict his repeated assertions that his transcendental idealism implies that we can never have cognitive access to things in themselves because the only things we are capable of cognizing are the appearances given in intuition.\(^{13}\) Furthermore, the official “theorem” of the Refutation promises “the existence of objects in space outside me” (B275, emphasis added). Whatever else one might take them to be, for Kant, objects in space cannot be things in themselves. Were Kant to drop the strict distinction between objects in space and things in themselves here in the Refutation, it would undermine nearly every important and distinctly “critical” claim in the *Critique*.

The claim that Kant proves the existence of ontologically distinct spatial objects does not fare much better, for this claim would be equally inconsistent with

\(^{13}\text{E.g., see A42/B59ff., A129, A368ff., A490/B518ff.}\)
Kant’s account of his transcendental idealism as he describes it in the A-edition’s Fourth Paralogism. There Kant also wanted to refute the skeptic and show that the existence of objects in space “need not be inferred” (A371) from introspectively accessible mental states. There, however, Kant was much more explicit about the importance of his transcendental idealism in refuting the skeptic. He claims to be able to prove that we have immediate conscious access to objects in space because “external objects (bodies) are merely appearances, hence also nothing other than a species of my representations, whose objects are something only through these representations, but are nothing separated from them” (A370). He argues that,

matter for [the transcendental idealist] is only a species of representations (intuition), which are called external, not as if they related to objects that are external in themselves but because they relate perceptions to space, where all things are external to one another, but that space itself is in us. (A370)

These remarks leave no question that, at least in 1781, Kant took the spatial objects to which we have immediate access to be transcendentally ideal in a strong sense which does not leave room for their supposed ontological independence. Thus a proponent of the ontological reading of the Refutation of 1787 must claim that Kant had drastically changed his mind about the meaning of his transcendental idealism. This is a move that Guyer is willing to make,14 but as even he admits, Kant himself claimed that the new argument against idealism is a “supplement” to the A-edition “only in the way of proof” (Bxxxix), indicating that Kant did not take the Refutation to be a revision of his position, or at the very least that he did not want to present

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14Summarizing Kant’s attempt at a new expression of the refutation from circa 1790-1 (R6315), Guyer writes, “we can know that in addition to our representations objects numerically distinct from them exist, although this was just what was denied in 1781” (p. 342). This reading of R6315 begs the question against the phenomenological reading, however, because what Kant says there is consistent with either reading. And R6315 is only in conflict with the A-edition Fourth Paralogism if one ignore the distinction between the empirical and transcendental senses of the phrases “outside me” and “inside me,” which Kant himself wanted to emphasize in the 1781 refutation.
it as such.

I take these considerations to speak in favor of the phenomenological reading of the Refutation. One might worry that on this interpretation Kant promises (or at least appears to promise) much more than he delivers. All he has shown is that I must represent things as existing outside me (externality in the empirical sense), but it has not been shown that there really are such things (externality in the transcendental sense). In a certain respect this complaint is warranted, but it should also be kept in mind that nothing stronger should have been expected from Kant. Kant has shown that at least one formulation of cartesian skepticism has been refuted. If the worry is that we cannot be certain that our judgments of the existence of external objects are correct, Kant has defused the worry: judgments are certain for Kant when they hold with the necessity that comes along with objective validity, and this Kant has delivered. According to Kant’s own standards at least, we are necessitated in forming judgments to the effect that objects in space exist. Perhaps this demonstration could only be satisfying to one already convinced of the critical philosophy, but such “internal” success might be the best that could be hoped for.

The most important upshot of this reading of the Refutation is that it reveals one more central component of the necessary features of the semantic content that goes into articulating the intentional objects experienced in cognition. Kant has shown that I couldn’t possibly have the experience I do if I didn’t represent objects as existing apart from me and my representations, “outside me”, in space. Something’s being “outside me” in this empirical sense does not entail that the object be a thing in itself, and thus be mind-independent in that transcendental sense, but it does entail that the object be represented as distinct from me and hence as mind-independent, i.e., represented as an “empirical thing in itself.” In order for me to represent something as a substance persisting through time, I have to represent it
as continuing to exist when I turn my back on it, when I blink, when neither I nor anyone else is in the room. I have to represent it, that is, as existing independently of me and my representational faculties. One way to take this point—although Kant himself surely never put it this way—is that the subject of empirical cognition, i.e., the psychologically normal human engaged in experiential perception of the world, cannot help but represent the world in terms of what we might call a “naive transcendental realism.” If we consider a person who has never read Kant, nor thought that much about philosophy at all, and we analyze the contents of her representations of empirical objects, we will find that her propositional attitudes toward these objects entail claims like “That object exists in space, hence independently of me, and hence completely irrespective of my representing it,” but not claims like “That is a mere appearance, hence a mere mind-dependent representation,” nor claims like “I merely represent this object as though it is in space.” Although Kantian philosophical investigation reveals empirical objects to be no more than representation-dependent intentional objects, such metaphysical and ontological facts do not factor in to the semantic content through which we represent these objects in normal modes of empirical cognition.

15Nicholas Rescher argues for a position that is some respects similar to this (“On the Status of ‘Things in Themselves’ in Kant,” *Synthese*, Vol. 47, No. 2, pp. 289-299). On his view, the idea of a thing in itself is “the product of an intellectual insistence on a certain way of thinking about things” (p. 298) and thus is implicitly at work in all human cognition. I would disagree with Rescher, however, insofar as he claims that in representing appearances, we are attempting to intend things in themselves in the transcendental sense which we take to lie behind that which appears. I do not think that in representing appearances, the mind is already searching after something distinct from the appearance which appears. Rather, the appearance we represent as an empirical object is itself already taken to be a fully substantial thing in its own right, and in normal cognition, we do not need to seek out that which lies behind it. (Such a search takes place only in transcendental philosophical investigation.) The appearance, I would claim, is represented as an empirical thing in itself, but not a transcendental one.
5.2 Sensations and Things in Themselves

Thus far in my discussions of the function of sensation within empirical cognition I have remained intentionally silent on the question of the causal basis of sensations. I began my reconstruction of Kant’s theory in Chapter 2 by taking sensations to be passively received from the affection of something on the senses, but I was primarily concerned with the processes and operations performed on these sensations as they were developed into ever more complex representations of objects, and I ignored the question of where the sensations initially came from. The reconstruction of Kant’s theory of empirical intuition would not be complete, though, without an account of this causal basis. Thus in this section I will argue that we should understand sensations to be the result of a transcendental affection of things in themselves on the subject. I will first argue (§5.2.1) that the so-called problem of double affection—according to which both things in themselves and empirical objects are causally responsible for sensations—is really no problem at all (at least when analyzed in terms of the intentional object phenomenalism I have defended).\textsuperscript{16} I will then (§5.2.2) discuss the controversiality of Kant’s assertions that things in themselves exist and are the causal basis of our sensory representations. This will complete the project of the dissertation because it will have been shown not just how we form objective representations of empirical objects out of given sensory matter, but also where this matter comes from.

