

Cognition, Thought and Object: A Reappraisal of Transcendental Logic's Nature

Abstract

In this article, I re-examine Kant's many senses of cognition, thought, and object in order to better understand his account of logic, and, in particular, transcendental logic. In laying out the multiple and conflicting ways Kant defines each of those terms, the relation between transcendental logic and pure general logic can be revealed as analogous to, and, indeed, linked to, the isomorphism that exists between the categories of the understanding and the logical forms of judgment, which are equivalent if one ignores the manifold of intuition. This means transcendental logic is a general logic, even as a logic (some) cognizing.

Immanuel Kant's introduction of a new kind of logic called "transcendental logic" in his *Critique of Pure Reason* (A 1781/ B 1787), hereafter *KrV*, arguably represents the work's most original contribution to philosophy. However, various difficulties surround fundamental aspects of its interpretation as a science or discipline, particularly when it comes to understanding its nature, scope, and purpose as a "logic." This notably manifests itself in the secondary literature when some of its most prominent scholars, often in passing, attempt to evaluate transcendental logic's relationship with pure general logic, hereafter PGL, which represents Kant's conception of formal logic. Despite the variety of opinions that exist on the matter, an assumption that is rather dominant in the literature is the idea that transcendental logic differs from PGL because the domain of objects which falls under transcendental logic's purview is somehow limited or restricted in terms of its scope relative to PGL, which is marked by generality in the sense that, as a formal logic, it is completely indifferent to the nature of objects *per se*. This is an assumption which, if true, would make transcendental logic fall under what Kant calls a "special logic."

Such a view is, I believe, fundamentally wrong. I say this primarily because it betrays a misunderstanding of the purpose of any so-called "transcendental" discipline or inquiry, whose focus, rather than lying on objects, always lies instead in determining the *a priori* conditions which enable the possibility of experience. Consequently, in this paper I will attempt to clarify the nature of transcendental logic, in particular in terms of its relation to PGL. My main argument will consist of making a case in favor of the more counterintuitive view that transcendental logic, like PGL, must be a "general" logic, and *not* a "special" logic, at least assuming we are not changing the meaning of this latter qualifier as it was originally intended to be understood by Kant himself. In other words, then, part of what I hope to show is that insofar as its "generality" is concerned, the

domain of objects covered by, or belonging under, transcendental logic's purview, is just as universal in its scope as that inherent in PGL.

An important source behind the scholarly confusion surrounding this topic comes, I believe, from Kant's often inconsistent use of certain terms relevant to a discussion of this nature. This includes, for instance, Kant's implicitly varying conceptions of "cognition," "thought," and "object," which are terms that are often employed in the *KrV*. Without a proper understanding of the many senses in which Kant understands these specific terms and the way he uses them in certain passages, the risk of misinterpreting his views on anything related to his account of logic will naturally increase. In particular, the assumption that certain passages should be read one way as opposed to another, which is a result of these ambiguities, has led scholars to overlook a profound relation that exists between transcendental logic and *PGL* which Kant tries to evince in his constant juxtaposition of transcendental logic with *PGL* in discussing the former.

As such, to better support my eventual conclusions, this article will have to be structured in a way that seeks to limit the risk of our conflating one sense of a term with another as much as possible, for much of my analysis of Kant's account of transcendental logic unsurprisingly involves making use of these terms and knowledge of the way they can be said to interrelate. This means, then, that the article contains a somewhat significant level of preliminary conceptual scaffolding, so to speak, so that the reader may not have only a good perspective of what is at stake, but also as an awareness of where potential misunderstandings will lie. This will be shown to come in handy throughout our close reading of Kant's remarks on logic, as it will enable and facilitate a full and proper understanding of the nature of transcendental logic in terms of its relation to PGL.

More specifically, then, I begin with an overview of Kant's notion of transcendental philosophy in general, and this in terms of what it is supposed to be about as well as why there is a need for it at all. Later, I will successively engage with the aforementioned ambiguous terms, viz., those of "cognition," "thought," and "object," revealing their many plural and often mutually meanings, as well as their relatability to contemporary notions we want to relate them to. After that, I will look at Kant's account of logic *simpliciter*, which is itself also ambiguous at times. In that part of the paper, careful attention will particularly be paid to the way in which Kant classifies various kinds of "logics" as well as the reasons behind his doing so, which is a task that will allow us to fully appreciate the nuances involved in what Kant means by a logic of the *general* as opposed to a *special* use of the understanding, to not speak of other distinctions, such as that which exists between pure and applied logic.

Following this, I will put forward my interpretation of Kant's account of transcendental logic, which is a logic whose concern will be shown to be limited to the pure (explicitly non-empirical), thinking of objects. Kant's frequent juxtaposition of transcendental logic with PGL is something that will be given more attention to than usual, for my hope is to convince the reader not only that transcendental logic is as general as PGL, but also that the nature of the relation between them finds its parallel in the relation, or isomorphism, which holds between Kant's pure concepts of the understanding, or categories, and the logical functions of judgment, which roughly amount to the finite syntactic forms any given expression can take. Over the course of developing my interpretation of transcendental logic, I will notably engage with a specific part of Clinton Tolley's recent, prominent attempt to argue for transcendental logic's generality when it comes to adjudicating the extent of the object domain it treats. In so doing, I will point to an issue in its interpretation of Kant's notion of content whose analysis will enable us to better understand transcendental logic's very specific *modus operandi*.

After that, I offer a few closing remarks and attempt to place transcendental logic within Kant's classification of logics in such a way that will allow us to see how they all depend on the former's possibility in some fashion or other.

I. Setting the Scene: What is Transcendental Philosophy?

Kant's critical project is notable for its focus on the *conditions* that are said to lie behind a possible experience. In fact, we can say that transcendental philosophy, which represents the new direction implied by the critical turn Kant's philosophy took with his publication of the *KrV*, concerns precisely just that. More specifically, transcendental philosophy is, for Kant, a discipline which has as its aim the systematization of the *a priori* conditions required for the possibility of experience. That there should even be such cognitive "conditions" is entailed if Kant's Copernican hypothesis¹ is true, for it is implicit that *if* objects must conform to cognition, as opposed to the other way around, then the mind would have to bring some contribution to its own to that which we call experience. Since Kant defines experience as empirical cognition (B 147), this means this contribution of ours would have to come in the form of certain *a priori* conditions lying in our mind. Granting the truth, then, of Kant's hypothesis, one can therefore say that from the perspective of transcendental philosophy, whatever qualifies as an *object*² (be it physical, mathematical, or otherwise) is to be considered only in terms of how our mind can relate to it. In other words, from the perspective of transcendental philosophy, cognition is to be considered only to the extent in which the 'cognizer' participates.

Transcendental philosophy's concern, then, is never really with objects *per se*, which thus makes it quite unlike any regular science. Its concern, rather, is with our cognition of objects only insofar as this is possible *a priori*. By virtue of its unique manner of reflection, transcendental philosophy is, as Graham Bird writes, "a higher-order enquiry" (53) than that present in the kind of cognition that marks everyday life and scientific practice. It only seeks to examine or determine the constitutive cognitive ingredients that make such experiences possible. Xavier Zubiri thus sees it as a second-order account of metaphysics (207), or meta-metaphysics, which is a most appropriate label. This explains why it would amount to putting the cart before the horse to even begin to consider transcendental philosophy to be any sort of equivalent to or subfield of, say, psychology or cognitive science, for it concerns itself precisely with what grounds the possibility of fields like the latter (and, from a Kantian view, if there are no formal conditions of experience, such fields would not exist as they would lose their legitimacy).

What transcendental philosophy aims for, rather, is to allow us to answer a question such as "what is it that makes a psychological or empirical investigation possible in the first place?" The standpoint of the cognizer is never seen through any empirical or psychological prisms, but only considered as transcendental subject. But why, then, should we call it a meta-metaphysics rather than simply a metaphysics? The reason for this is that, for Kant, the possibility of metaphysics as a science itself hinges on the success of transcendental philosophy, as its primary guiding question is the central question of *KrV* itself, viz., "how are synthetic *a priori* cognitions possible?" as metaphysics, for Kant, consists precisely of a certain kind of synthetic *a priori* cognitions (that are mediated through concepts).

