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PREVIEW

KANT'S COPERNICAN THEORY OF SELF CONSCIOUSNESS

by

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DISSERTATION

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PREVIEW

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Introduction

In light of some of the things Kant says with regard to the possibility of self consciousness, one can ask if there is any ground for Kant to claim that his position is in any way different than Hume's, as set forth in his *Treatise of Human Nature*. One can also ask if he has a right to so roundly criticize the Cartesian arguments of the Rational Psychologists as he does in the *Critique*.

He agrees with Hume that we do not 'look into our breasts' and see ourselves, as we might look about our rooms and spy pieces of furniture. We do not encounter some permanent perception of ourselves amongst all the fleeting perceptions of things we experience. Hume sees no other sufficient reason to postulate an enduring and identical subject for our perceptions. What is more, he attempts to give a consistent account of the origin of that idea in terms of similar, but distinct perceptions, and their effects upon a faculty he calls "imagination". He theorizes that for all we know the train of perceptions we encounter when we introspect "may [each] exist separately, and have no need of any thing to support their existence." (Hume, *Treatise* Bk I, Part IV, page 252, brackets mine). They very well could be independently existing mental entities that tend to form bundles. Through the agency of association, these ideas have an effect on the imagination. That faculty, under the influence of similarities between individual perceptions, gives birth to further ideas or notions which in turn, become members of the bundles they arise from. These new entities postulate the existence of identical, simple, and enduring subjects or minds that possess those bundles of perceptions as properties. Yet, "There is properly no *simplicity* in it (the mind) at one time, nor *identity* in different (times): whatever natural propension we have to imagine that simplicity and identity." (Hume, *Treatise*, Bk I Part IV, page 253). At least for a time, Hume thought that an account of the notion of personal identity along these lines is possible. He confidently

asserts that persons are nothing but such bundles of perceptions. However, in an appendix Hume acknowledges insuperable difficulties with the account; “..upon a more strict review of the section concerning personal identity, I find myself involv’d in such a labyrinth, that, I must confess, I neither know how to correct my former opinions, nor how to render them consistent. (Hume, Treatise, page 366). He cannot reconcile the belief in an identical and simple mind with two propositions which he accepts; first, that individual perceptions are “distinct existences”; and second, that no real connections are perceived between such “distinct existences”. For when he tries to construct a story that can account for the origin of the former idea in terms of the latter, and their effect on the imagination, he finds that he cannot tell his tale without making use of the very notion he is trying to account for. The story he tells makes free use of the notion of an identical and enduring thinking consciousness which reflects on its past perceptions. Yet, to be consistent, Hume admits that he finds no parent impression for this idea, and can therefore not allow the notion full legitimacy. It, like the notion of external and independently existing objects, is a useful fiction. Hume cannot find a permanent perception of his mind, nor can he find any sort of ‘real connection’ between its distinct perceptions. So, on empiricist grounds, the notion of an identical enduring subject of thoughts and perceptions cannot be fully justified. It, like the notion of enduring and identical external objects, is a “fiction” of the imagination. Such fictions are ultimately ‘fallacious’ according to Hume. However, along side this highly negative case against such notions, Hume also presents a picture of such fictions as playing a unique, crucial, and perhaps necessary role in reconciling and rendering comprehensible features of our experience. So, although his attempts to justify these sorts of notions on empiricist grounds ultimately fail, and he is unable to fully account for, and justify the opinion that there are external objects via this genetic method, he does nevertheless grant that belief in

