

# KANT'S SUBJECTIVE DEDUCTION

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## Abstract

In the transcendental deduction, the central argument of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant seeks to secure the objective validity of our basic categories of thought. He distinguishes objective and subjective sides of this argument. The latter side, the subjective deduction, is normally understood as an investigation of our cognitive faculties. It is identified with Kant's account of a threefold synthesis involved in our cognition of objects of experience, and it is said to precede and ground Kant's proof of the validity of the categories in the objective deduction. I challenge this standard reading of the subjective deduction, arguing, first, that there is little textual evidence for it, and, second, that it encourages a problematic conception of how the deduction works. In its place, I present a new reading of the subjective deduction. Rather than being a broad investigation of our cognitive faculties, it should be seen as addressing a specific worry that arises in the course of the objective deduction. The latter establishes the need for a necessary connection between our capacities for thinking and being given objects, but Kant acknowledges that his readers might struggle to comprehend how these seemingly independent capacities are coordinated. Even worse, they might well believe that in asserting this necessary connection, Kant's position amounts to an implausible subjective idealism. The subjective deduction is meant to allay these concerns by showing that they rest on a misunderstanding of the relation between these faculties. This new reading of the subjective deduction offers a better fit with Kant's text. It also has broader implications, for it reveals the more philosophically plausible account of our relation to the world as thinkers that Kant is defending—an account that is largely obscured by the standard reading of the subjective deduction.

## Introduction

Kant's transcendental deduction of the categories, the central argument of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, is an account of our cognitive relation to the world. In it Kant seeks to address a problem in explaining how our thought is successfully 'in touch' with the world given to us through the senses. Kant sets up this problem in terms of the relation between our faculties of sensibility and understanding.<sup>1</sup> Through the former objects in the world are given to us, through the latter we use concepts in making judgments about these objects. These two faculties work together in experience. It is not easy, however, to see how this cooperation is

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, the introduction to the Transcendental Logic (A51/B75), in Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* (Cambridge, 1997). For references to the first *Critique*, I use *A* and *B* to indicate the pagination of the first and second editions, respectively.

possible. It is tempting to believe that our sensible intuition must be outside the sphere of the understanding's conceptual activity. Our intuitions, after all, are supposed to provide a *constraint* on this activity—by revealing how things are in the world outside our thought. And a view that denies the independence of sensibility would threaten to collapse into an implausible subjective idealism. But, at the same time, it is also hard to see how intuitions can play this constraining role from outside the sphere of the understanding, for they would then lack any conceptual determination. As Sellars famously noted, a bare, indeterminate given seems unable to play any meaningful role in our thought.<sup>2</sup>

Kant's goal in the deduction is to offer an account of the relation between sensibility and understanding that resolves the above dilemma. But the exact nature of the relation he is proposing remains deeply contested. We can make some progress in understanding Kant's account by considering another issue that has long perplexed Kant's readers: his distinction between objective and subjective sides of the deduction. I claim that the standard reading of the subjective deduction encourages a fundamental misunderstanding of the view Kant is presenting in the deduction. I then defend an alternate reading of the subjective deduction, one that reveals a more plausible model of our cognitive relation to the world.

Kant distinguishes the objective and subjective sides of the deduction in the preface to the first edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason*. This is an intriguing remark, for it offers a clue to untangling the notoriously obscure structure of the deduction. It is not, however, an easy clue to use. Kant's discussion of the objective and subjective deductions is itself somewhat obscure, and problems arise in assessing the nature of the distinction, the location of each side, and their relationship to one another.

These difficulties become evident when we turn to Kant's formulation of the distinction:

This inquiry [the deduction], which goes rather deep, has two sides. One side refers to the objects of the pure understanding, and is supposed to demonstrate and make comprehensible the objective validity of its concepts *a priori*; thus it belongs essentially to my ends. The other side deals with the pure understanding itself, concerning its possibility and the powers of cognition on which it itself rests; thus it considers it in a subjective relation, and although this exposition is of great importance in respect of my chief end, it does not belong essentially to it; because the chief question always remains: 'What and how much can understanding and reason cognize free of all experience?' and not: 'How is the *faculty of thinking* itself possible?' (Axvi-xvii)

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2 Wilfrid Sellars, *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind* (Cambridge, 1997).

This passage introduces three central difficulties. First, the nature of the distinction is unclear. While it is evident that the objective side establishes the validity of the categories, it is less clear what Kant means in saying the subjective side shows how the understanding itself is possible. Second, Kant does not indicate where the two sides are to be found in the text. And turning to the body of the *Critique*, there are no passages explicitly identified as subjective or objective deductions.<sup>3</sup> A third difficulty concerns the relationship between the two sides. How do they contribute to the overall argument of the deduction, and to what extent do they appeal to each other? Kant himself notes that the objective deduction does not rely upon the subjective side, but, as we will see, it is difficult to accommodate this claim. Together, these three problems stand as a test for any proposed reading of Kant's distinction. A successful account should explain the nature, location, and interrelationship of the objective and subjective deductions.

Previous attempts to explain this distinction have struggled in particular with the subjective side of the deduction. Drawing upon Kant's remark that this side addresses the question: 'How is the *faculty of thinking* itself possible?' (Axvii), commentators often take the subjective deduction to be an investigation of the faculties in the subject that make cognition possible. I criticize this standard reading in part one, showing that the textual evidence speaks against it and that it fails to solve the difficulties discussed above. In its place, I present a new reading of the subjective deduction. I see it as addressing the dilemma raised above regarding our cognitive relation to the world. The subjective deduction has the task of explaining how our sensible and intellectual faculties can be related in a way that puts us successfully 'in touch' with the world. This is what Kant means in saying the subjective deduction answers a how-possible question. For, in explaining the coordination of these faculties, it reveals how thought, as a cognitively significant faculty in relation to objects given independently of it, is possible. This reading meets the criteria of a successful account. It is also a more viable account of our cognitive relation to the world.

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<sup>3</sup> In fact, Kant mentions the objective deduction only once more, a passing reference at A336. He never again refers explicitly to the subjective deduction. One might object that I am blurring an important distinction in switching between talk of objective and subjective *sides* of a deduction and talk of objective and subjective *deductions*, but Kant himself refers to them in both ways in the A-preface (Axvi-xvii). He clearly views these two modes of expression as synonymous.

## Part 1. The Standard Reading of the Subjective Deduction

The reading of the subjective deduction I am proposing departs on several points from the reading generally found in the secondary literature. After presenting this standard reading, I adopt a two-part strategy for questioning it. First, I challenge the evidence given in support of this reading. I Then identify problems that result from adopting it. These criticisms lay the groundwork for the new reading I provide in part two.

### *1.1. Features of the Standard Reading*

Although interpreters dispute many details concerning the subjective deduction, there remains a broad consensus on two key features. First, commentators generally agree regarding its location, identifying section II of the A-deduction with the subjective side, and section III with the objective side. That is, the subjective deduction is thought to be Kant's initial account of a threefold synthesis in section II. Here, Kant argues for the necessity of three related syntheses as sources of cognition: those of apprehension, reproduction and recognition.

In presenting this threefold synthesis, Kant begins with a minimal sensible awareness of objects. This is the idea that the manifold of sensible impressions must be represented as being *of* something and thus as having the unity of an intuition. But, as Kant notes, 'in order for *unity* of intuition to come from this manifold . . . , it is necessary first to run through and then to take together this manifoldness . . .' (A99). This is the synthesis of apprehension, which collects diverse impressions into a unified intuition.

