Kant on Perceptual Content

Colin McLear
University of Nebraska–Lincoln
colinmclear.net | mclear@unl.edu

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Abstract

Call the idea that states of perceptual awareness have intentional content, and in virtue of that aim at or represent ways the world might be, the 'Content View.' I argue that though Kant is widely interpreted as endorsing the Content View there are significant problems for any such interpretation. I further argue that given the problems associated with attributing the Content View to Kant, interpreters should instead consider him as endorsing a form of acquaintance theory. Though perceptual acquaintance is controversial in itself and in attribution to Kant, it promises to make sense of central claims within his critical philosophy.

> He who merely senses and does not judge does not err. Thus every error lies in judgement. Judgements are actions of the understanding and of reason.
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> *Wiener Logik*, 24:833.

Contemporary philosophers of mind commonly speak of the representational or 'intentional' content of a mental state. Mental states are intentional—that is, have intentional content—just in case they aim at or are directed towards some actual or possible object, property, or state of affairs.

Call the idea that states of perceptual awareness have intentional content, and in virtue of that aim at or represent ways the world might be, the 'Content View.' What I want to discuss here is the Content View as an interpretation of Immanuel Kant's conception of perceptual experience, or in his terminology, the having of an empirical intuition. I argue for two claims.

First, that the Content View is an unsatisfactory interpretation of Kant despite the extremely widespread embrace of it in contemporary Kant scholarship. Second, that given the problems associated with attributing the Content View to Kant, interpreters should consider him as endorsing a form of acquaintance theory. In particular, interpreters should eschew interpreting Kant as ascribing to any form of sense-data acquaintance theory in favour of attributing to him the view that mind-independent tracts of a subject's environment are partially constitutive of the subject's perceptual states.[1] This form of environmental acquaintance, however controversial in itself and in attribution to Kant, promises to make sense of central claims within his critical philosophy.

[1] For contemporary proponents of various forms of perceptual acquaintance with elements of the subject's environment, see Martin 2000, Travis 2004, Brewer 2006, Martin 2006, Travis 2006, Travis 2007, Fish 2009, Brewer 2011.

I do not intend for the positive portion of my argument to be fully made here. It requires, at the very least, a substantive discussion of the argument of the Transcendental Deduction, an examination of various texts concerning Kant's views regarding hallucination, as well as consideration of his epistemology. I pursue these issues elsewhere.[2] But I do hope to show here that much of the contemporary Kant scholarship is mistaken in its largely unexamined assumptions concerning how best to place Kant with regard to the philosophy of perception, and that a constructive reorientation towards a more plausible and historically accurate (though perhaps unexpected) interpretation of his view is possible.

The paper proceeds in six parts. First, I shall discuss the Content View more thoroughly. Second, I will introduce some of Kant's terminology and discuss his view of the cognitive faculties and their respective roles. I then discuss two opposing interpretations that nevertheless both presuppose the Content View in their readings of Kant. In section four I provide three arguments which tell against Kant's endorsing the Content View. Finding the Content View wanting as an interpretation, I examine, in section five, alternative ways of understanding Kant's notion of perceptual givenness, first in terms of acquaintance with mind-dependent sense-data and second in terms of acquaintance with the subject's environment. Finally, in section six, I summarize the argument of the paper.

1 The Content View

I am calling the view that experiential states possess their intentional status in virtue of relations to content, the 'Content View'.[3] A contemporary proponent of the Content View, Susanna Siegel, explains the view as follows.

> the Content View can be refined into a proposal that finds the following similarity between visual experiences and beliefs: like beliefs, maps, and newspapers, visual experiences have contents, and just as the contents of beliefs are conditions under which the belief state is true, so the contents of experiences are conditions under which the experience is accurate. According to this proposal, experiences are the kinds of states that can be accurate, and their contents are conditions under which they have this status. (Siegel 2010, p. 30)

[2] I make a start on these issues in McLear 2015, McLear Forthcoming a, Mclear Forthcoming b.

[3] Here and throughout I will simply assume that the specification of additional conditions may well be needed to successfully characterize the occurrence of an experience and its content, causal conditions being the most obvious. So the 'in virtue of' relation between subject and content need not be the whole story. But it is the story I am mainly concerned with here. Hence, I will stick with the less complicated explication of the Content View as stated above.

So, according to the Content View, part of what it is for a mental state to count as an experience is that it can be evaluated for its correctness, and the conditions of its correctness are determined by its content.

It is important that the nature of the relation to content in virtue of which the experience occurs be understood as requiring more than the experience's merely being non-arbitrarily *associated* with a representational content. For one might plausibly agree that there are non-arbitrary conditions for associating experiences with particular representational contents, without thereby thinking that experience is something that is had *in virtue of* a relation to a representational content.[4] It is this 'in virtue of' claim which I take to be the distinctive claim of the Content View.

Given this characterization of the Content View it might be helpful to see how it would work in a toy example.[5] Suppose, for example, that an experience E has the following content C:

> (**C**) That cup is white

This content determines a correctness condition V:

> (**V**) S's experience E is correct iff the cup visually presented to the subject as the content of the demonstrative is white and the content C corresponds to how things seem to the subject to be visually presented

Here the content of the experiential state functions much like the content of a belief state to determine whether the experience, like the belief, is or is not correct. But a proponent of the Content View might also argue for the existence of perceptual contents that are not conceptual in nature. Whichever kind of content is appealed to, it is the fact of the state's having content that determines a correctness condition that allows token mental states with that content to map, mirror, or otherwise track aspects of the subject's environment.

I believe that the Content View has been assumed by many interpreters as best describing Kant's position concerning the nature of experience.

2 Kant's Dictum

Now that Kant has come up, I want to briefly introduce some of his terminology. Kant distinguishes two distinct faculties in the cognition of empirical objects. The first he calls *sensibility*, the function of which is to make objects consciously available to a subject. The second faculty

[4] See Pautz 2009 for discussion of difficulties surrounding a proper characterization of the Content View. Pautz considers experience to be straightforwardly *identical* with a particular kind of relation to a representational content.

[5] For this way of setting up the position see Schellenberg 2011, 726.

is that of the *understanding*, whose function is to enable a subject to think about the objects given by sensibility (A19/B33; See the references section for a key to the abbreviations used to refer to Kant's works).

Sensibility yields what Kant calls 'intuitions' (*Anschauungen*) (A19/B33) whereas the understanding yields 'concepts' (*Begriffe*) (A19/B33). Kant defines intuitions and concepts as forms of conscious objective awareness (A320/B376–7), and more broadly, as types of what he terms '*Vorstellung*', commonly translated in English as either 'representation' or 'presentation.'[6] Issues arise with both of these translations, but I will follow convention in translating it as 'representation' in what follows.

The main point I wish to emphasize in introducing Kant's technical terminology is his firm separation of the faculty of sensibility and the intuitions it yields from that of the understanding and the concepts it spontaneously generates. Kant famously put the division this way,

> Our nature is so constituted that our intuition can never be other than sensible; that is, it contains only the mode in which we are affected by objects. The faculty, on the other hand, which enables us to think the object of sensible intuition is the understanding. To neither of these powers may a preference be given over the other. Without sensibility no object would be given to us, without understanding no object would be thought … What's more, these two faculties or capacities cannot exchange their functions. The understanding is not capable of intuiting anything, and the senses are not capable of thinking anything. (A51/B75)

Here Kant indicates that it is a necessary condition of being given an object that a subject's sensibility be put into operation. Moreover, Kant very firmly emphasizes that each faculty plays a special role in the broader cognitive life of a subject, and these roles are not to be exchanged (see also A50/B74, A51/B75–6, A271/B327).