independently existing objects allows us to make sense of our sense experience. Such beliefs allow us to reduce a potentially bewildering multiplicity of experiences to some sort of order. The belief in external objects allows us to resolve apparent contradictions and fantastic events. Without such beliefs we would have an immensely complicated, nearly chaotic picture of the world. In this connection Hume calls such ‘useful fictions’, “suppositions” and “presuppositions”. He comes near to arguing in Kantian fashion, that beliefs concerning independently existing objects with which we coexist are a necessary condition of being able to make sense out of our experience. In this aspect of his thought he approaches Kant. As we will see, Kant argues that the categorical concepts (and beliefs concerning a world of objects that conform to those concepts), are a necessary condition of being able to claim warrant for particular empirical judgments, not only about external items, but for an important class of judgments concerning our own mental history. Kant even uses Hume’s term ‘presupposition’ in the *Refutation*. We will examine these areas of common ground between Hume and Kant, while at the same time arguing that Hume did not recognize that unity of consciousness is a necessary condition of experience (i.e., cognition of objects under concepts via judgments). Kant, on the other hand, saw that a proof to that effect can provide sufficient grounds for the belief in an identical consciousness. For if judgments could not occur unless there were such an identical consciousness, and judgments in fact occur, then such an identical consciousness must exist. There is what one might call a performative admission of precisely this point lurking just below the surface of Hume’s own story concerning the origin of the idea of personal identity. I think this is what concerned him in the appendix to the *Treatise*. So, while Hume to a certain extent anticipated Kant’s arguments concerning the possibility of some sort of epistemological justification for the concept of independently existing enduring objects, he did not anticipate the possibility of a similar

sort of justification for our belief in an identical consciousness as subject of thought. However, in connection with his transcendental proofs concerning the consciousness that is at the seat of experience, Kant is very careful to point out that his arguments do not prove metaphysical theses regarding the simplicity or immateriality of the substance that is associated with that consciousness. This cautionary argumentation is found in the *Paralogisms* section of the Critique. An examination of that section will lead us to compare and contrast Kant's views with those of Descartes, for Descartes presents arguments that are supposed to establish such metaphysical theses.

Kant agrees with Descartes in saying that the "I think" (the consciousness involved in thinking, or experience) is something that plays a substantival role. In fact, Kant's transcendental arguments do more than this: They show that in order for thought, or experience to be possible the "I" (this consciousness) *must* play a substantival role, and *must* be singular, and *must* be identical over time. Kant tells us that these things follow from the very concept of thinking. The proposition that: "The I of apperception, consequently in every thought, is a single thing that cannot be resolved into a plurality of subjects, and hence a logically simple subject, lies already in the concept of thinking" (B 407). In the *Deduction* Kant deploys an impressive arsenal of argumentation toward this end. Yet, in the *Paralogisms* section, Kant argues at some length, that none of the analytic truths concerning the identical consciousness that must be in place for thought to be possible can be used to establish with certainty that the 'I of apperception', or the "I think" is in an 'absolute' sense a simple mental substance. Kant argues that a use of the "I think" as the only data with which to try and settle the question of the relation that the unitary consciousness that is the seat of experience has to the concept of substance, is insufficient to the purpose.

A primary motivation for the *Paralogisms* section is Kant's concern with the

philosophical position called ‘mind/body dualism’. Using an analysis of the concept of thought (i.e., the “I think” or the “I think of apperception”), as the only premise for an argument to the effect that the substance that has thoughts is simple, immaterial or immortal is something that is carried out by an enterprise Kant calls “Rational Psychology”. The Rational Psychologist’s arguments, as Kant presents them, have a decidedly Cartesian flavor. The use of the phrase “I think” to indicate the premise from which Rational Psychology begins is a pretty clear indication that Kant has Descartes in mind when discussing Rational Psychology.

This gives us reason to believe that the *Paralogisms* section represents Kant’s considered opinion regarding Descartes. I will argue that if this is the case, then Kant either did not carefully read Descartes, or he erected a straw man. In either case I think that Descartes himself would in fact agree with a great many of the criticisms that Kant presents in regard to “Rational Psychology”.

I will argue that Descartes’ position is not as naive as that of Kant’s Rational Psychologist. To that end I will compare Descartes’ argumentation in the *Meditations on First Philosophy* (and in his replies to the objections of Arnauld) with the *Paralogisms* section of the *Critique*, highlighting areas of coincidence of opinion.