\textsuperscript{16}I am not claiming that my interpretation is the only interpretation that could solve the double affection problem. I leave it open that there might be other similar takes on the problem. My point here will simply be that the ability of intentional object phenomenalism to defuse the problem will be one more mark that speaks in its favor.
5.2.1 There is no “Problem of Double Affection”

The doctrine of double affection is the view, attributed to Kant by many readers,\(^{17}\) that Kant assigns incompatible causal antecedents to the sensations out of which our empirical representations are formed. In some instances, Kant will say that our sensations are brought about by “noumenal” or “transcendental affection” of nonspatiotemporal things in themselves on the subject. In other instances, he will say that sensations are brought about by the influence of empirical objects on the physical body of the perceiver. Given the distinction between empirical and noumenal objects demanded by Kant’s transcendental idealism, these two causal explanations would seem to be incompatible. If our sensations can be explained entirely by appeal to transcendental affection, then there is no work for empirical affection to do, and if they can be explained entirely by appeal to empirical affection, then appeal to transcendental affection is likewise superfluous. There would seem to be one cause too many and we want to know whether our sensations are caused by things transcendentally “outside me” or empirically “outside me.”

This embarrassment of riches is made all the more embarrassing by the fact that, as many have noticed, the notions of transcendental affection and empirical affection each appear to be incompatible with certain aspects of Kant’s theory. The claim that our sensations are caused by empirical objects seems to conflict with Kant’s claim that empirical objects are appearances which depend for their existence on their being represented in cognition. Since these appearances are only represented in cognition once sensations have been synthesized with the \textit{a priori} forms

\(^{17}\)This claim was put forward most famously by Erich Adikes in his \textit{Kants Lehre von der doppelten Affektion unseres Ich} of 1929. Hans Vaihinger also presents a classic discussion of the problem in his \textit{Commentar zu Kants Kritik der reinen Vernunft} (bd. 2). More recent discussion of the problem can be found in Van Cleve’s \textit{Problems From Kant}, ch10; Nick Stang’s “Adickes on Double Affection” (forthcoming); Claude Piché’s “Kant and the Problem of Double Affection” \textit{(Symposium: Canadian Journal of Continental Philosophy} 8 (2) pp. 275-297); Bryan Hall’s “Appearances and the Problem of Double Affection in Kant” \textit{(Kantian Review}, 14 (2) 2010, pp. 38-66).
of cognition, empirical affection would require that appearances depend on the very sensations which they are supposed to have caused.\textsuperscript{18} The circularity of this mutual dependence is clearly vicious, and thus empirical affection appears incompatible with Kant’s transcendental idealism.\textsuperscript{19}

The alleged problem with transcendental affection as the cause of sensations is that it seems to be blatantly incompatible with Kant’s claim that the categories can be applied only to empirical objects. Kant argues repeatedly throughout the \textit{Critique} that the pure concepts of the understanding, of which causality is one, have legitimate use only with respect to appearances, and he claims that any attempt to apply these concepts to noumenal entities marks a lapse into transcendental illusion.\textsuperscript{20} It would seem that in labeling things in themselves as the causal basis of our sensations, Kant violates one of his own most important principles.\textsuperscript{21}

The problem of double affection would seem to present us with a dilemma. We don’t simply have too many causal explanations of the origin of sensations; neither of the explanations we do have seems acceptable. What should we say in response to this dilemma? I will argue, first, that Kant does not hold a double affection doctrine; the objection against empirical affection given above is insuperable, and on his considered

\textsuperscript{18}See Vaihinger’s \textit{Commentar, Bd. 2} (p. 53), and Nick Stang’s “Adickes on Double Affection” (forthcoming) for discussions of this problem.

\textsuperscript{19}Note that this objection against the possibility of empirical affection in Kant’s theory does not depend on interpreting his theory in terms of the intentional object phenomenalist I’ve defended. However one chooses to interpret his position on the ontological status of empirical objects, one point on which he is consistent and unambiguous is that these objects are mere appearances, and as such are mind-dependent, requiring a sensory input for their representation.

\textsuperscript{20}See A293/B349ff. for Kant’s introduction to his discussion of “transcendental illusion.”

\textsuperscript{21}Strawson, for instance, argues that the idea of things in themselves affecting the subject is fully unintelligible: “The doctrine that we are aware of things only as they appear and not as they are in themselves because their appearances to us are the result of our constitution being affected by the objects, is a doctrine that we can understand just so long as the ‘affecting’ is thought of as something that occurs in space and time; but when it is added that we are to understand by space and time themselves nothing but a capacity or liability of ours to be affected in a certain way by objects not themselves in space and time, the we can no longer understand the doctrine, for we no longer know what ‘affecting’ means, or what we are to understand by ‘ourselves’.” \textit{(The Bounds of Sense, Routledge, 1966, p. 41.)}
view there is only one cause of sensations: things in themselves. Second, I will show that Kant’s claim that sensations are occasioned by transcendental affection does not violate his principle that the concept of cause is legitimately applied only to empirical objects.