¹ "Let us, therefore, try to find out by experiment whether we shall not make better progress in the problems of metaphysics if we assume that objects must conform to our cognition" (B xvi)

² By which I mean here what we direct our cognition to, or, in other words that which our cognition is a cognition of.

The *KrV* can be seen as an attempt at “doing” transcendental philosophy, and the way it proceeds is by looking at each of our mental faculties (i.e., sensibility, understanding, and reason) in turn, and considering their *a priori* contribution to cognition. This is what a transcendental analysis, put simply, amounts to, and it is always driven by questions of origin as well as by the question of the cognizer’s relation to the object. This is precisely what Kant does when analyzing each of the two branches of human cognition, viz., sensibility, or that passive faculty which gives us objects in intuition (in the Transcendental Aesthetic, the Greek for sense-perception being *aisthēsis*) and the understanding, which is the faculty for thinking these given-yet-undetermined objects under concepts or rules, the analysis of which is undertaken in the section titled Transcendental Logic, particularly the Transcendental Analytic.

Tied as it is to the pure concepts of the understanding or categories that Kant defends, as well as considering the fact that the Transcendental Logic section accounts for the bulk of the *KrV* itself, it is reasonable to consider Kant’s introduction of transcendental logic to be the work’s principal philosophical innovation. However, an understanding of some of its most fundamental aspects has proven to be tricky, as most scholars still do not appear to understand its role or purpose, particularly when they discuss this new logic with reference to Kant’s idea of PGL, as mentioned at the outset. To properly address these kinds of questions, which is the purpose of this paper, we must first engage with a few preliminary notions.

II. Cognition and Thought

In Kant’s *KrV*, various terms, including a few already mentioned, are used in both broad and restrictive ways at unheralded times. A lot of these terms are, as we have said, unfortunately central to the present inquiry of trying to clarify the precise nature of the relationship between transcendental logic and PGL. Among them, we have the following: cognition [*Erkenntnis*], thinking (or thought) [*denken/Gedanke*], object [*Objekt/Gegenstand*], and one could even say the same of logic [*Logik*] itself. As such, even though a terminological excursion will necessarily delay us from a more direct engagement with the question at hand, we are obligated to get a good sense of the alternating broad and restrictive ways in which Kant makes use of these essential terms, for it is only in this way that we can properly understand the relationship between both types of “logic.”

It is fitting, of course, to start with cognition [*Erkenntnis*] since the *KrV*’s purpose is, precisely, to establish, or demarcate, the limits of (human) cognition. What does this term mean? Firstly, to approach the matter through *via negativa*, one can start by emphasizing something that should be somewhat obvious, namely, that this notion must not be confused with whatever it is that we call “knowledge” today. I find the need to mention this because most noted translations, apart from the more authoritative translation by Paul Guyer and Allen Wood, have used the word “knowledge” (or what would be its equivalent in other languages), instead of the far less problematic “cognition,” and the influences of such versions appear to have trickled down into contemporary literature. This is done, I suspect, either to make Kant more palatable for the purposes of modern epistemological debates or, perhaps, because the word “knowledge” (German, *Wissen*) has long had more cachet in philosophy’s history and, at the end of the day, both words are similar *enough* to be synonymous (assuming, of course, one does not reflect *too* hard on the differences between the two).³ Whatever the reason for this, said tendency has apparently led many

³ Something analogous also happens in the CPR with ‘reference’ and the more accurate term ‘relation’ (*Relation, Verhältnis*).

to misunderstand the meaning of a more obscure related notion that is essential in understanding the purpose of transcendental logic, viz., that of *objective validity* [*objektive Gültigkeit*], as we see shortly.

Kantian cognition, then, must be understood as very much unlike our sense of knowledge, which we, of course, take as something along the (admittedly contestable lines) of “justified true belief.”⁴ Why is this, however? The reason is that cognition is, rather, supposed to be differentiated from *sensation*, since all representations, for Kant, belong to one of these two classes. This fact, I think, already makes it quite hard for cognition to adequately stand in for a notion that serves as any kind of “opposite” to, say, something like *ignorance*, which is the alternative to *knowledge*, but which is in no way analogous to sensation, as the latter is supposed to be, at the very least, non-conflicting with cognition, and essential to particular kinds of cognition.⁵

What, then, could Kant mean by the term “cognition,” more positively speaking? Unfortunately, Kant himself does not define such a clearly pivotal term straightforwardly enough at any point in the *KrV*. The closest he comes to doing so is in a classification where he calls an “objective perception” a cognition (A320/B376). Now, an objective perception in this context is a type of representation with consciousness, which might lead one to think that *perhaps* a cognition is supposed to be equivalent to a perception that has also undergone some additional process whereby we become *conscious* of it in some way. So, a sense perception alone, or an empirical intuition, would not, for instance, be enough to qualify as cognition in the absence of our being conscious of it, or the objects it involves.

However, as many questions as this possible reading of things might raise, it does not compare with the confusion generated by Kant’s own words when he also says in the course of the same passage that both intuitions as well as concepts fall under the same class of objective perceptions that are to be labeled cognitions. Such an equivalence is rather problematic because, not only is it not clear *how* a singular intuition on its own could serve as an objective representation as just defined, but, also, because Kant himself says that neither intuitions nor concepts alone can amount to cognition in the opening passage of the “Transcendental Logic” section which comes right before the introduction of his logical catalogue (starting at A50/B74). It serves us to look, then, at the contents of that passage, seeing as it suggests a narrow and very different sense of cognition altogether, one which, by virtue of its placement within the text of the *KrV*, our inquiry cannot afford to ignore.

⁴ In fact, the criterion for what makes something “true” for Kant, which is a constituent of most standard theories of knowledge will already presuppose cognition for Kant, as we shall see later. It is also worth noting Lorenz B. Puntel’s perspective, who notes that when Kant discusses knowledge specifically, which he does near the end of CPR, it is on the plane of the empirical subject: “What Kant’s theory seeks to explain... involves nothing like “attitudes,” including “taking something to be true,” [i.e. basic concerns of contemporary epistemology] which are one and all empirical. What he wants to answer is instead the transcendental question that can here be formulated as follows: what are the conditions of possibility of the empirical subject’s having such attitudes as doubting, believing, and taking to be true? With respect to the complete theoretical structuration of subjectivity, the “attitudes” of empirical subjects are thus utterly irrelevant. Kant appears to understand and to determine knowledge as an attitude of the *empirical* subject; *cognition*, on the other hand, he understands as an absolutely central *transcendental* matter (or structuration)” (Puntel 110).

⁵ Compare with *Vienna Logic* 805: “All representation is either sensation or cognition. It is something that has relation to something in us. Sensations do affect, but they quickly vanish, too, because they are not cognition. For when I sense, I cognize nothing.” [Due to the problematic nature and accuracy of Kant’s logic lectures, these references should not be taken as decisive. The *Vienna Logic* is based on lectures from around 1780, whereas the *Dohna-Wundlacken Logic* from the early part of the following decade, and the *Jäsche Logic* is from 1800.]

Kant says in this famous passage that the elements of *all* cognitions are intuitions (understood as the immediate/singular representations offered by sensibility, the receptive capacity of our mind that allows for objects of experience to be *given* to us) and concepts (which are general/reflected representations⁶ offered by our understanding, which is described in this passage as the faculty or capacity for thinking sensible objects under concepts). In his unequivocal words, *both* are required for there to be any cognition: “Intuition and concepts...constitute the elements of all our cognition, so that neither concepts without intuition corresponding to them in some way nor intuition without concepts can yield a cognition” (A50/B74).⁷ This makes cognition a process, and this is reflected in Kant’s emphasis on the fact that human cognition is discursive.⁸ Because the *given object* is required for cognition, we can follow Tyler Burge in saying that “[t]heoretical cognition for Kant is fundamentally cognition of objects” (378). In this case, we would be referring to a domain of objects which, on the basis of the preceding “Transcendental Aesthetic” section’s conclusions, which had established space and time as pure forms of sensible intuition, would have to include not only empirical objects, but also the objects of pure physics and mathematics. *This* sense of “cognition,” then, is one that emphasizes the need for conceptualization.