In the synthesis of apprehension, we run through and hold together a sequence of representations. Using Kant's favorite example we represent successive line segments as together forming a single line (A102). But in running through this sequence of representations, we must be able to reproduce the previous representations. That is, I can represent a particular segment as belonging to the line only if I can reproduce the earlier sequence. Thus, the synthesis of apprehension presupposes a synthesis of reproduction.

It is not enough, however, simply to reproduce certain representations, for an arbitrary collection of representations would not amount to an intuited object. The reproduced manifold must instead be recognized as

belonging together in the object. That is, the synthesis of reproduction presupposes a synthesis of recognition. Through the latter, the manifold representations are identified as being of the same object (A103). But sameness is always with respect to a concept (a rule or norm that one can be right or wrong about). Thus, the synthesis of recognition necessarily involves concepts. Since these concepts make experience possible, they cannot be derived *from* experience. Rather, they must be based on the unity of the thinking subject—what Kant calls transcendental apperception (A106 ff.) The categories are those rules by which diverse representations are brought to the unity of apperception. They are required for the recognition, reproduction and apprehension of intuited objects, and are thus objectively valid. This, very briefly, is Kant's account of the threefold synthesis in section II.<sup>4</sup>

Though commentators offer various interpretations of this threefold synthesis, they generally agree in identifying the subjective deduction with it. Meerbote expresses this consensus, writing: 'As is generally acknowledged, Kant explicitly provides his Subjective Deduction, in the A edition, in his statement and analysis of the three-fold synthesis, at A98-110 [in section II].'<sup>5</sup> This is a key feature of the standard reading.

4 I provide a more detailed reading of the threefold synthesis in chapter three of Nathan Bauer, *Kant's Transcendental Deductions of the Categories* (Chicago, 2008).

5 Ralf Meerbote, 'A sometimes neglected aspect of Kant's subjective deduction', in *Proceedings: Sixth International Kant Congress*, edited by G. Funke & Th. M. Seebohm (Washington, D.C., 1989), 260. Scholars who clearly endorse this standard reading, identifying the subjective side with the passages on the threefold synthesis in section II, include: Herman-Jean De Vleeschauwer, *La Déduction transcendentale dans l'oeuvre de Kant* (Paris, 1934-7); De Vleeschauwer, *The Development of Kantian Thought*, translated by A. R. C. Duncan (London, 1962) 84; Herbert James Paton, *Kant's Metaphysic of Experience* (London, 1936) vol. I, 356; Robert Paul Wolff, *Kant's Theory of Mental Activity* (Harvard, 1963) 85; Justus Hartnack, *Kant's Theory of Knowledge*, translated by M. H. Hartshorne (Hackett, 2001) 47; W. H. Bossart, 'Kant's transcendental deduction', *Kant-Studien*, 68 (1977) No. 4: 388; Onora O'Neill, 'Transcendental synthesis and developmental psychology', *Kant-Studien*, 75 (1984) No. 2: 151; Paul Guyer 'Psychology and the transcendental deduction', in *Kant's Transcendental Deductions*, edited by E. Förster (Stanford, 1989) 68; Hua Terence Tai, *The Objective and Subjective Deductions in Kant's Critique of Pure Reason* (Cornell University, 1989) 14; Tai 'The psychological and the transcendental in Kant's theory of knowledge', in *Mind & Cognition*, edited by J. C. Ho & Y. H. Young (Taipei, 1996) 149; Rudolf Makkreel, *Imagination and Interpretation in Kant* (Chicago, 1990) 20; Makkreel, 'Imagination and Temporality in Kant's Theory of the Sublime', in *Immanuel Kant: Critical Assessments*, vol. 4, edited by R. Chadwick (New York, 1992) 381; Henry E. Allison, 'Apperception and analyticity in the B-deduction', in *Idealism and Freedom* (Cambridge, 1996) 46; Sarah L. Gibbons, *Kant's Theory of Imagination* (Oxford, 1994) 43; Matthew McCormick, *Kant's Transcendental Psychology* (University of Rochester, 1995) 160; Arthur W. Collins, *Possible Experience* (Berkeley, 1999) 31-2; and Georges Dicker, *Kant's Theory of Knowledge* (Oxford, 2004) 93.

A second feature of the standard reading is a concern with the psychological character of the subjective deduction. Whether or not a given author accepts this assessment, there is a presumption in the literature that the subjective deduction is taken to be a psychological account of certain cognitive capacities. Kemp Smith, for instance, refers to it as 'psychological in character'.<sup>6</sup> The subjective deduction has subsequently been interpreted as a 'psychologico-transcendental process'<sup>7</sup> and as a 'psychologically oriented explanation'.<sup>8</sup> Strawson and Kitcher both see the subjective deduction as the centerpiece of Kant's transcendental psychology, though they disagree as to the nature and value of such an inquiry.<sup>9</sup>

Through this brief survey of the literature we have identified two common features: the identification of the subjective deduction with the threefold synthesis and a concern with the psychological character of the subjective side. Put together, the following picture of the subjective deduction emerges. On this side of the deduction, Kant offers an account of our basic cognitive capacities. It can thus be seen as a psychological investigation of the cognitive subject. Kant proceeds by identifying three key syntheses: apprehension, reproduction and recognition. These syntheses, he argues, are necessary for the very possibility of experience, and thus reveal certain essential capacities in the cognitive subject. In what follows, I refer to this view of the subjective deduction as the standard reading.<sup>10</sup>

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6 Kemp Smith, *A Commentary to Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*, 236.

7 De Vleeschauwer, *The Development of Kantian Thought*, 95.

8 Hartnack, *Kant's Theory of Knowledge*, 47.

9 P. F. Strawson, *The Bounds of Sense* (London, 1966) 97; and Patricia Kitcher, *Kant's Transcendental Psychology* (Oxford, 1990) 14, 182. Others who see the subjective deduction as a transcendental psychology include: Allison, 'On naturalizing Kant's transcendental psychology', in *Idealism and Freedom*, 58-9; Sebastian Gardner, *Routledge Philosophy Guidebook to Kant and the Critique of Pure Reason* (New York, 1999) 165; Matthew McCormick, 'Kant's Theory of Mind in the Critique of Pure Reason's Subjective Deduction', *The Journal of Value Inquiry*, 39 (2005) Nos. 3-4: 359-60. Strawson came to regret his disparaging remarks on transcendental psychology, but continues to see the subjective deduction as psychological in character. See Strawson, 'Sensibility, understanding, and the doctrine of synthesis', in *Kant's Transcendental Deductions*, 77.

10 Of course, in identifying a standard reading of the subjective deduction in the secondary literature, I do not mean to suggest that there are no exceptions to this consensus on the matter. Graham Bird, for example, has argued that sections II and III each contain an objective and subjective deduction, and he rejects the notion that the objective deduction is distinguished by its non-psychological character. (See *The Revolutionary Kant* (Chicago, 2006) 288-90, 313-19.) Even among the scholars discussed above, not all of them endorse every feature of the standard reading. Nonetheless, we find the above characterizations of the subjective deduction together in the secondary literature sufficiently often to justify referring to them collectively as a standard reading.

## 1.2. Evidence for the Standard Reading

A striking feature of the literature on the subjective deduction is that little evidence is offered in support of the standard reading. The identification of the subjective side with the threefold synthesis is often taken to be self-evident and in need of no justification. What evidence we find is of two kinds. First, there are direct appeals to the passage in the A-preface where Kant draws the distinction between objective and subjective sides. Second, there are appeals to the tradition of reading the subjective deduction in this way.