Kant elsewhere makes remarks that suggest the operation of a subject's sensible receptivity is also *sufficient* for being given an object. For example, consider what Kant says right at the beginning of the first chapter of the first *Critique*. He says,

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[6] The translation of *Vorstellung* as 'representation' has figured in prominent English translations by Kemp Smith and Guyer and Wood. 'Presentation' figures in the Hackett translations by Werner Pluhar. Though I think 'presentation' is a more neutral term, and for that reason preferable to 'representation', it sits poorly with Kant's Latin gloss of '*Vorstellung*' as '*representatio*' in the '*Stufenleiter*' passage at A320/B376. For further discussion of this issue see the Pluhar translation of the first *Critique*, Kant 1996, p. 22, n. 73. Susanna Schellenberg (2011, p. 714) goes so far as to attribute the Content View to Kant solely on the basis of the '*Stufenleiter*' passage. But we should not conclude solely from a translation of '*Vorstellung*' as 'representation' that Kant endorses either a representationalist or an indirect realist theory of perception. The terminology used must make sense of, and cohere with, Kant's overall view.

> Objects are given to us by means of sensibility, and it alone yields us intuitions; they are thought through the understanding, and from the understanding arise concepts. (A19/B33)

One way of reading this text takes it as stating that sensibility is the faculty by means of which objects are given to us, and the relevant representational kind by which this is done is that of intuition. Similarly, the understanding is the faculty by means of which objects are thought, with the relevant representational kind being that of concepts.

One might nevertheless object that the text falls short of a clear commitment to the sufficiency of sensibility alone in giving an object, for it is perhaps possible to read the text as saying that though objects are given *by means of* sensibility, the understanding nevertheless plays a necessary role in their being given as well.[7] However, further textual evidence that Kant considers sensibility sufficient for giving objects may be found in the introduction to the Transcendental Deduction (§13),

> In contrast [to the pure forms of intuition], the categories of the understanding do not at all put forward conditions under which objects in intuition can be given to us. Consequently, objects could indeed appear to us without their being necessarily related to functions of the understanding, and therefore without the understanding containing their conditions a priori. (A89/B122; see also A90/B122–3, B132, B145)

As other commentators have noted, this passage clearly says that objects may be given in intuition independently of any act of the understanding.[8]

Therefore, given these seemingly straightforward pronouncements as to the separate cognitive roles of sensibility and understanding in providing for empirical cognition of objects, it seems that an interpretation of Kant which respects these pronouncements is preferable to one that does not.

Letus call this interpretation of the division of cognitive labor between the sensibility and understanding 'Kant's Dictum.' It says,

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[7] Thanks to Stefanie Grüne for impressing this point on me.

[8] See Hanna 2005, Hanna 2008, Allais 2009, Schulting 2012. Some have argued that this apparent statement of sufficiency is misleading or even inconsistent with the views Kant develops in the body of the Transcendental Deduction. See, for example, Wolff 1963, pp. 156–7; Longuenesse 1998, pp. 226–7. On my view such interpretations fail to fully appreciate Kant's arguments concerning the nature of intuition in the Transcendental Aesthetic, and attribute to Kant an unnecessarily strong set of demands on objective representation. For further argument about the necessary conditions of objective representation see McLear 2011, McLear Forthcoming c. Thanks to an anonymous referee for urging clarity on this point.

> (**Kant's Dictum**) Sensibility is sufficient for giving an object but the understanding is necessary for thinking it

Hence, one desideratum for interpreting Kant is that one's interpretation respects Kant's Dictum.[9] As we shall see, one of the problems with attributing a version of the Content View to Kant is that one thereby fails to respect Kant's Dictum.

3 Proponents of the Content View

At this point I want to provide some evidence for thinking that contemporary interpreters of Kant, who otherwise differ quite markedly concerning the interpretation of his perceptual theory, agree that he endorses the Content View.

Perhaps the most prominent recent interpretation of Kant as endorsing the Content View is found in John McDowell's 1994 book *Mind and World*. McDowell's project there is to show, given certain presuppositions concerning the nature of justification, how it is that experience can play a justificatory and not merely causal role in the fixation of belief. In the course of this argument McDowell articulates very clearly a commitment to construing representational content as the kind of thing that is correct or incorrect. He says,

> The very idea of representational content brings with it a notion of correctness and incorrectness: something with a certain content is correct, in the relevant sense, just in case things are as it represents them to be. I can see no good reason not to call this correctness 'truth.' But even if, for some reason, we reserve that title for correctness in this sense when it is possessed by things with conceptual content, it seems a routine thought that there can be rational connections between the world's being as a possessor of one bit of content represents it and the world's being as a possessor of another bit of content represents it, independently of what kind of content is in question.[10]

McDowell explains the close connection between the idea of representational content and that of correctness in terms of the normative character of any world-directed mental state, a paradigmatic instance of which is judging that something is the case. He says,

[9] Similarly, whether the understanding is sufficient by itself to think of objects is a difficult issue. I suggest a way of understanding how thought might have an object independent of intuition in the final section. In any case, neither intuition nor thought is sufficient for *cognition*, for this requires both together.

[10] McDowell 1996, p. 162. Many of McDowell's interlocutors share similar views. See Evans 1982, p. 202; Peacocke 1992, pp. 55, 65; Burge 2003, p. 506.

> To make sense of the idea of a mental state's or episode's being directed towards the world, in the way in which, say, a belief or judgement is, we need to put the state or episode in a normative context. A belief or judgement to the effect that things are thus and so—a belief or judgement whose content (as we say) is that things are thus and so—must be a posture or stance that is correctly or incorrectly adopted according to whether or not things are indeed thus and so. (If we can make sense of judgement or belief as directed towards the world in that way, other kinds of content-bearing postures or stances should easily fall into place). (McDowell 1996, pp. xi–xii)

Here McDowell claims that beliefs and judgements have a particular way of disclosing the world to a subject and that this is a way in which we might understand world-directed mental states more generally. He further claims that the way in which a mental state is directed at the world is in terms of its possessing a correctness condition concerning how the world in fact is. McDowell then relates his understanding of such world-disclosing or world-directed states to perceptual experience.

> We should understand what Kant calls 'intuition'—experiential intake—not as a bare getting of an extra-conceptual Given, but as a kind of occurrence or state that already has conceptual content. In experience one takes in, for instance sees, that things are thus and so. That is the sort of thing one can also, for instance, judge. (McDowell 1996, p. 9)

McDowell here utilizes Kant's term 'intuition' (*Anschauung*) which McDowell equates with 'experiential intake.' So he endorses the idea that intuition has content (being necessary for our 'taking in' that something is the case), and that it is in virtue of this content that the experiential state, together with the world, is either correct or incorrect. From this we can conclude that intuitions have representational content, that this entails that such content is assessable for its correctness, and that intuitions with content are thereby mental states assessable for their correctness. Hence, McDowell's interpretation clearly understands Kant as endorsing a version of the Content View.

We can get a better sense of those positions which contrast with McDowell's proposed interpretation by first looking at a contemporary advocate of the existence of non-conceptual content. Christopher Peacocke has articulated an influential conception of the representational content of a subject's spatial representations—what he dubs 'scenario' content—which involve ways of filling out space around the perceiver (Peacocke 1992, Ch. 3). Peacocke does not claim any basis in Kant for the view, but it has a clear resonance with Kant's conception of spatial representation as cognitively basic. Scenario contents are determined by labelling a fixed origin

(usually one of the perceiver's body parts, e.g. the centre of the chest), axes (e.g. directions with respect to the centre of the subject's chest), and a time. Specification of a scenario content in this manner yields correctness conditions. A fully specified scenario content—a 'positioned' scenario—will be correct when the space around the perceiver at that time matches the content of the subject's representation of that space, and the orientation of surfaces and objects in it (Peacocke 1992, p. 63).