First let’s look at the textual evidence. If we list references to transcendental affection alongside those to empirical affection, we see that instances of the former far outnumber the latter. As early as the Transcendental Aesthetic, Kant argues that we can have knowledge \textit{a priori} of appearances, but not of “the things in themselves that may ground them \([\text{zum Grunde liegen mag}]\)” (A49/B66). Similar language occurs in the A-edition Paralogisms, where he argues that the “transcendental object... grounds both outer appearances and inner intuitions” (A379-80), and he goes on to describe spatiotemporal bodies as “a mere appearance of who knows what unknown object” (A387). In the Antinomies, he refers to “the non-sensible cause \([\text{nichtsinnliche Ursache}]\)” and the “merely intelligible cause” \([\text{intelligible Ursache}]\) of representations (the transcendental object) (A494/B522), and he will go on to argue that appearances “must have grounds that are not appearances” which Kant again labels an “intelligible cause” that has its own “causality \([\text{Causalit"at}]\)” whose effects are “encountered” in experience but not determinable as appearance (A537/B565). In the \textit{Prolegomena} he argues that appearances are representations which things in themselves “produce \([\text{wirken}]\) in us because they affect \([\text{afficieren}]\) our senses” (4:289). He returns to this claim later in the book when he argues that we receive the matter out of which we construct nature when “our sensibility is affected in its characteristic way by objects that are in themselves unknown to it and that are wholly distinct from appearances” (4:318). In the \textit{Groundwork}, he argues that the “involuntary” representations of the senses “enable us to cognize objects only as they affect us and we remain ignorant of what they may be in themselves” (4:451). And in his \textit{On a}
Discovery, Kant says that the doctrine of the Critique “posits this ground of the matter [Stoffes] of sensory representations not once again in things, as objects of the senses, but in something super-sensible, which grounds the latter, and of which we can have no cognition” (8:215). This collection of passages spans not just the whole of the first Critique, but all of the high critical period of the 1780s (On a Discovery was published in 1790). I take Kant’s repeated insistence across this decade as indisputable evidence that transcendental affection was an essential component of his considered position on the source of the sensory matter of cognition.

What textual evidence is there that empirical affection is also a component of the considered view? Not all that much, it turns out. For the most part, the closest we get to assertions of empirical affection are claims about the specific physical processes that affect sensibility, thereby occasioning sensations. For instance, in the Transcendental Aesthetic, Kant writes that “colors... are only modifications of the sense of sight, which is affected by light in a certain way” (A28).22 Similarly, in the Metaphysical Foundations he writes that “The basic determination of something that is to be an object of the outer senses had to be motion, because only thereby can these senses be affected” (4:476). The only passages of which I am aware in which Kant will state that sensations or perception depend on an empirical affection occur in the Anticipations and the Third Analogy. At B208, Kant concludes the argument of the Anticipations by claiming that “all objects of perception, insofar as they contain sensation, must be ascribed an intensive magnitude, i.e., a degree of influence on sense.” A couple pages later he returns to this idea, claiming that one can “regard” the reality in an object “as a cause (whether of sensation or of another reality in appearance, e.g. an alteration)” (A168/B210).23 And in the Third Analogy,

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22 This passage is excised from the B-edition, replaced with a paragraph that makes no mention of any sort of empirical affection.
23 These passages were discussed in Chapter 4 with respect to the “Inferred Cause Interpretation”
Kant remarks that “we cannot empirically alter any place (perceive [an] alteration) without matter everywhere making the perception possible” (A213/B260).

Clearly, the textual evidence supporting empirical affection is much less robust than that supporting transcendental affection. In fact, the primary motivation that a commentator might have for taking empirical affection to be a necessary component of Kant’s system is not that he makes the claim very often, but rather his repeated insistence that the concept of a cause has legitimate application only when applied to empirical objects.\(^\text{24}\) I can only cognize something as an effect if that thing is in space or time, and I can only cognize something as the cause of that effect if it too is represented in space or time. Thus insofar as sensations are understood as the result of an affection on the subject (an effect), the only possible cause of these sensations that we could hope to cognize would be an empirical object in space or time.

Without denying that any of the above are necessary parts of the Kantian system, I propose that we read these claims about empirical affection in terms of the intentional object phenomenalism I’ve defended. According to that reading, empirical objects are merely the intentional objects of certain complex representational states. Thus all of the (non-trivial) determinations in the object will depend directly on the contents articulated by the representation of it. A consequence of this is that to say that a certain feature of an empirical object is a necessary feature of that object is to say that the cognizing subject is necessitated in including that feature in the content of the representation. Thus to say, as Kant argues in his Analogies, that every experienced event requires that there be some empirical (i.e., spatiotemporal) cause of that event, is to say that for every empirical event we represent, we must also represent an empirical causal antecedent of that event. Applied to the case

\(^{24}\)See A189/B232ff.
of sensations as effects, the claim would be that we can only represent sensations as effects insofar as we represent them as caused by empirical objects (specifically, objects affecting our sense organs).

Kant’s few scattered allusions to empirical affection should thus be taken as claims about how we must represent the causal antecedents of sensations within empirical cognition. It is a condition on the possibility of experience that we represent objects as causally interacting with us and with each other, but this necessary feature of the contents of our experience does not entail this content describes how things are absolutely. Mere intentional objects cannot cause sensations because, really, they cannot cause anything. Facts about the necessary features of our representational contents do not entail facts about how things are independently of our representations.

The problem of double affection is thus revealed not to be a problem at all. Although within empirical cognition we necessarily represent the causal antecedents of our sensations in terms of an empirical affection by objects affecting our physical sense organs, really, the only true or ultimate cause of sensations, as revealed by transcendental philosophy, is the transcendental affection of things in themselves on the subject. There would only be a problem of double affection if either (i) there were incompatible claims made about the true causes of sensations, or (ii) there were incompatible claims about how we necessarily cognize these causes in cognition. Insofar as things in themselves turn out to be the only true cause of sensations, (i) is not a problem. And insofar as we do not (in fact, cannot) cognize things in themselves as the causes of sensations in empirical cognition, (ii) is not a

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25Note that this is implicit in the way Kant describes the supposed causal relation between objects and sensations in the Anticipations. He says that realities in objects “must be ascribed [beigelegt worden muß]... a degree of influence on sense” (B208, emph. added), and later that we can “regard” [betrachtet] a reality in an object as a cause of sensation (A168/B210).
problem.

One important issue remains to be resolved here, and that is the complaint that Kant has no right to claim that things in themselves cause sensations because according to Kant’s own principles, we are not licensed in applying the concept of cause to non-empirical entities. My response to this worry follows that of many recent commentators who have not found reason to be all that bothered by the doctrine of transcendental affection. Kant claims that the concept of causality is applicable only to empirical objects, and hence is not applicable to things in themselves. But if we take this to mean that it is impossible for us to have determinate cognition of things in themselves as the causes of sensations, then there is still room for Kant to make the general and indeterminate assertion that unknowable things in themselves somehow ground our sensations. When Kant claims that things in themselves affect sensibility, he is not claiming to know any of the specific features and powers of things in themselves such that they can bring about this affection (nor is he claiming to know how many of them there are, nor why they caused these sensations rather than others, and so on). These specific and determinate features of things in themselves as causes cannot be cognized because things in themselves cannot be given as objects in intuition. But the general and abstract claim about things in themselves as the ground of sensations does not purport to yield any determinate cognition of things in themselves, and so Kant has not violated his own thesis about the limits of cognition.