It is true that Kant’s arguments are intended to do work against a common way of reading Descartes. Kant maintains that we cannot learn anything about the metaphysical status of thinking beings if our lone piece of data is the “I think” of thinking. Descartes, on the other hand does make arguments for clearly dualistic conclusions. But it is important to note that Descartes does recognize the fact that his arguments do not, with certain modifications, prove as much as he supposes them to. He acknowledges his reliance on a theological premise (and arguments to support that premise) in order to provide a grounding for the dualistic arguments he presents. He recognizes that

independently of the theological assumption, the arguments he provides in the second and sixth Meditations are not sufficient to establish the independence of mind from body. So he does arrive at his conclusions only after taking what by his lights is a necessary detour through some arguments that are supposed to establish the existence of a non-deceiving God. This alone should show us that Descartes had an awareness of the limitations of the non-theological components of his argument. Before he proves God's existence Descartes provisionally takes up an agnostic position in regard to the dependency relationship (if any there be) between his soul and body. At that point in the *Meditations* Descartes does not presume to be able to determine whether or not souls cease to be when bodies undergo severe physical alterations. He cannot be satisfied in his answers until he is first satisfied that God exists as guarantor of his clear and distinct graspings, and as a source of revelatory knowledge concerning the matter. Without such assurances Descartes takes up a decidedly agnostic position concerning the relation between mind and body. This under-emphasized agnostic aspect of Descartes' position is very much like Kant's position as presented in the *Paralogisms of Pure Reason*. However it is not entirely surprising that Kant would be misled by what he read in the *Meditations*. Typically Descartes himself emphasizes the dualistic implications of his views, and one of the aims he clearly has in mind in the *Meditations* is to argue for some sort of independence of mind from body. This is the overall gist of the second and sixth Meditations. So it sure looks like Descartes is a traditional "Cartesian Dualist". Yet, even after he has demonstrated to his own satisfaction that there is a God, there are strong indications that Descartes' most considered opinion is opposed to the sort of naive dualism that is usually labeled "Cartesian". In the sixth Meditation, and in his letter to Arnauld, Descartes struggled to give voice to a hypothesis according to which the relation between mind and body is very close. He describes the connection between mind and

body as being “intimate”, and notes in reference to his body that he is “very closely united to it, and so to speak so intermingled with it that [he] seem[s] to compose with it one whole.” He says that “Nature” teaches him about this tight relationship via the phenomena of pain and pleasure. We become quite distressed when in pain, or ill, as if we consider our fate to be tightly bound up with the fate of our bodies. Reverting to his theological premise, Descartes argues that God would certainly not let us be deceived in regard to this basic and pervasive belief. Also, in his reply to Arnauld’s objections, he reiterates the fact that in the sixth Meditation he is trying to argue that the mind is distinct from the body while at the same time being “substantially united” with it. So it seems that in Descartes’ considered opinion, the soul and body might very well have much the same relationship as obtains between form and matter in Aristotle’s metaphysics. Although there is a logical distinction between the two things, it may be that they cannot exist in isolation from each other. So, given that all of this is going on in Descartes, if we read Kant’s Rational Psychologist as being Descartes himself, we should protest in his name that Kant is in fact giving Descartes short shrift in that section of the *Critique*.

There is another possible point of contention between Descartes and Kant which I have not so far described. However it is just below the surface of the argumentation in the Refutation of Idealism. If we examine the implications of Cartesianism, we find that there is nothing in what Descartes says which would lead us to say that it is not possible for there to be self conscious beings which at the same time had no external experience. However, the stated purpose of the Refutation of Idealism is to show that a necessary condition for being able to claim warrant for at least some judgments concerning empirical self consciousness is that we have beliefs concerning external objects. So, a logical implication of Kant’s position in regard to these claims is that we can never find ourselves in a position where we are both making such claims and in possession of no

beliefs concerning an external world of which we are a part. Such a circumstance might at first glance seem possible. Kant argues that it is in fact not possible. This, in a very real sense, is a Copernican turn.