What is Kant doing, then, in diverging so radically from himself within his own text? This remains unclear. Marc Djaballah interestingly suggests Kant may tacitly have God in mind when it comes to accounting for those passages which imply that intuition on its own suffices for cognition: “everything indicates that Kant is marking the logical possibility of a sort of cognition that is impossible for the human understanding, a sensible, rather than a discursive form of cognition...there does not seem to be another way to make sense of the idea of an intuition as an objective perception, specifically by contrast to a concept” (75-76). While it is certainly plausible that Kant could have been implicitly referring to a sort of non-human, intuitive, and therefore non-discursive genre of cognition (like God’s would be), even though the actual passage itself has nothing to do with issues of divine cognition.

The explanation I suggest instead is that, if we judge by the content of his logic lectures, Kant probably *did* in fact believe in something which could be called solely intuitive *human* cognition. For instance, a passage in the *Vienna Logic*, echoes this rather odd idea: “The lowest cognition is intuition, because it is always concerned with something unique” (911). It seems to be the idea is it still counts as cognition in some sense because the matter, or object, of the cognition would be same as a more traditionally Kantian cognition. For instance, this is what Kant appears to advance in the *Jäsche Logic* in claiming the following:

If a savage sees a house from a distance, for example, with whose use he is not acquainted, he admittedly has before him in his representation the very same object as someone else who is acquainted with it determinately as a dwelling established

⁶ They are reflected because they are the result of uniting representations under a rule (another way to think of concepts, then, are as *meta*-representations).

⁷ Compare with A92/B125: “there are two conditions under which alone the cognition of an object is possible: first, intuition, through which it is given, but only as appearance; second, concept, through which an object is thought that corresponds to this intuition.”

⁸ See also, *Dohna-Wundlacken Logic* 706: “All our cognitions involve the following two things {two elements, one of which without the other yields no cognition}: 1. intuition (the interpretation" of the concept, of thought); 2. concept. A pure concept like a pure rule does not yet yield any distinctness of cognition[:]; this requires intuition, too. Conversely, intuition without concept is likewise nothing. For without [a concept] it would be as if it had seen nothing. E.g., tasteful poetic descriptions of regions, which produce only intuition, do not serve at all for cognition, are only cosmetic.” Also 752: “Cognition is more than *conceptus*, more than *intuitus*, it is both together. We seek objective reality, which we attain through application to intuition.”

for men. But as to form, this cognition of one and the same object is different in the two. With the one it is *mere intuition*, with the other it is *intuition* and *concept* at the same time. (V)

If one contrasts this with the standard *KrV* meaning, for instance as expressed in the claim that “All cognition requires a concept, however imperfect or obscure it may be” (A105), I am inclined to think that Kant is simply using two parallel and clearly conflicting senses of human cognition, viz., one (very) broad one and one far more restricted one.

This would, of course, entail some level of conceptual sloppiness on his part, and unfortunately it is hard to deduce the reasons that would lie behind it with any confidence. Regardless, we can say that due to its placement within the *KrV*, the Kantian sense of cognition that will be most relevant for our present enquiry will naturally be the second one, although keeping in mind the existence of the first one, as we will see, will also allow us to understand a few of his more challenging claims. It should be noted that since, for reasons to be explained below, cognitions are expressed in judgments, which for Kant come in certain *propositional* forms, that they can be false (unlike, say, a piece of “knowledge”), and whether they succeed or fail at expressing truth is something which can only be determined by the relation of the cognition to its object, which is something we will also elaborate on later.

Now, because cognition in Kant’s more restricted and, for our purposes, primary, sense, involves thinking, or, more accurately, is a type of thinking, we should look more closely at Kant’s views on thinking *simpliciter*. To begin, thinking is, unlike cognition, explicitly defined by him, viz., as “cognition through concepts” (A69/B94).⁹ Unfortunately, this definition immediately harkens back to his confusingly broad conception of cognition, for it insinuates that cognition might also be possible *without* concepts. In addition, it also gives the misleading impression that all thinking is cognition—something which Kant certainly cannot believe on the basis of the two definitions of cognition we have, particularly the narrow one, which essentially restricts our cognition to that which has a basis in intuition, as well as for reasons of circularity. Moreover, this is not to speak of the fact that it seems rather odd in general to say that any thought whatsoever qualifies as cognition. Of course, his is not to say that this specific definition of thinking which Kant offers in the *KrV* is necessarily making an implicit reference to the broad and, for our purposes, confusing and unhelpful conception of cognition. However, it is still very context-specific, by virtue of its needing to reference cognition within the definition, as if thinking somehow depends or equates to cognition.

So, what else does Kant say about thinking, then, which might give us a good or at least better sense of what thinking is really all about? For one, Kant notably describes thinking as a *spontaneous* act, standing in contrast to the *receptive* act of intuiting. This is not so problematic for us, as it falls rather well in line with our own everyday sense of thinking. But that is clearly still not enough to get to the essence of what thinking is supposed to be. However, Kant does seem to get at closer to this when, elsewhere, in the *Jäsche Logic*, he describes it as the “bringing [of] the representations of the senses under rules” (12), which would seem to bring his more restrictive definition of cognition into play. Now, the first thing that stands out from this description is its implicit insight that concepts, which are in any case the elements of thought, are somehow supposed to be rules. Returning to the main issue, however, the problem is that if Kant’s statement were to apply to all thinking, then there would seem to be no room for thinking of the kind which

⁹ See also, in the *Jäsche Logic*: “Cognition through concepts is called thought (cognition discursiva)”, in the opening of the Universal Doctrine of Elements (91).

occurs *without* representations of the senses, and thus, no clear explanation for the possibility of our thoughts about non-sensible things.

Is this a problem? Not quite, for as was the case with cognition, Kant also has two senses of the word “understanding.” It is important to note that when Kant uses the term ‘understanding’ in a larger sense it refers to our intellect as a whole. However, there is also the understanding *stricto sensu*, which only allows one to think sensible things. The thinking of objects as they are apart from any relation to us, i.e., as they are in themselves, is due to our faculty of reason *stricto sensu* (as reason too is a word Kant uses in multiple ways), so these thoughts are dealt with differently.

Specifically, what Kant does is to relegate the non-cognitive concepts, whose thought we are trying to explain, to the status of ideas, which are produced by reason as understood in Kant’s restricted sense, viz., as one of the three mental faculties standing alongside our sensibility and understanding *stricto sensu*. It is, more precisely, supposed to serve as “the faculty of the unity of the rules of understanding under principles,” the latter being *not* rules, but, as A301/B357 says, “synthetic cognitions from concepts.” It can also produce concepts out of the pure concepts of the understanding which have no (at least no direct) relation, to objects of experience, i.e. they are *not* part of experience and thus go beyond it, which is to say they are *transcendent*. For example, this includes God, soul, and the world understood as a totality. These non-cognizable concepts are what Kant calls ideas (A320/B376-7), and thus, what allow for a broad conception of thinking that is more in line with our conception of what thinking is, if we keep in mind the context within which Kant is discussing things. Whereas on the restrictive conception of thinking we need intuition, and the thinking is always about sensible objects, his broader conception allows for our thinking about supersensible objects.

As such, this accounts for why Kant can say, without contradiction: “I can...think up objects that are perhaps impossible, or that are perhaps possible in themselves but cannot be given in any experience” (A96). Similarly one point to when he says: “I can think whatever I like, as long as I do not contradict myself, i.e., as long as my concept is a possible thought, even if I cannot give any assurance whether or not there is a corresponding object somewhere within the sum total of all possibilities” (Bxxvi, note). That is, we can *think* of *anything* that is not a contradiction, and this domain of ‘objects’ is clearly necessarily larger than that of merely *cognizable* ones (assuming, of course, his restrictive sense of cognition).