As Van Cleve has concluded, “Kant is free to talk about things in themselves as

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causes, as long as causation is understood abstractly as the relation of ground to consequent, a relation that can hold between nontemporal items.” 27 Similarly, Hogan has argued that we can make perfect sense of transcendental affection, so long as we acknowledge that the concept of causality (qua transcendental affection) involved will be the unschematized category, which, while not completely without meaning or sense, does lack determinate reference and hence cannot count as full cognition: “Kant explains that the ‘unschematized’ category of causation—the category viewed in abstraction from spatiotemporal conditions of its empirical applicability—allows us to coherently think (Denken), although not theoretically cognize (Erkennen), causal relations even beyond the bounds of possible experience.” 28

5.2.2 The Existence of Things in Themselves

So much for the complaint that Kant violates his own epistemic humility by incorporating transcendental affection into his theory. There remains, however, a similar complaint: irrespective of whether Kant is licensed in speaking sensibly of the transcendental affection of things in themselves on the subject, why is he entitled to claim that things in themselves exist at all?

Different commentators have addressed the question of the argument for the existence of things in themselves in different ways. Some think that Kant was simply dogmatic about the existence of things in themselves. 29 Others appeal to things

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27 Problems From Kant, p. 138. Van Cleve goes on to worry that “our grasp of such a [grounding] relation must be analogical at best. I do not say that such a relation is unintelligible or incoherent, but I do find it difficult to comprehend” (ibid.). He is correct to say that such a non-temporal grounding relation is difficult to comprehend, but he should not be worried about this, because that is Kant’s point (at least part of it) in claiming that we cannot cognize nonspatiotemporal objects. It isn’t just that I cannot have determinate knowledge of this or that thing in itself; rather, I cannot even represent the real possibility of what such things would be like, once I have abstracted from the only way that objects can be given to my mind (space and time).

28 “Noumenal Affection,” p. 504.

29 Paul Guyer will sometimes say things that go in this direction. See ch. 15 of his Kant’s and the Claims of Knowledge.
in themselves as necessary postulates of reason for either practical cognition\textsuperscript{30} or theoretical cognition.\textsuperscript{31} I will not attempt to give an exhaustive treatment of the different avenues one might take in trying to argue for the existence of things in themselves, as this would be a substantial project in its own right. I want instead to investigate one argument for the existence of things in themselves that Kant hints at at a various places in his writings. This is the deceptively simple argument that, since there are appearances, there must be something that appears. Here are a few characteristic expressions of this argument:

It also follows naturally from the concept of an appearance in general that something must correspond to it which is not in itself appearance, for appearance can be nothing for itself and outside of our kind of representation; thus, if there is not to be a constant circle, the word ‘appearance’ must already indicate a relation to something the immediate representation of which is, to be sure, sensible, but which in itself, without this constitution of our sensibility (on which the form of our intuition is grounded), must be something, i.e., an object independent of sensibility. (A251-2)

If, on the other hand, appearances do not count for any more than they are in fact, namely, not for things in themselves but only for mere representations connected in accordance with empirical laws, then they themselves must have grounds that are not appearances. (A537/B565)

If we view the objects of the senses as mere appearances, as is fitting, then we thereby admit at the very same time that a thing in itself underlies them. [...] Therefore the understanding, just by the fact that it accepts appearances, also admits of the existence of thing in themselves, and to that extent we can say that the representation of such beings as underlie the appearances, hence of mere intelligible beings, is not merely permitted but also unavoidable. (Prol., 4:315)

We have proved all objects of experience only as appearance. There must, therefore, be something actual besides the objects of experience. (23:42; handwritten by Kant in his copy of the Critique at A571/B599)

\textsuperscript{30}E.g., Hogan (2009) and Westphal (1997).

\textsuperscript{31}E.g., Rescher (1981).
The sensible world lies merely in the senses. These, however, show us only the manner in which they are affected by things, but not the latter themselves. They show us merely the appearances of the things. But these are not the things themselves. They indeed underlie the appearances, and I can therefore surely infer the actuality of the things from the appearances, but not the properties of the things themselves from the properties of the appearances. (Metaphysik Mrongovius, 29:857)

In these passages, Kant makes it seem like the inference from the existence of an appearance to the existence of something that appears (a thing in itself) is a simple analytic deduction. We couldn’t make sense of the very notion of an appearance without also presupposing the notion of something that did the appearing. Writers who interpret Kant’s transcendental idealism in terms of a “two-aspect” (or “one-world”) theory are able to easily sidestep the question of the existence of things in themselves. If things in themselves are numerically identical to appearances and the two concepts simply pick out two different ways of describing one and the same entity (either things considered as they are in themselves or things considered in relation to cognizing subjects), then the existence of appearances immediately entails the existence of things in themselves. Things are more complicated on metaphysical interpretations of transcendental idealism that take the distinction between appearances and things in themselves seriously, and this is especially true of the intentional object phenomenalism on offer in this dissertation. If appearances and things in themselves really are ontologically distinct, then it is an open question whether we can make sense of Kant’s repeated insistence that the existence of appearances entails the existence of things in themselves. One-world interpreters tend to take this to speak in favor of their position. Allison will argue that “the temptation to worry about the existence of things in themselves disappears once it is recognized that Kant is not primarily concerned with a separate class of entities, which, unlike appearances, would supposedly ‘be there’ even if there were no finite
cognizers.” Similarly, Langton argues that Kant’s repeated claims that the existence of appearances entails the existence of things in themselves “makes little sense on a phenomenalistic interpretation, according to which appearances are sense data, or conscious states of mind: what could be easier to suppose that that there could be an appearance without there being something that exists in itself, apart from our states of mind?” Likewise, Allais will argue that, “Berkeleyan objects [or “virtual objects,” or “phenomenalist objects”], as collections of ideas [...] do not imply the existence of things of which the objects-as-collections-of-ideas are appearances.”