With this in mind I examine the connection that exists between the argumentation that is contained in the *Deduction of the Categories*, the *Refutation of Idealism*, and the three *Analogies of Experience*. These sections together give us an argument concerning the conditions necessary for the transformation of what (in the *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*) Kant calls “judgments of perception” into “judgments of experience”. Judgments of experience are any judgments concerning objective states of affairs, while judgments of perception are more immediate judgments concerning the content of one’s own mental life. A case of the former might be the judgment that there was a cannon firing, while a related judgment of perception might be a report of sensory states like “First I saw a flash of some sort, and a few seconds later I heard a bang”. I will examine the above mentioned sections with an eye toward highlighting the material contained in them that has to do with a particular sort of judgment of experience: those that are first person, and have to do with one’s own long term mental history. In short; we will look at a very important aspect of what Kant calls “empirical self consciousness”. Empirical self consciousness consists of judgments that have to do with one’s own mental history. Empirical self consciousness does not include only judgments of perception. Judgments of perception have to do with more or less immediate mental history. I will argue that the material from the three sections, taken collectively, is intended to establish some epistemological points regarding necessary conditions for those aspects of empirical self consciousness that are not covered by judgments of perception. Kant argues that all judgments which concern the actual temporal order of one’s own mental states over significant tracts of time will require an overarching set of

beliefs concerning a world that satisfies the categorical concept that Kant denotes by the term “community”, if they are going to be able to lay claim to justification. While we might be able to assert that some certain long term picture of our mental history was the case without such a setting, we will not be able to lay claim to justification for that assertion. By these lights the Refutation (which by itself is far too brief) can best be seen as requiring some sort of supplementation via the third of the Analogies of Experience. This, despite the fact that Kant himself puts the argument of the Refutation in terms of “the permanent” in perception being a necessary condition for the warranted assertability of such judgments. Use of this terminology has led commentators like Bennett and Guyer to emphasize the relevance of the first and second *Analogies* as supplements to the *Refutation*. But the cognition of co-existence seems to be of importance, and in a sense, more basic to the enterprise of providing the possibility of warrant for such judgments. For Kant speaks of outer intuition being necessary for these ends, and this only being possible through cognizance of things in space along with oneself.

Kant argues that, in the relevant cases, one must hold some beliefs concerning one’s own co-existence with objective items in a sort of causal matrix in order to be able to provide warrant for judgments concerning the actual temporal order of one’s own history over large tracts of time. Once one has this, one can begin to make warranted claims of the type in question. However, I do agree with Guyer that the *Analogies* section presents something of an artificial separation of what are in reality intertwined aspects of empirical judgment. There are interrelations between the concepts “substance”, “cause and effect”, and “community” which need to be explicated. But, I will argue that it is a necessary condition for being able to claim warrant for any particular judgment to the effect that one is experiencing a substance, or some particular event, or some particular set of coexistent things, that one have the sort of background set

of beliefs just described. Kant puts it this way: It is a necessary condition of being able to claim warrant for any judgment as to the objective temporal order of things that we have in place such a background against which to work. This ability to claim warrant for judgment concerning the actual history of things, in turn allows one to claim warrant for judgments concerning one's own mental history over extensive periods of time. So, an important component of empirical self consciousness could not find justification if we did not have what Kant calls 'external experience'.

In the process of explicating all of this I will also consider Kant's views concerning the nature of thought, judgment, and the relations that exist between the categories and the logical functions of judgment. These are subjects he takes up in the so called "Metaphysical Deduction" of the categories. In the process I will compare my views to those of Beatrice Longuenesse in her *Kant and the Capacity to Judge*. She takes up a position that is substantially unlike mine in that she does not see much of the argumentation in the Analytic as having to do with establishing the necessary epistemic conditions for claims to warrant for particular judgments having to do either with external objects, or oneself. Instead she sees the argument as having more to do with giving a connection between the table of judgment types and the objects such judgments can be about. The project of the *Deduction*, as she sees it is provide an answer to the question "what must objects be like if they are going to be amenable to judgments of the sort catalogued in the first of Kant's tables?". The answer is that they (and space and time) must always already have been generated (as intuitions) by a "*synthesis speciosa*", a preconceptual synthesis, that nevertheless involves the categorical concepts. Only after this primitive synthesis occurs is it possible for us to take up into reflection objects, notice similarities in our experiences of them, and (using the judgment types) generate empirical concepts with which we can categorize the things we encounter in our world.