Consideration of Peacocke's notion of scenario content helps clarify the non-conceptualist opposition to McDowell's conceptualism. Scenario content, qua non-conceptual, differs from the kind of representational content that McDowell recognizes in two important ways. First, scenario contents are contents attributed to the subject regardless of what other conceptual capacities the subject may have. Scenario contents are thus meant to capture aspects of the percieving subject's experience that may well outrun the subject's own capacities for articulation.[11]

Second, scenario contents are correct in a manner that is altogether distinct from propositional contents, which are true or false depending on whether the conditions set out by the concepts constituting the proposition are satisfied. In contrast, scenario content, much like the content of a map or a recording, is accurate or inaccurate. It thus admits of degrees of approximation.[12]

Thus, for the non-conceptualist, while it is still the case that a subject's mental states only count as representational in virtue of possessing correctness conditions, the nature and articulability of these correctness conditions differs radically from those set out by the conceptualist.

We can see these two features of non-conceptualism at work in an interpretation of Kant that is, in many ways, directly opposed to McDowell's conceptualism. Robert Hanna has argued that, for Kant, sensible intuitions possess wholly non-conceptual representational content. We can see this in two quotes from Hanna, the first of which describes the non-conceptualist position and attributes it to Kant, while the second articulates in greater detail the kind of representational content Hanna thinks is present in perceptual experience.

> Non-conceptualism holds that non-conceptual content exists and is representationally significant … Non-conceptual cognitive content in the contemporary sense is, for all philosophical intents and purposes, identical to intuitional cognitive content in Kant's sense. (Hanna 2005, p. 248)

[11] Endorsement of this thesis sometimes goes under the name 'state non-conceptualism' or 'relative non-conceptualism'. See Heck 2000, Speaks 2005; for usage in the Kant literature see Allais 2009, Hanna 2005, 2008, 2011b.

[12] See also Burge 2003. This conception of non-conceptual content also goes under name 'content non-conceptualism' or 'absolute non-conceptualism.' See, again, Heck 2000, Speaks 2005.

> essentially non-conceptual content is either accurate or inaccurate, and as I have suggested, inherently poised for use in the intentional actions of conscious animals. (Hanna 2008, p. 58)

We can thus see that for Hanna, intuitional content is non-conceptual but nevertheless representational—it expresses an accuracy condition in virtue of which the mental state represents some portion of the mind-independent world. Hanna's position (both on its own and as attributed to Kant) regards this nonconceptual content as essentially veridical, indexical, and context dependent.[13]. But the basic presumption which drives Hanna's non-conceptualism is the same as that of McDowell's conceptualism. A mental state counts as a state of perceptual awareness—that is, a 'world-directed' state—only in virtue of having a representational content which sets a correctness condition for the state. Hence, Hanna, like McDowell, articulates an interpretation which endorses the Content View.

I take it that McDowell's and Hanna's views are representative of two extremes regarding interpretations of Kant's understanding of the content of intuition. McDowell, at least in the discussion in *Mind and World*, argues that intuition is through and through conceptual. That is, McDowell understands the representational content of perception as the same kind of content as is found in beliefs or thoughts. So the content of an experience is a conceptually structured, truth-evaluable proposition.[14] Hanna, in contrast, argues that intuition has absolute *non-conceptual* content—it has a structure essentially different in nature from that of conceptual content.[15]

Hanna and McDowell articulate the basic shape of recent debate concerning the interpreta-

[13] Hanna 2006, Chs 1–2; Hanna 2011b

[14] McDowell has since changed his view. A more current specification of it states that intuition is not propositional in structure though it nevertheless possesses conceptual content. See McDowell 2009. However, since McDowell still construes the content of intuition as intentional and conceptual, bringing with it a normative notion of correctness, I consider even his more current statements to be an expression of the Content View. See, for example, McDowell 2013, where he explicitly says that it is 'in virtue of having content as they do that perceptual experiences put us in such [i.e. cognitive] relations to things' (p. 144).

[15] Hanna 2011a, p. 354; see also Hanna 2005. In correspondence, Hanna has emphasized the extent to which he considers his position as broadly inclusive, embracing aspects of disjunctivism and relationalism. However, since he continues to endorse the thesis that it is only in virtue of the correctness conditions of a subject's mental states that they count as cognitively related to the world, he falls, for my purposes, within the ambit of the Content View as I have articulated it above.

tion of Kant's views concerning perceptual experience.[16] So whether a perceptual experiential state has conceptually structured content (McDowell), or non-conceptually structured content (Hanna), it is in virtue of the state's aiming at a way the world might be, and thus having a correctness condition, that the state counts as a form of perceptual awareness. In the next section I examine three arguments as to why Kant must reject this claim.

4 Three arguments against the Content View

In Kant's writings one finds outlined three distinct though related arguments which implicitly or explicitly tell against Kant's holding that perceptual experience is fundamentally a relation to a representational content. The first is based on a view of sensory deception—call this the **Argument from Deception**. The second concerns Kant's views on the nature of structured representational content itself—call this the **Argument from Combination**. The third depends on Kant's modal requirements on cognition—call this the **Argument from Modality**. I will discuss these in turn.

4.1 *The Argument from Deception*

One of the main attractions of the Content View is that it promises an account of how sensory illusion is possible. For example, according to the Content View, the reason why the two horizontal lines in the Müller-Lyer illusion look unequal, even when one knows that they are not, is due to the fact that they are sensorily represented as being unequal in length. Because of the sensory inaccuracy of the representation of the line lengths one may be led to make make false judgements concerning their lengths. So, for the proponent of the Content View, empirically false beliefs generated by a case of illusion may be explained by the inaccuracy or incorrectness of sensory representation itself, and the independence of sensory representation from belief explains how sensory illusion can persist even in the face of opposing belief.

Thus, prima facie evidence for Kant's denial of the Content View would lie in Kant's denying that sensory illusion is best understood as inaccurate sensory representation. That Kant makes just such a denial is seen in two passages from his published work.

[16] There are a great many other ways to articulate the notion that intuition has content within the limits set by Hanna and McDowell. For example, 'imagist' views (e.g. Longuenesse 1998) which deny that intuition has conceptual content, but assert that it is the result of an imaginative synthesis, hold that the images which constitute experiential consciousness are constructions according to conceptual rules. Hence, in so far as the images purport to be representational they must be attributed a content determined by the rules of their construction. In my terms, this amounts to a variation of the Content View. See Longuenesse's discussion of concepts as rules for sensible synthesis, Longuenesse 1998, pp. 50ff. See also Anderson 2001, Land 2012. Watkins 2008, pp. 519–20 also suggests an imagistic view, though it is not fully articulated. Other views that seem compatible with this include Strawson 1966, Strawson 1970, Sellars 1978, Ginsborg 1997, Ginsborg 2006. Schulting 2012 is a good recent example of how this debate is still defined almost entirely in terms of the positions set by McDowell and Hanna.

In the introduction of the Transcendental Dialectic of the first *Critique*, Kant denies that illusion is a product of sense perception. He says,

> truth and illusion are not in the object in so far as it is intuited [*Denn Wahrheit oder Schein sind nicht im Gegestande, so fern er angeschaut wird*], but are in the judgement made about the object in so far as it is thought. Hence although it is correct to say that the senses do not err, this is so not because they always judge correctly but because they do not judge at all. Thus both truth and error, and hence also illusion as the process of mistakenly leading to error, are to be found only in the judgement, i.e., only in the relation of the object to our understanding. (A293–4/B350)

Here Kant denies that what is delivered by sensibility—namely 'the object insofar as it is intuited [*angeschaut*]'—consists in something assessable for truth or error. Error is a product of the relation of the object to the understanding—that is, in the object as it is judged.

Kant makes a similar point in his 1798 *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*.

