

Intuition & Presence

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How is it possible to intuit something *a priori*? An intuition is a representation of the sort which would depend immediately on the presence of an object. It therefore seems impossible originally to intuit *a priori*, since then the intuition would have to occur without an object being present, either previously or now, to which it could relate, and so it could not be an intuition.

Prolegomena, 4:281-2.*

Introduction

RECENTLY THERE HAS BEEN a resurgence of interest in the details of Kant’s theory of empirical intuition and the significance of these details for understanding Kant’s views on cognition and his transcendental idealism more generally.¹ One presumption of much of this work is that empirical intuitions “immediately present” their objects to a perceiving subject. Kant does repeatedly talk of the “immediacy” of intuition, and does so in relatively canonical contexts (A19/B33, A68/B93, A320/B376–7; JL 9:91), but it is not obvious which, if any, position in the philosophy of perception Kant takes to be entailed by this commitment to immediacy. However, in the secondary literature on Kant’s notion of (empirical) intuition, we typically see at least one, and perhaps all three of the following notions in play. First, that there is no inference, on the part of the subject, in the perceptual act of apprehension. Second, intuitions present their objects immediately in the sense that there is no mental intermediary to which the subject is related, and in virtue of which the subject is able to perceive her environment. Finally, and perhaps most controversially, that intuitions present their objects immediately in the sense that one cannot have the relevant intuition (be it inner or outer) without there being something which is thus intuited, and which is thereby made present to the subject’s consciousness. It is this last relational and existential conception of immediate presence that has proved the most controversial.²

¹ See McDowell (1996), McDowell (1998a); Hanna (2005); Allais (2007); Allais (2009); Hanna (2011a); Roche (2011); Allais (2011); Gomes (2014).

² For intentional object and representationalist readings of an object as being “immediately present” which would deny the existence claim see Sellars (1968); Aquila (1983); Pereboom (1988); Aquila (2003); Haag (2007); Aquila (2008); Watkins (2008); Grüne (2009); Watkins (2012); Stephenson (2015). See Allais (2009); Allais (2011); Gomes (2014); McLear (2016b) for discussion of “relationalist” readings of Kant. For readings that attempt to combine both representational and relational elements see McDowell (1998b); Hanna (2005); Hanna (2008); McDowell (2013).

In this paper I explicate the notion of “presence” [*Gegenwart*] as it pertains to intuition. Specifically, I examine two central problems for the position that an empirical intuition makes an object immediately present in the controversial third sense – viz. as an immediate relation to an existing particular in one’s environment. The first stems from Kant’s description of the faculty of imagination as providing intuitions in the *absence* of their objects, which might suggest that the notion of “presence” linked to that of intuition does not require the actual occurrent existence of what is so presented. The second problem stems from Kant’s discussion of hallucination, since if things with the subject were mentally the same whether she was perceiving an object or merely hallucinating, the object itself could not be said to be immediately present to her, as the reading requires.

I shall suggest that Kant’s writings indicate at least one possible means of reconciling our two problems with a conception of “presence” such that perceptual and hallucinatory states might be understood as mentally distinct kinds of states – i.e. as different kinds of intuition – rather than as intuitions of the same general kind, and which differ only in terms of their causal etiology. This may not be sufficient to *secure* the relationalist’s claim that intuition is an immediate relation to an existing particular in one’s environment, but it does show that opposition to this claim will require further argument.

Section one discusses the issue of presence with respect to intuition in greater detail. Section two articulates challenges that Kant’s remarks on imagination and hallucination present for the relational and existential reading of “presence”. Section three then examines the textual and philosophical basis for defending the relational claim.

1 Intuition & Presence

In the “*Stufenleiter*” passage from CPR (A320/B376–7) Kant defines an intuition as a kind of “singular” [*einzel*] and “immediate” [*unmittelbar*] representation that is “conscious” [*bewußt*] and has relation to an object [*Gegenstandsbezug*].³

Several interpreters have taken the general notion of “immediacy” here as a kind of presence to the mind, as is characteristic in perception. Call this notion of presence “*phenomenological presence*”. Charles Parsons and Lucy Allais have both advanced variants of this view.⁴

One might think that the criterion of “immediate relation to objects” for being an intuition is just an obscure formulation of the singularity criterion. But it evidently means that the object of an intuition is in some way directly present to the mind,

³ Cf. A19/B33, A68/B93, A320/B377, A713/B741; JL 9:91; MM 29:800, 888; VgM 29:970-3; VL 24:905. I shall assume throughout the rest of the paper that the immediacy of intuition is distinct from its singularity. Intuitions are also supposed to be, unlike sensations [*Empfindungen*] or mere “feelings” [*Gefühle*], *objective*, in the sense of relating to some object. So objectivity may be a necessary condition as well. For further discussion see Grüne (2009); McLear (2014). For Kant’s distinction between sensation and feeling see CJ 5:189, 203-6.

⁴ Other such proponents include Bird (2006), 119; Hanna (2008), Hanna (2011b).

as in perception, and that intuition is thus a source, ultimately the only source, of immediate knowledge of objects.⁵

it seems to me that Kant thinks that perception of empirically real objects involves those objects being directly present to consciousness, without mental intermediaries: it involves being in representational mental states which essentially involve the (empirically real) object as constituents.⁶

Both Parsons and Allais link the notion of immediacy to the other characteristics of intuition by way of appeal to our (contemporary) notion of a conscious experience. An empirical intuition immediately relates to its object in just the sense that a conscious experience has the characteristic phenomenology of immediately—i.e. non-inferentially, and without the presence of any intermediary—presenting something for apprehension by a conscious subject.

The notion that intuition involves no intermediary might be taken in one of two ways. According to the first way, a subject's awareness of an object *O* does not hold in virtue of their awareness of any other *object O'*. According to the second way, one's awareness of an object *O* does not hold in virtue of a further *psychological state*, which one must also occupy, which may or may not itself be a form of awareness. I take it that the conception of phenomenological presence construes this presence as non-inferential and immediate in only the first of these two senses.⁷

In §8 of the *Prolegomena* Kant links the concept of an intuition to the presence of its object.

