

8

Getting Acquainted with Kant

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8.1 Introduction

Philosophers, and not just philosophers of mind, commonly speak of the “content” of a mental state. If one is comfortable talking in this manner, then a natural question to ask is what *kind* of content a mental state might have, and whether, in particular, mental states like belief have the same or a similar kind of content as an experience. My question here concerns whether Kant claims that experience has nonconceptual content, or whether, on his view, experience is essentially conceptual.¹

¹Note that my usage of the term “experience” here and throughout is *not* meant to correspond to Kant’s technical term *Erfahrung* but rather to his notion of an intuition. For discussion of how Kant’s technical terms line up with our contemporary notion of an experience, see McLear (2014b:771–2).

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For Kant scholars, figuring out how Kant might have answered this question has been one of central importance. Part of the reason for this stems from the relevance of Kant's account of intuition to three central and enduring issues of philosophical interest, namely, our acquisition of empirical concepts, the fixation of basic perceptual belief and the epistemic warrant we attain for such beliefs.² However, as I shall discuss below, there is a sense in which this debate concerning the content of intuition is ill-conceived. Part of this has to do with the terms in which the debate is set, and part to do with confusion over the connection between Kant's own views and contemporary concerns in epistemology and the philosophy of mind.

However, I think much of the substance of the debate concerning Kant's views on the content of experience can be salvaged by reframing it in terms of a debate about the dependence relations, if any, that exist between different cognitive capacities. Below, in Sect. 8.2, I clarify the notion of "content" I take to be at stake in the interpretative debate.³ Sect. 8.3 presents reasons for thinking that intuition cannot have content in the relevant sense. I then argue, in Sect. 8.4, that the debate be reframed in terms of dependence. We should distinguish between Intellectualism, according to which all objective representation (understood in a particular way) depends on acts of synthesis by the intellect, and Sensibilism, according to which at least some forms of objective representation are independent of any such acts (or the capacity for such acts). Finally, in Sect. 8.5, I further elucidate the cognitive role of intuition. I articulate a challenge which Kant understands alethic modal considerations to present for achieving cognition, and argue that a version of Sensibilism that construes intuition as a form of acquaintance is better positioned to answer this challenge than Intellectualism.

²Examples of work which most clearly attempt to address these issues in both contemporary philosophy and the study of Kant include Lewis (1929), McDowell (1996), Sellars (1968) and Strawson (1966).

³In this chapter, I do not pretend to give a comprehensive survey of positions or arguments. I aim instead at discussion of some central issues. For a more thorough attempt to chronicle the extent of the debate, see McLear (2014b); cf. Grüne (2009).

8.2 What Is Content?

Contemporary philosophy typically construes the phrase “mental content” as referring to that thing which fulfils a certain functional role—namely, it is that (i) which may be the object of different cognitive states within the same subject (e.g. of belief and desire), (ii) which may be the object of the same (or a different) cognitive state in other subjects (e.g. that you and I might be able to believe the same thing and thus communicate), and (iii) which has veridicality conditions (e.g. that which you and I both believe is true).⁴

So typically, when we ask about the content of a mental state, we are asking about something which is supposed to fulfil these three roles. The traditional satisfier for this functional specification is an abstract entity—a proposition.⁵ For example, I might both hope *that there is snow on Mt Washington* and desire *that there is snow on Mt Washington*. You and I may both believe *that there is snow on Mt Washington*. And the contents of our beliefs may well be true.

This notion of content also requires a conception of the thing which *has* content, namely, the “vehicle”.⁶ One example of a vehicle is a sentence. The English sentence “snow is white” expresses the proposition *that snow is white*. There is a set of corresponding English phonemes that

⁴As it turns out, these conditions are partly constitutive of our notion of conceptual content. Whether there are other kinds of mental content has been an issue of some controversy. For relevant discussion, see Beck (2012), Heck (2009) and Peacocke (1992). As I argue below, while it is plausible to think that Kant admits a notion of “content” in this sense, it is doubtful that he allows for any other kind of content. This does not, however, mean that conceptualism is correct.

⁵For some historical context for this view, see King et al. (2014), Chaps. 1–3. Once propositions are admitted, much of the debate about nonconceptual content can be transposed into a debate about the constitution and structure of propositions. For representative discussion, see Heck (2009) and Stalnaker (1998). I examine Kant’s conception of propositional content below.

⁶The fact that there is a difference between vehicle and content does not mean, however, that the two are unconnected. For example, a mental state might inherit its content from features of the vehicle. If one admits the existence of sense-data, then one might take their representational properties (or some subset thereof) as inherited from features of the sense-data—e.g. a red sense-datum represents the property *red* in virtue of the sense-datum’s instantiating that very property. In the end though, what I am concerned with here is specifically the content and not the vehicle. When Kant is careful he makes similar distinctions. See e.g. his discussion of sensation (*Empfindung*) and feeling (*Gefühl*) in the Third *Critique* (KU, 5:189, 203–6). It is therefore no resolution of our question to say that Kant admits the existence of nonconceptual *vehicles* (such as feelings).

when uttered together also express the relevant proposition. Finally, we might also postulate a *mental* vehicle (i.e. the psychological state or event) for content, such as the thought (an occurrent psychological state) *that snow is white*.⁷

So in asking whether Kant accepted the (possible) existence of nonconceptually contentful mental states, we first need to know whether it is even coherent to ascribe to him a notion of “content”, conceptual or not (and irrespective of whether he would use the corresponding German word *Inhalt* for this notion), in the terms set out above.

It seems highly plausible that Kant did accept the existence of content as specified. This is his notion of a “judgement” (*Urteil*). The vehicles for judgement are mental states, “representations” (*Vorstellungen*). Judgements are the product of “relating” representations, in the *act* of judging, in one consciousness:

The unification of representations in a consciousness is judgment. ... Thinking is the same as judging or as relating representations to judgments in general. (Prol, §22, 4:304; cf. Log, §17, 9:101; V-Lo/Wiener, 24:928)

What kinds of representation are related in one consciousness? Kant specifically has concepts in mind (cf. KU, 5:287; B146, B283; Log, 9:101; V-Lo/Wiener, 24:928). Judgements consist of concepts that, due to an act of the mind in which they are unified in one consciousness, are brought together to form truth-bearing contents via the process of *synthesis* (I leave open how exactly Kant thinks this is accomplished, but it must involve appeal to his notion of a “transcendental unity of apperception”). But what is grasped in the judgemental act—the judgement proper—is not itself something merely psychological (B142; Prol, 4:298–9; cf. Anderson 2001). This is why Kant can say of logic—the study of concepts, judgements and inference—that it “has no empirical principles, thus it draws nothing from psychology ..., which therefore has no influence at all on the canon of the understanding” (A54/B78).