In defining principles as we just did above, i.e., as “synthetic cognitions from concepts”, we find the need to mention, however, a third sense of cognition. This is a type of cognition where sensible objects are unnecessary. There are various references to cognitions without sensible objects, as can be seen when transcendental logic is formally introduced as well as when PGL is confusingly described as a logic that deals with *cognitions*. This potential conflation, I think, makes it a little more difficult to appreciate a distinction that Kant wanted to show, and that we will soon come to understand, of PGL as *a logic of thinking* and of transcendental logic as *a logic of (some) cognizing*. As such, we have to get to the question of whether Kant in fact thinks that *all* thoughts can be said to be cognitions in at least some sense, as the definition of principles would seem to imply.

Sayings in Kant’s logic lectures show us Kant might have spoken frequently in this very loose and almost paradoxical way, lowering the bar for qualification as a cognition so much that it opens the floodgates for any thought about anything, which truly distances the idea of cognition from our traditional understanding of knowledge, where the latter is often treated as an “*elite*

suburb of believing,” as Gilbert Ryle once put it (5). For instance, Kant says the following in the *Vienna Logic* when discussing the theories of Johann Casper Lavater:

“Lavater maintained many things based on endless inferences, and spoke of the character of the future life, which has not the least semblance of incorrectness or opposition about it. But does this cognition have an object that agrees with it? Such cognitions are then called empty” (823).

Here, similarly, is a reference from the *Vienna Logic* which appears to equate a thought about anything whatsoever with a cognition: “Logic occupies itself merely with cognition” (904). If the *KrV*'s purpose is to determine the limits of our cognition, then it appears from such language that there are technically no limits to cognition *per se*.

From these considerations, then, we thus glean that Kant has a third sense of cognition, in which these need not, by definition, have any relation to an object, a fact which makes them empty, but which nonetheless preserves their status as cognitions. In this extremely broad sense of cognition, cognition and thought are synonymous and the previously problematic or, at best, context-specific definition of thinking as ‘cognition through concepts’ suddenly becomes much less perplexing and unproblematic. Notice that this consideration of empty cognitions also leads us to think about *content* as a cognition’s relation to an object (of possible experience), a point which will become very important later in our distinguishing transcendental logic and PGL. It is only through our keeping these three different notions of cognition in mind that we can also properly understand some of Kant’s more challenging, paradoxical-sounding, claims: e.g., that a cognition can sometimes be “empty,” or even “false,” while nonetheless remaining a cognition (as opposed to, say, a non-cognition).

In sum, and to put the question of the relation between thinking and cognition to rest, at least for our purposes, we should probably elaborate a little on the claim made in passing that all thinking is implicitly a judging, which is, I should note, one of Kant’s most notable contributions to philosophy, seeing as it advanced a propositional as opposed to imagistic understanding of the world.¹⁰ In the *KrV*, Kant says that the understanding, now in the broad sense including “reason” as outlined above, “can be represented as a faculty for judging” (A69/B94). What does this mean? It means, in short, that our intellectual capacities as a whole boil down to the making of judgments. One of the end-results of this is that Kant redefines concepts as “predicates of a possible judgment”.¹¹ The forms of all judgments (equivalent to “cognitions” in the third sense), for Kant, are limited to a certain few, and they apply both to analytic and synthetic judgments (indeed, as formal, they are, strictly speaking, devoid of any content they might have, but this is a notion we will only explore later). They also famously, or infamously, provided the clue for uncovering the systematic principle that allowed Kant to derive the table of categories, where the latter are, of course, those pure concepts of the understanding which will also ground the possibility of transcendental logic, or which, better put, necessitate the idea and legitimacy of such a logic in the first place.

III. On Objects

¹⁰ For more on this see, Campbell.

¹¹ There is a lot of subtle argumentation that has been skipped here, but for a good summary, see Longuenesse 2005, 91-96. See also the following from Kant’s *Prolegomena* (1783): “thinking is uniting representations in a consciousness. This unification originates either merely relative to the subject and is contingent and subjective, or it happens absolutely and is necessary or objective. The uniting of representations in a consciousness is judgement. Thinking is therefore the same as judging, or referring representations to judgements in general” (304).

The other term we must clarify before proceeding is *object*, which we have inevitably made mention of at various points already. It is key to expand upon it, however, because the generality of a given logic is tied to issues surrounding the domain of objects that fall under its purview. In a most minimal sense, an object, for Kant, is that *at which* our cognition is directed, or, equally, that which our cognition is *a cognition of*. In more detail, Kant thinks of this sense of object as that which is thought as a *united* manifold through a concept (in Kant's words at B137: "that in which the concept of the manifold of a given intuition is united"). Necessarily presupposed in this *stricto sensu* conception of an object, then, is what he calls a *united* manifold. What is it that allows or performs the unification of this manifold as found in this definition of object? The answer is *synthesis*.

Kant defines synthesis as "the action of putting different representations together with each other and comprehending their manifoldness in one cognition." It is a process involving the imagination, the specific details of which might take us too far afield. Let us settle by saying, for our purposes, that it involves what Kant calls (in his simplified version of the "Transcendental Deduction" at A77) *a going through, taking up and combining* "in a certain way," or the search for a unity out of diversity, which is required for cognition (here understood in the primary-restrictive sense). If cognition, in this sense, is *objectively valid* judgment, the "certain way" will require a *bringing under concepts*, i.e., guidance by certain rules which belong to the understanding, the purview of what will be called a transcendental logic.

What is the nature of these rules? On a primary level, they are *a priori*. Why? Because space and time are *pure* forms of intuition and so there is a *pure manifold* that must be synthesized in any possible cognition, whether pure or empirical. The implication is therefore that empirical synthesis presupposes a pure synthesis, and this is tantamount to saying that all cognition will presuppose some pure cognition. This pure synthesis is what yields the categories, or pure concepts of the understanding, and as Kant says, they are what "give this pure synthesis unity" (A79/B104). This unity is the same function¹², as he goes on to say, "that gives unity to the different representations in a judgment." This is a crucial point. For these *a priori* rules, as Béatrice Longuenesse puts it, "guide the syntheses to just those forms of combinations that will make it possible to compare, and thus reflect sensible manifolds according to logical forms of judgment." This reflection implies that if we ignore the manifold, both the categories and logical forms of judgment are equivalent (after all, the function and faculty are identical), the former being the latter understood "in their transcendental signification," to use Salomon Maimon's expression (99). It is the given manifold of intuition, then, that seems to make for the difference between an (empty) thought and a cognition (in the primary sense), and this difference becomes *real* once the manifold has become a unity through synthesis as spontaneous act of the understanding.¹³

The ramifications of these considerations on our understanding of transcendental logic will be made clear soon enough. In the meantime, it is time to return to our terminological excursion. What is Kant's other conception of "object"? We can call the first a real conception and the other a logical conception, as it would include the objects "of an impossible experience" which we had

¹² "By a function...I understand the unity of the action of ordering different representations under a common one" (A68/B93).

¹³ See Kant's statement: "The same understanding, therefore, and indeed by means of the very same actions through which it brings the logical form of a judgment into concepts by means of the analytical unity, also brings a transcendental content into its representations by means of the synthetic unity of the manifold in intuition in general, on account of which they are called pure concepts of the understanding that pertain to objects a priori; this can never be accomplished by general logic." (A79/B105).

referred to when considering the question of thinking. These are logical because they are purely mental for us, and possible only because they are not contradictory. For Kant, again, we can think *anything* as long as it is not contradictory, even if there is no corresponding object of sensible experience. Now for Kant, the highest such concept is that of “an object in general.” It behooves us to comprehend the meaning of this oft-neglected concept a little better.

Kant curiously writes that “The highest concept with which one is accustomed to begin a transcendental philosophy is usually the division between the possible and the impossible. But since every division presupposes a concept that is to be divided, a still higher one must be given, and this is the concept of an object in general” (A290/B46). This is clearly supposed to be an important idea for Kant. But where does all that come from and what does it mean? Jan Aertsen notes that although the term *supertranscendental being*, which previously stood for “intelligibility or objectivity as such” was not common currency in Kant’s time, this is what would be congruous with what Kant means by an “object in general” (642). As it is, Kant himself uses the concept of an “object in general” to stand for *anything*, “leaving undecided whether it is something or nothing” (A289/B46).