The question comes down to whether Kant is justified in making the inference from the existence of appearances to the existence of things in themselves that ground these appearances when appearances are construed in the phenomenalistic sense described by the intentional object interpretation of Kant’s phenomenalism. As Langton points out, when “appearance” is understood as a transcendentally ideal and phenomenalistic mere intentional object which only exists (insofar as it can be said to exist at all) because it is represented, the inference to the existence of something that appears is no longer so straightforwardly analytic. It might seem that at best we can infer from the existence of appearance to the existence of the representation of that appearance (on whose intentionality the appearance depends).

I think, however, that if we look closely we find that Kant does, or at least thinks he does, have the resources to give an argument from the existence of appearances to the existence of things in themselves, even when appearances are interpreted

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32 *Kant’s Transcendental Idealism*, p. 51.
33 *Kantian Humility*, p. 22.
34 *Kant’s One World,* p. 661.
35 Allais also makes this point when she argues that, “Someone who believes that objects as we know them are collections of sense-data or ideas may plausibly think there is something other than these sense-data, which is in some way responsible for their order and existence [...] However, this is an inference, or explanation of the order and existence of the sense-data, not an implication of them, and there would be no reason to call the sense-data *appearances* of this cause” (ibid.).
in such a way that there is a strict ontological separation between them and things in themselves. According to this argument, if we grant, as I have argued we should, that appearances are constructed in representation out of the data given in sensation, then since appearances depend on sensation, and sensations can only have been caused by things in themselves, the existence of appearances proves the existence of things in themselves. I will first state the argument as I see it, and then discuss its important moments.

1. There are appearances.
2. The existence of appearances entails the existence of sensations.
3. Sensations exist.
4. Sensations are caused either by empirical objects, by the mind itself (specifically, the productive imagination), or by things in themselves.
5. Empirical objects cannot cause sensations.
6. The productive imagination cannot cause sensations.
7. Therefore things in themselves are the cause of sensations.
8. Therefore things in themselves exist.

I don’t think it would be unreasonable to say that the premise in line 1 is obviously true. Even if one were to call into question the existence of external appearances (as might Kant’s opponent in the Refutation), the skeptic would still acknowledge the existence of inner appearances, i.e., empirical states of the subject’s own mind.

Since appearances are the intentional objects of empirical representations, and we can only have empirical representations if sensations are given out of which these representations can be constructed, the existence of appearances entails the existence of sensations (lines 2 and 3).
The premise expressed in line 4 is an exhaustive list of the possible sources of the sensations we find ourselves with. Sensations are either produced by my mind itself or by the affection of objects independent of my mind (i.e., objects “outside me”). Among the latter, there are objects outside me in the empirical sense (appearances) and objects outside me in the transcendental sense (things in themselves). We saw in §5.1.2 above that while empirical objects must be represented as the cause of sensations, they cannot in full metaphysical fact be the true cause of sensations. Hence line 5.

Line 6 is the most problematic step in the argument. Although Kant makes it clear that he believes that the mind itself cannot produce sensations on its own, it is not clear that he has any argument for this claim. The first line of the 1787 Introduction to the *Critique* asserts dogmatically that “the cognitive faculty” can only “be awakened into experience [...] through objects that stimulate our senses” (B1), and in the Aesthetic he will assert just as dogmatically that sensation “presupposes the actual presence of the object” (A50/B74). Now, the only mental faculty that would be capable of producing sensations on its own is the imagination, and Kant does think that in some cases it can do this. For instance, in dreams and in hallucinations brought on by fevers, there are not simply sensory illusions, but full images of things that are not there. Kant thinks that in these cases sensations are created by the mind itself, but he is careful to note that this sort of creation of sensations is only the work of the reproductive imagination, not the productive imagination. The imagination can only generate sensations that it is already familiar with because they have been received through impressions previously. The initial stock of sensations

36 See A376: “Now cognition of objects can be generated from perceptions, either through a mere play of imagination of by means of experience. And then of course there can arise deceptive representations, to which objects do not correspond, and where the deception is sometimes to be attributed to a semblance of the imagination (in dreams), sometimes to a false step in judgments (in the case of so-called sense-deceptions).” See also B278-9.
must have come from the impression of external objects on the senses. This, at least,
seems to be Kant’s point when he writes that the intuition of a real object in space,
necessarily presupposes perception, and it cannot be invented by any
power of imagination or produced independently of perception, which
indicates an actuality in space. [...] Once sensation is given (which, if
it is applied to an object in general without determining it, is called
perception), then through its manifold many an object can be invented
in imagination that has no empirical place outside imagination in space
or time. Whether we take sensations, pleasure and pain, or even external
sensations such as warmth, etc., it is certain beyond doubt that it is
perception through which the material must first be given for thinking
objects of sensible intuition. [...] One cannot just think up the real in
intuition a priori. (A373-5)\(^{37}\)

These assertions that the imagination can only reproduce previously received
impressions, but cannot create new ones ex nihilo, can have the appearance of dog-
matism, and it isn’t clear that Kant has an argument on behalf of the claim. Perhaps
the situation is not completely hopeless though. One way to take Kant’s claim that
sensations can only be reproduced by the imagination, but not created from scratch,
is as the claim that sensations are not generated a priori (he suggests as much in
the last sentence quoted above). We’ve already seen that Kant classifies sensations
as the one a posteriori element that fuels all cognition,\(^{38}\) and so the claim under
investigation comes down to the claim that sensations can only be given a posteriori.

If we then consider how Kant understands the difference between the a priori and
the a posteriori in his account of the mind and its cognitive capacities, we notice
that this distinction correlates exactly with the distinction between the formal and
material. Kant describes his transcendental idealism as a “formal idealism” (Prol.,

\(^{37}\)Cf. *Metaphysik Mrongovius* (29:885): “We can therefore fabricate nothing materially
<materialiter>, but rather only formally <formaliter>.” By this, Kant presumably means that
while we can rearrange previously received sensory matter into any form that we can dream up,
without having some stock of remembered impressions to draw on, such fabrications are impossible.