⁷I leave open here what this mental vehicle is. It could be a neural state type, or something at a higher and more abstract level of specification.

In addition to serving as the content of psychological vehicles and the bearers of truth, Kant also considers judgements to be the objects of different epistemic attitudes. For example, he distinguishes between varieties of “holding for true” or “assent” (*Fürwahrhalten*) in the Canon of Pure Reason at the end of the First *Critique*:

Assent [*Das Fürwahrhalten*] is an occurrence in our understanding that may rest upon objective grounds, but that also requires subjective causes [*Ursachen*] in the mind of *him who judges*. (A820/B848; trans. amended and emphasis added)

Kant then identifies three different kinds of assent with respect to judgement, namely, opining, believing and knowing, as well as a kind of defective form of assent that he terms “persuasion” (for discussion see Chignell 2007). Depending on one’s evidence or “ground” (*Grund*) for assent (A822/B850), one might at one time opine what at a later time one knows. Hence, Kant seems to acknowledge the existence of content in the relevant sense. There is something—judgement—that is carried or expressed by psychological states, which can be the object of different epistemic attitudes, and which is the bearer of truth and falsity. Furthermore, since judgements are constituted by concepts, Kant obviously accepts that at least some mental states—acts of judging—have conceptual content.

However, one might object that Kant does not conceive of the content of an intuition or a judgement in the way that I have suggested. For example, Clinton Tolley (2013, 2014) has argued that Kant’s use of “content” (*Inhalt*) concerns not our contemporary notion of a proposition, specified above, but rather something else. For example, there are a number of texts where Kant connects both the content of cognition (B79; B83; B87) and that of intuition (B67; cf. Tolley 2014:207) with a “relation to an object”. Kant also partly *defines* intuitions and concepts in terms of how they relate, immediately or mediately, to objects (B93). I want to raise two points concerning Tolley’s discussion.

First, based on Kant’s use of “content” there is a short argument to the conclusion that intuitions do not have conceptual content (Tolley 2013:128):

1. The content of a cognition (whether intuition or concept) consists in, that is, is nothing but, a relation to an object.
2. Concepts and intuitions relate to objects in different ways, that is, mediately and immediately.
3. The content of intuition is different from the content of concepts, that is, it is nonconceptual.

This argument gives us good reason to reject the idea that intuition could have, *in Kant's sense of the term*, a concept as its "content" (*Inhalt*).⁸ Indeed, Kant's notion of content does not obviously fit with the conception of content that I have been working with thus far.

Second, Tolley's analysis of Kant's use of "content" might nevertheless be compatible with the contemporary notion that I have been working with thus far. The basic idea would be that the kind of relation to an object, which constitutes Kant's use of "content", is itself determined by the kind of correctness condition, and thus "content" in our contemporary sense, of the relevant psychological state. In an empirical judgement we have a specification of some logically possible state of affairs. For Kant, thought is directed to its object by means of a condition which an object or state of affairs may or may not satisfy. As long as something satisfies it, whatever it is, then the judgement is true. In this sense a judgement only *mediately* relates to an object. It relates to it mediately because it specifies a general condition, which any number of possible objects might meet. Thus, one can have a particular object in mind only to the extent that that object satisfies the specification which is the content of one's thought.

If mediate relation to an object is understood in terms of a kind of content that specifies a condition that may or may not be satisfied, immediate relation to an object might similarly be understood in terms of a different kind of content, one that is singular rather than satisfactorial, and thus could only refer to a specific thing. Singular content is not content that specifies a condition. Instead the relevant object is part of the content itself (I leave open how best to interpret "part of" here). On this way of thinking, then, the mediate/immediate relation that Kant speaks

⁸ For opposing views see e.g. Engstrom (2006), Griffith (2012) and Willaschek (1997).

of is best understood in terms of a difference between descriptive (i.e. satisfactoral) and singular content.⁹

Although this attempt at a rapprochement between the two senses of “content” (Kant’s and our own) is attractive, I think it cannot ultimately work. The problem, as I discuss in the next section, is that, although Kant obviously accepts that intuitive representations have relation to an object, he does not obviously intend this as an endorsement of a notion of “contentful” experience in our contemporary sense.

8.3 Does Experience Have Content?

Our question is whether Kant endorses the claim that experience has nonconceptual content. I have argued that the standard notion of content which is presupposed by this question is that of a proposition—something which is the potential object of different epistemic attitudes in one subject, is communicable across subjects, and which is the bearer of truth and falsity. I have argued further that the correlative notion of a proposition in Kant’s philosophy is that of a judgement and that his own usage of the term “content” to specify a type of relation to an object can partially be accounted for in terms of our contemporary notion of a descriptive specification of an object or state of affairs.

However, there are several hurdles that face the intelligibility of the question as to whether Kant admits that experience, that is, intuition, has nonconceptual content. The first is that if the analysis in Sect. 8.2 is correct then the claim that intuition has conceptual content is really just the claim that it has *judgemental* content, without which it could not qualify as intuition. While there have been prominent interpretations which tie intuition essentially to judgement, the view has recently been roundly criticised for a variety of reasons including the fact that it seems to conflate judgement with synthesis more generally.¹⁰ Moreover, in a 1791 letter to

⁹For example, this seems to be one of the central ways in which Robert Hanna distinguishes between conceptual and nonconceptual representation. See Hanna (2005, 2008); cf. Thompson (1972).

¹⁰For interpretations tying judgement to intuition, see Paton (1936:285), Pippin (1982:33) and Strawson (1966:94). For extensive criticism of “judgementalist” readings of Kant, see Grüne

J. S. Beck addressing just this issue, Kant explicitly denies that “the relation of intuition to an object in general” is the work of judgement (Br, 11:311). Since concepts are, for Kant, “predicates of possible judgment” (A69/B94) and the “understanding can make no other use of [them] ... than that of judging by means of them” (A68/B93; cf. Heis 2014a), their deployment is restricted to their role in judgement. Since Kant has ruled out judgement as that which connects an intuition to its object, it seems that concepts cannot themselves be contents of intuition.