This empty, propositional place-holding sense of object is the (only) one that could be presupposed by what he will classify as PGL (all thinking, in short, is a *thinking of*). Salomon Maimon, similarly, conceived of it as “something thinkable” (149) and also says that “a logical object is simply the concept of a thing in general, i.e. something that is not determined by any conditions, whether a posteriori or a priori” (207). He goes on to write, interestingly, that “a logical proposition or a logical truth is simply one that can be predicated of a thing in general.” Kant’s PGL, we can say, if it is concerned with an object of any sort, would be precisely with this type of “object”. In a different context discussing Edmund Husserl, Jean-Luc Marion similarly defines the *Gegenstand überhaupt* as “the most empty objectivity” (151), and this definition is one we can appropriate for this discussion.

What is more interesting, however, is the relation this type of object has with the categories, which are the elements of transcendental logic. Kant uses the expression of an “object in general” several times when describing the pure concepts of the understanding. For instance, he writes, “pure concepts [contain] only the form of thinking of an object in general” (A50/B74) He also says: “They are concepts of an object in general” (A95/B128). Does this mean we can use, or, more strongly, does this mean the categories are *necessary* in allowing us to think objects which fall beyond the bounds of a possible experience? Apparently so. Kant says a few things about this, among which stand out the following: “the categories extend farther than sensible intuition, since they think objects in general without seeing to the particular manner (of sensibility) in which they might be given” (A245/B309). Similarly, he says that “Since the categories are the only concepts that relate to objects in general, the distinction of whether an object is something or nothing must proceed in accordance with the order and guidance of the categories” (A289/B346).

Clearly, then, it appears the categories are involved in our thinking about a much wider range of objects than objects of a sensible experience, as one might be tempted to believe for obvious reasons. In perhaps the most telling passage of all, Kant writes:

Once I have pure concepts of the understanding, I can also think up objects that are perhaps impossible, or that are perhaps possible in themselves but cannot be given in any experience since in the connection of their concepts something may be omitted that yet necessarily belongs to the condition of a possible experience (the concept of a spirit), or *perhaps pure concepts of the understanding will be extended further than experience can grasp* (the concept of God). (A96, my emphasis)

As such, the categories are applied in one's thinking of any object, in the absolutely wide sense of the term, and so they are, by consequence, concepts for thinking objects of possible experience (which amounts to cognition in the rich and restricted second sense outlined above) *and* impossible experience (and any supposed cognition, in the restricted sense, we think we have of these will be the result of the invalid inferences brought about by pure reason's peculiar fate). They allow us, then, to think objects in the logical sense (i.e. the widest set of objects) and not merely a subclass of objects in the real and restricted sense.¹⁴ In sum, the categories deal with our thinking in general.

IV. Kant's Logic and its Divisions

We are now well-equipped to properly discuss the question of the generality of transcendental logic, as the question has to do with the objects it considers, and whose discussion naturally requires a solid understanding of the relation that holds between cognition and thought in Kant's philosophy, and this so as to avoid misreading key passages that appear ambiguous. Let us begin, however, by painting a picture of Kant's idea of logic in general. This is, after all, a term which Kant also uses inconsistently, in both a broad as well as a relatively restricted sense. The broad sense is never made quite explicit by Kant in his own words, but it is implicit in his classification of extremely different logics under one umbrella notion of logic. What is this broad sense? For one, it is going to sound very foreign to us nowadays, although to be sure, even his narrower definition will sound foreign, but much less so, and this is an important way. The broad sense of logic amounts, in brief, to a study of thinking, one which combines a hodgepodge of insights from various fields, and so this is a rhapsodic or, for Kant, non-scientific, conception of logic, one which was in vogue throughout much of the history of logic. As Ricardo Pozzo puts it in a detailed study, when it comes to an understanding of what logic entailed, the era stretching from Petrus Ramus to Kant, "conceived a sort of melting pot containing not just formal logic but also methodology, theory of knowledge, psychology, rhetoric, grammar, aesthetics, hermeneutics, and so on" (295). Such an extremely wide sense of logic is, quite evidently, unabashedly open to objections of psychologism and their like. We nowadays have various kind of logics, of course, but these are essentially always thought of in the context of a formal language with a particular syntax and semantics apart from inference rules, and so on.

It seems like Kant is merely paying homage to tradition, however, whenever he treats logic in such a way. Indeed, as we will see, the way he divides things is rather technical and, if one wants, ahead of its time. There are many times, after all, when Kant uses "logic" alone to refer to nothing but PGL, just as there many times when he uses "general logic" to refer to PGL alone as well (PGL is not the only kind of general logic, as we will see shortly). For him, it seems, it is only PGL that deserves the title of logic among the ones existing in his time. The reason for this, I think, is because PGL serves as a complement as well as point of contrast to the bold idea he wants to introduce of a transcendental logic. The other two logics (applied general logic and special logic), seem to be mentioned mostly either out of charity to the tradition of the time, or, perhaps, because Kant intended to make part of the *KrV* a logic manual and so would have been forced to make some kind of reference to them.¹⁵

¹⁴ See also: "To be sure, a pure use of the category is possible, i.e., without contradiction, but it has no objective validity, since it pertains to no intuition that would thereby acquire unity of the object; for the category is a mere function of thinking, through which no object is given to me, but rather only that through which what may be given in intuition is thought." (A253/B309)

¹⁵ Although Kant admittedly describes applied general logic in a *sui generis* way (A54/B78).

The section of the *KrV* most relevant to our current discussion is the already partly discussed beginning of the second part of the Doctrine of Elements, which opens the Transcendental Logic, titled “Introduction: The Idea of a Transcendental Logic” (starting at A50/B74). It is there, at the very outset of the first subsection (I. On logic in general), that Kant defines logic as the “science of the rules [to be understood here either in a normative as opposed to constitutive sense¹⁶] of the understanding in general”, where logic is meant to be understood as an intellectual correlate to aesthetic, defined in the same sentence as “the science of the rules of sensibility in general.”

What we should take from this definition, at least for our purposes, is that Kant here gives logic (which seems to stand for PGL here) a status which it did not traditionally have in his time, viz., the status of a science. Compare his definition, for example, with the title of Antoine Arnauld and Pierre Nicole’s logic text, *La logique, ou l’art de penser*, which Jill Buroker calls “the most influential logic from Aristotle to the end of the nineteenth century” (xxiii). A “science”, for Kant, is a *system* of cognition, a notion which is curiously not too far off from Aristotle’s axiomatic conception of an *epistêmê*.¹⁷ It is not, however, the representative “organon” sense of a science (where objects are cognized in advance), that will define logic, since it has no objects to speak of (and hence no real cognitions which can arise therefrom), seeing as it considers only “itself”.¹⁸ It deserves, however, the label of “science” because it serves as the “outer courtyard...to [all] the [authentic] sciences” (B9), or as their propaedeutic.

So it is clear, then, that what Kant has in mind is a purely formal conception of logic when he is making these kinds of claims (and at one point he even goes so far as to call it “merely formal logic”, at A131/B169). This is quite noteworthy because, for one, Kant is far ahead of his time when in emphasizing its formality as a defining feature. Indeed, Dietmar Heidemann has written that “Kant is the inventor of the now-common “formal logic”” (47). Second, in promoting such a conception, he is simultaneously subliminally advancing what for us is the rather telling thesis that a lot of so-called logics (even ones he himself mentions) are not really logics in any full or authentic

¹⁶ There is clearly room for a debate on this topic, as Tolley makes claim to in an article (2006). I am convinced that certain passages do imply that Kant wants to think of these as rules in a constitutive sense. For instance, *Vienna Logic* 793: “Now if logic is to be a science of the universal laws of the understanding, then these must be necessary rules, because they are to have relation to everything without distinction among objects, and without them nothing at all can be thought.” Of course, it is strange to say that the constitutive and normative supposed to be two sides of the same coin, for an ought implies the possibility of a can (not). Another relevant passage from the *Jäsche Logic*: “As a science of the necessary laws of thought, without which no use of the understanding or of reason takes place at all, laws which consequently are conditions under which the understanding can and ought to agree with itself alone - the necessary laws and conditions of its correct use — logic is, however, a *canon*” (14). I am convinced that Kant when wants to emphasize the normative element, it is to divorce PGL from applied general logic. Also, see this passage in the same section of *Jäsche*: “In logic, however, the question is not about *contingent* but about *necessary* rules; not how we do think, but how we ought to think. The rules of logic must thus be derived not from the *contingent* but from the *necessary* use of the understanding, which one finds in oneself apart from all psychology. In logic we do not want to know how the understanding is and does think and how it has previously proceeded in thought, but rather how it ought to proceed in thought. Logic is to teach us the correct use of the understanding, i.e., that in which it agrees with itself.” See also, *Vienna Logic* 791: “We can divide! the laws of our understanding in the following way[:] 1. Rules for how we think. 2. Rules for how we ought to think.” Lastly, from *Dohna-Wundlacken Logic* 694: ‘Logical rules are not ones according to which we think, but according to which we ought to think.’