Her story is more a tale of the genesis of our judgments than the justification of them. Yet she does at crucial points identify the transcendental unity of apperception with objective experience and empirical apperception, pure intuitions with the empirical intuition of space and time, thus rendering my reading of the *Deduction*, and *Analogies* perhaps a bit more plausible. For despite the disagreements, there is this common ground.

PREVIEW

Overview

I would like now to present an overview of the entire work. First we will look at the *Deduction*, and its relation to Hume, then we will look at the *Refutation of Idealism* and the *Analogies of Experience*, with an eye toward what they have to say about ‘judgments of experience’, and empirical self consciousness. Finally, we will examine the material in the *Paralogisms* section, as it relates to Descartes:

The Deduction

The centerpiece of the Transcendental Analytic is the *Deduction*. The purpose of this section is variously described by Kant. In the *Critique* itself the Deduction is described as showing that use of the categorical concepts is a necessary condition of the possibility of “experience”. Kant means by this that they are necessary conditions of the possibility of cognition of objects. In the *Critique* he also attempts a deduction of the categories as conditions of the possibility of apperception. In *The Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics* Kant tells us that the main purpose of the *Deduction*, and the sections in the Analytic of Principles that serve as supplements, is to carry out an analysis of the conditions epistemically necessary for the possibility of claiming ‘objective validity’ or warrant for ‘judgments of experience’ (conditions that will include as a necessary element, the application of the categorical concepts). Judgments of experience are judgments concerning objective states of affairs. An objective state of affairs is one that obtains independently of us. In the *Principles* section of the *Critique* Kant clearly casts this argumentation in terms of claims about a temporal order of things that is independent of the temporal order of our experience of those things: An objective state of affairs is one that is believed to consist of objects or events that have a temporal order that is different from, or distinct from the temporal order of our experience of those objects or events. So while we may claim, for instance that our experience of a house consists first

of our seeing the roof, and then the walls, and then the steps, we, if we are claiming that we are in fact seeing a house, typically also believe that the roof, walls, and steps exist with each other through that same stretch of time in which we serially experience them, even during those times we do not experience one or more of them. Another example: I might see a flash, and then a few seconds later hear a report. However I believe that my experiences are brought about by an independently existing event (or rather features of one event, i.e., a cannon firing).

If I am to consider the sensory evidence in the cannon firing case to be evidence that there is an independently existing event, then I had better apply the “concept of an object” to the cannon (the x which is the reason I have the sense experiences, and which is believed to have certain properties that account for those experiences). But, Kant argues, in order to apply that concept in that particular case, I must already have in place a set of beliefs concerning a world of objects and events, a world that includes myself. This overarching set of beliefs provides for the possibility of justification for claims which are like this particular judgment. Where pure logic cannot, the overarching beliefs allow us to delimit, from within the realm of our experience, those things that should be treated as substances, those things that should be treated as events, and they also allow us to determine the objective temporal order of things. They allow us to take mere judgments of perception and transform them into judgments of experience. This framework not only allows us to place together certain sense data with each other, certain other with yet others, and so carve up the world into objects and events of various kinds, but it also allows us the possibility of claiming justification for how we carve up our world. It allows us to distinguish those judgments that can be labeled ‘knowledge’, or ‘warranted’, from those that cannot. The concepts that allow us to do these things are the twelve categorical concepts Kant introduces via an examination his table of judgment

types. He claims that there is a principle that allows one to derive his table of categories from the table of judgment types. The categories make possible intuition of space, time, and objects in space and time. This is done through a use of those categories in acts of synthesis. This is a necessary prerequisite of knowledge claims. Knowledge claims can only be made via judgments. This is another sort of synthesis. Yet the understanding is involved in both sorts of synthetic activities, so the same pure concepts are involved.