> The senses do not deceive. This proposition is the rejection of the most important but also, on careful consideration, the emptiest reproach made against the senses; not because they always judge correctly, but rather because they do not judge at all. Error is thus a burden only to the understanding. (*An* §11 7:146)

Though Kant does not specifically mention intuition here, the view expressed seems essentially a reiteration of the position expressed in the previous quote and is repeated extensively in the logic lectures (LL 24:83ff., 103, 720ff., 825ff.). The senses do not err because they do not judge. Kant thus looks to be making a simple argument about the relation of sensing to error. Call this Kant's **Argument from Deception**. Here is a preliminary statement of it:

(1) Truth and error are found only in judgement

(2) The senses do not judge, only the understanding does

Therefore

(3) The senses do not deceive, for the deliverances of sense lack truth-apt content

However, the key claim of the second premiss, that the senses do not judge, is ambiguous, for Kant tends to uses 'judgement' (*Urteil*) in a manner consistent both with the *endorsement* of a claim, and with the content (what we would call the proposition) expressed by a claim. Another way of putting this is that Kant's usage of 'judgement' is ambiguous between one which concerns

the *content* of a propositional attitude rather than what, following Frege, we now consider to be the 'force' of that attitude.[17] Judgement in this latter sense denotes an *act* of assertion or expression of the attitude of belief.

Occasionally Kant will signal the distinction between content and force by using the transitive verb '*beurteilen*' and its nominative '*Beurteilung*' for denoting the act of assertion (e.g. CPrR 5:57–8), and the nominative *Urteil* for denoting the content asserted. But Kant does not always do this. This ambiguity leaves the interpreter in somewhat of a bind, for until it is resolved no conclusion may be reached concerning Kant's acceptance of the Content View.

The first disambiguation of 'judgement', according to which the senses simply convey a representational content without endorsing or denying it, is compatible with Kant's holding that sensory experiences occur in virtue of the subject's representing a content (though again, this content is neither affirmed nor denied). In order that the Argument from Deception count as an argument against the Content View, premiss (2) must be disambiguated in favour of the second sense of 'judgement', which is to say that Kant must be understood as claiming that the senses do not convey any representational content capable of determining a correctness condition at all.

That Kant holds the first position, is perhaps suggested by his account of error. Kant defines error as the taking-for-true (*für Wahrheit gehalten*) of some falsehood or vice versa (JL 9:53; see also LL 24:83, 720, 814, 824).[18] Thus error is a feature of taking an incorrect attitude towards the content of some claim rather than a feature of the content itself. If we understand Kant's conception of judgement as the taking of some particular attitude of holding-for-true then we can see why he links the lack of sensory error to the lack of judgement. The senses do not err because they do not take up an attitude towards their content. Since they refrain from taking such an attitude they cannot take an *incorrect* attitude. So there is no judgement in sense

[17] Frege 1879/2007 is often considered one of the first philosophers to clearly distinguish between a judgement and its content, §2, pp. 1–2. For discussion of this point see Geach 1960, p. 223; Bell 1979, Ch. 3; Owen 2007.

[18] This was not an uncommon way to understand error. G. F. Meier defines error in his *Vernunftlehre* (Meier 1752)—his treatise on logic, with which Kant was deeply conversant—as either taking the true for false or the false for true (§109; RL 16:29). In Meier's case, the bearers of truth and falsity are cognitions rather than judgements (§11; RL 16:4). But this is not obviously in opposition to Kant's view since Meier's definition of a cognition as a sum of representations or the act whereby a representation of a thing is wrought would seem to conform well to Kant's conception of cognition as the relation to an object.

experience though there is still content conveyed in virtue of having the experience.[19]

The plausibility of Kant's holding instead the second position, in which content is missing from what is conveyed by the senses and is instead generated by an act of judgement, depends on appreciating the way in which propositional content and judgement were linked by philosophers in the modern tradition. For example, in the most influential treatise on logic of the 17th century, Arnauld and Nicole's *Port-Royal Logic* of 1662, they define a proposition in terms of the comparison of two ideas in judgement where one (the predicate) is affirmed or denied of the other (the subject).[20]

The identification of the proposition with the act of bringing together ideas in a judgement would therefore suggest that the reason the senses do not deceive is that they are incapable of bringing together ideas in the manner requisite to form a proposition—the vehicle of correctness—and thus cannot err. G. F. Meier's definition of judgement as 'the representation of a logical relationship between concepts' suggests a similar conception (Meier 1752, §292; in RL 16:81). Hence Kant, influenced as he was by Meier, could easily have endorsed this position.

These considerations, in and of themselves, do not decide which of the two disambiguations of premiss (2) is endorsed by Kant. Fortunately, I think some headway in deciding between these two positions can be made by considering remarks concerning combination in the argument of the B-Deduction, to which we will now turn.

4.2 *The Argument from Combination*

The Argument from Deception turns on Kant's notion of a judgement. So what is a judgement (*Urteil*) for Kant? In the 1783 *Prolegomena* he defines it as follows.

> The unification of representations in a consciousness is judgement … thinking is the same as judging or as relating representations to judgements in general. (Pr §22 4:304; see also JL §17 9:101; LL 24:928)

[19] One might worry that Kant could not really hold this first position because he, like other modern philosophers, did not adequately distinguish between acts of predication and the assertion or endorsement of the whole proposition in which the predication occurs. See Geach 1960, Nuchelmans 1983, Hylton 1984, Buroker 1993, Buroker 1994, Owen 2003, Owen 2007. For criticism of this interpretation see Ott 2002, Ott 2004, van der Schaar 2008. However, Kant clearly does distinguish predication from assertion in his discussion of problematic judgement in the Metaphysical Deduction ((A74–5/B99–100); Ott 2004, p. 50.) It therefore at least possible that Kant may hold a version of the Content View in which the content of intuition is construed in terms of problematic judgement. This would apparently respect at least one disambiguation of premiss two of the Argument from Deception. According to this disambiguation, the senses do not judge, not in the sense of lacking judgemental content, but in the sense that they do not assert, of the problematic content they possess or convey, that it is true or false.

[20] See Arnauld and Nicole 1662/1996, p. 82. See also the discussion of propositions and judgement in Buroker 1993, Buroker 1994.

This text indicates that a judgement is the relating of different representations together in one consciousness. What kind of representations? Kant indicates that what are linked in judgement are *concepts*. He says this in a variety of places. Here is one clear statement from the third *Critique*:

> The concepts in a judgement constitute its content (that which pertains to the cognition of the object) …(CJ §35 5:287; see also B146, B283; JL 9:101; LL 24:928)

judgements, for Kant, are unified conceptual representations that, in bringing together concepts to form propositions, are the bearers of truth and falsity. So we should distinguish between judgemental content, which is simply the propositional content constituted by the unity of conceptual representations, and judgemental act, which is the act whereby such unity is effected.

According to this sketch of Kant's theory of judgement, 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 (I leave open how exactly the transcendental unity of apperception accomplishes this). We may contrast the logical relations in which representations stand in an act of objective judgement to the manner in which representations are related in a sensory event or act. In sensory experience representations are related to each other non-logically, and merely as to their form in either space or time. Hence, their logical combination is not given, but rather made. This is, I think, Kant's point in §15 of the second edition version of the Transcendental Deduction. There Kant says,

> a manifold's combination [*Verbindung*] as such can never come to us through the senses; nor, therefore, can it already be part of what is contained in the pure form of sensible intuition. For this combination is an act of spontaneity by the power of representation [*Vostellungskraft*]; and this power must be called understanding, in order to be distinguished from sensibility. (B129–30)

Here Kant argues that the kind of combination by which the understanding connects distinct representations simply cannot be carried out by passive sensibility. He continues:

> Hence all combination is an act of understanding … we cannot represent anything as combined in the object without ourselves having combined it beforehand; and that, among all representations, combination is the only one that cannot be given through objects, but—being an act of the subject's self-activity—can be performed only by the subject himself. (B129–30)

Kant says here that combination absolutely cannot be given, but must rather be provided through an act of the understanding. Since we know from the above discussion of Kant's theory of judgement that the content of a judgement requires a combination of concepts, we can conclude that sensibility cannot provide a judgemental content because it cannot act to combine the content in the requisite manner. Hence, Kant must reject the possibility of an intuition's having such content in virtue of the fact that sensibility is passive and therefore unable to engage in the kind of combinatorial unifying activity requisite for judgement.[21] The fact that combination is required for truth-apt representational content might be taken to mean that intuition is, prior to such combination, a purely subjective form of representation without any relation to a particular. But, if so, it becomes unclear how intuition could ever fulfil its role of giving objects to consciousness as Kant's Dictum requires. Alternatively then, intuition may present a particular to consciousness without the intuition's being *about* the particular.[22] Kant may thus think that mental states only get to be aimed at or about things when cognitive processes requiring discursive acts of the understanding are brought into play.