¹⁷ Kant defines a science in his *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science* (1786) as “a doctrine that is supposed to be a system, that is, a whole of cognition ordered according to principles” (4:468). In the *CPR*, he defines a “system” as follows: “I understand by a system...the unity of... manifold cognitions under *one idea*” (B860, my emphasis).

¹⁸ “For the advantage that has made it so successful logic has solely its own limitation to thank, since it is thereby justified in abstracting – is indeed obliged to abstract – from all objects of cognition and all the distinctions between them; and in logic, therefore, the understanding has to do with nothing further than itself and its own form.” (Bix)

sense of the word. This should therefore make us suspicious of believing, then, that he would want his new conception of a transcendental logic, which he notably refers to as a science as well¹⁹, to belong alongside these logics as just another “impostor” logic, *sot speak*. This is particularly so because the comments which seem so laudatory and emphatic about logic and its scientific status are notably made in the later B edition, as if he wanted to underscore something that was not particularly clear enough in the A edition, viz., the view that not every “logic” is a logic in the authentic sense. Perhaps these non-genuine logics were only referenced by Kant as being logics out of respect to tradition, or some other similar consideration. If this is indeed what Kant was thinking in making these subtle changes in the B edition, it should lead us to believe that his introducing transcendental logic as a “logic” could only be because he would have deemed it a genuine logic of the sort that would at least place it on the same level as his purely formal conception of the term.

In any case, let us go back to the Introduction. Kant there says that logic can be undertaken with two aims, either as the logic of the general or of the particular use of the understanding (A52/B76). A logic of the general use of the understanding (i.e., a general logic) “contains the absolutely necessary rules of thinking, without which no use of the understanding takes place” and with no “regard to the difference of the objects to which it may be directed.” That is to say, our thought may be directed at objects, but general logic ignores the nature of these objects and so is indifferent to them *qua* objects, even if the thought itself may be *about* them.²⁰ This implies that it concerns thought in the wide sense, beyond “cognitions” in the sense of objectively valid judgments (this is not the kind of validity it is interested in). This is a logic, then, whose laws would apply to our thought about anything which can be thought. The only “object” it must be married to, as we saw above, is the logical concept of an object in general, which is why it makes no distinction between our thinking of the soul and our thinking of a triangle. It goes without saying that PGL will be the general logic *par excellence*. It specifically does not treat the question of the relation a cognition has to (real) objects, which we will understand later means the content of cognition. Rather, as Kant says about PGL: “A general but pure logic therefore has to do with strictly a priori principles, and is a canon²¹ of the understanding and reason, but only in regard to what is formal in their use, be the content what it may (empirical or transcendental).”

Kant includes applied general logic (AGL) under general logic too. AGL looks at the understanding from a different angle, viz., from within the world of experience, which is what Kant means when he claims it is concerned with “the rules of its [i.e., the understanding's] necessary use *in concreto*” as opposed to *in abstracto* (A54/B79). It is nothing but a description of the way the empirical subject thinks, psychologically speaking, which is what he means when he says it is “merely a cathartic [not a canon or an organon] of the common understanding” (A53/B77). Kant clearly thinks very little of AGL. Some of his comments in the B Introduction seem to undermine it greatly, whether inadvertently or not, e.g. when he says that “if some moderns

¹⁹ A57/B81: transcendental logic = the “science of pure understanding and of the pure cognition of reason”.

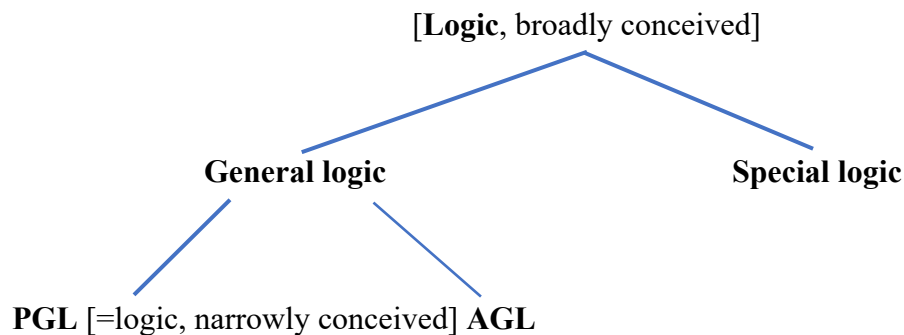
²⁰ Compare with *Dohna-Wundlacken* 693: “Among the rules of thought there are universal ones, which apply to particular objects without distinction. Thus there are universal rules of language, too. Such a grammar does not contain words, not a *copia vocabularum*, but rather only the form of language. We will be able to represent to ourselves a universal doctrine <of thought>. This universal doctrine of thought is called *logic*, doctrine of the understanding. It is a preparation for thinking about objects”. This is also why Kant calls a general logic an elementary logic (A52/B76). The thinking about them, at least the pure thinking of them, appears to be reserved for a transcendental logic.

²¹ In the 1799 “Public Declaration concerning Fichte’s *Wissenschaftslehre*,” Kant writes that “logic, that is to say, pure logic, abstracts from the content of cognition; the attempt to cull a real object out of logic is a vain effort” (*Correspondence*, 12:370).

have thought to enlarge it [i.e., logic] by interpolating psychological chapters about our different cognitive powers...then this proceeds only from their ignorance of the peculiar nature of this science” (Bviii). Also, in the *Jäsche* lectures, one finds the following revealing insight: “Applied logic really ought not to be called logic. It is a psychology in which we consider how things customarily go on in our thought, not how they ought to go on” (II. 18).²² Its relation with PGL then, is not that deep at all, beyond the fact that in PGL the specific objects which might be being thought of through concepts is of little importance to it, as would also be the case in a description of the way our understanding works *in concreto*. As such, it is useful to take from this that Kant is also quite flexible about what can qualify as a general logic, for, taking the above considerations into account, AGL barely appears to belong naturally in the same class alongside PGL.

A logic of the special use of the understanding, on the other hand, “contains the rules for correctly thinking about a certain kind of objects” (A52/B76). The special use, Kant says, amounts to “the organon [as opposed to canon] of this or that science”, which is what we might call it the methodology of a science in the strict sense we defined above (for instance, the methodology of mathematics), which implies a rather good acquaintance with the objects (A52/B77), i.e. they must be given and cognized clearly and distinctly. Kant devotes nothing but a few lines in total to special logic (unless, of course, transcendental logic belongs to it, in which case, he would dedicate the bulk of the *KrV* to a special logic.)

Based on Kant’s words, it appears, then, that at least this much of Kant’s division of logics cannot be debated:



V. Transcendental Logic at the Crossroads?

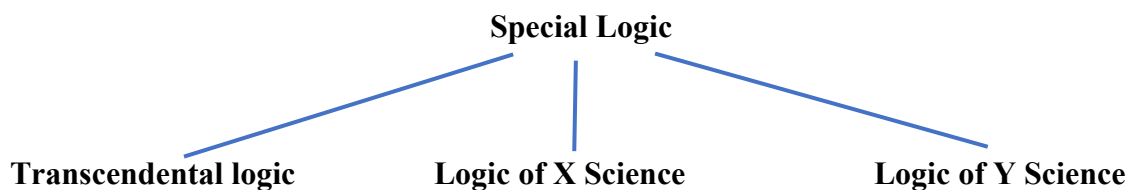
Transcendental logic, which will be defined by Kant as “a science of pure understanding and of the pure cognition of reason, by means of which we think objects completely a priori” (A57/B81), is continuously juxtaposed with PGL. Kant, however, never affirms or denies whether transcendental logic belongs in the same class of general logics alongside PGL. He also never says in the text that transcendental logic is a special logic²³. However, almost all leading Kant scholars who have addressed related questions, have, with the notable exception of Clinton Tolley,

²² See also *Vienna Logic* 791: “*Logica naturalis* is cognition' of the rules of the understanding *in concreto*, *logica artificialis* [is such cognition] *in abstracto*. Also: For us, then, only *logica artificialis* is ever called logic.