Turning to the first point, defenders of the standard reading generally refer to Kant's description of the objective and subjective sides of the deduction in the A-preface (Axvi-xvii). Few, however, discuss in any detail how the passage from the preface supports their reading. In fact, Kant never explicitly identifies the subjective deduction with the threefold synthesis in section II of the deduction. Neither does anything in this passage state that the subjective deduction is a kind of psychological inquiry. Kitcher provides a reasonable gloss on just how little the passage from the A-preface tells us. As she puts it: 'Needless to say, there are other supportable views of the Subjective Deduction as well. Kant's scanty remarks about the two sides of the Deduction do not rule out very much.'<sup>11</sup> Kant's description of the subjective deduction does not rule out the standard reading, but it provides little evidence for it.<sup>12</sup>

Perhaps because of the obscurity of the A-preface passage, defenders of the standard reading frequently invoke the authority of tradition in reading the subjective deduction this way. Gibbons offers a representative example. Rather than defending the standard reading, she simply notes: 'The account of the threefold synthesis of the A edition . . . is generally thought to be the Subjective Deduction to which Kant referred in the preface.'<sup>13</sup> Clearly, such appeals to how the subjective deduction is typically understood are unsatisfactory as

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11 Kitcher, 'Kant on Self-Identity', *The Philosophical Review*, 91 (1982) No. 1: 51, fn. 14.

12 In part two, after presenting my own reading of the subjective deduction, I return to the A-preface and show that the new reading offers a better explanation of Kant's description of the two sides of the deduction than does the standard view.

13 Gibbons, *Kant's Theory of Imagination*, 43. For further examples of this appeal to the interpretive tradition, see Bossart, 'Kant's Transcendental Deduction', 388; Meerbote, 'A sometimes neglected aspect of Kant's subjective deduction', 260; Tai, *The Objective and Subjective Deductions in Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*, 14; Tai, 'The psychological and the transcendental in Kant's theory of knowledge', 143; Wolff, 'Robert Howell, 1992, Kant's Transcendental Deduction', *Synthese*, 113 (1992) No. 1: 125; and Dicker, *Kant's Theory of Knowledge*, 93.

evidence for this reading. To be fair, commentators are often using the notion of a subjective deduction to make other points, rather than directly investigating this side of the deduction, and in such cases it is reasonable to appeal to the traditional view. But it is significant, nonetheless, that the standard reading has not drawn more scrutiny, for a problematic understanding of the subjective deduction could distort the broader views of these authors on Kant's work.<sup>14</sup>

We will now consider two problems that result from adopting the standard reading. First, this reading of the subjective side results in an untenable interpretation of the *objective* side. Second, it mischaracterizes what Kant means in calling this side of the deduction *subjective*. I examine each point in turn.

### ***1.3. An Untenable Interpretation of the Objective Deduction***

On the standard reading, the subjective deduction is identified with Kant's account of a threefold synthesis in section II, while the objective deduction is said to belong to section III. But this latter identification is problematic, for two reasons. First, it is wrong that Kant reserves the central task of the objective side, establishing the objective validity of the categories, to section III. Kant already claims to have established this much by the end of section II, concluding that the categories 'are therefore also fundamental concepts for thinking objects in general for the appearances, and they therefore have *a priori* objective validity, which was just what we really wanted to know.' (A111) In fact, section II is more clearly aimed at establishing the validity of the categories than section III. The difficulty in construing section III as the objective deduction is reflected in the secondary literature. Even among those commentators who identify section III as the more central objective side, it is common to find more attention placed on the supposedly less important section II.<sup>15</sup> Commentators have good reason to focus on section II, for the argument there more clearly concerns the

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<sup>14</sup> Elsewhere, I examine the history of this tradition. I trace the origin of the standard reading of the subjective deduction back to the neo-Kantian Hermann Cohen. See, for example, Cohen, *Kants Theorie der Erfahrung*, vol. 1.3 of *Hermann Cohen Werke*, edited by H. Holzhey (Hildesheim, 1987) 137-8. Apart from a brief mention in an early encyclopedia entry—Georg S. A. Mellin, *Encyclopädisches Wörterbuch der kritischen Philosophie*, vol. 2 (Jena & Leipzig: Friedrich Frommann, 1799) 41-2—I have not found any explicit discussion of Kant's distinction between objective and subjective deductions prior to Cohen. On these points, see chapter two of Bauer, *Kant's Transcendental Deductions of the Categories*.

<sup>15</sup> See, for example, Béatrice Longuenesse, *Kant and the Capacity to Judge*, translated by C. T. Wolfe (Princeton, 1998) 56; and Paton, *Kant's Metaphysic of Experience*. The latter devotes 116 pages to section II, but only 42

validity of the categories. But it is important to note that if the standard reading is correct, then this focus on section II conflicts with Kant's stated view that only the objective deduction is essential.

There is a further problem with identifying the objective deduction with section III. Kant maintains that this side can succeed independently, without appealing to the subjective deduction. But it is difficult to see how the argument of section III, construed as an objective deduction, can avoid appealing to the material in section II. Section III clearly relies on Kant's account of the threefold synthesis in section II, for the main arguments there appeal repeatedly to the syntheses defended earlier.<sup>16</sup> There is no way to make sense of these arguments without drawing upon the previous arguments of section II. Indeed, given the role the categories play in Kant's system, it is unclear how they could be defended without appealing to some account of our cognitive capacities—the presumed topic of the threefold synthesis. As Kitcher notes: 'Even a superficial reading of the text, particularly the central deduction of the categories, reveals that, if interpreters do excise or ignore all the discussions of cognitive processes and powers, then they will have very little left to read.'<sup>17</sup> The standard reading is thus committed to the objective deduction relying on the subjective deduction, contrary to Kant's claim that the former stands on its own.

Among the commentators who recognize this problem, most respond that Kant was simply wrong to assert the independence of the objective deduction. Wolff, for instance, writes:

In thus giving a central role to the Subjective Deduction, I must go against Kant's own assertion that it 'does not form an essential part' of the enquiry [Axvii]. The justification for this procedure is the only possible one: that without the Subjective Deduction Kant's argument is incomprehensible, while by means of its suggestions, the argument becomes perfectly clear.<sup>18</sup>

But this response to the problem requires attributing to Kant a misunderstanding of the central argument of the *Critique*. Naturally, every interpretation of Kant faces some recalcitrant passages, but the standard reading suggests that Kant is guilty of a very obvious mistake. Even some defenders of the standard reading ac-

pages to the supposedly more essential section III.

16 See, for example, A116 ff.

17 Kitcher, *Kant's Transcendental Psychology*, 3-4.

18 Wolff, *Kant's Theory of Mental Activity*, 80. We find other rejections of Kant's claim that the objective side can stand alone in: Norman Kemp Smith, *A Commentary to Kant's Critique of Pure Reason* (London, 2003) 237; Andrew Brook, *Kant and the Mind* (Cambridge, 1994) 120-1; Kitcher, 'Kant's Cognitive Self', in *Kant's Critique of Pure Reason: Critical Essays*, edited by P. Kitcher (Lanham, MD, 1998) 66; and James Van Cleve, *Problems from Kant* (New York, 1999) 79.

knowledge how remarkable this implication is, as is evident in the above quotation from Wolff.<sup>19</sup> Simply put, it is implausible that Kant would fail to notice that the subjective deduction is necessary for achieving the goal of the deduction. While such an error on Kant's part cannot be ruled out, appealing to it should surely be a strategy of last resort. It would be far preferable to find a reading of the subjective deduction that accommodates Kant's claim concerning the independence of the objective side.