How is it possible to intuit something *a priori*? An intuition is a representation of the sort which would depend immediately on the presence of an object. (Pr 4:281; cf. B72)

It is the conceptual link between intuition and the presence of its object that motivates Kant's discussion of the seemingly problematic nature of *a priori* intuition. The apparent implication is that the dependence of an intuition on a present object is supposed to be incompatible with the idea that an intuition could be *a priori*, for in such a case Kant says the *a priori* intuition would "precede" the object itself and do so "originally" (4:282). Kant's framework for articulating this problem seems to depend on interpreting "presence" [*Gegenwart*] as entailing *existence*. Though Kant is not explicit about this, the problem he seems to be aiming to articulate is one according to which an intuition (in its empirical sense) is taken to be one produced by a present

⁵ Parsons (1969), 112.

⁶ Allais (2011), 380.

⁷ It is compatible with the immediacy of intuition, as I have construed it here, that it be the product of mental processes; cf. Allais (2009), 394-5. However, this is not yet to say that intuition is the product of *synthesis*. For argument that we should not construe intuition as the product of synthesis see Allais (2009); Tolley (2013); McLear (2014), McLear (2015); TODO: cite Allais (this volume). For contrasting arguments see Longuenesse (1998); Grüne (2009).

object, while an a priori intuition (if such there be) would be one that is *not* produced by any object. In this Kant appears to be making a claim that parallels his use of “original” in the Transcendental Deduction to describe the status of the transcendental unity of apperception.

I call it [i.e. self-consciousness] the **pure apperception**, in order to distinguish it from the empirical one, or also the **original apperception**, since it is that self-consciousness which, because it produces the representation **I think**, which must be able to accompany all others and which in all consciousness is one and the same, cannot be accompanied by any further representation. (§16, B132)

The connection of “original” with production would seem to require that there exist something that does the producing. If that is correct, then in the *Prolegomena* passage that we’ve been considering Kant would then be asking how there could be a priori intuition which would “originally” precede but nevertheless productively depend on something’s subsequent existence? As Kant goes on to explicitly ask, in the last sentence of §8, “how can the *intuition* of an object precede the object itself?” (4:282). That is, how could an intuition which productively depends on the existence of its object, also precede, in the sense of not productively depending on, the object it is supposed to be an intuition of? An “a priori intuition” thus seems like a contradiction in terms.⁸ A natural reading, then, of §8 is that it conceives of intuition as, by definition, dependent on an existing object, which is the origin or ground of the intuition, and uses this definition to motivate the problem of a priori intuition.⁹ We might then conceive of intuition as follows:

Strong Presence-Dependence (SPD): If a subject S intuits an object O at a time T, then O exists and is suitably related to S at T¹⁰

According to SPD, whenever one has an intuition, there is something actually existing that one intuits. So, in the case of an outer empirical intuition, one only has an outer intuition when there is an actually existing object which is present to one in the intuition of it. SPD is thus incompatible with an account of intuition that includes hallucinations, imaginings, memories, or dreams in the class of possible outer intuitions.

Attributing SPD to Kant thus brings with it a high explanatory cost, for it might seem natural to include one’s veridical perception of a red ball, one’s hallucination of a red ball, and one’s memory of a red ball as all belonging together in the mental kind *outer intuition*, since they are

⁸ Thanks to Anil Gomes for encouraging clarity on this point.

⁹ This is how the passage is taken by Allais (2010, 59). Hanna (2001), 210 also construes intuition as clearly dependent on an existing object.

¹⁰ The notion of a suitable relation here is meant to be broad enough to accommodate various notions of the reliance of sensibility on “affection”, and is easily thought of here in straightforwardly causal terms. In the latter case we should construe this relation as excluding issues concerning deviant causal chains leading to the occurrence of a perception.

all, at least in a phenomenological sense, “spatial” representations. SPD must deny this. Only the successful perception of the red ball counts as an outer intuition. The other states, though perhaps phenomenologically similar, are nevertheless not outer intuitions.

However, Kant goes on, in the passage from §8 of the Prolegomena, to significantly weaken his initial claim by saying that,

It therefore seems impossible originally to intuit *a priori*, since then the intuition would have to occur without an object being present, **either previously or now**, to which it could relate, and so it could not be an intuition (Pr 4:281-2; my emphasis)

Here Kant indicates that an intuition only depends on the actual presence of of an object *for the initial intuition*, but not necessarily for subsequent ones. This suggests a weaker sense in which an intuition might depend on its object.

Moderate Presence-Dependence (MPD): If a subject S intuits an object O, then either O exists at T and is present to S, or did exist at some time prior to T and was present to S

MPD is compatible with an imagining or a hallucination counting as an intuition, so long as what was imagined or hallucinated was actually intuited at some prior point.

Interestingly though, Parsons and Allais seem divided as to whether it is SPD or MPD that correctly characterizes Kant’s view. Parsons seems to concede that,

Imagination being immediate in the required sense [of phenomenological presence], immediacy of a representation does not imply the existence of its object at all.¹¹

Clearly then, Parsons does not think that intuitions are strongly dependent on the existence of their object, if cases of imagination instantiate just the same kind of “immediate presence” as cases of veridical perception. In contrast, Allais holds that an empirical intuition “essentially involves the object” as a constituent.¹² This requires the SPD reading of intuition, since the intuited object must obviously exist if it is to be a constituent of the mental state.

2 Problems with Presence

Though both interpretive options, SPD and MPD, have a textual and philosophical basis in Kant’s work, they also stand in at least *prima facie* tension with other aspects of Kant’s account of the sources and nature of intuition. There are three significant hurdles to interpreting intuition as dependent on an existing object. The first, and most obvious, is that though *a priori* intuition is

¹¹ Parsons (1992), 83.