If it is not textually plausible to understand the content of an intuition in conceptual terms (at least as Kant understands the notion of a concept) then what would it mean to say that Kant endorses conceptualism with regard to experience? In keeping with our contemporary notion of a content as setting a veridicality condition for a mental state, one might be tempted by the line of thought suggested at the end of Sect. 8.2, namely, that intuition relates to its object immediately in virtue of the kind of veridicality condition (“content” in our sense) possessed by intuitive representations.

The conceptualist would then have to explain how the intuition has the kind of content that it does, namely, the possession of a veridicality condition, something that could be the object of an epistemic attitude and (potentially) communicated in an explicit judgement—without thereby construing it in terms of judgement (or even a concept). And since we have ruled out a concept’s figuring, via judgement, as the *content* of an intuition, the most plausible thing a conceptualist might say is that concepts are nevertheless partly responsible for the *generation* of the intuition, as rules for synthesis enacted on (non-contentful) sensory impressions.¹¹

Though the details of the view may vary, I take the heart of this version of the conceptualist interpretation as one according to which concepts play a role in the generation of intuitive representations. The conceptualist can then argue that it is at least partly in virtue of this generative role that intuitions possess veridicality conditions. These generative conditions are what serve to constitute an intuition’s presentation of an object (often construed in terms of the intuition’s intentionality), as well as the

(2009), Chap. 2.2, and Land (2015b).

¹¹ For examples of this kind of view, see Anderson (2015), Friedman (2015), Ginsborg (2008), Grüne (2009), Haag (2007), Land (2015a), Longuenesse (1998a) and Pereboom (1988).

intuition's relevance to other epistemic attitudes, both in the *acquisition* of empirical concepts, and in the *warrant* the intuition provides for basic perceptual beliefs. Prescinding from the details of this interpretation (or family of interpretations), it is this central claim regarding the generation of intuition that I think is mistaken, and which I take to be the primary issue of debate between so-called conceptualists and nonconceptualists.

But even this alternative way of interpreting the issue of conceptualism in Kant's theory of experience is problematic, for at least two reasons. First, a central motivation for nonconceptualist readings of Kantian intuition stems from the case of apparent perceptual experience in beings which lack the relevant concepts, such as infants and non-human animals. The animal case is especially problematic since non-human animals lack (according to Kant) even the capacity to acquire concepts. Thus the need to account for such cases remains even if a conceptualist construes their position in terms of the role concepts play in the generation of intuition rather than as its "judgemental" content. Second, the "generative" reading, which eschews positing judgements and their component concepts as the contents of intuitions, still presupposes that the relevant distinction between mere sensation and genuine intuition hinges on the possession of a correctness condition. But, as I have argued elsewhere, this presupposition is incorrect. Kant does not ascribe to correctness conditions any fundamental explanatory role in his conception of intuition. In fact, he seems to eschew ascribing correctness conditions to intuition altogether (see McLear 2016 for extensive discussion). The fact that this central assumption is mistaken threatens the coherence of a content-centred interpretative debate between conceptualists and nonconceptualists.

If the debate concerning the content of intuition has presupposed a notion of "content" that Kant rejects, then how should we understand the debate? In the next section, I argue that we should not frame the debate in terms of the presence or absence in experience of a particular kind of *content*, and thus of the presence or absence of correctness conditions that could be the object of doxastic attitudes, but rather in terms of the presence or absence of particular kinds of cognitive *ability* and the dependence relations that may or may not hold between such abilities and the occurrence or generation of experience (intuition).

8.4 Reframing the Debate

I have argued thus far that, at root, the conceptualism debate should be understood as concerned with the conditions under which intuitions are generated rather than the “content” of an intuition as a kind of correctness condition.¹² Here we can distinguish two broad camps, each of which construe these conditions differently. On the one side is Intellectualism, which construes the generation of intuition as dependent on the higher discursive activity of the intellect (i.e. understanding, judgement and reason).¹³ By contrast, Sensibilism argues that at least some intuitions do not rely for their existence or generation on any activity of the intellect.

Sensibilism and Intellectualism can agree that sensing and thinking involve distinct (and distinctive) cognitive abilities. In this regard, Sensibilism is not to be confused with a crude *empiricism*. Moreover, both Sensibilism and Intellectualism explain the generation and structure of representations or mental states at least partly in terms of the relevant cognitive capacity or faculty. The key difference is that Intellectualism construes the structure of intuitive representations, and ultimately even their generation, as dependent not only on sensibility *but also on the understanding*, and possibly other “higher” cognitive faculties as well (e.g. judgement or reason). For the Intellectualist, the only representations which do not admit of this dependence are the simple sensations that are the supposed initial product of sensibility, in its interface with, or passive “affection” by, mind-independent reality.¹⁴

By contrast, Sensibilism argues that at least some objective sensory states, including the “pure” representations of space and time, possess structure which is not the product of the activity of the intellect. Moreover, Sensibilism construes such representations, at least in some cases, as generated without, and in principle independently of, the activity of the intellect.

¹²In this sense I am in agreement with the emphasis on generation of intuition in recent interpretations such as Grüne (2009), Land (2015b) and Longuenesse (1998a).

¹³Note that I use “discursive” here to denote not concepts, but the activity of the mind in the “running through, and taking together” of representations (A99).

¹⁴Since sensations are simple, they do not admit of structure, and thus according to Intellectualism do not depend on the activity of the intellect.

There are at least three benefits to reframing the debate in this manner. First, we avoid any attribution to Kant of the (in my view) controversial assumption that intuition essentially has a correctness condition that could be the object of epistemic attitudes.¹⁵ Of course, a proponent of Intellectualism might argue *to* the conclusion that intuitions essentially have correctness conditions as a result of their generation by acts of synthesis. But this would need to be shown as part of the Intellectualist's argument, rather than as an assumption thereof.

Second, and perhaps surprisingly, avoiding the content assumption and reframing things in terms of cognitive abilities actually brings Kant *closer* to aspects of the contemporary debate in the philosophy of mind. This is due to two features of the contemporary debate. The first feature I have in mind is the extraordinarily wide range of views concerning the existence and nature of concepts.¹⁶ Hence, asking whether Kant accepts the existence of nonconceptual content in experience requires a great deal of triangulation with respect to what one might mean by "concept" or its cognates.¹⁷ Reframing things in terms of cognitive abilities lets us sidestep much of this discussion. A second feature of contemporary debate in the philosophy of mind is that, since Gareth Evans's seminal 1982 work, *The Varieties of Reference*, many philosophers have been influenced by the idea that what we mean in talking about thought as being "conceptual" or "conceptually articulated" is best understood in terms of its having a structure that is the product of the exercise of two or more distinct abilities. Evans puts things this way:

¹⁵There are, nevertheless, various weaker senses in which an intuition might have a correctness condition. For further discussion, see McLear (2016).