So if we combine Kant's Dictum that sensibility is sufficient for intuiting objects while the understanding is necessary for thinking them with the point made in the passages from §15 above that no combination can be given in sensibility, we get the conclusion that the intuition of an object is not accomplished in virtue of a relation to a truth-apt content, for such content can only be the result of relating representational elements together via an act of the understanding. We thus have a new argument against the Content View. Call this new argument the **Argument from Combination**.

(1) Only judgements may be true or false

(2) The truth or falsity of a judgement depends on the existence of a logical relation between its representational elements

(3) Logical relations between representations depend on an intellectual act—viz. combination

(4) Sensibility is incapable of performing intellectual acts, so the intuitions it provides cannot be true or false

[21] Proponents of the Content View might read this passage as indicating that sensibility alone cannot produce intuitions, but only sensations which themselves require combination into intuitions. Against this, Kant typically talks about synthesis or combination as operative on a manifold of intuition rather than a manifold of sensation (e.g. A78–9/B104–5, A99) and he thinks of pure intuitions, which by definition lack any sensory content, as possessing a manifold in need of unity. So whatever Kant means by the unification of a manifold, he does not at all obviously mean that synthesis is performed on a series of discrete sensations. For further discussion of how Kant is using the notion of combination in the B-Deduction see McLear 2015.

[22] For discussion and defence of this view of intuition see Parsons 1992, Allais 2009.

(5) Intuition gives us objects (from Kant's Dictum)

Therefore

(6) No intuition gives an object in virtue of a content that is true or false

The Argument from Combination is thus an argument concerning a necessary condition on what it is to be a truth-apt representational content. Such content must have a special kind of order relating its elements, and this order can only come about through the cognitive activity of a spontaneous intellect.[23] In this manner Kant remains within the early modern construal of propositions as kinds of intellectual acts (of predication or combination). His view is obviously sophisticated in that it allows for a distinction between predication and assertion so that he can allow for non-asserted propositions as part of the content of hypothetical judgements. But Kant nevertheless thinks of representational content as requiring the intellectual activity of the understanding.

The Argument from Combination is an independent argument against the Content View interpretation, but it also helps disambiguate the problematic premiss (2) of Kant's Argument from Deception.[24] Since Kant regards the content of judgement as dependent upon a unifying act of the understanding, and sensibility as unable to carry out such acts, it must be the case that sensibility cannot convey truth-apt representational content. Hence, the Argument from Combination demonstrates that Kant must endorse the second reading of premiss (2) of the Argument from Deception—namely, that the senses do not convey truth-apt representational content.[25]

So the revised Argument from Deception looks like this:

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[23] A related position that Kant might be thought to hold is one where sensible intuition conveys material that is not itself truth-assessable, but is nevertheless apt to be, and which, upon being synthesized, *becomes* so. Would this be a version of the Content View? It would seem to depend on the nature of what is conveyed by sensibility. If this material is both not truth-apt (or otherwise correct, etc.) *and* fails to make something mind-independent present to consciousness, then we do not really have a case of perception. Presumably then, perception would be understood to require synthesis and we would thus have a version of the Content View. But this would mean that sensibility cannot independently establish a cognitive relation to an object and thus that Kant's Dictum is violated. Alternatively, the material conveyed by the senses is not truth-apt and *does* make an object present to consciousness, in which case it is a version of an acquaintance view, which I discuss below. Thanks to Ted Sider and Vera Flockhart for each suggesting versions of this alternative to me.

[24] The Argument from Combination will seem convincing only to those who have not accepted a dominant line of interpretation in Kant studies (e.g. Sellars 1968, Pippin 1982, Kitcher 1990, McDowell 1994, Longuenesse 1998, McDowell 1998, McDowell 2003, Land 2006, Land 2008, Griffith 2010, Kitcher 2011) which reads the argument of the Transcendental Deduction (particularly in the second edition) as requiring that the understanding be operative on sensibility for intuition of objects to occur. This 'Intellectualist' requirement is a clear violation of Kant's Dictum. To be sure, there are texts which seem to support Intellectualism, and more needs to be said in defence of Kant's Dictum. For discussion of these issues see Allais 2009, McLear 2011, Tolley 2013, McLear 2015.

[25] As I shall suggest in Sect. 5.2 below, the combination of a no-content view of perception with the claim that there are cases of perceptual deception means that Kant ought to be read as endorsing a doxastic theory of perceptual error.

(1) Truth and error are found only in judgement

(2) Sensibility (and thus the senses) is not capable of the combinatorial act necessary for judgement.

Therefore

(3) The senses do not deceive, for the deliverances of sense, in virtue of not being combined, are not truth-apt

However, even with these two arguments in hand there remains one further strategy for attributing the Content View to Kant. The discussion thus far has been mostly centred on the issue of truth-apt representational content. In contrast, many advocates of a non-conceptualist version of the Content View do not think that the content of an experience is truth-apt, for they think truth-aptness is had only by conceptually structured content.[26] Instead, these non-conceptualists conceive the content of experience in terms of accuracy. Since Kant only clearly discusses truth-apt content, there seems to be an open possibility that he endorses this more minimal notion of the content of intuition understood in terms of mere accuracy.

Against this possibility we should note first that Kant, to my knowledge, never speaks of the accuracy of intuition, as opposed to the truth-aptness of judgement.[27] So unlike the texts appealed to in the Argument from Deception, the Content View has no clear textual basis for attributing the accuracy view to Kant. Second, Kant does clearly indicate in the passage cited from the first *Critique* in support of the Argument from Deception that neither illusion nor error are given in what is intuited but rather only in what is judged.[28] So he clearly does not think that error and illusion are to be accounted for by appeal to the representational content of intuition understood in terms of accuracy. This is a surprising result if he in fact endorses the minimal notion that the content of intuition determines an accuracy condition.

Hence I see no reason as to why the arguments from Deception and Combination would not extend more broadly to include not only truth-apt judgements but also accuracy conditions.

[26] Prominent examples include Peacocke 1992, Burge 2003, Burge 2010.

[27] There are passages where Kant might be taken as indirectly speaking or implying this view. For example, in the Refutation of Idealism, Kant argues that the 'intuitive representation' (*anschauliche Vorstellung*) of outer things leaves open whether those things exist. Their existence must instead be determined by appeal to the causal coherence of those intuitive representations with others (B278). This might suggest that an intuition represents the existence of some object but the extent to which this representation is accurate must be determined by appeal to the causal criterion. There are two immediate problems with this reading. First, it is unclear whether Kant means the same thing by 'intuitive representation' as he does by representation in outer intuition. Second, the context of this passage has Kant wanting to make room in his theory of intuition for the possibility of dreams and hallucinations. It is not at all obvious that he need make room for such possibilities by appealing to the Content View. I pursue this point further in my 'Kant's Disjunctivism.' Thanks to Stefanie Grüne for discussion of these issues.

[28] Kant is also recorded as asserting this in numerous texts from his logic lectures, see LL 24:83, 84, 87, 103, 146, 156, 720, 813, 825, 833.

Nevertheless one might find these textual considerations less than compelling and remain attracted to the idea that Kant endorses some version of the Content View in thinking that correctness conditions are required for objective representation in empirical intuition. However, there is one further, quite general, argument that can be brought to bear against Kant's holding the Content View. We will discuss this in the next section.

4.3 *The Argument from Modality*

There is a general argument against Kant's holding the Content View which, if it succeeds, does so whether the correctness conditions set by the content of intuition are understood in terms of truth-aptness or accuracy. This argument, which I call the **Argument from Modality**, stems from general conditions Kant sets on theoretical cognition. The argument depends on what Andrew Chignell has called Kant's 'Modal Condition' (Chignell 2010, Chignell 2011) on theoretical cognition (I will drop the modifier from here on). Kant states it clearly in the second edition preface.