¹² Allais (2011), 380. I have argued for a similar position. See McLear (2016b), §5.2.

also a singular and immediate representation of an object (viz. space and time), the object so presented does not exist. These a priori intuited objects are, according to Kant, *ens imaginaria* – imaginary beings (A291/B347; cf. MFNS: Preface, 4:467; *Mrongovius Metaphysics* (1782-3), 29:820), and Kant emphasizes this as his argument in the *Prolegomena* continues.

There is, therefore only one way possible for my intuition to precede the actuality of the object and occur as an *a priori* cognition, namely if it contains nothing else except the form of sensibility, which in me as subject precedes all actual impressions through which I am affected by objects. (4:282; original emphasis).

A fully satisfactory account of the relational nature of intuition would have to explain the pure case as well as the empirical. Unfortunately, I lack the space required to elaborate such an account here.¹³ Bracketing this issue concerning a priori intuition, we'll examine the two further issues – viz. imagination and hallucination, both of which concern *empirical* intuition, in the following subsections.

2.1 Imagination & Presence

SPD is clearly threatened by Kant's account of the faculty of imagination [*Einbildungskraft*] and its capacity to generate intuitions without the presence of the object. For example, in the *Anthropology*, Kant introduces the faculty of imagination [*Einbildungskraft*] as a subfaculty of sensibility.¹⁴

Sensibility in the cognitive faculty (the faculty of intuitive representations) contains two parts: *sense* and the *power of imagination*. - The first is the faculty of intuition in the presence of an object, the second is intuition even *without* the presence of an object. (An 7:153; cf. 7:167; B151; MM 29:881; VM 28:449; DM 28:673)

Though Kant again puts things in terms of “presence” here, the implication seems to be that sensibility generates intuitions only of existing objects, while imagination generates intuition even in the absence of an existing object. If this is correct then Kant's conception of the imagination as an intuition-producing faculty is clearly a problem for any account of presence in terms of the current existence of its object. The suggested view would then take intuitions as *not* after all

¹³ I think that the most promising strategy for a general account is to distinguish between existence [*Existenz* or *Dasein*] and actuality [*Wirklichkeit*]. All intuitions are relations to actualities, but not all intuitions are relations to existences. Kant actually makes such a distinction at R 6324, 18:647 (between 1790 and 1793), specifically naming time and space as actualities but not existences. Obviously, this requires further discussion. On the cognitive role of intuition see McLear (2016b); McLear (2016a).

¹⁴ Kant's definition of the imagination and its powers is not unusual for the time. See, e.g. Baumgarten (2013), §§557-8.

dependent on the presence of the object they bring before the mind. Intuitions would then be merely self-standing representations that may or may not correspond to some existing object.¹⁵

The threat is perhaps tempered somewhat by Kant's distinction between an "original" [*ursprünglich*] or "productive" [*productiv, dichtend*] faculty, and one which is merely "reproductive" [*reproductiv, zurückrufend*] (7:167-8).¹⁶ For example, the productive imagination is partially responsible for the a priori representation of space and time, while reproductive imagination allows a subject to sensorily recall past presentations. So, on this line of thinking, in the case of intuiting a spatial object in vision or touch, the empirical intuition does indeed seem to depend on the presence of that object, as an object of outer sense, at some point in the subject's history, rather than its being a total fabrication of the mind.

However, when we ask *why* the status of one's present mental state as an intuition might depend on a past state of intuiting an outer object, things no longer seem so straightforward. The problem is that the existence of a present intuition, as generated by the imagination, seems to depend not so much on the particular existence of some previously intuited *object* as it does on the (previous) presentation of sensory properties characteristic of our experience of empirical objects. Kant makes this clear in his discussion, in the *Anthropology*, of the limits of the productive imagination.

The power of imagination (in other words), is either *inventive* (productive) or merely *recollective* (reproductive). But the productive power of imagination is nevertheless not exactly *creative*, for it is not capable of producing a sense representation that was *never* given to our faculty of sense; one can always furnish evidence of the material of its ideas. To one who has never seen *red* among the seven colors, we can never make this sensation comprehensible, but to the person who is born blind we cannot make any colors comprehensible, not even the secondary colors, for example, green, which is produced from the mixture of two colors. Yellow and blue mixed together give green; but the power of imagination would not produce the slightest idea of this color, unless it had *seen* them mixed together. This is exactly how it is with each one of the five senses, that is, the sensations produced by the five senses in their synthesis cannot be made by means of the power of imagination, but must be drawn originally from the faculty of sense. (An 7:167-8)¹⁷

¹⁵ Roche (2011), 361 argues that Kant's remarks on imagination pose a problem for understanding intuition as dependent on the presence of an object which it presents. See also Makkreel (1990), chs. 1-2; Haag (2007), 256-64; Grüne (2009), 41-3; Stephenson (2015).

¹⁶ Things are actually more complicated than this, as Kant's notion of a faculty of imagination covers various subfaculties, which have different cognitive roles, and which are controlled by a greater or lesser degree by the will. See Satura (1971), 113-141 for discussion.

¹⁷ Kant makes something like this argument in a variety of places. For example, in his discussion of skepticism in the A-edition Fourth Paralogism (A373-5), Kant argues that it would not be possible to simply *imagine* the entirety of the

What this suggests is that though the imagination cannot truly originally generate any sensory quality, it can combine anything to which it has been exposed. If we understand objects as ordered complexes of properties then the imagination seems capable of producing any object it can assemble from given sensory material. This would suggest that an intuited object need *never* have existed, but only the sensory material from which it is “assembled”. One might intuit (via imagination) an object which one has never before encountered by combining various sensory characteristics which one *has* previously encountered (e.g. a red cube and a green sphere) into some new object (e.g. a red sphere).¹⁸ This might also explain why Kant refers, further on in the *Prolegomena* §8 passage to the presence of an object “either previously or now to which the intuition could relate.” (4:281)

Kant’s view of imagination both explains why there might be a dependence relation of current intuition on past circumstances, and what exactly it is about one’s past circumstances that was important – viz. the exposure to sensory qualities that the imagination could not generate on its own. What this suggests is that though the imagination cannot generate any truly *original* sensory quality, it can combine anything to which it has been exposed. If true, this results in an even weaker form of presence-dependence.