¹⁶For a sampling of the variety, see Machery (2009) and Margolis and Laurence (2014).

¹⁷For example, much of the contemporary debate has been concerned with the difference between "state" views and "content" views (see Heck 2000, Speaks 2005 and Van Cleve 2012). This distinction has also exerted itself in the Kantian debate (e.g. Allais 2009, Faggion 2015, Grüne 2011 and Hanna 2011a, b). But according to e.g. the Fregean tradition of understanding conceptual content, it makes no sense to say that one could be in a state with conceptual content C without also thereby being able to grasp that content C, i.e. without also possessing the concept. Of course, one could argue that Kant should or should not be understood in terms of the Fregean tradition (cf. Tolley 2014 for a defence of the Fregean reading), but this would be a further move. It would perhaps be better if we could avoid these interpretative difficulties altogether.

If a subject can be credited with the thought that a is F , then he must have the conceptual resources for entertaining the thought that a is G , for every property of being G of which he has a conception. This is the condition that I call “The Generality Constraint”. ... I shall speak ... of the concepts a subject has, of this or that property. And I shall allow myself to say that this or that particular thought-episode comprises such-and-such an Idea of an object, as well as such-and-such a concept. This is simply a picturesque way of rephrasing the notion that the thought is a joint exercise of two distinguishable abilities. (1982:104)

So part of what Evans means by the notion of a content’s being *conceptual* is that it belongs to an episode of thinking understood as an exercise of the distinct cognitive abilities defined by the Generality Constraint. Evans also appeals to this conception of concept possession to distinguish between states that have and states that lack conceptual content (cf. Evans 1982:104n.22, 226–7).

The view that conceptual content be understood in such terms has been influential, and several of the central participants in the contemporary debate concerning the content of perception endorse it.¹⁸ It is therefore unsurprising that those who would accept that experience might have nonconceptual content also reject the claim that all content be understood in terms of the exercise of abilities which obey the Generality Constraint (cf. Beck 2012, 2013).¹⁹ So a benefit of reframing the Kantian debate with respect to cognitive abilities is that it intersects nicely with contemporary discussion without thereby requiring us to say anything more specific about the nature of concepts.

A third benefit is that the Intellectualist/Sensibilist distinction brings unity where we might otherwise find dissent. For example, with respect to the debate concerning whether the content of intuition should be understood in terms of judgement, or instead in terms of the exercise

¹⁸ See e.g. Dummett (1993), Geach (1957), Kenny (2010), McDowell (1990, 1998) and Peacocke (1992). For criticism, see Davis (2005:144–5). For recent work implicitly or explicitly connecting Kant to this tradition, see Allais (2015), Dunlop (2012), Hanna (2005), Heis (2014b) and Longuenesse (1998a).

¹⁹ There is, of course, the question as to whether Kant endorses the Generality Constraint as it is typically understood. Some support for thinking that he does comes in the footnote at B133–4, but more needs to be said concerning this matter. I shall pursue this issue in future work.

of a conceptually guided synthesis (cf. Land 2015b), it might seem that there is strong disagreement concerning the content of experience and the role of the understanding in cognition. However, this internecine debate hides what I take to be fundamental agreement between the two “conceptualist” camps—namely, that Kant strongly ties the exercise of intellectual cognitive capacities to the conditions governing the possibility of objective sensory experience. This position takes as central Kant’s claim that

the same function that gives unity to the different representations in *a judgment* also gives unity to the mere synthesis of different representations *in an intuition*, which, expressed generally, is called the pure concept of understanding. (A79/B104–5)

The Intellectualist reading of this passage focuses on the claim that the very same cognitive capacities are at work in judgement and in intuition. Since this claim concerns the unity of judgement and intuition it might even seem reasonable to say that the structure of each kind of representation is supposed to depend on the activity of the intellect. It would then be this activity which brings it about that the representations have objectivity in Kant’s sense of “relation to an object” (B137).²⁰ By reframing the conceptualism debate in terms of the Intellectualist/Sensibilist divide, we can highlight the most important aspects of the dispute, while nevertheless allowing that there might be differences of interpretation within each camp regarding the precise way in which Kant adheres to one or the other side of the divide.²¹

With these points in mind we can revise our previous framing of the conceptualism debate in Sects. 8.2 and 8.3 to read it as instead resting on three distinct but interrelated claims: (i) the content of an intuition is a kind of relation to an object; (ii) the relation to an object depends on

²⁰ For an alternative reading of this passage, and the notion of a “relation to an object”, see McLear (forthcoming a); cf. Allais (2015), Chap. 11.

²¹ A further virtue of the capacities-based approach that I advocate here is that it helps to make sense of the way in which Kant understands that infants and non-human animals might or might not have experience of an objective world. I lack the space to discuss appropriately this issue here, but see McLear (2011) and McLear (forthcoming a) for further discussion.

the possession of a privileged set of cognitive capacities—specifically, the capacity to carry out a “synthesis” directed in accordance with concepts; (iii) synthesis in accordance with concepts sets correctness conditions for the intuition’s representation of a mind-independent object.

If the conceptualism debate is thus really best reconceived as concerning the kinds of mental acts a cognitive subject is able to perform, and the role of those acts in imparting a particular kind of structure to a subject’s mental states, then our original question as to whether Kant recognises the existence of nonconceptual content in experience breaks down into two more fundamental ones. First, we can ask whether the cognitive capacities necessary for the generation of an intuition themselves impart or otherwise determine a correctness condition for the intuition. Second, we can ask whether the generation of an intuition always and everywhere depends on the exercise of distinctively intellectual capacities, whether or not such an exercise would impart or otherwise determine any sort of correctness condition. I argue elsewhere that we have reason to answer both questions negatively.²²

One might try to circumvent the Intellectualism/Sensibilism dichotomy that I have sketched by arguing that the two aspects of Intellectualism as I have articulated it—namely, the determination of correctness conditions in intuition and the dependence of intuition on an exercise of distinctively intellectual cognitive capacities—come apart. It seems possible to reject the first claim—that intuition has content determined by the exercise of intellectual capacities—but endorse the second claim—that the generation of intuition is nonetheless dependent on distinctively intellectual capacities.