> 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 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. (Bxxvi)

Here Kant contrasts merely logically possible thought, in which one brings together logically compossible concepts, with the kind of real empirical possibility necessary for cognition. Kant distinguishes between the two sorts of 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; NM 2:171–2). The subject matter of a thought is really possible, in 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, opposing attractive and repulsive forces; see also A264–5/B320–1). Moreover, Kant considered a further kind of repugnance, wherein the subject *itself* is 'cancelled out'. In other words, according to Chignell it would be impossible for any being to exist that would instantiate such repugnant properties (Chignell 2011, pp. 144–5). In order for knowledge to be possible, the demonstration of the real possibility of the object of knowledge must be secured.

Chignell puts the Modal Condition this way:

> **(Modal Condition)** Necessarily, S knows that *p* only if S is in a position to prove the real possibility of the objects referred to in *p*[29]

Chignell then glosses this as follows:

> The claim is that in order to count as theoretically cognizing an object (having theoretical knowledge about it), I must be able to provide full-blown proof (and not just probabilistic opinion or hypothesis) that it is really possible. So, even if I have a valid argument with apparently plausible premisses, the conclusion can't count as cognition or knowledge unless I am able to prove that there is no real repugnance amongst the predicates of the concepts involved. (Chignell 2011, p. 146)

One of the ways discussed by Chignell by which such proof might be provided is via 'appeals to experience or the experience of others' (p. 146). But if this is the case then experience must be able to *prove* the real possibility of the subject matter of the judgement and do so in virtue of some feature of the experience itself.[30] The question is how it might do this. Answering this question will demonstrate why the Content View cannot adequately satisfy the Modal Condition.

If experience is to provide proof of real possibility then it must have features which thought alone does not. If experience is conceived along the lines suggested by the Content View, what would those features be? This is a particularly pressing question for the Content View because it considers experience and thought to be similar in a variety of ways. For example, they are both attitudes to content, and the content in both cases sets veridicality conditions on mental states that possess them. It seems clear then that the content of an experience cannot be simply the same as the content of a thought, otherwise experience would be no better situated to satisfy the Modal Condition than thought.

The most promising strategy for bringing Kant's remarks in line with the Content View is to distinguish the content of intuition from that of thought (or judgement generally) and to claim that experience satisfies the Modal Condition in virtue of the content of the intuitions that partially constitute an experience. A defender of the position that Kant endorses the Content View might argue here that the relevant difference in content between experience and thought is that

[29] Chignell 2011, p. 146. Note that in the argument that follows I go beyond any claims concerning the Modal Condition that Chignell might himself endorse.

[30] Note that Kant thinks that merely possible experiences can also provide the needed proof to satisfy the Modal Condition. See A771/B799 and the discussion in Chignell 2011, p. 146. My concern is with how experience could do this, so I will stick to the simpler case of actual experience.

perceptual content consists of singular propositions, and therefore incorporates actual elements of the perceiving subject's environment in a way that mere thought does not.[31] Kant is very clear that intuition is singular while thought is merely general (A68/B93; A320/B376–7; JL 9:91; Pr 4:281). If experience (specifically intuition) has singular content while thought does not, so the argument goes, then experience is in a position to provide proof of actuality because the content of an experience can include particular objects in the subject's environment, thereby making them part of the content of the subject's mental states.[32] Thus, according to this suggestion, experiential states, in virtue of their singular content, provide proof of real possibility. The subject, it might be claimed, could not be in the experiential state she is in if the object constituting the content of that state were not really possible. So, trivially, since the subject is in the particular experiential state she is in, the object which is part of the content of that state must be really possible.

Despite the obvious attractiveness of understanding the distinction between thought and experience along such lines, I am not convinced that appeal to singular content is enough to satisfy the Modal Condition.

First, the singular content theorist faces a dilemma. Either the singular content of an experience is part of the nature of the experience or it is not.[33] In either case problems arise. Let us take these in turn.

On the one hand, the theorist might consider singular content as partially constitutive of the nature of the subject's perceptual experiences. In this case we have the means to argue that the content of the experience is in a position to prove the real possibility of beliefs or judgements concerning that content, but we lose the Content View's neat explanation of illusion and hallucination. To understand this recall that, according to the Content View, what it is for an experience to be the kind of experience it is, including its phenomenal character, is determined by the content to which one is related in virtue of which one has that experience. According to the constitutive view of singular content, since what it is to have a particular kind of experience involves entertaining that particular singular content, it would be impossible for there to be a phenomenally matching hallucination (or illusion) which lacked that content.[34] Hence,

[31] There are a variety of different ways in which we might understand the nature of such singular content. For example the content might be so-called Russellian propositions, consisting of a particular object and a property of that object (or the universal of which that property is an instance). I leave open here the exact characterization. For discussion of some different possibilities see Siegel 2010.

[32] An influential argument along these lines was made by Strawson (1959); see also Brewer 1999.

[33] I understand the notion of a 'nature' here as that which makes a particular experience the kind of experience that it is and thus as playing a significant explanatory role with respect to issues such as phenomenal character, introspection, behaviour, etc. See Martin 2004, Fish 2009 for discussion.

[34] Some proponents of the Content View have also argued that it is unintelligible to understand elements of a subject's environment as literally constituting the intentional content to which one is related. See, e.g., McDowell 1984, Burge 1991, 2007.

the Content View's attractively straightforward way of accounting for sameness of phenomenal character between introspectively indistinguishable experiences by sameness of content would be lost.

On the other hand, the theorist may take singular content as determining the correctness conditions for particular token experiences but not as constitutive of the nature of the subject's experiences themselves. However, if the nature of the experience—understood as the type of mental content that makes the experience the kind of experience that it is—is independent of the subject's actual environment, then it is no longer clear how the *experience* provides any proof of real possibility, as opposed to the singular content present in some token instance of that experience. This way of objecting does assume that it must be features of the experiential type rather than merely its tokens, which are relevant to satisfaction of the Modal Condition. An advocate of the Content View interpretation might plausibly deny this. What is more, the Kantian texts are simply silent with respect to this issue of whether mental types or their tokens are relevant to satisfaction of the Modal Condition. It seems reasonably to worry, however, that reliance on this distinction is anachronistic, and to that extent unsatisfactory as an interpretation of Kant's views.

Independently of this first problem there is a second, and more general, problem that the Content View faces in satisfying the Modal Condition. Kant's objection to the rationalist claim that thought alone might be sufficient for cognition consists, at least in part, in arguing that the means by which thought structures its content (i.e. non-contradiction) is not sufficient for determining whether the property picked out by the predicate really can inhere in the object referred to by the subject. So we need, in proving the real possibility of the relevant object, a means of getting at the object with its properties that goes beyond what can be cognized by means of logical principles alone. The Content View, however, fails to do this because it remains at too abstract a level, a level at which there is nothing in the experience itself to *prove* whether the relevant object has the relevant property (more precisely: whether the relevant property is really compossible with the other properties inherent in the object). This is true even for the singular content theorist, for there is nothing in the content itself which indicates that the universal attributed to the particular object can really inhere in that object. This is supposed to be one of the virtues of the Content View, in that it allows a straightforward explanation of perceptual error by postulating, in the case of illusion, the representation of an object as instantiating properties which it does not actually possess. But by emphasizing the importance of the subject's relation to a representational content, the Content View cannot explain how a relationship between bits of content (e.g. an object and a universal) can prove the real possibility (much less the existence) of a corresponding relationship between bits of the world (e.g. an object and a particular property instance). Hence, the very same problem that seems to afflict

thought (at least according to Kant) would also seem to afflict experience, understood as the Content View suggests.