#### *1.4. The Subjective Deduction as Subjective*

I turn now to the second problem with the standard reading: its misunderstanding of the sense in which the subjective deduction is *subjective*. In the literature, the modifier 'subjective' is often taken to identify the distinct *topic* of this investigation: a deduction of the mental subject. Brook provides a clear example of this view:

Since the objective deduction is about the conditions of representations having objects, a better name for it might have been, 'deduction of the object'. Similarly, a better name for the subjective deduction might have been 'the deduction of the subject' or 'the deduction of the subject's nature'.<sup>20</sup>

Here, the subjective deduction is seen as investigating the mental subject, determining the preconditions of experience on the side of the subject.

In identifying the subjective topic of the subjective deduction, the standard reading often adopts a problematic division between subjective and objective conditions of experience. Kemp Smith offers a representative example:

The subjective deduction seeks to determine the subjective conditions which are required to render knowledge possible, or to use less ambiguous terms the generative processes to whose agency human knowledge is due. It is consequently psychological in character. The objective deduction, on the other hand, is so named because it deals not with psychological processes but with questions of objective validity. It enquires how concepts which are *a priori*, and which as *a priori* must be taken to originate in pure reason, can yet be valid of objects.<sup>21</sup>

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19 Similar responses can be found in: Kemp Smith, *A Commentary to Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*, 236-8; Meerbote, 'A sometimes neglected aspect of Kant's subjective deduction', 268; and Brook, *Kant and the Mind*, 121.

20 Brook, *Kant and the Mind*, 106. We find similar formulations in Gardner, *Routledge Philosophy Guidebook to Kant and the Critique of Pure Reason*, 139 and Kitcher, *Kant's Transcendental Psychology*, 63.

21 Kemp Smith, *A Commentary to Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*, 236. Similar readings are presented in: Hoke Robinson, 'Intuition and manifold in the transcendental deduction', *The Southern Journal of Philosophy*, 22 (1984) No. 3: 411 en. 9; Meerbote, 'A sometimes neglected aspect of Kant's subjective deduction', 260; Gibbons, *Kant's Theory of Imagination*, 21; Allison, 'On naturalizing Kant's transcendental psychology', 58-9; and

We can call this a broadly Cartesian approach to the deduction. Here, Kant is understood as initially showing that the categories fulfill conditions of thought on the side of the subject. This takes place in the subjective deduction. Then, in the objective deduction, Kant uses this subjective foundation to establish further objective conditions for objects given in sensibility. Thus we find Kemp Smith emphasizing that what he calls the 'logical or epistemological' argument of the objective side relies essentially on the psychological argument of the subjective side. As he puts it: 'Factors which are transcendental in the strict or logical meaning of the term rest upon processes that are transcendental in a psychological sense.'<sup>22</sup>

This remains a popular way of reading Kant. Stroud provides a clear formulation of the approach:

The necessary conditions of our thinking the ways we do appeared to include highly general facts or states of affairs which are non-psychological in the sense of apparently containing nothing about how we think. They were essentially richer than the merely psychological starting-points from which they were to be derived, and the gap was to be bridged by some form of Kantian or transcendental argument.<sup>23</sup>

On this model, the deduction follows the indirect, Cartesian strategy of bridging the gap from a subjective foundation to genuine objective experience.

This approach to securing objectivity has come under criticism in recent debates over the status of transcendental arguments. Stroud again explains the difficulty involved, writing:

how can truths about the world which appear to say or imply nothing about human thought or experience be shown to be genuinely necessary conditions of such psychological facts as that we think and experience things in certain ways, from which the proofs begin? It would seem that we must find, and cross, a bridge of necessity from the one to the other. That would be a truly remarkable feat, and some convincing explanation would surely be needed of how the whole thing is possible.<sup>24</sup>

Many philosophers share Stroud's skepticism regarding the possibility of bridging this gap. If we read Kant as providing these subjective foundations in the subjective deduction, it is unclear how these can ground his proof of the validity of the categories in the objective deduction.

In fact, Kant is aware of the pitfalls of this approach and seeks to avoid them. In the Refutation of Idealism, for instance, Kant rejects this Cartesian strategy. He notes:

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McCormick, 'Kant's Theory of Mind in the Critique of Pure Reason's Subjective Deduction', 355-6.

22 Kemp Smith, *A Commentary to Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*, 236-8.

23 Barry Stroud, 'Kantian Argument, Conceptual Capacities, and Invulnerability', in *Understanding Human Knowledge* (Oxford, 2000) 161.

24 Stroud, 'Kantian Argument, Conceptual Capacities, and Invulnerability', 158-9.

The proof that is demanded [by the Cartesian skeptic] must therefore establish that we have *experience* and not merely *imagination* of outer things, which cannot be accomplished unless one can prove that even our *inner experience*, undoubted by Descartes, is possible only under the presupposition of outer experience. (B275)

The argument of the Refutation is meant to undermine the Cartesian notion of a foundational realm of inner subjectivity. Given this criticism, it is unlikely that Kant means to ground the objective claims of the deduction on this subjective foundation.<sup>25</sup>

It is worth noting that the metaphor of bridging a gap from the subjective to the objective, though common in the literature, does not appear in the *Critique*. What Kant says is that the deduction must show ‘how *subjective conditions of thinking* should have *objective validity*’ (A89). But by this Kant does not mean that we bridge a gap from self-standing subjective foundations to further objective conditions of experience. His point, rather, is that the very same conditions initially presented as subjective must be shown to have objective validity. Rather than bridging a gap between two distinct realms of experience, the deduction reveals the absence of any such gap. We should see the deduction as defending a notion of subjectivity—in the sense of essentially involving the subject—that is not *opposed* to objectivity, but *constitutive* of it. The standard reading, with its sharp division between objective and (merely) subjective conditions of experience, misses the proper Kantian notion of subjectivity.

### *1.5. The Status of the Standard Reading*

In examining the standard reading, I have argued that there is little evidence for its identification of the subjective deduction with the threefold synthesis. We then considered some problems that result when we adopt the standard reading. These problems suffice to warrant consideration of an alternate account. In turning to this new reading, there are three lessons we can draw from our examination of the standard view. First, we should be suspicious of the psychological reading on which the identification of the subjective deduction

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<sup>25</sup> I return to this issue when I present my own reading of the subjective deduction in part two. The claim that Kant is actually opposed to this Cartesian reading of his position is defended in James Conant, ‘Varieties of scepticism’, in *Wittgenstein and Scepticism*, edited by D. McManus (New York, 2004). Collins, *Possible Experience* and Hubert Schwyzer, ‘Subjectivity in Descartes and Kant’, *The Philosophical Quarterly*, 47 (1997) No. 188 are also sensitive to the problems that result from taking Kant to be starting from Cartesian subjective foundations.

with the threefold synthesis is based. Second, we now recognize the need for a better understanding of the sense in which this side is subjective. Finally, we need a better explanation of how the subjective side of the deduction relates to the objective side and how these two sides relate to sections II and III of the deduction. In what follows, I present a reading of the subjective deduction that addresses these issues.

## Part 2.A New Reading of Kant's Subjective Deduction

Give the problems with the standard reading of the subjective deduction, I propose that we reconsider one of its central claims: the identification of the threefold synthesis in section II as the subjective deduction. In its place, I offer a new reading of the subjective side. Rather than a broad examination of the subject's cognitive capacities, it is better seen as a response to one specific question about these capacities. The subjective deduction, I argue, has the specific task of explaining how our seemingly independent capacities for thinking and being given objects are coordinated. I present this reading in part 2.1. Then, in parts 2.2 and 2.3, I show that it avoids the problems that arose on the standard view.