For example James Messina (2014) argues for a reading of the relationship between the output of representations by sensibility and the exercise of intellectual capacities that seeks to exploit a supposed middle ground between the two kinds of dependence that I have sketched. This reading states that the unity of the pure forms of intuition—namely, the representations of space and time—metaphysically depends on, and is only possible through, the activity of the original synthetic unity of apperception. Since I take this form of dependence to be a central point

²² See McLear (2015, 2016); cf. McLear (2014b).

at issue, I would regard such a position as a form of Intellectualism. But what distinguishes Messina's position from other forms of Intellectualism is his denial that "this unity [of the representations of space and time] is the output or result of the figurative synthesis, or any other act of synthesis for that matter" (2014:23).²³

While this view is very interesting, and coherently maps a portion of logical space, I fail to see any compelling reason for thinking that Kant would have (or should have) endorsed it. The problem is that the view seems to inherit a central fault of Intellectualism without inheriting one of its (putative) central merits. According to Messina, the objective status of a subject's sensory states depends on her possessing, and exercising, intellectual cognitive capacities. This means that Messina's interpretation inherits all of the traditional problems with respect to non-rational beings that dog more standard versions of Intellectualism. But since, on this reading, intuition does not ultimately depend for its structure on the activity of the intellect, but rather on the (unsynthesised) "pure" forms of space and time, there is no sense in which we can appeal to the structure of thought (or the capacity to think) to explain the ultimate intelligibility of spatially and temporally structured objects, as Intellectualism attempts to. Intellectualism can at least purport to offer an explanation as to why spatial and temporal objects are intelligible to thought. This is because it sees the generation of the pure intuitions of space and time as dependent upon a figurative synthesis which is itself dependent upon the possession and exercise of intellectual cognitive capacities (such as the understanding and the capacity to judge). But Messina's proposed interpretation provides no such benefit, because it denies that the intuitions of space and time are the result of a figurative synthesis, while nevertheless severely limiting the sense in which sensibility is construed by Kant as an independent faculty capable of generating its own class of objective mental states. So while I take Messina's interpretation to be logically possible,

²³ However, Messina (2014:13) does seem to think that the representation of determinate spaces and lines depends on synthesis, which would seem to preclude infants and non-human animals from having such representations. That would mean that they could neither represent locations in space or edges or boundaries of objects. This seems both philosophically and textually problematic. For discussion regarding Kant's views on the cognitive capabilities of non-human animals, see Allais (2009:405–8), McLear (2011), McLear (forthcoming a) and Naragon (1990).

it fails to capture the underlying basis for postulating a dependence relation between the two faculties, and thus is, to that extent, dialectically unmotivated.²⁴

8.5 Modality and Cognition

As I mentioned in Sect. 8.1, three issues of central and enduring philosophical interest concern the relationship that experience has to the content of our concepts (and thus what we believe and know), the fixation of basic perceptual belief, and the justification or warrant for those beliefs. It is at least partly due to interest in Kant's position regarding these enduring issues that scholars have focused so heavily on the question of his views concerning concepts and the content of experience.

It is widely acknowledged that, with respect to the first issue, Kant's conception of empirical concept acquisition via abstraction faces serious interpretative and philosophical difficulties.²⁵ Concerning the second, Kant says remarkably little about exactly how it is that sensory experience gives rise to empirical judgement. I shall focus, in a somewhat indirect way, on the third issue, concerning empirical warrant, and specifically on the way in which intuition puts a subject in a position to prove the real possibility of a represented object. Such proof is a necessary condition of cognition, and although cognition is different from knowledge (i.e. *Erkenntnis* is not *Wissen*), it is necessary for possessing substantive empirical knowledge (see Chignell 2014; Schafer, forthcoming). My aim here is both to clarify the role of intuition in proving the possibility of the objects of cognition, and to show that the Intellectualist position faces a significant challenge in accommodating this account, one not faced by Sensibilism as I interpret it.²⁶

²⁴ Thanks to James Messina for discussion concerning these points.

²⁵ See Anderson (2015), Ginsborg (2006a, b), Longuenesse (1998a) and Pippin (1982).

²⁶ For previous discussion of intuition, content and modality, see McLear (2016). For criticism of this account, see Grüne (2014a). For ease of exposition I construe cognition as a necessary condition of empirical knowledge. However, as Chignell (2014:576–9) points out, Kant seems to allow that there are cases where the grounds of knowledge may not require cognition, such as with analytic knowledge and negative knowledge of things in themselves. These caveats are assumed throughout my discussion.

One of the central claims of Kant's Critical philosophy is that reasoning in accordance with logical principles cannot, by itself, provide a subject with knowledge of the world. The possibility of ampliative knowledge concerning the world requires that the mind obtain its subject matter from something other than the activity of the intellect, and thus, given our cognitive constraints, via sensibility. This is one of the many ways in which our understanding differs from that of an intuitive intellect (B145–6).

A second contribution of intuition to knowledge, beyond that of obtaining a subject matter for thought, is in the satisfaction of what we can call Kant's *modal condition* on cognition and knowledge. One of Kant's main criticisms of the German rationalist tradition is that the principle of contradiction cannot provide us with positive cognition of the world. He (here in agreement with Crusius) argues that a further positive contribution is needed to separate what is merely logically possible from what is genuinely metaphysically possible.²⁷ In this way, Kant's Critical philosophy is a radical departure from the German rationalist tradition exemplified by Leibniz, Wolff and Baumgarten, amongst others.

Cognition, and ultimately empirical knowledge, depends on being able to show the metaphysical possibility of the concept's being instantiated—its “objective validity”.²⁸ The point that a proof of real possibility is necessary for cognition is made explicitly by Kant in the preface to the B edition of the First *Critique*:

To *cognize* an object, it is required that I be able to prove its possibility (whether by the testimony of experience from its actuality or *a priori* through reason). But 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

²⁷ As L.W. Beck says, “what Kant did learn from Crusius must not be underestimated; he learned that ‘the rain never follows the wind because of the law of identity’” (Beck 1978:94). Beck cites here Kant's *Negative Magnitudes* from 1763 (NG, 2:203). See also Hogan (2009) and Watkins (2005:162–5).