Weak Presence-Dependence (WPD): If a subject S intuits an object O, then either O exists at T and is suitably causally related to S, or the sensory qualities characteristic of O were instantiated and suitably related to S at some time (or times) prior to T

With WPD in view, it is difficult to see how there could be textual evidence which might support Kant’s endorsing MPD over WPD. Kant’s stated commitments regarding the nature and capabilities of the imagination support WPD over MPD. His view of imagination both explains why there might be a dependence relation of current intuition on past circumstances, and what exactly it is about one’s past circumstances that was important – viz. the exposure to sensory qualities that the imagination could not generate on its own. This is not yet to say that Kant endorses WPD over SPD, but rather that MPD is not a stable intermediary position.

spatial world, since the imagination could not simply produce such representations without being originally exposed to them (cf. R 5400, cited in Caranti (2007), 33-4). Even Descartes seems to agree with this, noting in *Meditation I* that “[certain simple kinds of qualities] are as it were the real colours from which we form all the images of things, whether true or false, that occur in our thought” (AT 7:20). Though Descartes goes on to doubt our capacity to know even such basic qualities given the possible existence of an evil deceiver, it is notable that the deceiver must be something other than ourselves, in order to account for all the richness and variety of what we experience (however, see *Meditation VI* (AT 7:77), where Descartes wonders whether there could be some hidden faculty in ourselves producing all of our ideas). Cf. Baumgarten (2013), §559.

¹⁸ For a similar conclusion see Stephenson (2011), §1, and Stephenson (2015), §§3-4. Note that Stephenson argues for what he calls “General Affection Dependence” via considerations concerning information-processing and sensation. However, as is apparent from the above discussion, we can get to a version of this position via very general consideration of Kant’s discussion of the faculty of imagination, rather than any more specific appeal to the representational status of sensation or to human sensibility as an “information-processor.”

2.2 Hallucination & Presence

There are other texts which cause further, though not dissimilar, problems for an account of presence in terms of existence. Perhaps the most notable of these is the following remark of Kant's in the Refutation of Idealism.

From the fact that the existence of outer objects is required for the possibility of a determinate consciousness of our self it does not follow that every intuitive representation of outer things [*jede anschauliche Vorstellung äusserer Dinge*] includes at the same time their existence, for that may well be the mere effect of the imagination (in dreams as well as in delusions)...(B278-9; cf. A376; Pr 4:290).

This passage might be taken to suggest that there can be outer intuitions without outer objects and that the issue of whether an intuition presents anything actual is settled only with respect to, e.g., the experience's coherence with Kant's causal criterion of actuality.¹⁹ If true then the passage seems a clear counterexample to an existence-based view.

One issue with this text is that Kant does not explicitly refer to outer intuitions, but only to the "intuitive representation of outer things." It is not clear whether an intuitive representation of an outer thing is the same as an outer intuition.²⁰ However, given the reference to the imagination, it seems rather plausible that Kant is not indicating a new category of representation (i.e. the category of intuitive representation), but rather indicating that the imagination supplies intuitions in the absence of their objects, and does so most clearly in the case of dreams and delusions.

We are left with the following situation. SPD is perhaps suggested by the definition of intuition in the *Stufenleiter* as an immediate, singular, and conscious relation to an object (A320/B376-7), as well as by the initial definition of intuition in the *Prolegomena* (4:281). In contrast, Kant's further remarks concerning intuition in the *Prolegomena*, as well as his remarks on dreams and hallucinations in the Refutation, coupled with his many statements regarding the nature and limits of the imagination, strongly suggests that he holds only a much weaker position, where it is only the sensory qualities to which the subject previously needs to have been exposed, not an object which possesses them all – viz. WPD.

In the next section I argue that SPD is, at least, *compatible* with Kant's account of *empirical* intuition, and may in fact be the more preferable position to that of WPD when more systematic considerations are taken into account.

¹⁹ Kant states the causal criterion thusly, "That which is bound up with the material conditions of experience, that is, with sensation, is actual [*wirklich*]" (A218/B266). In the third note to the Refutation of Idealism Kant appears to reemphasize this by saying, "Whether this or that supposed experience be not purely imaginary, must be ascertained from its special determinations, and through its congruence with the criteria of all actual experience [*wirklichen Erfahrung*]" (B278-79). Pereboom (1988) relies heavily on this criterion to show how Kant grounds the actuality of objects represented in experience. See pp. 326, 333–5. Roche (2011) also relies heavily on this passage to argue that Kant must deny that intuition is, as a rule, strongly presence-dependent.

²⁰ Allais stresses this in her analysis of this passage; cf. Allais (2011), 395, note. 16. For criticism of this kind of move see Grüne (2009), 42-3.

3 Confusing the Inner with the Outer

A series of notes, or “*reflexionen*,” taken in 1790 as commentary on (or perhaps preparation for) a series of conversations with Kant’s former student Johann Gottfried Carl Christian Kiesewetter, present different attempts by Kant to elaborate ideas connected with his Refutation of Idealism, and specifically, with the connection between the having of an outer intuition and the existence of the object so intuited.²¹

First, Kant clearly distinguishes between sensing and imagining. For example, he says,

We have two sorts of intuition: sensible intuition, for which the object must be represented as present, and an imagining as intuition without the presence of the object. The imagining, if one is conscious of it as such, can also be considered as inner sensible intuition (18:619).