\(^{38}\)See A40/B34, A176/B218, A720/B748.
4:337) because the *a priori* structures that the mind brings to the table are the pure forms of sensibility and understanding, and knowledge is *a priori* to the extent that it deals only with these formal structures. Although the concepts of the *a priori* and the *a posteriori* are not equivalent to the concepts of the formal and the material, within Kant’s theory, the *a priori* the formal are coextensive, as are the *a posteriori* and the material. Sensation then, which has no form on its own and is the matter of all experience, is fully material. Hence it cannot be *a priori* and must be only *a posteriori*. That is, our initial stock of sensations can only be occasioned by the affection of objects outside me impinging upon my senses. As empirical objects have already been ruled out as possible causes of sensations, the only option left is that things in themselves, which are outside of me in the transcendental sense, are the only possible cause of my sensations. Thus since I have sensations at all, things in themselves must exist. Hence lines 7 and 8.

This reconstruction of the argument is, of course, not completely satisfying. For now one would want to ask why Kant is entitled to identify the *a priori* with the formal in his theory of the mind. Perhaps, though, there is no argument for this claim. At the very least, Kant seems to help himself to this principle in the opening line of the B-edition Introduction:

> There is no doubt whatever that all our cognition begins with experience; for how else should the cognitive faculty be awakened into experience if not through objects that stimulate our senses and in part themselves produce representation, in part bring the activity of our understanding into motion to compare these, to connect or separate them, and thus to work up the raw material of sensible impressions into a cognition of objects that is called experience? (B1)

The idea of a creatively productive imagination simply does not fit with Kant’s basic conception of the human mind, which he takes to be essentially receptive, depending on interaction with the external world for all of the fuel needed to get its cognitive
engine in motion. And so perhaps Kant’s ultimate and true reason for taking the existence of appearances to entail the existence of things in themselves is simply that the mind as Kant understands it is by nature receptive.

5.3 Conclusion

Two important loose ends have been tied up in this chapter, bringing the reconstruction of Kant’s theory of sensation in his account of empirical cognition to a close. Continuing my interpretation of Kant’s empirical realism as at bottom a semantic theory about the necessary features of the representational contents through which we represent objects, I argued in §5.1 that the actuality of an empirical object is exhausted by the subject’s ability to represent the object as a part of the causally interconnected system of nature that the subject constructs in experience through the reception of a coherent and orderable stream of sensations. Actual objects in space are “outside me” in the empirical sense. Even though these objects are revealed by transcendental philosophy to be dependent on the cognitive activities of the representations that intend them, we nevertheless must represent these objects as though they are fully mind-independent and go about their business completely independently of the representational activities of subjects who may or may not be perceiving them.

Where the externality of the empirical objects described in §5.1 boiled down to a semantic feature the content of our representations, the externality of the transcendent objects described in §5.2 was a metaphysical feature of things that are really, not merely purportedly or intentionally, mind-independent. We saw that even though we cannot claim to have any determinate knowledge or cognition of things as they are in themselves, we can nevertheless claim with some certainty that things
in themselves exist and are the causes of the sensations we find ourselves with. The analysis of things in themselves as the causes of sensations in terms of intentional object phenomenalism allowed us to defuse the so-called problem of double affection and assert that only things in themselves, not empirical objects, are the true grounds of sensations. And although we were not able to give a completely satisfying argument on Kant’s behalf for the existence of things in themselves, we were at least able to see that Kant’s certainty regarding the existence of transcendentally efficacious things in themselves was closely tied up with his most fundamental conception of the human mind as essentially receptive.

These two points of intersection between Kant’s theory of sensation and the different senses in which we can think of objects “outside me” bring the project of the dissertation to a close. For we now have in place an account of where sensations come from (§5.2), what sorts of representational functions Kant assigns to these “subjective” (yet “object-directed”) mental states (chapter 2), how sensations enable intentional reference to objects in space through their combination into intuitions (chapter 3), how sensations enable the conceptual representation of the “reality” of an empirical object (chapter 4), and, finally, how sensations enable the conceptual representation of the “actuality” of an empirical object (§5.1). Although there are other aspects of sensation that are important for Kant’s practical philosophy (regarding incentive) and his aesthetic philosophy (regarding pleasure), the above topics exhaust the most important elements of Kant’s theory of sensation for his theory of the empirical cognition of the physical world.
Chapter 6

Summary and Conclusion

In the preceding chapters, I have offered a reconstruction of Kant’s theory of how sensation contributes to our cognition of the objects we encounter in the empirical, spatiotemporal world. I have argued that Kant is best understood as an intentional object phenomenalist, and that the objects we come to know in sensory experience are mere intentional objects that have no ontological standing independent of being represented in experience. In this brief conclusion, I will first offer a summary of the most important moments in the account I’ve given of the processing of sensation into representational content, and then I will offer a few final remarks about the interpretation of Kant’s idealism, and where further work would need to be done to spell out the interpretation in more detail.

6.1 Kant’s Theory of Sensation

According to the interpretation I have given, we come to represent physical objects in the empirical world because sensations are caused in our minds by the affection of things in themselves, these sensations are organized by the imagination
into intuitions of sensible qualities arrayed in space, and then these intuited qualities are conceptualized in terms of (among other things) concepts of reality and actuality. The successive series of processes and functions can be summarized by the nine items in Figure 1.

1-3. We saw in §5.2.2 that Kant’s belief in the existence of things in themselves is to a certain degree dogmatic, but can ultimately be traced to his conception of the human mind as essentially receptive. Since the mind cannot be the source of its own sensory matter, there must be entities which are fully mind-independent and which cause the sensory matter we find ourselves with. Although Kant will insist that we cannot cognize how this transcendental affection of things in themselves on the subject can occur, he will still insist that it must. The result of this affection is what was described in §2.1.1 as the manifold of “E-sensations.” These are the pre-synthetic, hence unconscious, brute sensory impressions (Eindrücke) which, though neither consciously accessible nor representational in their own right, are the matter that come to be taken up in experience first into intuitions and then into conceptual representations and judgments.

3-5. I concluded Chapter 2 by indicating that sensations could only come to make a contribution to the representation of objects insofar as they were combined into what Kant calls intuitions (Anschauungen). In §3.2 I argued that an intuitive
representation of an object is what results when the “figurative synthesis” of the imagination combines a manifold of E-sensations with the *a priori* representation of space and thereby directs the subject’s conscious attention to the sensory qualities of those sensations, now presented in spatiotemporal arrays. In virtue of this combination with the representation of space, the sensory matter takes on the function of what I labelled in Chapter 2 as “O-sensations.” The intuitive awareness of sensory qualities in space is both the first instance in which sensations can become conscious, and, more importantly, it is also the most basic instance of any sort of intentional relation to an object. Even though the intentional content of intuitions is nonconceptual (as argued in Appendix A), intuitions nevertheless make the subject brutally aware of sensory qualities with spatiotemporal forms.