The exact details of the relationship between the judgment types and the categories is difficult to make out but the following seems true: To use Kant's terminology; the categories bring about a 'pure' intuition of space and time, and they also make possible empirical intuition of objects in space and time. Through this function they provide a framework from within which it is possible to justify particular claims concerning objects, and events. They give us the justificatory apparatus with which we can determine the objective order of events and substances in space and time. These types of determinations are judgments of experience. No judgment of experience is possible without three ingredients working together; we must have sensory data (a manifold of intuition), the categories must be applied to this manifold (thus providing the justificatory framework for claims to objective knowledge), and we must have the ability to form judgments of certain logical types. If we take an inventory of our judgments of experience we will find that the claims that are made, and the governing framework against which they are justified involve the use of certain very general concepts (cause and effect, substance and accident, and 'the concept of an object', being chief among them), particularized for the sorts of entities involved. What is more, these categorical concepts find parallels in the table of the logical functions of judgment that Kant introduces in the *Metaphysical Deduction*. In the *Deduction* Kant holds that no judgment which makes use of those merely logical functions can make a claim to be knowledge of

the objective order of things unless the categories have been applied to the ‘manifold of intuition’ ‘a priori’. The *Deduction* is rather obscure in this regard. We find Kant talking about a priori knowledge, and pure syntheses, but in the *Principles* section the argument is clearly concerned with empirical knowledge, and empirical synthesis. I maintain that the same sort of argument is behind at least some of the argumentation in the *Deduction*, but is obscured by Kant’s presentation, and unfortunate choice of terms. But it is also obscured by what appears to be competing lines of argumentation. I will catalogue these competing arguments through an examination of Paul Guyer’s commentary. I will also examine a commentary of Longuenesse, comparing and contrasting both with my own view. This I will do after I conclude my look at the *Deduction* itself. I will conclude that there is a case to be made that the terminology Kant uses in the *Deduction* can be considered to be a failed attempt to state argumentation much like that which appears in the *Principles* section. In that section Kant argues that no claims that particular judgments of experience have objective validity could be made unless there were an overarching set of beliefs to the effect that there is a world consisting of a community of causally interacting objects including ourselves. This gives us a way to read the argumentation in the *Metaphysical and Transcendental Deduction of the Categories* that allows us to paint a picture according to which it is in fact a much more unified piece of reasoning than it appears to be. I will note some agreement in this regard from both Guyer and Longuenesse, while at the same time acknowledging the other sorts of arguments that seem to be going on.

But, most important for my purposes, we can also make sense out of the parts of the *Deduction* that have to do with apperception or self consciousness. In the *Refutation of Idealism* Kant argues that the above principle holds even for judgments concerning the actual temporal order of our own mental states over a substantial period of time. To

claim warrant for individual judgments about our own history over the long term, we must apply the concept of community. That is, we must have experience of an external world. In contrast, it appears that we can make judgments of perception (i.e., judgments concerning the relatively short term contents of our mental life), merely by attending to our experience. There is no question of warrant for such judgments. But judgments of perception constitute but a minority of the beliefs we hold, and judgments we make, which regard our own history. A much larger portion of our empirical self knowledge involves judgments of experience, i.e., judgments which involve placing recollected events in our long term mental history in an objective temporal order. We do this based upon mental events (recollections) which are presented to us in a temporal order that is quite distinct from the events we take them to be reports of. In fact at any one moment we may have some set of recollections before us at the same time, yet we may interpret them to be reporting to us mental events that not only happened in some particular order, but which cover a period of years. If we are to be able to claim warrant for some one interpretation of a set of recollections, we need the overarching set of beliefs concerning an external world which Kant describes. This aspect of Kant's thought is only hinted at in the *Deduction*, but is given great emphasis in the *Refutation and Analogies*. Even in the *Deduction*, use of the categorical concepts is importantly (if obscurely) tied up with the possibility of apperception. This possibility of apperception, in turn is a prerequisite of the ability to form warranted judgments of experience. It is a prerequisite for knowledge. Remember also; Kant argues (in the *Deduction*) that an exercise of the categories upon the manifold of intuition allows intuitions of objects to be possible, for it makes intuition of space and time as unified manifolds possible. He calls this a "figurative synthesis". This much is pretty clear, even in the *Deduction*. Yet this "figurative synthesis" gives rise to difficulties for the reader of the *Critique*.