### *2.1. Reconstructing the Subjective Deduction*

As we have seen, a challenge facing any proposed reading of the subjective deduction is the obscurity of Kant's A-preface remarks. There he describes the subjective deduction as an examination of 'the pure understanding itself, concerning its possibility and the powers of cognition on which it itself rests; thus it considers it in a subjective relation . . .' (Axvii). But this characterization of the subjective deduction allows of several interpretations. We might, following the standard reading, take it to mean that *any* appeal to cognitive powers, and thus the entire threefold synthesis, falls under the subjective deduction. But we can also read Kant as saying that the subjective deduction addresses only a particular aspect of these cognitive powers. That is, these cognitive powers might be relevant to the subjective deduction only insofar as they address a question about the *possibility* of an understanding that rests upon them. This latter reading would then leave room for a broader appeal to these cognitive powers in the objective deduction. From this passage alone, it is difficult to determine Kant's precise meaning.

Given this uncertainty, I propose that more might be accomplished by beginning with another feature of the A-preface distinction. One point that is perfectly clear in this passage is Kant's concern that readers may have reservations concerning the subjective deduction. He allows that it might be construed as merely hypothetical, and he worries that it may fail to produce 'complete conviction' in the reader (Axvii). I propose that we examine the A-deduction for passages that express this concern, in the hope that provisionally identifying these passages with the subjective deduction will lead to a better overall reading. Sure enough, we do find passages expressing Kant's worry that the reader will find his claims strange and perhaps unbelievable. There are three such passages in the A-deduction: the first near the end of section II, and two more in section III. In what follows, I refer to these as 'worry passages.'

Let us begin with the first of these worry passages. Here, Kant writes:

All appearances therefore stand in a thoroughgoing connection according to necessary laws, and hence in a *transcendental affinity*, of which the *empirical* affinity is the mere consequence. That nature should direct itself according to our subjective ground of apperception, indeed in regard to its lawfulness even depend on this, may well sound quite contradictory and strange. (A113-14)

Notice that, as in his discussion of the subjective deduction in the A-preface, Kant expresses a worry about how readers will respond to his view. In referring to the affinity of appearances, Kant means their standing in systematic connection, to form a law-governed whole of nature.<sup>26</sup> Kant has argued that the affinity of appearances has its source in the subject's apperception, and here he grants that the reader might resist this conclusion. It is strange, after all, to claim that the categories (expressing the apperceptive unity of the subject) are the source of the law-like nature of the objects that appear to us in experience. It is easy to see why the reader might find this claim perplexing, for we normally take the order of nature to operate independently of our own thought.

What has led Kant to this odd result? A few pages earlier, Kant summarizes what he has achieved in section II:

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<sup>26</sup> On this notion of affinity, see A113. I thank Tom Vinci for helpful comments clarifying my discussion of affinity in an earlier draft. On this conception of nature, see A418-19/B446-7, and sections 14 to 17 of the *Prolegomena*, in *Theoretical Philosophy after 1781*, edited by H. E. Allison & P. Heath (Cambridge, 2002) 89-91 [Ak. 4: 294-7].

Now I assert that the *categories* that have just been adduced are nothing other than the *conditions of thinking in a possible experience*, just as *space* and *time* contain the *conditions of the intuition* for the very same thing. They are therefore also fundamental concepts for thinking objects in general for the appearances, and they therefore have *a priori* objective validity, which was just what we really wanted to know. (A111)

Kant claims to have shown that experience is possible only if we think objects by means of the categories, and, following from this point, that the categories are objectively valid. In the A-preface, Kant is clear that establishing this objective validity is the task of the more essential objective deduction. This is why he adds, in the passage above, that this is what we wanted to know.

Kant goes on to note a further implication of what he has just shown:

However, the possibility, indeed even the necessity of these categories rests on the relation that the entire sensibility, and with it also all possible appearances, have to the original apperception, in which everything is necessarily in agreement with the conditions of the thoroughgoing unity of self-consciousness, i.e., must stand under universal functions of synthesis, namely of the synthesis in accordance with concepts, as that in which alone apperception can demonstrate *a priori* its thoroughgoing and necessary identity. (A111-12)

As the objective deduction has established, the categories must determine the objects of experience. But these objects are given in sensibility as appearances. There must thus be a relation between understanding and sensibility, one that allows the categories of the former to determine the appearances of the latter. As Kant puts it:

without that sort of unity [that provided by the categories], which has its rule *a priori*, and which subjects the appearances to itself, thoroughgoing and universal, hence necessary unity of consciousness would not be encountered in the manifold perceptions. But these would then belong to no experience, and would consequently be without an object, and would be nothing but a blind play of representations, i.e., less than a dream. (A112)

Experience, Kant claims, is possible only on the basis of this connection between our sensible and intellectual faculties. It is important to emphasize that Kant, in this passage, does not mean to challenge his earlier claim regarding the objective validity of the categories. The worry he raises here does not involve a doubt as to whether our experience is a mere blind play of representations, for the objective deduction has already shown such a state to be impossible. Rather, the worry lies in our failure to comprehend just how it is that experience manages to be something more than a blind play of representations.

At the root of our incomprehension is a dilemma concerning the relation between sensibility and understanding. The objective deduction requires that there be a necessary connection between the two, a connection by which the categories determine all appearances. But we are also committed to the view that sensibility is, in some sense, independent of the understanding. We are, after all, finite creatures, lacking intellectual intuition.<sup>27</sup> This claim that sensibility should be independent of the understanding can be thought of as the Empirical version of the worry Kant is addressing. But there is also a Rational variant. There the idea is that in metaphysical inquiry we can achieve theoretical knowledge through reason alone, where this again suggests the lack of a necessary connection between our sensible and intellectual faculties. If, following the Empiricists and Rationalists, we are committed to the independence of sensibility or the understanding, it becomes difficult to see how the categories of the understanding are able to determine all sensible appearances. Lacking an explanation of this relation, we are faced not so much with doubt about the validity of the categories, but rather with bafflement regarding the inexplicable relation between sensibility and understanding that the objective validity of the categories demands.

Kant's provisional response to this worry is at A113, near the end of section II. There he points out that the rules governing appearances also have their source in the understanding. It is this explanation that prompts Kant to acknowledge the strangeness of his position in the first worry passage. In the A-preface, we found Kant worrying that readers might find the subjective side of the deduction unconvincing. Now we see him again worrying about the reader's response, acknowledging that one might well be puzzled by a strange implication of his argument: namely, the seemingly inexplicable connection between what we think through the understanding and what is given to us in sensibility. It is my view that explaining this connection is the task of the subjective deduction. It addresses a worry that may keep the reader from endorsing the results of the objective deduction, even if they accept its argument.

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<sup>27</sup> By this Kant means that our understanding can only represent objects that are given to us in sensibility. This is in contrast to a divine understanding that would create the objects it thinks (B145). For God, unlike us, there is no relation between sensibility and understanding to explain.

As I see it, the first three subsections of section II contain a sustained argument for the validity of the categories—the heart of the objective deduction. In subsection four, Kant summarizes what he has shown and then raises the worry to which the subjective deduction is addressed. It is here that the problematic of the subjective deduction comes into view. But the actual argument of the subjective deduction is not here. Consider the title of subsection four: ‘Provisional explanation of the possibility of the categories as *a priori* cognitions’ (A110). In this provisional explanation, Kant is merely setting out the program of the subjective deduction.

The actual argument of the subjective deduction is found not in section II but in III. Note the title of the latter: ‘On the relation of the understanding to objects in general and the possibility of cognizing these *a priori*’ (A115). Here we move from a provisional explanation of the possibility of the categories governing appearances to an account of the relation that will explain this possibility. This is consistent with what I am identifying as the task of the subjective deduction. The argument of section III is complicated, even by Kant’s standards, but the general approach is clear. As Kant puts it: ‘What we have expounded separately and individually in the previous section we will now represent as unified and in connection’ (A115). Kant’s aim is to establish a necessary relation between the capacities involved in experience.