²⁸ Note that I take the notion of objective validity to be distinct from, and typically more demanding than, objective reality. As Winkler (2010:69) has helpfully noted, for Kant, a concept is objectively real if and only if its corresponding object is really possible, while a concept is objectively valid if and only if objects can be thought or experienced only by its means (A97; A89–90/B122; A93/B126; A111). It is presumably this demanding sense that is at issue in TD. At other times there is a less demanding use of “objective validity”, where it seems to act more as a substitute or synonym for “objective reality” (see Bxxiv; Bxxvii; A156/B195; A311/B368; A669/B697).

cannot give any assurance whether or not there is a corresponding object somewhere within the sum total of all possibilities. But in order to ascribe objective validity to such a concept (real possibility, for the first sort of possibility was merely logical) something more is required. (Bxxvin.)

Kant's point here is that the structure of thought is governed ultimately by the rule of non-contradiction, and in this way mirrors what is logically possible. But an analysis of thought tells us nothing as to whether there really, that is, metaphysically, could be an object such as the thought specifies. Kant further distinguishes between logical and real possibility in terms of the notion of "cancellation" (*Aufhebung*). The subject matter of a thought is *logically* possible if the thought's constituent concepts may be combined in judgement without contradiction, and thus without being logically cancelled out (A151/B190; NG, 2:171–2). The subject matter of a thought is *really* possible, by contrast, if it can be shown that the subject matter to which the thought corresponds consists of properties which are mutually empirically compossible and not, in Kant's terms, "really repugnant". This is perhaps best illustrated with examples involving physical forces (e.g. opposite motions, or opposing attractive and repulsive forces; cf. A264–5/B320–1). Since real repugnance cannot solely be determined via consideration of the logical possibility of the subject as conceived, cognition requires the demonstration of the real possibility of the object through some means other than mere conception.²⁹ Call this condition on proof of possibility the "Modal Condition" (Chignell 2010:146). Kant indicates in the passage quoted above that real and not merely logical possibility must be provable via experience or a priori argument (e.g. a transcendental deduction) if cognition is to be possible. We can then more clearly define the modal condition on cognition as follows:

²⁹ See Chignell (2010:144–5; 2014:581–2), Warren (2001), Chap. 1, and Watkins (2005:162–5).

Modal condition:

Necessarily, *S* cognises an object *O* only if *S* is in a position to prove the real possibility of an object possessing the features constituting the content of the representation of *O*.³⁰

While it is not totally obvious what proof of real possibility comes to in all cases,³¹ it is clear from the quoted passage that Kant thinks that *one* way of proving the real possibility of an object is to demonstrate its *actuality* via a presentation of that object in experience. Surely then, in such a case the content of an intuition must play a decisive role in satisfying the Modal Condition, for what other kind of representation could do so in the case of experience?

Kant's modal condition on cognition thus presents a challenge: how must experience be if it is to play its stated role in satisfying the Modal Condition? As I discuss below, Intellectualism must provide a specific answer to this question, which I argue is less convincing and more problematic than the kind of answer provided by a Sensibilist interpretation.

8.5.1 Intellectualism and the Modal Condition

Recall that Intellectualism makes two claims concerning the relation between the intellect and sensibility. First, it claims that the generation of intuition by sensibility depends in part on cognitive acts carried out by the intellect. Second, it claims that these cognitive acts are necessary for imparting content (in our contemporary sense) to the intuition, in virtue of which it has relation to an object.

This conception of the generation and content of intuition puts constraints on how intuition might satisfy the modal condition. Insofar as it is the content of intuition that makes the relevant contribution to proof of real possibility, it must either come from the cognitive activity of the

³⁰ Relatedly, if *O* is really impossible, then *S* could cognise its real impossibility only if she were in a position to prove it (cf. Chignell 2014:584).

³¹ For discussion of complications surrounding the articulation of the modal condition, see Chignell (2014); cf. Stang (2011, 2016).

intellect, or from the nature of intuition itself. In the former case, there can be no proof of real possibility, for intellectual acts of synthesis are discursive, and thus constrained only by the law of non-contradiction and the categories. The Intellectualist should therefore prefer the latter case, in which the (a priori) formal sensory conditions of space and time determine what is really possible. The vast extent of the logically possible would thus be understood as constrained by the nature of experience and its spatial and temporal conditions.

This view seems to accord with Kant's explanation of his notion of real possibility in the section of the First *Critique* entitled The Postulates of Empirical Thinking. There he writes:

Whatever agrees with the formal conditions of experience (in accordance with intuition and concepts) is *possible*. (A218/B265)³²

According to this passage, cognition of the real possibility of an object requires only that it conform to the formal conditions, both sensible and conceptual, of experience. Clearly, every object of intuition conforms to the sensible formal conditions of experience, since every object of intuition or experience must have spatial or temporal structure. Furthermore, according to Intellectualist interpretations of Kant, every object of experience or intuition conforms to the conceptual formal conditions of experience, namely the categories, because every intuition is *generated* by a synthesis that takes place in accordance with the categories.³³ Thus, every intuition, regardless of whether the object it represents exists or not, conforms to the formal conditions of experience, and is therefore the representation of an object that is really possible. Moreover, the discussion of the formal conditions of experience says nothing about real repugnance or compossibility. Hence, according to this defence of Intellectualism, there is no need to recognise a further contribution of intuition to a

³² Even though, in this passage, Kant only uses the term "possibility", from the context it is clear that he is concerned with real possibility. A little bit later he equates "objective reality of the concept" with "possibility of such an object as is thought through the concept" (A220/B268). And in other passages he equates objective reality with real possibility (see e.g. FM, 20:325ff.).

³³ Exemplars of this view include Grüne (2009, 2014a), Haag (2007), Longuenesse (1998a) and Pereboom (1988).

proof of real possibility other than its contribution of spatial and temporal form.³⁴

While this manner of responding to the challenge of articulating the contribution of intuition to the satisfaction of the modal condition is attractive, it also suffers from three serious problems. These are, respectively, that (i) it is too weak, (ii) it does not properly distinguish between perception and hallucination, and (iii) it does not account for Kant's appeal at Bxxiv (quoted above) to the actuality of what is presented in experience. I take these points in turn.

First, there are cases in which intuition of the actuality of an object proves its real possibility, but does so in virtue of something much richer than mere formal possibility as construed above.

Consider, for example, the discovery of the platypus. The existence of such an egg-laying, duck-billed, beaver-tailed, otter-footed mammal was surely something that was in conformity with the *formal* laws of experience (i.e. the categories plus the pure forms of intuition), but European scientists had no idea prior to the discovery of a live specimen in 1798 that the co-instantiation of such features was *really possible* in nature. The intuition that proved its real possibility, in this case via its actuality, thus did more than show just that its existence conformed with the formal conditions of experience.