It is understatement to say that all is not light and clarity in the *Deduction*. There are two versions of this argument. Even when we concentrate (as we will) on the second edition *Deduction*, and wrestle with the details of Kant's views the task of interpretation is large. While the deduction of the categories is being carried out, Kant takes an interesting detour that has to do with apperception. Kant seems to argue that something over and above the particular applications of the categorical concepts to sense data that generate particular judgments must obtain in order for those particular applications, and those particular judgments of experience to be possible. He argues that an "a-priori" synthesis must take place. He also makes it clear that this synthesis has to do with intuitions. This synthesis brings about intuition of space and time as unified manifolds. It thereby makes intuitions of objects in space and time possible. As I have already pointed out, he calls this synthesis "pure", "original", and "transcendental" as well. But he also takes great pains to point out that this a-priori synthesis brings about a 'transcendental unity of apperception'. He also goes to great pains to make sure we know that this transcendental unity of apperception is itself the 'something above and beyond' that acts as a prerequisite of particular judgments of experience. So the synthesis upon which this transcendental unity of apperception depends is sometimes called a transcendental synthesis of apperception. The things Kant says about the transcendental unity of apperception are various. It imparts a unity to perceptions such that they not only are perceptions of an enduring and identical consciousness, but can be recognized as such (even if only obscurely). The transcendental synthesis of apperception is described as "pure" and "a priori". He claims that there can be a priori self knowledge. It is also claimed that the transcendental synthesis of apperception is brought about by application of the categories. So, while this transcendental unity of apperception, like particular judgments of experience, is the result of a synthesis using the categorical concepts, it is

in some way describable as ‘prior’ to any given particular judgment of experience. It is contrasted with empirical uses of the same concepts (thus Kant’s use of the term “pure”). It is not at all clear what Kant’s is getting at here. Something like the following seems to be the case:

As a prerequisite of particular judgments of experience that can claim to be pieces of knowledge about objects, there must be a sort of unified state which already obtains between the constituents of the manifold of data which are synthesized in such particular acts. This unity makes the data accessible, or useable as data for particular knowledge claims. This unity also allows the conscious entity to at least potentially recognize the data as its own property. Moreover this latter condition is the ground of the former: The manifold of data that is used in a judgment will have the sort of unity that makes it all accessible and useable for the purposes of making judgments and objective knowledge claims only if it is at least potentially recognizable as being the possession of the consciousness involved. Only if the data meets this condition, can it be made use of in judgments of experience (knowledge claims concerning objects). At the same time this prerequisite unity is a necessary condition of self consciousness (or apperception). So in two senses it is “transcendental”. It is a prerequisite for apperception, and it is a prerequisite for knowledge of objects.

At this point it is tempting to say that this transcendental unity is in some way describable as having to obtain *before* the items in a manifold are accessible or useable as constituents in particular judgments either about ourselves, or about particular objective states of affairs. It is hard to describe Kant’s thesis without making use of this word. Kant himself uses it. Kant sometimes does seem to take this word in a temporal sense as meaning that this unified state must be in place at some point in time earlier than the time at which any particular judgment is made. He sometimes uses the term ‘a-priori’ in this