²³ He does, of course reference general logic which subsumes AGL, but one can safely assume he never has it in mind, because it seems all times when he says general logic he means (only, or specifically) PGL. I will use PGL instead of general logic in what follows for this reason.

supposed it to be a special logic, in the sense that the domain of objects falling under its purview is supposedly not fully coextensive with the universality that defines a general logic such as PGL.²⁴

The temptation to classify transcendental logic as a special logic also comes from the fact that, as we will come to see, it does involve a rather specific use of the understanding in limiting itself to a certain kind of thinking, specifically, the pure thinking of objects. The dominant view is misguided out of the gates, however, *if* one strives to preserve Kant’s notion of a special logic as outlined above. After all, a “transcendental” logic cannot be the *organon* for a science, and does not treat any subclass of given objects, for transcendental philosophy in general does not, as discussed earlier, ever “treat” objects *per se*. Moreover, special logics all presuppose real experience to be the case, whereas a transcendental logic should presumably be a logic concerned instead with the conditions of a possible experience. As such, it must be emphasized at the outset that it is quite simply a mistake to think transcendental logic could be grouped as follows, alongside other special logics:



Where, then, would transcendental logic find its place in Kant’s division of logics?

To answer this question, we should probably say something more about transcendental logic. It must be noted that the first point Kant makes about transcendental logic is specifically in terms of a contrast to PGL, and this has to do with what we might call its abstractness. Kant notes that whereas PGL abstracts from all “content of cognition, i.e., from any relation of it to the object, and considers only the logical form in the relation of cognitions to one another, i.e., the form of thinking in general,” transcendental logic, by contrast, does not abstract from all content of cognition (A55/B79-80).²⁵ A few things are worth noting here. The first is that Kant when discussing PGL in relation to transcendental logic, he must be using the term “cognitions” in the third (the “paradoxical”) sense, which we equated with thinking. The reason for this is because PGL cannot be said to deal exclusively with cognitions in the second (the primary) sense, but, rather, it concerns all types of thought about anything. Indeed, if he is not using it in this way, he is not being exhaustive and complete with regards the nature of PGL in this passage as one might otherwise expect.

The more crucial point in this initial distinction between PGL and transcendental logic, one which has surely gone unnoticed, or avoided, for the most part, as evidenced by the very scant literature on the subject, is the idea that the content of a cognition is tantamount to the relation of the cognition to the object. Kant also makes this point at A58/B 83 as well as at B67. It is important

²⁴ It is tempting to provide an overview of the countless times such views have been repeated in the literature. However, in place of this I will refer instead to pp. 419-421 of Tolley’s 2012 paper “The Generality of Transcendental Logic,” which provides a comprehensive overview of the literature when it comes to the state of this question that is impeccable both in terms of its accessibility and thoroughness. Since then, it appears scholars have been a lot more careful around the question. By and large, however, despite the added nuance, they still do not appear to consider, for transcendental logic to be a general logic. For examples of this, see Chance (27ff.), Lu-Adler (157), Nuzzo (198), and Willaschek (48).

²⁵ Kant’s language in these passages only presents transcendental logic as a provisional logic on the basis of the possibility of *a priori* concepts, which allow for *a priori* cognitions.

to properly interpret Kant's conception of a cognition's content because transcendental logic is supposed to be a logic where "one did not abstract from all content of cognition" (A55/B80).

Before expanding on the notion of a cognition's content, however, it behooves us make a few more general remarks and clarifications about the purpose of transcendental logic. Transcendental logic as a logic of the pure thinking of objects should not be interpreted to mean that transcendental logic is a logic which provides us with the rules for thinking about pure, as opposed to empirical, objects, which would represent a gross misreading of its purpose²⁶. Indeed, Kant is quite explicit in claiming that excluding cognitions of empirical content does not equal a mere consideration of *a priori* cognitions (as if were an organon). The aim of this new logic, then, is different, for, as he says, "not every a priori cognition must be called transcendental" (A56/B80). After all, any ordinary mathematical statement qualifies as an *a priori* cognition, and a statement of that kind taken *per se* says nothing to us at all about the conditions enabling the possibility of human experience.

Recall, in addition, that one of the big takeaways from our discussion of synthesis was that in any empirical cognition there is an implicit layer, so to speak, of pure cognition. Synthesis' importance, after all it, is the fact that it allows us to refer to a manifold of intuition as an object (a necessary part of cognition as such). In other words, it has a manifold of *a priori* sensibility lying before it to consider. Space and time contain such a manifold and if it is to be known, it must be gone through in a certain way, taken up and connected, which constitutes the act of synthesis. This is what will enable any cognition, whether empirical or pure, to be the possible subject of some "transcendental" cognition. Specifically, we should understand a transcendental cognition to be a kind of cognition which, as Alexander Schlutz writes, "takes place on a meta-level where one cognizes the way a specific presentation can be applied a priori" (82), which is what would amount to the pure thinking of objects Kant mentions.

Kant gives an illuminating example which clarifies this notion of transcendental cognition even further: "neither space nor any geometrical determination of it a priori is a transcendental representation, but only the cognition that these representations are not of empirical origin at all and the possibility that they can nevertheless be related a priori to objects of experience can be called transcendental." As Longuenesse writes, what the latter more reflective cognition, which would explain how space and time make the sensible element of experience possible, specifically contains that makes it a transcendental cognition, in contradistinction to, say, a merely *a priori* one, is that it "concerns itself with concepts a priori *insofar as they relate a priori to objects*" (Longuenesse 1, 18, emphasis added). That is, "what is transcendental is not the [*a priori*] concept itself, but the reflection on its origin and its relation to an object" (19). By virtue of not privileging concepts over relations, let alone specific classes of concepts, we can thus appreciate a similarity that transcendental logic shares with PGL over special logics.

Kant's concern in his new logic, then, is purely etiological and relational, from a transcendental perspective. This unique emphasis accounts for why Kant says the following about it: "Such a science, which would determine the origin, the domain, and the objective validity of such cognitions, would have to be called transcendental logic." As such, we must try to understand the question of content and the how of an *a priori* relation to objects which would make for the content that transcendental logic considers. In doing this, we will better appreciate and reiterate the etiological and relational aspects of transcendental logic as constituting its key difference from PGL, and not the domain of objects it considers.

²⁶ And Tolley seems to ascribe it to Giorgio Tonelli (2012, 4).

To understand what Kant means when he says the content of cognition can be understood as its relation to the object, it behooves us to look at Tolley's recent attempt to provide an account of the matter as found specifically in his 2012 article, *The Generality of Kant's Transcendental Logic*. Tolley essentially develops his account in passing, for his primary objective in said paper is to defend the view that transcendental logic is a general logic and that focusing on questions of domain is misguided in differentiating transcendental logic from PGL, and indeed he develops it in his 2013 article *The Non-Conceptuality of the Content of Intuitions: A New Approach*. Now, Tolley is right, in my view, in emphasizing that we should look at the content of a cognition as its relation to the object, rather than opting for the other ways in which it has been looked at in the history of Kant studies²⁷. However, Tolley's interpretation of the content of cognition is, I think, fundamentally flawed. Regardless, examining what he says will still prove to be illustrative for our purposes, because the details which account for why his account ultimately fails will help underscore the alternative that Kant probably meant instead.

The heart of Tolley's interpretation of the matter hinges, in brief, on a supposed equivalence between the content of cognition and the content of a concept. He tidily sums up his argument in a revealing footnote:

We can connect the earlier conception of the content of a cognition as (i) the cognition's relation to an object with the present conception of content as (ii) what is contained or thought 'in' the cognition in the following manner: when we relate to an object by thinking of it, say, as a human, we are implicitly relating to it as we would be by explicitly thinking of it as rational and as an animal (2012, 434, n. 38).