Interestingly, Kant says that though an imagining is an intuition, it is an “inner sensible intuition.” Why does he need to make this point? If an imagining of a spatial object, and a sensing of it are both on par as intuitions, then why would it need pointing out that imaginings are *inner* intuitions? This point is especially problematic given Kant’s repeated insistence that inner representations exist only in time and not in space, and that to think otherwise is “self-contradictory.”²²

Kant goes on to address the problem of hallucination, or more broadly, any involuntary imagining, which might lead one to have false beliefs concerning how things are. Kant suggests that the problem with such imaginings is primarily epistemic and doxastic—we cannot always tell when we are having a genuinely outer intuition or merely the appearance of one.

the question arises, whether that intuition which has the form of outer sense, like an imagining (in dreams or in a fever), is so identical to that which also has an object of outer sense that the two cannot be distinguished from each other. The answer is that in this condition of imagining it [i.e. the real] certainly cannot be distinguished [from the imaginary], for this is a deception of the power of judgment; but the question is properly whether it cannot be distinguished in general, i.e., whether one cannot be conscious that the one is an intuition of the senses [*Sinnenanschauung*], the other to be sure a sensible intuition [*sinnliche Anschauung*], but only in an imagining, for which no object outside the representation is present. The answer is that consciousness can accompany all representations, hence even that of an imagining, which, together with its play, is itself an object of inner sense, and of which it must be possible to become conscious as such, since we really distinguish such things as inner representations, hence existing in time, from the intuition of the senses (18:621).

²¹ For discussion of the notes and their English translation see Guyer’s discussion in Kant (2005), note 81, pp. 592-3.

²² R 6315, 18:618; cf. 18:621; R 6311 (in Kiesewetter’s hand), 18:611-12. The claim that spatial relations cannot be represented in time is also prominent in the first *Critique*. Cf. Bxl-i, A34/B50-1, B275-6.

Kant makes a number of claims in this passage, not all of which are obviously consistent with one another. First, he clearly states in the opening sentence that both imaginings and sensings are (or can be) intuitions, and that they can have the same “form”—viz. spatial form. In this way both seem to count as “outer” intuitions. One might reasonably then infer that the difference between them lies ultimately in their causal etiology—one is an outer intuition generated by the imagination, with no corresponding object present, the other is an outer intuition generated by the presence of the object (and its effect on the subject). Second, and perhaps on account of the first point, Kant seems to concede that an imagining and a sensing cannot be distinguished from one another via reflection alone. This is the cause of an “error of judgment” whereby we might be moved to err in our perceptual beliefs insofar as we make false judgments based on how things appear to us.²³ But, third, Kant also goes on to state that imaginings are the objects of inner sense, and that we “really distinguish” [*wirklich unterscheiden*] inner representations from the outer representations delivered by the senses.²⁴

Finally, just prior to the above quote Kant says,

What I represent to myself as spatial cannot be counted as a representation of inner sense, for the form of this is time, which has only one dimension (18:620-1)

This means that representations of things in space cannot be, themselves, *inner* representations, since then their form would be that of time only. This claim is consonant with Kant’s stated position in the first *Critique* (A34/B50-1), and is repeated many times in the other *reflexionen* constituting the Kiesewetter notes.²⁵ Kant thus appears to hold an incompatible set of claims. They are,

1. “Outer” sensing and imagining are cases of intuition, which have the same form
2. Sensing and imagining (other things being equal) cannot be distinguished by reflection alone
3. An “outer” sensing and an imagining have different forms (i.e. space vs. time) and are, in virtue of their differing forms, really different.

Obviously, a conflict arises between (1) and (3). Kant cannot, without equivocating on the meaning of “form”, endorse both claims at once, though he seems to in the paragraph quoted above. The plausibility of (2) depends on a sensing and an imagining being phenomenologically indiscriminable. Indeed, Kant *might* distinguish between the forms of inner and outer intuition on

²³ Kant appears to hold a “doxastic” theory of perceptual error, where experience only presents something, but does not make any claim concerning how that thing is. What is phenomenally presented is not itself accurate or inaccurate, it simply *is*. Perceptual error thus arises in judgment only, when the subject misjudges what has in fact been presented to her. See An §11 7:146 and A294/B350-1; cf. A293-4/B350; BL 24:83ff, 103; DL 720ff; VL 825ff. I discuss this point further below.

²⁴ Specifically, the representations derived from the senses of vision, hearing, and touch; cf. the distinction at An 7:154 between the “subjective” and “objective” sense modalities.

²⁵ See the references cited in note 22 above.

what is ultimately a *phenomenological* basis—representations that *seem* or otherwise present their content as in three dimensions have the “form” of space, while those with only one dimension have the “form” of time. We’ve already seen, in Parson’s remarks, cited in §1 above, that this is a not uncommon way of understanding the “immediacy” of what is present in an intuition. But if that is the case then (2) and (3) look incompatible as well, for if outer sensings and imaginings have differing phenomenological forms then they, other things being equal, *should* be distinguishable by reflection alone.

In fact, I do not believe the three claims are straightforwardly reconcilable. Part of the problem is that “form” has no fixed designation for Kant. Kant ties the notion of “form” to that which is “determinable” (vs. matter or that which is “determined”) (A266/B322). What is “form” in one case might be “matter” in another case. For example, a concept might be or give form to its content, but it is also the matter of a possible judgment (A266/B322; cf. JL 9:91, 101, 115). Given this ambiguity, I do not see how we can straightforwardly reconcile claims (1) and (3) above by means of an appeal to different “determinable” or “determined” entities. It seems extremely plausible that the subject matter which is “determined” in the Kiesewetter excerpt is sensation, and the determinable is the form of intuition. But Kant seems to claim both that the forms of sensing and imagining are the same, and that they are really different.