The section III subjective deduction consists of two main arguments, the so-called deductions from above and below.<sup>28</sup> In referring to them in this way, Kant means to distinguish their starting points, for the two arguments begin from different sources of cognition: apperception and sense. The argument from above starts from our intellectual faculties, with pure apperception, while the argument from below begins with the appearances given in sensibility. Both, however, have a common goal: establishing a systematic connection between these sensibly given appearances and the understanding. Kant is quite clear on this point. For having concluded, at the end of the deduction from above, ‘that the appearances have a *necessary relation to the understanding*,’ he then adds: ‘Now we will set the necessary connection of the understanding with the appear-

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<sup>28</sup> ‘So called’ because Kant himself never refers to these individual arguments as deductions. I prefer to call them simply the arguments from above and below.

ances by means of the categories before our eyes by beginning from beneath, namely with what is empirical' (A119).

The two arguments also share a common argumentative strategy for reaching this conclusion. From their distinct starting points, each argument goes on to show that the source of cognition in question cannot yield cognition or experience on its own. Kant's desired conclusion—that there is a necessary connection between sensibly given appearances and the understanding—is arrived at by undermining the position that either the understanding or sensibility can serve as independent sources of cognition.

In the argument from above, Kant shows that the unity of apperception, though a necessary source of all experience, cannot stand alone. As Kant puts it: 'This synthetic unity [of apperception], however, presupposes a synthesis, or includes it . . .' (A118). Here, Kant is drawing upon the results of the objective deduction in section II. His point is that although pure apperception is a source of cognition, it is not an independent source. As Kant goes on to say, 'the transcendental unity of apperception is related to the pure synthesis of the imagination, as an *a priori* condition of the possibility of all composition of the manifold in a cognition' (A118). Apperception, in itself, is empty, for, as pure unity, it requires a synthesis by which a manifold of content is brought to this unity, an *a priori* synthesis of imagination.

In the argument from below, Kant adopts the same undermining strategy, this time directed toward sensibility as a putatively independent source of cognition. Again relying upon the results of the earlier objective deduction, Kant notes that the associability of sensibly given appearances presupposes an affinity of these appearances. That is, it presupposes their standing in systematic connection under general laws. This affinity cannot be given in sensibility, but must be supplied by apperception via the same pure synthesis. As Kant notes:

The objective unity of all (empirical) consciousness in one consciousness (of original apperception) is thus the necessary condition even of all possible perception, and the affinity of all appearances (near or remote) is a necessary consequence of a synthesis in the imagination that is grounded *a priori* on rules. (A123)

Given the necessary role of apperception, sensibility cannot stand as an independent source of cognition.

Whereas the argument from above shows that apperception is cognitively empty without a synthesis by which representations are brought to its unity, the argument from below shows that the associability of appearances can be explained only by appeal to an intellectual synthesis through which they are determined as law-like. Both sensibility and understanding require a pure synthesis of imagination through which each is necessarily related to the other. Kant goes on to acknowledge this common appeal to imagination:

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 an empirical cognition, hence there would be no experience. (A124)

Imagination thus assumes a pivotal role in both arguments. Through it is revealed a necessary connection between the supposedly independent faculties of sensibility and understanding.

Together, the arguments from above and below address the problematic of the subjective side of the deduction. The subjective deduction is aimed at the reader who struggles to comprehend the mysterious fit between the seemingly separate unities of sensibility and understanding. The solution involves showing that there is only a single unity—and thus no fit to explain. That is, the very same function of imagination brings representations to the unity of apperception (considered from the side of thought) and determines the affinity of all possible appearances (from the side of sensibility). While it is tempting to think of imagination as a sort of bridge between understanding and sensibility, this is precisely to miss the point. Such language suggests a combination of two self-standing processes by means of a third. But what Kant has argued for is a relation that is necessary precisely because neither faculty can make any contribution at all to experience without the other. As Kant puts it in the introduction to the Transcendental Logic: ‘Only from their unification can cognition arise’ (A51/B75-6). Since the categories represent the various forms of this basic cognitive function, we can now see how it is that the categories that govern our thinking also determine how appearances are given to us.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> As early as the metaphysical deduction, Kant is already preparing the way for this solution. There, he writes: ‘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 . . .’ (A79/B104-5). This emphasis on the necessary con-

In the objective deduction, the asserted cooperation between sensibility and understanding could come to seem mysterious precisely because of the apparent independence of these two faculties. For in identifying sensibility as the source of the spatial and temporal form of appearances, we might mistakenly conclude that this form is a unity that is cognitively significant apart from any contribution of thought. Call this the error of Empiricism. The corresponding error of Rationalism would be to think that the structure or unity of thought can produce cognitive results apart from any contribution of sensibility. We can thus see the arguments from above and below as addressing, respectively, the Rational and Empirical variants of the worry that motivates the subjective deduction. The argument from above reminds the Rationalist that ‘thoughts without content are empty,’ while the argument from below reminds the Empiricist that ‘intuitions without concepts are blind’ (A51/B75).<sup>30</sup> Together, these arguments undermine the view that either the understanding or sensibility can function independently of the other, leaving only Kant’s own view: that the two necessarily function together in making experience possible.

The objective deduction in section II provides the foundation for the arguments of the subjective deduction in III, and, initially, the latter might seem repetitive and unnecessary. But what is essentially different about the subjective side is its rhetorical strategy. Here Kant’s goal is not to establish a claim, but rather to prevent a misunderstanding. Kant knows that his readers will approach the deduction with their own philosophical presumptions, and he knows that these views might distort the picture Kant is presenting of the relation of faculties in the subject. The subjective deduction is intended to prevent a misreading of the account

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nection between sensibility and understanding might seem at odds with Kant’s earlier treatment of them as seemingly independent faculties. It is true that Kant thinks of the two faculties as distinct and ‘fundamental sources in the mind’ (A50/B74). Kant is even willing to examine the cognitive contributions of sensibility on its own in the Aesthetic. But this should not be taken to imply that sensibility actually functions on its own. Indeed, Kant is careful to avoid such a suggestion, noting: ‘In the transcendental aesthetic we will therefore first isolate sensibility by separating off everything that the understanding thinks through its concepts, so that nothing but empirical intuition remains’ (A22). That is, the Aesthetic can consider sensibility on its own because it abstracts from the contributions of understanding, not because sensibility is in fact independent. I address the seemingly contradictory claims Kant makes concerning the relation between sensibility and understanding in chapter eight of Bauer, *Kant’s Transcendental Deductions of the Categories*.

<sup>30</sup> I owe to James Conant the helpful suggestion that the deductions from above and below are aimed at the Rationalists and Empiricists respectively.

defended on the objective side. Kant does so, as we have seen, by undermining the standpoints of Rationalism and Empiricism, respectively, in the arguments from above and below.