5-7. The account of empirical intuition given in Chapter 3 shows us how intentional relations to empirical objects are initially made possible, but since these representations are nonconceptual, they are not capable of representing their objects as the sorts of things they are. For this, the application of conceptual determinations by the understanding is required. The full range of activities carried out by the understanding goes far beyond what I was able to address in this dissertation; my focus was on those categorial determinations whose use Kant ties directly to the data given in sensation. Thus in Chapter 4, I presented an interpretation of Kant’s theory of the relation between sensation and intensive magnitudes. I showed that his claim that we can infer that every object of experience possesses an intensive magnitude simply because every sensation does could only make sense if one reads Kant in terms of the intentional object phenomenalism I defend. According to this model, since the E-intentional objects on which we base our judgments of reality (viz., the qualities of sensations) are already intensive magnitudes (prior to any conceptualization), the understanding is justified in applying concepts of realities with intensive magnitudes
to the I-intentional objects of cognition. The upshot of the discussion was that every possible object of sensory experience will possess not just a formal spatiotemporal extensive magnitude, but also a material intensive magnitude.

7-9. The result of the processing of E-sensations into empirical intuitions and the subsequent conceptualization of the objects given in intuition in terms of realities yields a determinate representation of a spatiotemporal entity. But the mere representation of an object on its own and without relation to the rest of cognition, however robust and detailed the representation may be, will never be sufficient to determine whether the object is a possible but merely imagined or illusory object, or is fully actual and a component of the full system of nature. We saw in Chapter 5 that to determine an object as actual, the representation of the object must be related to what Kant calls the “material conditions of experience.” These material conditions are the totality of the cognized system of nature insofar as this system is given to the subject in sensation. I argued that the characterization of actuality that Kant articulates is to be understood in terms of a form of coherentism. The actuality of an object is exhausted by the ability of the subject to represent the object as nested within the causal framework of the system of nature. This understanding of the actuality of an object is consistent with my interpretation of Kant’s theory as a form of intentional object phenomenalism because, qua mere intentional objects, the modal determinations of an object (like the rest of their determinations) depend on the subject representing them.

I take the above functions and processes to mark the most important aspects

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1The model sketched in Figure 1 should not be taken to be a comprehensive account of what goes into the construction of representations of empirical objects. Absent from my account are, most importantly, the determination of the object’s extensive magnitude (which would occur in parallel with the determination of intensive magnitude), the determination of the object as causally interacting substance in community with other such substances, and the further determination of the object in terms of empirical concepts, e.g., house, dog, etc.
of Kant’s theory of sensation’s contribution to empirical cognition. I do not take the interpretation I’ve given to be completely exhaustive of this contribution though. One thing that I have said little about is the relation between sensations and empirical concepts. The two concepts I focussed on—reality and actuality—are *a priori* concepts that fall out of the understanding’s pure forms of judgments. But Kant will also insist that all of the concepts we form on the basis of *a posteriori* interaction with the world are the result of an appropriation of the information given in sensation. Interpreting how Kant thinks the understanding can first create empirical concepts on the basis of sensation, and then how the understanding and imagination can employ “schemata” to reapply these concepts later (on the basis of new sensory data) would be a project in its own right, and one worth pursuing in future research.\(^2\)

My interpretation of Kant’s theory of sensation focussed narrowly on our representations of objective states of affairs in the physical world. Thus I did not have much to say about the relation between the sensations that enable these representations and other forms of sensations. A more comprehensive account of Kant’s theory would need to take these other modes of sensation into account. For instance, the relation between “objective” sensations and mere feelings, especially of pleasure and pain, was discussed briefly in §2.1, but there is much more that could be explored here. The status of sensations and feelings in Kant’s moral theory and his aesthetic theory would also be worth investigating, and how sensation in these other modes of cognition relates to the function of sensation in empirical cognition could yield illuminating results.

\(^2\)This is unfortunately not something that Kant himself has said much about. Since his attention in the *Critique* is on the *a priori* and transcendental forms of cognition, he doesn’t have much to say about the *a posteriori* and empirical operations of human psychology. It is possible, though, that a close investigation of Kant’s writings on anthropology and the published student lecture notes on the same could provide a fruitful resource for investigating this aspect of Kant’s theory.
6.2 Intentional Object Phenomenalism

In parallel with the reconstruction of Kant’s theory of sensation, I have articulated an interpretation of part of Kant’s transcendental idealism according to which Kant should be understood as arguing for an intentional object phenomenalism. The interpretation of Kantian idealism as intentional object phenomenalism can be reduced to a set of relatively simple claims. Populating the realm of what we might call “really real” or “ultimate” reality are non-mental things in themselves as well as the noumenal correlates of our minds (which are themselves a kind of thing in itself). The transcendental affection of things in themselves on our minds results initially in sensation, and eventually—as these sensations are processed through the various functions of the cognizing mind (as depicted in items 3-9 in Figure 1)—complex mental states. These mental states, by virtue of possessing the right sort of representational content, refer to physical bodies in space and time as their intentional objects. These objects are said to be mere appearances because they have no ontological status apart from being the intentional objects of our representations. On this model, the relation between things in themselves (transcendentally external objects) and appearances (empirically external objects) is as depicted in Figure 2. Appearances depend on representations, because without representations they are nothing; and our representations in turn depend on things in themselves, whose
affection on the subject produces the matter of cognition. In this sense, things in themselves can be said to “ground” appearances because the former cause the representations of the latter. But such a grounding relation exhausts the connection between things in themselves and appearances, and the two really are ontologically distinct. In being intentionally directed towards an appearance, I am not, however indirectly, intentionally directed to the thing or things in themselves that caused the sensations that led me to represent the appearance. And not only are appearances and things in themselves ontologically distinct, they are not even ontologically similar. Things in themselves exist in the full sense of term, and constitute ultimate reality; appearances are mere intentional objects (represented by the dashed outline in Figure 2).