I therefore suggest that the best means of understanding Kant here is to say that he equivocates on the use of “form”. In claim (1) he intends the use of “form” to pick out a certain phenomenal similarity. For example, representations of spatial objects may all have a phenomenal character which reliably causes beliefs concerning apparent depth and breadth. This would explain why he endorses claim (2), in that it might be compatible with his views on imagination and sensing that similar phenomenal character might be had in both case.²⁶ Claim (3), in contrast, construes form in terms of actual spatial or temporal extent, where this is not meant as tracking the phenomenal character typically associated with appearances of such extent, but the actual property of being extended (or located, etc.) in space or time.

Thus the Kiesewetter texts, though helpful in drawing our attention to issues surrounding Kant’s distinction between sensing and imagining, do not seem to straightforwardly provide a clear and consistent position. However, when we examine Kant’s published work in light of them, we see several recognizable points—viz. that sensing and imagining are both intuitions; that sensing and imagining may be sufficiently phenomenologically alike that this would explain how they can be confounded in judgment; and that sensing and imagining, despite their similarities, are really distinct kinds of intuition.

²⁶ Note that the explanation of phenomenal indiscriminability in terms of similarity or even sameness of phenomenology is not, strictly speaking, in the text. However, it is both one plausible explanation of indiscriminability, and seems to perhaps be endorsed in Kant’s practical philosophy, specifically in his discussion of the feeling of *respect* (G 4:401), where Kant may be distinguishing respect from similar feelings, not on the basis of phenomenology, but rather on the basis of how the feeling is generated (i.e. by reason vs. sensibility).

Kant's basic idea in the published texts is that we restrict the class of genuinely "outer" intuitions to those intuitions which cognitively relate the subject to some real, spatial entity.²⁷ In contrast, hallucinations, memories, imaginings, and dreams are all cases in which one has an intuition, but not an *outer* intuition.²⁸ Instead, one has merely an *inner* intuition. Both the outer and the inner intuition might involve the occurrence of the same types of sensations or feelings, and thus the same type of phenomenology. This would explain Kant's endorsement of (2)—sensings and imaginings are phenomenally indiscriminable because they both involve the same type of (merely subjective) sensory occurrences. There is evidence for this way of understanding Kant's position in his published work.

For example, in his *Anthropology* of 1798 Kant explicitly ties perceptual illusion to a confusion of *inner* sense representations with representations given via *outer* sense.

It is said that inner sense is subject to *illusions*, which consist either in taking the appearances of inner sense for external appearances, that is, taking imaginings for sensations, or in regarding them as inspirations [*Eingebungen*] caused by another being that is not an object of external sense. So the illusion here is either *enthusiasm* or *spiritualism*, and both are *deceptions* of inner sense (An 7:161; original emphasis; cf. LA 25:61, 281, 1456).²⁹

This passage, and the many passages like it from previous anthropology lectures, gives support to my preferred interpretation, for it takes hallucination and illusion to be purely *inner* representations, and our mistaken beliefs when confronted with these appearances as the product of a kind of confusion concerning what is present or represented. On this view, hallucination, dreams, and any other kind of imagining, is a *different* mental state type from those intuitions of outer things. The latter are genuinely *outer* intuitions, while the former are merely *inner* intuitions. They differ in virtue of the form of intuition constitutively involved in their generation.

A related text, which might further support this idea, occurs in the B-preface, where Kant presents a modification of the argument of the Refutation of Idealism. The issue he there raises also suggests that the epistemic challenge outer intuition poses is that it cannot always be distinguished from inner intuition, not that there is only one type of representation (what we might call a *merely* outer intuition), which may or may not occur in connection with an outer object. He says,

²⁷ Note that I am not arguing that Kant restricts outer intuition to specifically *veridical* intuition. The account I articulate suggests that one may enjoy an outer intuition even when illuded in various respects.

²⁸ Note that in the case of a priori mathematical construction, the object being constructed is constructed a priori *in outer sense* and thus in space. I take it that, to the extent that the imagination is involved in construction, it is the *productive* rather than the *reproductive* imagination. Hence, mathematical construction, which requires no existing object, is importantly different from cases of hallucination, dreaming, etc. that I discuss here. Thanks to Emily Carson for discussion of this point.

²⁹ See also Kant's remarks in the *Anthropology* concerning various kinds of insanity and dementia (7:214-16).

Now which given intuitions actually correspond to outer objects, which therefore belong to outer sense, to which they are to be ascribed rather than to the imagination—that must be decided in each particular case (Bxli; note).

This suggests that from the first-person point of view one is not always in a position to distinguish outer from inner intuition. One cannot always tell whether what one is experiencing is a genuine spatially extended object, or merely an inner ersatz sensory object generated by one's imagination.

The admission of the possibility of confusing inner with outer intuition allows Kant to individuate intuition via the particulars to which it relates; in the case of outer intuitions via spatial particulars, in the case of inner intuitions via temporally ordered subjective states. There are several points in the first *Critique* where Kant appears to suggest that we individuate intuitions in terms of such relations. For example,

This consciousness of my existence in time is thus bound up identically with the consciousness of a relation to something outside me, and so it is experience and not fiction, sense and not imagination, that inseparably connects the outer with my inner sense; for outer sense is already in itself a relation of intuition to something actual outside me; and its reality, as distinct from imagination, rests only on the fact that it is inseparably bound up with inner experience itself, as the condition of its possibility (Bxl; note).

Here Kant seems to be tying outer intuitions to actually existing spatio-temporal particulars that are (at least empirically) distinct from the cognizing subject. What's more, the occurrence of such outer intuitions in the mental life of the subject is a condition of the possibility of inner sense. This is what distinguishes an intuition of outer sense from a merely inner intuition that might be generated by the imagination, as in a case of hallucination. The contrast Kant makes between intuitions of spatio-temporal particulars (i.e. genuinely outer intuitions) and inner intuitions generated by imagination suggests that intuitions of actual spatio-temporal particulars are genuinely different from intuitions generated by the power of imagination, even when one cannot subjectively discriminate between them. Kant distinguishes between genuine experiences and mere imagination of spatial particulars in the Refutation as well.