Now, a few questions naturally to come mind. For starters, what is the content of a concept supposed to be in Kant? For Kant, a concept, as representation, is composed of certain marks (concepts have intensions, to use more contemporary language), which are partial concepts that tell us what is "common to several objects."²⁸ This is why, for instance, a concept can "pick out" several objects at once. This also explains its form of generality in contrast to intuitions, which are singular. So, what Tolley does is to essentially take this idea to try and explain that it has something important to do with how Kant accounts the way a cognition can relate to its object.

An example of should help clarify things. Suppose Mary is reflecting on a previous encounter with her neighbor John, as she recounts to Jane, her psychiatrist, the main events of his otherwise lonely week. Mary begins her session by telling Jane, "I finally interacted with a human this week." For Tolley, the cognition underlying such a thought, supposing for the sake of argument that it is perfectly capturable in a proposition by the relevant aspects of Mary's exact utterance, would necessarily be *relating* to its object, whose stand-in is the concept of a human, simply by virtue of its considering this object solely from the perspective of its being a human, rather than, say, that of being a neighbor, or being John. If Tolley is right, Kant's account of the content of cognition necessarily remains on the plane of the purely conceptual, and the reason Tolley interprets things like this has to do with the fact that since cognitions are conceptual in nature, they can presumably only relate to objects in a mediate fashion (2012, 433).

If Mary's intention was to emphasize the fact that John is her neighbor, leading her to tell Jane instead, "I managed to interact with a neighbor this week," the cognition she would want to convey to Jane by so doing would be a different one altogether by virtue of its considering John, or relating to John, through the lens of his status as neighbor rather than as a human *per se*. The cognition would have been a different one because the marks involved in the concepts of a human and a

²⁷ See Tolley 2013 for a detailed analysis.

²⁸ See Note 1 of the *Jäsche's Universal Doctrine of Elements* (91, n. 1)

neighbor do not perfectly correspond in a one-to-one fashion. This explains why Tolley refers to *not* needing to know what the concept of a human is or involves if one already knows what the concepts involved in being a human involve, so that the cognition still to be about the same thing. So, going back to our example, if Mary somehow did not know what a human was, but had thought of John in terms of her being an animal that is also rational, a fact which would have led to her to tell her psychiatrist, “I finally interacted with a rational animal this week,” the cognition underlying these words would bear the same relation to the object as the first cognition making explicit reference to John in this context as a human. The relevant conceptual marks involved would be the same, after all, which means their content is the same, for if this were not the case, we would be talking about two different cognitions altogether.

The idea is very compelling. However, my issue with such an interpretation when it comes to explaining what Kant means by *content* is that what Tolley describes appears to be talking about something else. In particular, I do not think that could have anything to do with notion of cognition *per se* with that of understanding a *cognition*.²⁹ Otherwise’s Tolley larger thesis, which I agree with on a significant level, risks being undercut in a certain sense. In particular, I say this because if his understanding of “content” is correct, transcendental logic would necessarily lose its status as a logic of possible experience or real cognition, as it would only leave us operating in the realm of only one stem of cognition, denying *all* relation to the actual object of a cognition in the process, which would mean falling into the unwanted error of intellectualizing transcendental logic, as Luciano Codato has noted (2).

What, then, is the content that transcendental cognition is concerned with? We referenced it earlier when we said that the categories are yielded by pure synthesis (B103). It must be this that Kant wants to emphasize, because, as we had established, in giving the rules of synthesis, the categories allow for the possibility of thinking an object from a pure manifold of intuition, which would be what allows one’s thoughts to have content. If content of cognition is convertible with the cognition’s relation to the object, and we look at this from the perspective of the synthesis of the understanding bringing the synthesis of the imagination under the pure concepts of the understanding, we are on a far better track than if we follow any idea along the lines of the content of cognition being convertible with the content of concepts. The categories, after all, are what allow for the given nature of an object in the restricted sense to have the particular nature it has (at least in terms of how we define said object). As such, there is certainly a “special” use of the understanding at play here, but it is not in any way similar to the way Kant has used the expression at any point in the *KrV*.

From these considerations it can only follow that transcendental logic is in fact best classified as a general logic. The reason I say this is because, as we saw, the categories apply to our thinking of *all objects*, in the broad sense (i.e., whether or not they belong to a possible experience). This sounds controversial to some extent, but we must not ignore the fact that like PGL, transcendental logic, as presented in the *KrV*, has its own Analytic, i.e., a logic of truth which presents the critical version of a correspondence theory of truth, *and* a Dialectic, or logic of illusion. As such, I think Tolley is certainly right in some way in saying it is domain-coincident with PGL and should thus not be distinguished from PGL on related grounds. What would differentiate PGL from

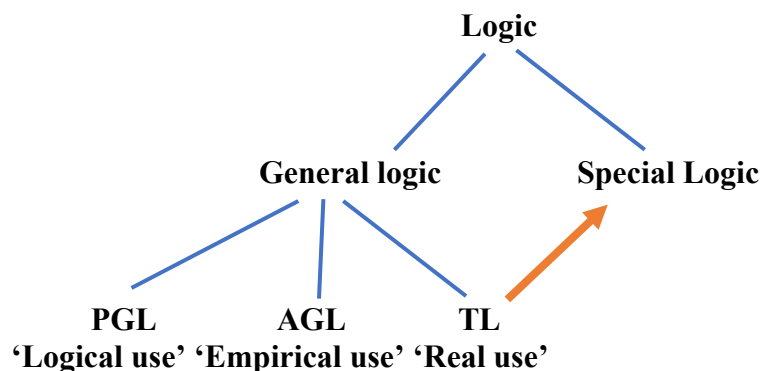
²⁹ See, for instance, *Dohna-Wundlacken Logic* 731: “To understand something <intelligere>: to represent something through the understanding, through concepts {so that one can explain oneself concerning it, state its marks}”. Also of interest: ““A mark is that in a thing which constitutes apart of the cognition of it, or -what is the same - a partial representation, insofar as it is considered as ground of cognition of the whole representation. All our concepts are marks, accordingly, and all thought is nothing other than a representing through marks” (*Jäsche* 58).

transcendental logic here, then, is that whereas PGL’s negative criterion of truth establishes logical possibility, the latter’s criterion of truth establishes real possibility, or cognoscibility. This would be done precisely by relating the concept to a sensible object. As Kant writes, “Now all intuition that is possible for us is sensible (Aesthetic), thus for us thinking of an object in general through a pure concept of the understanding can become cognition only insofar as this concept is related to objects of the senses” (B147). Transcendental logic’s methodology and aim are very different, then, from PGL’s, but not its domain. It is also primary to PGL, serving as its undergirding, in an important respect, because without the categories we cannot think in general.

VI. Concluding Remarks

In conclusion, we can say that since transcendental logic’s elements are the categories, it has a domain as general as PGL’s, since they are what we use for thinking objects in general, meaning they apply to all objects that can be thought of in a *logical* sense. Additionally, we can say that what demarcates it from PGL is its emphasis on the relation of cognition to objects, something which is only possible through synthesis. As we saw, PGL deals with the form of thinking and abstracts from all content of cognition. It is a discipline that merely analyzes representations, whereas transcendental logic has a manifold of *a priori* sensibility to consider. To cognize the manifold, we need synthesis (PGL, by contrast, is nothing but the mere *analysis* of form). As such, even a concept like our concept of the color ‘blue’ presupposes synthesis and the categories, and it is fair to call transcendental logic a logic of possible experience because it also grounds some aspect of *all* special logics. This should not be too much of a surprise, however, since the Transcendental Analytic is supposed to take the place of what was formerly ontology (A247/303). In some sense, then, the relation between transcendental logic and special logic is like that between general metaphysics, or ontology, the study of being *qua* being, and special metaphysics, which considered particular beings and presupposed the former.

As such, here is my final conclusion in diagram form, with the bold arrow indicating a separate relation of grounding, *not* belonging:



^Sub-use of the understanding associated with each general logic

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