Kant adopts the same rhetorical strategy in his Remark to the Amphiboly. The passage is worth citing in full:

In a word, Leibniz *intellectualized* the appearances, just as Locke totally *sensitized* the concepts of understanding . . . i.e., interpreted them as nothing but empirical or abstracted concepts of reflection. Instead of seeking two entirely different sources of representation in the understanding and sensibility, which could judge about things with objective validity *only in conjunction*, each of these great men holds on only to one of them, which in his opinion is immediately related to things in themselves, while the other does nothing but confuse or order the representations of the first. (A271/B327)

Kant sees Leibniz and Locke (representing the Rationalist and Empiricist traditions, respectively) as failing to recognize the necessary connection between sensibility and understanding—precisely because each takes one of these faculties to be independently functional. We can thus see the Amphiboly as returning, retrospectively, to the topic of the subjective deduction, now that the results of the deduction are in place.<sup>31</sup>

Having addressed the standpoints of Empiricism and Rationalism in the two arguments of section III, Kant again acknowledges the strangeness of his position, but he now has a fuller response for the concerned reader. This is the second of the three worry passages. Kant writes:

It is therefore certainly strange, yet from what has been said thus far obvious, that it is only by means of this transcendental function of the imagination that even the affinity of appearances, and with it the association and through the latter finally reproduction in accordance with laws, and consequently experience itself, become possible; for without them no concepts of objects at all would converge into an experience. (A123-4)<sup>32</sup>

The subjective deduction does not need to remove altogether the perceived strangeness of the understanding being the source of the affinity of appearances. It needs only to address the worry that the possibility of such

31 It is well known that Kant framed the history of philosophy as involving a perennial conflict between Empiricism and Rationalism, with his own critical philosophy mediating between and succeeding these two movements. See, for example, the brief chapter on the history of philosophy at the end of the *Critique* (A852/B880 ff.), along with his short sketch in the *Jäsche Logic*, in *Lectures on Logic*, edited and translated by J. M. Young (Cambridge, 1992) 539-44 [Ak. 9: 27-33]. The *Critique* contains numerous passages where Kant presents his own position as responding to problems with Empiricism and Rationalism. It is thus unsurprising to find him doing the same in the deduction.

32 The third worry passage, a few paragraphs later, makes largely the same point: ‘Thus as exaggerated and contradictory as it may sound to say that the understanding is itself the source of the laws of nature, and thus of the formal unity of nature, such an assertion is nevertheless correct and appropriate to the object, namely experience’ (A127).

a relation cannot even be comprehended. And Kant believes he has accomplished this much by the end of section III. As he concludes:

But we did not have to accomplish more in the transcendental deduction of the categories than to make comprehensible this relation of the understanding to sensibility and by means of the latter to all objects of experience, hence to make comprehensible the objective validity of its pure *a priori* concepts, and thereby determine their origin and truth. (A128)

It suffices if the subjective deduction makes this necessary connection of our intellectual and sensible faculties comprehensible.

I am proposing a new way of understanding Kant's distinction between objective and subjective deductions. On my view, the central argument of the objective deduction is in section II. Properly understood, it achieves the essential task of the deduction, proving that the categories must necessarily be involved in experience. But a worry stands in the way of a proper understanding of the objective deduction. For in the course of its proof, we come to see that the law-like nature of sensibly given appearances must have its source in the categories of the understanding. And although we cannot deny this connection, given its necessary role in experience, we might struggle to comprehend its possibility. The subjective deduction, on my reading, addresses this worry. It takes up the task of explaining this connection in section III. In doing so, it shows that our worry regarding the objective deduction rests on a misunderstanding of the relation between sensibility and understanding. With this new reading of the subjective deduction in place, we can now assess how it fits with Kant's remarks in the A-preface.

## *2.2. The Subjective Nature of the Subjective Deduction*

As we saw, the standard reading explains the subjective topic of the subjective deduction by invoking a distinction between subjective and objective conditions for the possibility of experience. The subjective side of the deduction is seen as establishing merely subjective conditions of experience, conditions the objective side then builds upon in identifying the categories as objective conditions of experience proper. I argued that this broadly Cartesian reading of the deduction is philosophically implausible and at odds with Kant's own

characterization of the deduction. As I will now show, the new reading of the subjective deduction allows for a better explanation of its subjective topic.

Clearly, the subjective deduction cannot be identified with all consideration of the cognitive subject, for the deduction as a whole is concerned with the relation of this subject to what is given in experience. In the subjective deduction Kant is concerned with one particular issue concerning this subject: namely, our struggle to comprehend how seemingly independent faculties work together to make experience possible. In the A-preface Kant characterizes this side of the deduction as examining ‘the pure understanding itself, concerning its possibility and the powers of cognition on which it itself rests’ (Axvi). Here, Kant refers to the understanding as our capacity for invoking thought in determining what is given to us in sensibility. It is an essentially relational capacity, one that rests on our powers of thought and receptivity, and, as such, it necessarily involves their coordination.<sup>33</sup> To question the possibility of the understanding just is to question the possibility of this coordination.

The source of this worry is the view, common to both Empiricists and Rationalists, that we can arrive at knowledge without this necessary connection: either through sensibility alone, as the Empiricists hold, or merely through our intellectual faculty, as the Rationalists believe. Both presumptions encourage a misreading of the objective deduction, leaving the necessary connection of faculties espoused by Kant incomprehensible. In the subjective deduction, Kant addresses this potential misreading, employing his arguments from above and below to undermine the two standpoints that encourage it. In doing so, he clarifies his view of how our various cognitive faculties stand together in the subject. This is the sense in which its topic is subjective.<sup>34</sup>

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33 See, for example, A51/B75, where Kant introduces the understanding as ‘the faculty for thinking of objects of sensible intuition . . .’. Kant spells out the relational nature of the understanding more clearly in a note from the 1780s: ‘The unity of apperception in relation to the faculty of imagination is the understanding’ (Kant, *Notes and Fragments*, translated by C. Bownan, P. Guyer & F. Rauscher (Cambridge, 2005) 258 [Ak. 23: 18]).

34 Kant has a further reason for calling this side of the deduction subjective: namely, its indirect method of argument, by elimination of the Empiricist and Rationalist alternatives. This apagogic approach was traditionally identified as subjective. On this point, see chapter four of Bauer, *Kant's Transcendental Deductions of the Categories*.

### 2.3. *The Relation Between the Objective and Subjective Deductions*

A successful reading of the subjective deduction should accommodate Kant's remark, in the A-preface, that the objective deduction does not rely essentially on the subjective deduction. Regarding the latter, Kant notes that:

although this exposition is of great importance in respect of my chief end, it does not belong essentially to it; because the chief question always remains: 'What and how much can understanding and reason cognize free of all experience?' and not: 'How is the faculty of thinking itself possible?' . . . . [E]ven in case my subjective deduction does not produce the complete conviction I expect, the objective deduction that is my primary concern would come into its full strength, on which what is said at pages [A] 92-3 should even be sufficient by itself. (Axvii)

Defenders of the standard reading of the distinction struggle to account for the independence of the objective deduction and are forced to the conclusion that Kant is guilty of an obvious error in claiming this independence. On the new reading, however, we can see why Kant would believe that the subjective deduction is important but not essential to the objective deduction. The objective deduction establishes that the categories are necessary conditions for the very possibility of experience. Thus, they must determine anything that can be given in experience. Presumably, the odd reference to pages A92-3 in the last sentence of the above quotation is meant to pick up on this point.<sup>35</sup> On these pages, Kant outlines the program of the objective deduction and suggests that it will be completed by revealing the categories to be prerequisites of experience. It is certainly helpful, in the subjective deduction, to address the reader's worry about the strangeness of the necessary connection between our sensible and intellectual faculties. And the arguments from above and below are useful in preventing a potential misreading of Kant's account that would lead to this worry. But these are auxiliary points. Read correctly, the earlier objective deduction provides a complete argument for the necessary connection between the categories and what is given in sensibility. It thus stands on its own in establishing the validity of the categories. By explaining Kant's insistence on the independence of the objective deduction, the new reading offers a better fit with Kant's own description of the distinction.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> I call it an odd reference because, as we saw in part 1.3, it is sometimes read as identifying the actual location of the objective deduction. But this cannot be what Kant means, for the argument of the deduction has not even begun at this point in the text. The passage is clearly programmatic in nature and thus cannot mark the location of the objective deduction.