The proof that is demanded must therefore establish that we have **experience** and not merely **imagination** of outer things (B275; original emphasis).

If this is correct, then we can see why, in the Kieseewetter notes, Kant would endorse claims (2) and (3)—that sensing and imagining (other things being equal) cannot be distinguished by reflection alone, and that an “outer” sensing and an imagining differ in virtue of their different constitutive forms (space vs. time). We can even, at least to a limited extent, understand

these claims consistently with claim (1)—that an “outer” sensing and a putatively “outer” imagining are both cases of intuition, and thus have a “form” which determines its sensory content. However, their specific forms, or modes of determination, differ. Imaginings are, on the above interpretation, intuitions. But they are ultimately *inner* rather than outer intuitions. This interpretation gets us as close as I think is possible to the points being made in the Kisewetter notes, without generating the unwanted inconsistency.

I thus suggest that Kant’s considered position is that perceptual representations of external objects are not merely causally distinguishable from representations generated by the imagination, but are instances of genuinely different representational types than those which are the product of hallucination, dreams, or other kinds of imagining. Otherwise, Kant would not need to repeatedly distinguish sensation from imagination, or outer intuition from inner. He could instead have simply held that there is one type of representation which may have different causes, either external or internal. But this seems to be exactly the position he denies. Kant does not locate the problem with imagination in the difficulty of connecting a particular representational type—intuition—with its causal source, and using this causal source as the criterion for determining whether an intuition is inner or outer. Instead, he argues that the epistemic difficulty for intuition lies in the fact that distinct representational state types (outer vs. inner intuitions) have reflectively indistinguishable phenomenology, which leads to errors in judgment regarding what actually appears to one. So, in any particular case, we must rely on how our experience of the object causally coheres with the other objects we experience.

An obvious objection might seem to loom for the above account. It is surely the case that one can have a hallucination concerning a spatial object, e.g. the Macbeth case – “is this a dagger which I see before me?”. Further, it seems that in hallucination of a spatially extended object (or a dream or imagining of it) there are spatial properties that might ostensibly be thought to be part of or present in the hallucination, such as relative spatial position (e.g. Macbeth asks if the dagger is *before*, in the sense of *being in front of*, him). On the account I have suggested, hallucinations are inner intuitions, which have only temporal form (A34/B50ff), and thus lack spatial properties, including relative spatial properties. So how could a merely inner intuition be a hallucination of something in space?

I believe that the account I ascribe to Kant can make two points in reply. First, Kant seems to think that hallucination and perception may well share the same (or similar) sensory character, which is to say that the very same kind of inner sensations (as modifications of the subject) may be involved in each kind of state. This may be the best explanation of their phenomenal indiscriminability. But, as I discussed above, Kant seems to reject the idea that phenomenal indiscriminability between the inner and outer entails that the same form of intuition is in play. In fact, given his denial that space could be the form of inner sense (A34/B350), Kant *must* reject such a claim. Otherwise he would have been able to refute dogmatic and skeptical idealism on phenomenological grounds alone. Both dogmatic and skeptical idealism, on Kant’s view, assume that objects in space are merely appearances in inner sense (A370-1; B274-5). But, as

the complex arguments of both the Fourth Paralogism and the Refutation of Idealism indicate, Kant never took phenomenological considerations as arguing against the idealist position. If anything, they were arguments *for* skeptical or dogmatic idealism.

Second, since, as I discussed above, Kant endorses a doxastic theory of perceptual error, and since he grounds the existence of perceptual error at least in part on the influence (perhaps causal) of sensibility on the understanding (A294/B350-1; cf. A293-4/B350; cf. the references cited in note 23 above.), he has ample resources to argue that hallucination involves an important doxastic aspect. In the Macbeth example, Macbeth is enjoying a mental state whose phenomenal properties are similar to those he would enjoy were it the fact that he was seeing a dagger, and it may well be the case that these sensory features are causing him to have a mistaken belief – viz. that there is a dagger he sees before him. Whether he is in fact enjoying an experience that is identical to one in which he sees a dagger is very much an open question. He may be. But it is also the case that he may not be, and that the causal influence of his sensibility on his doxastic processes has moved him to the belief that he *is* seeing a dagger, even though his experience may be, in many ways very different from a perceptual experience of a dagger – e.g. by being a merely inner intuition.

Assuming that the causal influence of sensibility on the understanding is to be understood at least partly in terms of similarity in the type of sensation(s) present to inner and outer sense, Kant seems to allow that there are phenomenal similarities, based on an at least partial identity between types of phenomenal properties, between hallucination and perception, while also allowing that there may be phenomenal differences between the two kinds of intuition that one is not always in a position to reflectively distinguish. The phenomenal similarities form part of a causal or quasi-causal explanation of a subject's susceptibility to make erroneous judgments concerning what kind of experience she is having. Hence, her report on the content of her experience may well be that it is of some outer object, when in fact it is merely an inner intuition.

One might object, at this point, that too little is being left to the object of outer intuition to think that it could plausibly be present to the experiencing subject when she is in the good case. After all, the presence (or possibility) of the same sensory modifications in both cases, might suggest that the outer object drops out or is “screened off” from our awareness, because it doesn't play a sufficient role in constituting the phenomenal character of the intuition.³⁰

I think there are at least two defensible replies on behalf of Kant's view here. First, while there may be some phenomenal property types that are shared by both the inner and outer intuitions, there is not a total match between the two. Hence there is at least some role for the relevant objects in constituting the phenomenal character of the relevant intuitions. This may seem ad hoc, but it is important to remember that Kant apparently has principled grounds to deny that phenomenal character is the same in both cases, because he denies that there is the same constitutive form of intuition present in both cases (space vs. time). Further, we might want

³⁰ For discussion of such “screening off” worries in the contemporary literature see Martin (2004), 60-70; Martin (2006), 369-70; Nudds and O'Callaghan (2009), 338.

to deny that Kant attributes phenomenal character to spatial or temporal representation at all, restricting it only to sensory representation, which is ordered by space and time. The content of inner and outer intuition would then differ on some non-phenomenal basis, which might be sufficient to avoid the worry of the outer object's being "screened off".