Further, Kant himself mentions several cases whose real possibility does not seem to be determinable by appeal to formal conditions alone. He mentions the power to be present in a space without filling it (e.g. as a ghost) or to intuit the future (e.g. clairvoyance) and to have telepathic contact with the minds of others (A222/B270). He considers these all possibilities which are "entirely groundless" because they "cannot be grounded in experience and its known laws" (A223/B270). As other commentators have noted, it is not clear why these examples could not be grounded in the relatively weak conditions designated by the elaboration of formal possibility described above.³⁵ So Kant's appeal to experience

³⁴ A further avenue of objection to Intellectualism, which I do not pursue here, concerns whether it makes sense to construe spatial and temporal form as, on the Intellectualist account, sufficiently independent of the intellect and its activity to count as making a genuinely independent contribution to cognition. For relevant discussion, see McLear (2015) and Messina (2014).

³⁵ For discussion, see Chignell (2014:588–9).

and its known laws would suggest that he has something in mind stronger than simply formal possibility. Intellectualism, limited as it is to appealing solely to formal possibility, cannot explain what this might be.

Second, returning to the example of the platypus, Intellectualism cannot explain how seeing a platypus would be any different for proving its real possibility than hallucinating a platypus (or a mammal with platypus-like features). This is not to say that Intellectualism cannot distinguish between hallucination and perception, but rather that its basis for doing so is neutral with regard to answering the question of the contribution of intuition to the satisfaction of the Modal Condition. For the Intellectualist, the representational content contributed by an intuition in both cases will be identical.³⁶ But, prior to 1798, while many biologists might have believed that one could hallucinate such an animal, no one would have thought hallucination proof enough that such an animal was really a possible denizen of the natural world.³⁷

A proponent of Intellectualism might respond here by pointing out that, given the reproductive nature of the imagination, all merely imaginative acts which nevertheless show the real possibility of something—e.g. of a platypus before 1798—depend on awareness of actual sensory qualities that the subject has been aware of in the past (Anth, 7:167–8).³⁸ So Intellectualism can allow a role for actuality in order to explain how the imagination can engage in the kinds of recombinative acts necessary to determining real possibility. The important difference is that, according to this reply, we do not need the actuality of a *particular object* to prove its real possibility, but rather only the actuality of the relevant property or properties it would instantiate so that sensation of such properties can be imagined and recombined with other (previously) sensed properties into the intuition of, for example, a (hallucinated) duck-billed platypus.³⁹

³⁶ Here John McDowell's interpretation stands as an outlier for he argues both that the content of sensory experience depends on intellectual capacities and that intuition is object-dependent. See McDowell (1998) for discussion. More paradigmatic examples of Intellectualism as I am conceiving it here are Grüne (2009, 2014a), Pereboom (1988) and Stephenson (2011).

³⁷ This would be true even in a case of "veridical hallucination" where one, say, visually hallucinates a platypus while in the presence of a platypus matching the features so hallucinated.

³⁸ See McLear (forthcoming b) and Stephenson (2015b) for extensive discussion of the issue of hallucination.

³⁹ Thanks to Anil Gomes and Andrew Stephenson for discussion on this point.

In reply to this, it is important to note that one of the primary motives for Kant's rejection of logical possibility as an appropriate guide to metaphysical possibility lies in the fact that it is too weak to exclude arbitrary (though logically consistent) combinations of predicates (see Chignell 2010). If Kant allows that the reproductive imagination can combine any sensory property it pleases with any other, so long as they have been previously experienced, without their ever having been instantiated in one and the same object (something that seems not to be ruled out by the very wide definition of formal possibility as concerning merely the categories plus the pure forms of intuition), then sensibility might offer only slightly more demanding constraints on arbitrary combination than those put on the understanding by the law of non-contradiction. This way of construing Kant's position effectively collapses the satisfaction of the Modal Condition into the provisioning of sensory material for thought. On this view the role of sensibility is to provide the mind with raw sensory material and nothing else. All other cognitive work is done by the recombinative activity of the imagination and of thought. While I cannot entirely rule this out as an interpretation, it seems to fit poorly with Kant's conception of sensibility as providing significant cognitive constraint on the arbitrary activities of our spontaneous discursive nature.

Third, in Kant's statement of the Modal Condition on cognition in the preface to the First *Critique* he explicitly mentions the revelation of actuality in experience. Once again, in the relevant portion of that text Kant states that

it is required that I be able to prove [the object's] possibility (whether by the testimony of experience *from its actuality* or *a priori* through reason).
(Bxxvi; emphasis added)

However, Intellectualism leaves it a mystery as to why Kant would appeal to actuality in this manner. According to Intellectualism, there is no need to appeal to an actually presented object in order to prove its real possibility. Instead, all that is needed is for the representation of the object to be one whose features satisfy the formal conditions of experience. This is why, on the Intellectualist view, hallucination can suffice for proof of real possibility. But if that were true, then appeal to actuality would

do no genuine work with respect to proof of real possibility. Thus, it is unclear why, on the Intellectualist interpretation, Kant would specifically mention actuality in a central statement of the nature of cognition and the contribution of experience to the satisfaction of its requirements.

If the above discussion is correct, then Intellectualism cannot construe intuition as satisfying the Modal Condition on anything other than the most general “formal” level. Intuition, according to Intellectualism, makes no further contribution to determining whether something is really possible according to the specific natural laws governing our world. This leaves it a complete mystery as to how cases of the actuality of the object, as presented in an occurrent intuition, might play any special sort of role in providing the proof necessary for cognition. This is dissatisfying both philosophically and textually.

8.5.2 Acquaintance and the Modal Condition

In contrast to Intellectualism, I suggest that we understand intuition as a cognitive route to actuality.⁴⁰ Intuition can prove the possibility of an object by relating the subject to an actuality which is the ground of the relevant possibility, thus providing its “proof”. Intuition, being partly constituted by some actuality to which it relates, thereby provides an intuiting subject with access to an actuality in virtue of which, and in combination with her higher cognitive capacities of understanding and judgement, she can cognise, and perhaps come to know, the real possibility of some truth or judgement.