A full and exhaustive elaboration of this sort of interpretation of Kantian idealism would require addressing several important complications and difficulties in greater detail than I have been able in this dissertation. First of all, there is the question of the “mere” in the claim that empirical objects are mere intentional objects. Many commentators will be unwilling to make this strict ontological distinction between appearances and things in themselves described by intentional object phenomenalism. They will argue that, even if the entire story I’ve told about the processing of sensations and the construction of representational content out of the data given in sensation is correct, we nevertheless should still be said to represent things in themselves, however indirectly, when we represent appearances. That is, while it could be granted that appearances are the intentional objects of our representations, they are not mere intentional objects, for appearances are appearances of things in themselves; in representing an appearance I am representing the thing in itself as it appears to me. The thing in itself, while not possibly an immediate object of consciousness, is nevertheless the indirect intentional object of cognition, and I
can be said to indirectly represent things in themselves by virtue of representing the way these things appear to me. This sort of model is depicted in Figure 3.

I am inclined to object to this sort of interpretation on the grounds that the I-intentional content through which I represent appearances presents determinations that are radically heterogeneous from things in themselves. All of the determinations that I represent in objects are either spatiotemporal determinations or determinations that rely on and presuppose spatiotemporal determinations (e.g., color, or physical density). Since Kant holds that things in themselves are not possibly spatiotemporal, there would be nothing in the content of the representation in virtue of which the representation could be said to represent, however indirectly, a thing in itself.  

This sort of response will not work against many recent interpretations of

\[ ^3 \text{Appeal to the indirect causal relation between things in themselves and appearances would not be sufficient to ground an indirect intentional relation. We do not in general think that mere causes of representations, through causal relations alone, are sufficient to direct the representations back at themselves. For instance, I do not think that the intentional object of my hallucination of a dead relative is the fever which caused the hallucination, nor that my lusty imagining of a sandwich is really aimed at the lowered glucose levels that lead me to feel hungry. One might, for a variety of reasons, want to insist that some sort of causal relations are necessary conditions on intentional relations, but causal relations are not sufficient for intentionality; there must be something in the content of our representations in virtue of which the representation is about its cause.} \]
Kant’s distinction between appearances and things in themselves. Lucy Allais, for instance, has argued that the things we know as appearances are the same things as the entities that in other contexts are labelled things in themselves. According to her model, things have intrinsic properties (“in itself” properties) and they have subject-dependent properties (appearance properties), but it is one and the same thing in possession of both kinds of property.\(^4\) Rae Langton argues for a similar model of the in-itself/appearance distinction, arguing that the distinction reduces to a difference between an entity’s intrinsic and relational properties.\(^5\) (This sort of interpretive schema is depicted in Figure 4.) On these interpretations, empirical representations

\(^4\) Much of her argument for and articulation of the view depends on an analogy to the Lockean distinction between primary and secondary qualities, but I think that looking closely at this analogy will reveal why the interpretation is unstable. What is distinctive about Lockean secondary qualities (at least as she takes Kant to understand them) is that they are mind-dependent without being merely in the mind. They are properties of things, but properties which depend for their existence on their relation to human cognizers. Appearance properties, on her view, have the exact same status:

they are neither entirely mind-dependent, in the sense of existing in the mind, or in the fact that subjects are in certain subjective states, nor entirely mind-independent, in that they do not exist apart from the possibility of our perceiving them. (“Kant’s One World,” *British Journal for the History of Philosophy*, 12 (4), 2004, p. 674.)

Just as, on Locke’s model, when I refer to a colored object, it is correct to say that I refer to a (Lockean) thing in itself which bears the color property, so too, when I refer to an appearance (with all its appearance properties), it is correct to say that there is a (Kantian) thing in itself which bears these appearance properties.

could be said to intend entities that are numerically identical to things in themselves because it is these things that bear the appearance properties which we represent in cognition. While I am confident that interpretations of this sort will come up short (in comparison with intentional object phenomenalism) when tested against the spirit and letter of Kant’s text, a full argument for why my model should be preferred would require a thorough investigation of many more of the intricacies of the philosophical issues surrounding Kant’s articulation of his idealism than I have been able to address here.

Many other commentators will agree with my basic contention that the distinction between appearance and thing in itself must be understood as a strict ontological distinction, but still be uncomfortable with my claim that appearances are mere intentional objects. Proponents of traditional “two-world” interpretations will typically assert that appearances, although ontologically distinct from things in themselves, still exist in their own right (even if there are complications about the dependency of their existence on their being represented). Although these interpretations bring along a whole host of well-documented complications and difficulties, they are at least able to say that our judgments about appearances are true in a relatively straightforward and uncontroversial sense of truth. Since appearances exist as more than mere intentional objects, they can be the I-intentional or even E-intentional objects of cognition, and there can be correspondence relations between representations and objects that allow us to call representations true in a common-sensical and unequivocal sense of the term. (See Figure 5.)

Things are not so simple for the intentional object phenomenalist, because according to this interpretation all of our empirical judgments are about mere intentional objects. As the reader has surely noticed by now, I have repeatedly argued that, in empirical cognition, we necessarily represent the world as radically different
than it really is (in itself). For example, I necessarily represent appearances as the cause of my sensations, but really appearances cannot cause anything and the only true causes of sensations are things in themselves. It will be objected that my interpretation amounts to a form of fictionalism, or even an error theory, and that such theories are a priori undesirable as interpretations of Kant. Thus one important difficulty that the intentional object phenomenalist must overcome is showing how the anti-realism implicit in the theory can be shown to be not just consistent with what Kant said, but also what he really meant to be arguing for. This would be no small project, but I think the general strategy for such a project is clear: appeal must be made to the reconceptualization of what counts as truth and falsity in judgment which results from Kant’s so-called “Copernican turn.” It would not be correct to call Kant’s theory of empirical cognition as I’ve described it an “error theory” because of the conditions Kant places on what is to count as an “error” (or not) in his theory of judgment. The measure of correctness in judgment, according to Kant, is “objective validity.” This is not a measure of whether correspondence relations can be found between representations and representation-transcendent entities, but whether the mind’s own rules for thought have been followed correctly. An objectively valid judgment, hence a non-erroneous one, is one in which a manifold of given sensations have been synthesized in conformity with the mind’s own a priori forms and with the entire system of nature as represented by a maximally rational
human cognizer. Insofar as the structure of our cognition of empirical objects as described in the preceding chapters can attain objective validity so described, our judgments about these objects should not be said to be errors, at least not by Kant’s own standards.
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