Second, it is not at all clear that, for Kant, the relevant way in which objects are "present" to us in perception is to be ultimately understood in phenomenological terms, and thus in terms of the (sensory) phenomenal character of the relevant intuition or mental state. Certainly this is not true for the way in which mathematically constructed objects are "present" to us in pure intuition.³¹ Even if we do require that the intelligibility of any existing object's being present to the mind in the intuition of it must depend on its being *sensibly* present (surely an attractive thought), the explanatory role of its specifically sensory character may be rather superficial. For example, it may be that the way in which intuition makes something present does not consist in its revealing a special class of properties, so much as revealing the metaphysical (as opposed to merely logical) compossibility of whatever properties may be presented in intuition.³² I briefly discuss this point in further detail in the final section.

While the position I have suggested does not resolve every issue raised by the texts, it makes good sense of a wide variety of texts, relies primarily on clear statements in published works such as the *Prolegomena* and *Anthropology* rather than solely on statements in Kant's notes, and evinces the proper charity in rendering Kant's stated positions concerning intuition and imagination coherent.

If this account is correct then two further points are relevant. First, the above account is not only compatible with, but in fact entails, SPD as opposed to WPD. On the above account one cannot have an outer intuition without there being something in space that one intuits. Imaginings, which include memories, hallucinations, dreams, and the like, are all inner intuitions. Something is thus made present to the mind in these cases, but it is merely sensory.

Thus, for the purposes of the relationalist's reading of the Kantian notion of immediate presence, we have at least shown that ascribing SPD to Kant is compatible with his views (and the texts) concerning imagination, hallucination, and dreams. Thus SPD is compatible with two of the most significant difficulties for this position – viz. that Kant allows that the faculty of imagination generates intuitions, and that members of the class of imaginings (including dreams and hallucinations) are reflectively indistinguishable from genuine sensings.

Second, the coherence of the proposed account requires that we reject a reading of the difference between the forms of inner and outer sense (i.e. time and space) that ultimately locates

³¹ Again, there is the relevant question here of how much we should separate or connect phenomenal character with sensation and feeling.

³² This puts Kant's view in stark contrast to contemporary views of perception which aim to explain the mind's grasp of the objective world in terms of its grasp of the specifically *sensory* qualities of the world (e.g. colors, sounds, tastes, and smells). See Campbell (2002), chs. 6-7. Campbell construes such sensory experience as fundamentally important for objective thought because it is our only route to "the qualitative categorical properties" constituting the objective world (Campbell (2005), 105; cf. Campbell (2011), 272-4).

it in the phenomenal discriminability of the two kinds of intuition. If the above interpretation is correct then inner and outer intuitions need not always be reflectively phenomenally discriminable, and may in fact share the same (or similar) phenomenology. This is an interesting result, as it may contravene those interpretations of Kant's theory of mathematics which base themselves on a perceptual or quasi-perceptual interpretation of the nature of pure intuition (e.g. in terms of the general characteristics of visual imagery).³³

So neither the passage concerning intuitive representation at B278-9, nor the passage concerning imagination in the *Anthropology* entails that Kant must reject his position, stated in the *Prolegomena*, that every intuition depends on the immediate presence of its object. Kant may coherently distinguish between outer intuitions, which depend immediately on the presence of some spatial object, and inner intuitions, which depend immediately on the presence of a merely sensory "object" or state. These representations do not differ simply in terms of their cause, but rather in terms of their form. Only outer intuitions have spatial form. In cases where one's imagination "runs away with itself" one may be unable to distinguish between the two. But this inability to discriminate between distinct types of mental state does not entail that the same mental state is involved in each case. Indeed, by distinguishing outer experience from imagination, Kant is explicit in denying this.

4 Conclusion

To review, I have argued that, contrary to the position I have called "weak presence-dependence" (WPD), intuition does indeed depend on the presence of its object. This account does not show that intuition *alone* can provide cognition or knowledge of an object, but it does provide the material to avoid one central and common objection to the relationalist conception of experience — viz. that our sensory experiences (or empirical intuitions) of the world could be just as they are and yet the world be fundamentally different, as with Descartes' famous demon scenario.³⁴ In attributing this position to Kant I take him to be evincing a commitment to a conception of the mind as being fundamentally in touch with reality, which suits his general disdain for radical forms of skepticism.³⁵

However, the proposed account does not necessarily *secure* a relational reading of intuition, as there may be other considerations which militate against such a reading. First and foremost, we need a conception of the cognitive role of intuition that can accommodate Kant's remarks concerning a priori intuition. There are also other issues of note. For example, Kant's views concerning sensation may prohibit a relational conception of perception. Alternately, considerations stemming from the most plausible overall interpretation of transcendental idealism may

³³ For example see Strawson (1966), ch. 5; Parsons (1969), Parsons (1992); Carson (1997); Friedman (2000); Kjosavik (2009); Friedman (2012).

³⁴ See McDowell (2008).

³⁵ See Chignell (2010) for discussion of Kant's views concerning skepticism and its significance.

likewise require reconsideration of Kant's commitments in the philosophy of perception. Thus, the proposed account, if successful, removes a significant hurdle for a relational reading of intuition, but there remains much work to be done.³⁶

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³⁶ Thanks to Lucy Allais, Anil Gomes, Michael Oberst, Justin Shaddock, Andrew Stephenson, Clinton Tolley, Eric Watkins, and participants at both the 2014 colloquium session at the Pacific APA in San Diego and the 2014 Midwest NAKS conference at Washington University in St. Louis for helpful comments and discussion.

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