According to my preferred Sensibilist account, an intuition is a relation that immediately—i.e. non-inferentially and without appeal to any of the subject’s background beliefs—presents its object. Since intuition

⁴⁰I am specifically concerned with empirical intuition here, but I think the claim could be generalised to cover Kant’s conception of intuition as a whole. For such a general framework to work, more needs to be said about how intellectual and a priori intuition fit into this framework. As I see it, intellectual, a priori and empirical intuitions are all relations to actualities. The difference is that in intellectual and empirical intuition there is causal determination, either from intellectual intuition to its object, or from object to the (subject of the) empirical intuition. A priori intuition is the most difficult case, since space and time are not existing objects in their own right (A291/B347), and so cannot straightforwardly cause or be caused by the intuition of them. I intend to address these issues in future work.

is understood to be a relation, it could not exist without the presence of its object, and it is in virtue of the object's being, in this sense, a constituent of the subject's mental state that she is in a position to appeal to it in the course of making judgements about the subject matter of her experience.⁴¹

Thus, on this reading, intuition is a form of non-propositional awareness, which can be thought of along the lines of "acquaintance" with one's environment. Intuition (or the psychological state thereof) need not be thought of in terms of a relation to a "content" in the contemporary sense, nor as depending on the exercise of intellectual cognitive capacities. Visual, auditory and tactile experience are perhaps the most prominent sense modalities for acquainting a subject with her environment, and do so in obviously distinctive ways. These sensory modalities (and perhaps the others) provide a form of access to the environment, that is, they make it immediately available to consciousness in a particular sensory way.⁴²

The term "acquaintance" has connotations often associated with its deployment by British philosophers as an epistemically foundational mental state which must itself satisfy stringent epistemic conditions. The stringent character of these epistemic conditions, such as possessing infallible knowledge of the existence, identity and nature of what is experienced, convinced figures such as Russell that acquaintance relations cannot hold between subjects and their environment but rather only between subjects and mental items (e.g. sense-data) or universals (cf. Russell 1997:46–7; 1910).

Kant does not adopt Russell's stringent epistemological characterisation of acquaintance. In particular, he does not hold that being acquainted with some part of one's environment *E*, of itself, entails that one *knows* anything about *E*. Acquaintance is thus not to be con-

⁴¹ This position raises obvious issues concerning intuition and hallucination. I articulate an account of intuition with respect to hallucination in McLearn (forthcoming b).

⁴² Kant specifies that three of the five senses, namely sight, touch and hearing, are forms of "objective" empirical intuition (Anth, 7:154) in virtue of being more conducive to physical object cognition than introspective cognition of the subject's own state. The other two senses, taste and smell, are "subjective" and have less to do with our perception of objects than with our "enjoyment" (*Genuss*) in the object (Anth, 7:154). It is thus possible that Kant thinks the sensory modes of taste and smell do not provide outer intuitions at all.

fused with knowledge. Neither does Kant privilege certainty concerning the character of one's subjective states over certainty concerning the character of one's environment (A370–1).⁴³ According to the version of Sensibilism I advocate, Kant understands acquaintance as serving a more cognitively basic epistemic function than either providing knowledge or, more generally, warranting an epistemic attitude. Instead, it is the basis of what Kant calls “cognition” (*Erkenntnis*), insofar as the term “cognition” attaches primarily to representations and not propositional attitudes.

We can see the advantages of this account when we look at the three objections I raised to Intellectualism in the previous section. Clearly, my interpretation accords with the Bxxvi textual reference to actualities that are presented via experience. My preferred interpretation also properly distinguishes between perception and hallucination. Since the intuited object is a partial constituent of the relevant sensory experience, it is the actuality of the object that grounds proof of its real possibility. In the case of hallucination, no external object is present, and so there is no corresponding ground of proof. Finally, in the case of the platypus prior to 1798—as well as Kant's own examples of telepathy, clairvoyance and ghostly matter—I take Kant to be appealing to the fact that there is no experienced or causally inferable actuality to which one might appeal in grounding the real possibility of such cases. This is clear from his point at the beginning of the next paragraph that

I leave aside *everything the possibility of which can only be derived from actuality in experience*, and consider here only the possibility of things through concepts *a priori*, about which I proceed to assert that it can never occur by itself solely from such concepts, but always only as formal and objective conditions of an experience in general. (A223/B270–1; emphasis added)

I take Kant's point here to be that his prior appeal to “experience and its known laws” (A223/B270) was an appeal to actualities that are either presented in particular experiences or are inferable via appeal

⁴³ It is this dependency relation that Kant emphasises when he says in *Metaphysik* K2 (1790s) that “I would have no inner sense if I had no outer sense” (V-Met-K2/Heinze, 28:771). Similar points are made in the Refutation of Idealism in the *Critique*.

to causal laws (A225–6/B272–3).⁴⁴ Again, I take my interpretation to explain better his appeal to actuality than that which could be offered by Intellectualism.

8.6 Conclusion

I have argued that “content”, conceived in terms of a correctness condition that can be the object of differing epistemic attitudes in and across persons, does not play an explanatorily significant role with respect to the constitution or generation of “intuition”—Kant’s term for the most primitive or basic kind of perceptual experience. I then argued that the debate concerning the content of experience be reconceived along the lines of the possession of cognitive abilities and the dependence relations that may or may not hold between intellectual and sensory abilities in the generation of intuition. The resulting framework for debate, between the positions I have labelled “Sensibilism” and “Intellectualism”, more fruitfully captures the central lines of contention that have implicitly or explicitly driven the conceptualism debate. I also presented several reasons why Sensibilism may be a preferable interpretation of Kant, not least because it seems best suited to make sense of a central aspect of his Critical philosophy—namely, the modal contribution of sensibility, via acquaintance, to our cognition of reality.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ For a weaker reading of Kant’s position in this passage, see Chignell (2014). I agree with Chignell that demonstration of empirical possibility requires showing that an object or state of affairs is not ruled out by the formal conditions of experience plus the actual obtaining empirical laws. I also agree that in many cases such demonstration may be too demanding. But I do not see that as licensing an interpretation according to which Kant is merely stating a kind of coherence condition with respect to background knowledge (Chignell 2014:591). By contrast, I concede that Kant may well be overstating his case against the possibility of telepathy, etc. However, all I need for my interpretation is that Kant appeals to something stronger than mere formal conditions of experience in determining real possibility, and that he construes experience’s contribution in many cases in terms of a presentation of actuality, rather than merely appealing to conditions of formal possibility. These points I take to be amply demonstrated by the relevant passages cited above from the Postulates.

⁴⁵ Thanks to Anil Gomes, Stefanie Grüne, Dennis Schulting, Andrew Stephenson and an anonymous reviewer for helpful comments and suggestions for clarification.