In reply to these considerations, the proponent of the Content View may argue that the Modal Condition can only be satisfied by some version of the Content View because *proof* of the real possibility of the subject-matter of a judgement requires the production of epistemic reasons, and it would seem that only a state with representational content could function in producing such reasons.[35] The idea here is that if the experience is to prove the possibility of its subject matter then it must be able to function as a premiss (or something along these lines) in a deductive argument of which the real possibility of the subject-matter of the judgement is the conclusion.

Something like this view would seem to have been part of McDowell's motivation for his (and supposedly Kant's) conceptualism. McDowell argues that there must be normative conditions that govern the occurrence of experiences if they are to count as justifying our empirical beliefs, and they must so count if we are to have empirical knowledge of the mind-independent world (see McDowell 1996, pp. xiv–xvii, and Ch. 1).

Two things may be said in reply to this. First, the argument presupposes what Jim Pryor has called the 'Premise Principle'—namely, that the only thing which may justify a belief that p is a state whose content is a proposition that could be used as a premiss in an argument for p (Pryor 2005, p. 189). Pryor notes several reasons why one might reject this principle. The most important, for our purposes, is that the principle fails to distinguish between a justifier—what makes it the case that one is justified in believing that p—and the justification that one *has* for one's belief that p, in the sense of an argument one has or can make in support of p.

For example, one justifier in coming to believe that one has a headache is the sensory experience of having a pain in one's head. The headache qua mental state is a justifier for believing the proposition that one has a headache. But one's headache cannot figure as a premiss in an argument and thus violates the Premise Principle. However, it also seems entirely appropriate to say that it is one's headache, and not merely some proposition concerning one's headache, which (at least partially) justifies one in believing that one has a headache.

Kant's notion of an epistemic ground seems to reflect this distinction between a justifier and the justification one has for a belief. Kant considers a ground to be 'that from which something can be cognized' (*LL* 24:42). In the Canon of *CPR*, Kant describes holding-for-true (*Fürwahrhalten*) or 'Assent' as concerned with two different kinds of grounds—one objective and one subjective (A820/B848).

As I understand Kant's notion of an objective ground, it is simply anything that renders probable the truth of a judgement to which one Assents (*LL* 24:143–4, 147, 194; *JL* 9:81–2). The

[35] Thanks to the editor of *Mind* for emphasizing to me the importance of this objection.

notion of probability here is *objective* in the sense that it does not depend on the subject's capacity to grasp the probabilistic relations between the ground and the truth of his judgement. Kant calls such a subjective grasp 'plausibility' (*Scheinbarkeit*).

> Probability is concerned with things. Plausibility is concerned with whether, in the cognition, there are more grounds for the thing than against it. (LL 24:883; see also LL 24:145, 194–5; JL 9:82; RF 16:436, R2603–4)

Plausibility and probability are distinct types of relationships. The status of an objective ground as sufficient depends on probability, not plausibility.

In contrast, Kant describes subjective grounds as 'causes [*Ursachen*] in the mind' of the subject, which rest on the 'particular constitution of the subject' (A820/B848). An Assent is justified when the justifier—the objective ground—is also one which the subject has in virtue of its being part of the cause—the subjective ground—of her Assent.[36] The fact that Kant considers the objective ground of an Assent to be an objective probability rather than a proposition suggests that he does not endorse the Premise Principle.

Second, McDowell himself explicitly denies the Premise Principle in his more recent work, arguing that there is a difference between an experience's being conceptual and its being propositional, and that his concern is to argue only for the former (McDowell 2008). Thus it is not clear why we should endorse the Premise Principle if even its primary proponent no longer endorses it (if he ever did).

With these considerations in mind we can now state the Argument from Modality more precisely:

> (1) For at least some p, where p is an empirical proposition, we know that p
>
> (2) Knowledge that p requires proof of the real possibility of p
>
> (3) Where p is an empirical proposition, the relevant proof must come via objective perceptual experience (as opposed to mere sensation)
>
> (4) Since, according to the Content View, it is the correctness condition specified by the content of an experience that makes it objective, it is the content of the experience that must play the relevant explanatory role in any proof of real possibility
>
> (5) This content is either (a) an empirical proposition; (b) a non-empirical proposition; (c) a non-propositional content
>
> (6) If (a), then the account is viciously circular; if (b), then the account is not relevant to empirical proof; if (c), the there must be an account of how the object, property,

[36] I am simplifying things here somewhat. For further discussion see Stevenson 2003, Chignell 2007, Pasternack 2011.

state of affairs, etc., which constitutes the non-propositional content is itself really possible. But this seems to require appeal to either (a), (b), or some further really possible object

Therefore

(7) Appeals to a content specifying a correctness condition as the means of satisfying the Modal Condition are either circular or irrelevant [by (1)–(6)]

(8) But, by hypothesis, for at least some *p*, we know that *p* [restatement of (1)]

Therefore

(9) For at least some *p* that is known, the objective perceptual experience which proves the real possibility of p does so in a way that is logically prior to that experience's possession of a correctness condition [by (1), (7)]

(10) However, according to the Content View, no objective perceptual experience is logically prior to a correctness condition specified by its content

Therefore

(11) Kant does not endorse the Content View [by (9), (10)]

Premisses (1)–(3) are background premisses which Kant plausibly endorses. Premiss (4) is entailed by the combination of the Content View with the Modal Condition. Premisses (5) and (6) straightforwardly express worries concerning circularity and relevance. It should be noted that the worry about relevance occurs so long as we limit the domain of empirical propositions to those concerned with empirical beliefs about specific elements of a subject's environment. There are some empirical beliefs, for example that the state of a physical object causally depends on its prior state and circumstances, which are (according to Kant) a priori demonstrable. This is part of the point of the section of the first *Critique* which Kant calls the 'Analytic of Principles.' But such a priori proofs do not extend to demonstrating the real possibility of particular empirical judgements concerning particular experienced objects (e.g. 'there is a red and round physical object in front of me'). Finally, premiss (10) is simply another way of stating the basic claim of the Content View. According to that view it is in virtue of a sensory state's content that it counts as an objective perceptual experience, so it cannot be the case that the status of an experience as objective is logically prior to its content.

The proponent of interpreting Kant as endorsing the Content View will likely want to reject (6). One might argue here that correctness conditions do not stand in need of proof in the way that empirical judgements do. But this seems an arbitrary claim. Surely one of the reasons for attributing content to an experience is that the content which determines what one experiences

is the very same (or very similar) content which determines what (e.g.) one believes or knows. This seems particularly important for the conceptualist about content. But if this is the case then one must be able to prove the possibility of this content in a way which does not resort either to general a priori principles or other experiences. Since, according to Kant, there *is* no other way to provide such proof, the correctness conditions could never themselves be objects of knowledge. This obviously places such content in an awkward position to be part of the ultimate justification or warrant of all empirical knowledge.

If the above three arguments against the Content View are correct, then either Kant does not endorse the Content View or his overall view is incoherent. On grounds of charity, it seems best to construe Kant as endorsing a theory of experience which is other than (and does not entail) the Content View. In the remaining sections of this paper I suggest and criticize some other possible theories he might endorse. In the end, I shall argue that his remarks concerning deception, the constitution of content, and the Modal Condition sit best with a view of experience as a primitive acquaintance relation between a perceiving subject and particular properties of the spatio-temporal world.

5 Acquaintance and perception

Let me summarize the ground covered so far. I have presented Kant's views regarding the two stems of empirical cognition—sensibility and understanding. I called the thesis that each stem of cognition makes a separate contribution to cognition, in which sensibility gives objects and the understanding allows thought of those objects 'Kant's Dictum.' I then argued that prominent interpretations of Kant presuppose that perceptual experience must be understood representationally—that is, in terms of the Content View. Finally, I presented three arguments for rejecting the idea that the senses convey content in the manner required by the Content View.