<sup>36</sup> Although I have shown how the new reading of the subjective deduction is consistent with Kant's claim that

There is a passage early in section II of the deduction that might seem to speak against my explanation of the independence of the objective deduction. In a ‘preliminary reminder,’ Kant notes:

The deduction of the categories is connected with so many difficulties, and necessitates such deep penetration into the primary grounds of the possibility of our cognition in general, that in order to avoid the longwindedness of a complete theory and nevertheless not to omit anything in such a necessary inquiry, I have found it more advisable to prepare than to instruct the reader in the following four numbers, and only then to represent the exposition of these elements of the understanding systematically in the immediately following third section. (A98)

Whereas I have argued that sections II and III correspond to the objective and subjective deductions, respectively, Kant here offers a different demarcation: section II is preparatory, while III is systematic. It might appear that Kant’s manner of distinguishing the two sections conflicts with mine. On my view, the objective deduction in section II is essential, while the subjective deduction of section III is not. Kant, however, seems to have the two reversed, for one would think that the *systematic* section III is surely more important than the *preparatory* section II.

But Kant’s use of the preparatory-systematic distinction is not as straightforward as it appears. In calling section II preparatory, Kant cannot mean to deny that substantive conclusions are arrived at there. As we saw earlier, Kant already claims to have established the main goal of the deduction, the objective validity of the categories, early in section II.3, in a passage summarizing what he has achieved through his account of a threefold synthesis. Kant even emphasizes the importance of this conclusion, noting that this ‘was just what we really wanted to know.’ (A111)<sup>37</sup> Likewise, in calling section III systematic, Kant cannot mean to deny that section II involves systematic relations among our faculties, for he clearly states that the synthesis of apprehension presupposes that of reproduction (A102), and, in turn, that both presuppose the synthesis of re-

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the objective side is independent, I have not yet discussed Kant’s concern about the reception of the subjective side. It is this concern that led him to assert the independence of the objective deduction in the A-preface (Axvi-xvii). I consider this further issue in chapter four of Bauer, *Kant's Transcendental Deductions of the Categories*. There I argue that Kant’s reservations regarding the subjective side are not the result of its psychological or speculative character, as the standard reading suggests, but instead are based on its apagogic (or *reductio*) method of argument—a method viewed as controversial in Kant’s own time. I go on to claim, in chapter six, that it was Kant’s dissatisfaction with the method of the subjective side that led him to rewrite the transcendental deduction for the second edition of the *Critique*.

<sup>37</sup> As we saw in part one, even defenders of the standard reading—who are committed to section III being more essential than II—tend to focus more on the arguments for the validity of the categories in II. In doing so, they are effectively granting that it reaches substantive conclusions of its own.

cognition (A108). Indeed, establishing this systematic connection between our sensible and intellectual faculties is the whole point of Kant's argument in section II.

From this, we might conclude that Kant is simply mistaken in calling section II preparatory and III systematic. But, in fact, Kant sometimes uses the preparatory-systematic distinction in a manner consistent with the above points. Consider, for instance, Kant's description of the *Critique of Pure Reason* as 'the pro-paedeutic to the system of pure reason.' (A11/B25) The *Critique*, he explains, is 'a preparation, if possible, for an organon, and, if this cannot be accomplished, then at least for a canon, in accordance with which the complete system of the philosophy of pure reason . . . can in any case at least some day be exhibited.' (A12/B26)<sup>38</sup> Though preparatory, the *Critique of Pure Reason* is clearly essential to Kant's purposes. What makes it preparatory is not its unimportance, but rather its lack of completeness.<sup>39</sup>

On this reading of preparatory, it would make to sense to call the main argument of the objective deduction in section II preparatory. For although section II establishes the essential conclusion of the deduction, it remains incomplete in that it does not yet address the worry that will be the focus of the subjective deduction in section III. Moreover, we have further evidence that Kant is using preparatory in the sense of incomplete, for he himself states, in the passage quoted earlier, that the preparatory status of section II is a consequence of his desire 'to avoid the longwindedness of a complete theory' (A98).<sup>40</sup> It also makes sense to call the subjective deduction in section III systematic, both because it further scrutinizes the systematic relation of our faculties and because it brings systematic completeness to the project of the objective deduction by addressing this outstanding worry. This construal of the preparatory-systematic distinction has precedent in Kant's

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38 Kant makes the same point later in the *Critique*, at A841/B869.

39 Kant uses preparatory in the same sense in the *Critique of Practical Reason* (in *Practical Philosophy*, edited & translated by M. J. Gregor (Cambridge, 1996) 269 [Ak. 5: 161]).

40 Dieter Henrich notes that this avoidance of unnecessary detail is a characteristic feature of the legal deductions Kant used as his model, and that, for this reason, Kant 'deliberately intended to be brief and to focus exclusively upon his crucial points.' (Henrich, 'Kant's notion of a deduction and the methodological background of the first Critique', in *Kant's Transcendental Deductions*, 34) Kant's division of the argument of the A-deduction into two sections reflects this intention, allowing him to focus on the central argument in section II, while reserving the less central concerns of the subjective deduction for section III.

writings elsewhere, is consistent with his own claims about the substantive conclusions reached in section II, and fits my reading of the objective and subjective deductions.

## Conclusion

I have defended a new reading of the subjective side of the transcendental deduction. Rather than being a broad account of our cognitive faculties, as is often claimed, the subjective deduction should be seen as addressing a worry that arises in the course of the objective deduction. Specifically, it responds to the reader who may find it incomprehensible how there can be a necessary connection between what is given to us in sensibility and what is thought through the understanding. Kant calls this side of the deduction subjective because its topic is the possibility of these faculties standing in the appropriate relation within the subject. The argument of the subjective deduction is found in section III of the deduction. There, Kant proceeds by undermining the position, common to both Empiricists and Rationalists that either sensibility or the understanding can be cognitively significant apart from the other. On Kant's view, both parties are prone to misread the deduction, precisely because they see it as attempting to bridge a Cartesian gap between the independent faculties of sensibility and understanding. In the subjective deduction Kant means to prevent this misreading of his position by denying the cognitive independence of these faculties.

We can thus see the subjective deduction as Kant's attempt to address the problem in explaining our cognitive relation to the world. The key to Kant's solution is his assertion of a necessary connection between sensibility and understanding. In contrast to traditional models that assert the independence of these faculties, Kant insists that our experience of objects necessarily involves both. In recognizing this connection we see that the intuitions given to us in experience must already be conceptually determinate and are thus capable of constraining our subsequent thought about them.<sup>41</sup> Unfortunately the role of the subjective deduction in ad-

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<sup>41</sup> John McDowell defends this way of reading Kant in McDowell, *Mind and World* (Cambridge, MA, 1996) and in subsequent works, such as McDowell, 'Having the World in View: Sellars, Kant, and Intentionality', *The Journal of Philosophy*, 95 (1998) No. 9. McDowell does not mention the subjective deduction in these works. But his critique of both a frictionless coherentism of thought and a bare, non-conceptual givenness, bears some resemblance to Kant's arguments against the positions of the Rationalists and Empiricists, respectively, in the subjective deduction. Kant provides a more detailed, positive account of how the understanding determines sensibility in the second half of the revised B-deduction. I examine this account in part two of Bauer, *Kant's*

addressing this problem has generally been missed by Kant's readers. We are left with the irony that the subjective deduction has typically been understood as offering precisely the indirect, Cartesian model of cognition that Kant meant for it to rule out.<sup>42</sup>

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*Transcendental Deductions of the Categories.*

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