I argue in the remainder of this paper that if we reject the idea that states of perceptual awareness are relations to representational content then there are two broad strategies we can pursue, both commensurate with a form of acquaintance. On the one hand, we construe perceptual awareness as constituted by acquaintance with sense-data.[37] On the other hand, Kant might

[37] One might construe sense-data views as versions of the Content View, for they would seem to be equally committed to the claim that perception occurs in virtue of representation. The only difference is that, in the case of sense-data views, perception requires an appeal to a mind-dependent sensory object. This would be a mistake. Sense-data views explain the features of an experience in virtue of a primitive relation to a mind-dependent sense-datum whose features explain the features of one's experience. Representation of the mind-independent objects that one indirectly perceives only comes in at a derivative level. Sense-data views thus explain experience in a manner fundamentally different from the Content View. For discussion see Jackson 1977, Robinson 1994, Foster 2000, Fish 2010, Martin unpublished.

endorse a form of direct perceptual acquaintance between a subject and her mind-independent environment. In the next few sections I examine each of these options. I argue that sense-data views threaten several significant Kantian commitments, and that an interpretation according to which subjects have acquaintance with mind-independent aspects of their environment is the most preferable interpretation.

5.1 *Acquaintance with Sense-Data*

The arguments presented in Sect. 4 entail that intuitions lack representational content. Nevertheless, in accordance with Kant's Dictum, intuitions are supposed to 'give' something to the consciousness of a subject. We therefore may be tempted to think that the given in intuition is something other than an object in the perceiving subject's environment. The most obvious candidate for such an object is something mind-dependent—that is, a sense-datum.[38]

There are two basic forms which a sense-data interpretation of Kant may take. On the first, sense-data are mental proxies for their physical causes, whose existence and nature is inferred from the existence and nature of sense-data. Call this position *Representative Realism*.[39]

Alternatively, sense-data are not taken as mind-dependent *proxies* for their indirectly perceived underlying causes, but rather as metaphysically or logically *constituting* the physical world. This is the view known as *Phenomenalism*.

On the Phenomenalist approach, broadly speaking, the physical world is constructed from mind-dependent phenomenal objects and relations between those objects.[40] Thus, on one prominent version of this theory articulated by James Van Cleve, physical objects are 'virtual' and are the result of logically relating various sensory objects or states to one another.[41]

Both of these views are problematically attributed to Kant. I will take them in turn.

[38] Note that when the notion of a sense-datum was initially employed by Moore it did not have this connotation of mind-dependence. However, the views of Moore, Russell, and Price quickly moved towards a view of sense-data as mind-dependent, and that is the notion I make use of in what follows. See Russell 1912, Price 1932, Moore 1953.

[39] See Lowe 1995, Ch. 3 for discussion of the view with respect to Locke. See also Mackie 1976, Yolton 1984.

[40] For the sake of convenience I shall talk of mind-dependent *objects* but I could just as easily be talking of mind-dependent *states*. On this latter view the mind-dependent relata are not reified into distinct objects of consciousness, but are rather understood as modes or ways of being conscious. This, for example, is the way in which Van Cleve favours the expression of his Phenomenalism. See Van Cleve 1999, Ch. 1. I do not think anything I say here turns on how the view is articulated, so I will stick with the simpler act-object model. All that matters is that the physical objects which play a role in our thought and talk about the world are ultimately ontologically and logically supervenient on forms of subjectivity, construed either as objects or states. The primary significance of using 'object' talk with regard to sense-data is to capture the phenomenology of presence and opposition that characterizes experiential consciousness.

[41] Van Cleve describes this interpretation of Kant clearly in Van Cleve 1999, pp. 8–12. For other prominent Phenomenalist interpretations see Turbayne 1955, Bennett 1966, Strawson 1966, Wilkerson 1976, Wilson 1984.

Representative Realism: According to Representative Realism, what is given by sensibility is not any part of the subject's environment, but rather a mind-dependent sense-datum. This sense-datum stands as a proxy for the indirectly perceived tract of the mind-independent environment which causes it.

The main problem with Representative Realism as an interpretation of Kant is that while it respects Kant's Dictum it threatens the intelligibility of his general project of grounding the possibility of empirical knowledge. According to Kant's Dictum, the understanding's role is to allow thought of the given, but since the given is a mere sense-datum, traditional sceptical worries immediately seem to arise. How can one move from premisses concerning the nature of one's sense-data, to a conclusion regarding the nature of the unknown physical world causing those sense-data? Perhaps one can make an abductive argument construing the physical word as the 'best' explanation of one's sense data, but this sort of conclusion is much less firm than the kind of apodictic certainty which Kant thought necessary to ground the physical sciences (B163; MFNS 4:468).

To be sure, Kant does say things that suggest that the sensory appearances we cognize do represent, or at least go proxy for, some underlying causes or set of causes of which we cannot have knowledge.

> appearances are only representations of things that exist without any cognition of what they might be in themselves. (B164)
>
> the word 'appearance' must already indicate a relation to something the immediate representation of which is, to be sure, sensible, but which in itself, without this constitution of our sensibility … must be something, i.e., an object independent of sensibility. (A252)

These passages suggest that the appearances we cognize have an underlying ground whose nature we cannot know. But they do not require that we understand the appearances as merely subjective modifications 'in our heads' as it were, nor that we understand their grounds in terms of specifically physical causes. Kant also speaks in ways which identify appearances with things as they are in themselves that appear (Bxxvi–vii). Furthermore, since Kant is quite clear that natural science concerns itself with the natural world and that nature is to be understood as the 'sum [*Inbegriff*] of all things, insofar as they are objects of the senses' (MFNS 4:467), he cannot be thinking that the physical world is distinct from and explains sensory objects. So despite its initial compatibility with Kant's Dictum, Representative Realism seems a poor choice for interpreting Kant's notion of the sensible given.

A final reason to doubt that Kant endorses Representative Realism is that the position seems to suggest precisely the kind of view of our access to the physical world that Kant attacks in

both the A-edition Fourth Paralogism and the B-edition Refutation of Idealism. Kant argues in both texts that the existence of objects distinct from the subject is not inferred but immediately perceived (A371; B276). This would be simply impossible according to Representative Realism.

Phenomenalism A prominent alternative strategy for understanding Kant is to deny that the sensory given is supposed to be a representational proxy for physical objects. Instead, Kant is interpreted as a Phenomenalist, and physical objects are themselves understood as constituted from sense-data. This position comports well with Kant's Dictum and avoids the kind of problems raised against Representative Realism. Nevertheless it has problems of its own.

Against Phenomenalism as an interpretation of Kant stand a multiplicity of considerations which have been well detailed in the literature.[42] I shall simply summarize them as follows:

> (i) Kant's explicit rejection of Berkeley (B70–1, B274; Pr 4:288–9, 293, 374)
> (ii) Kant's claim that his notion of appearances implies things which appear (Bxxvi, A251–2; Pr 4:315)
> (iii) Kant's rejection of a Cartesian privileging of the inner over the outer (B274–9, A367–380)
> (iv) Kant's contention in the Aesthetic that empirically real objects and the space in which they exist are part of one public space (A25/B39)
> (v) Kant's distinction between primary and secondary qualities (A28/B44; A38/B55)
> (vi) Kant's realism about the unobservable entities of natural science (A226/B237; A522/B550)
> (vii) Kant's arguments in the Principles that empirically real objects exist through time, exist when unperceived, and stand in causal relations to one another (A182–2/B225–226, A185/B228, B257)
> (viii) Kant's claim that we do not know what the objects of inner intuition (i.e. mental states) are in themselves (A38/B54-5, B150–57)
> (ix) Kant's rejection of a experiential kind common to both perception and hallucination (B275, B278–9; An 7:161)[43]

While the proponent of Phenomenalism may have ways of dealing with at least some of these points, there nevertheless remains a clear interpretative cost in attributing the view to Kant. There is, moreover, a general mistake which the Phenomenalist interpretation makes of which all of these other considerations may be seen as symptoms. The Phenomenalist, in explaining the possibility of our knowledge of material objects, must account for the *existence*

[42] See Collins 1999, Allais 2004 for extensive discussion.

[43] I defend this last point in detail in my 'Kant's Disjunctivism.'

of objects in terms of subjective capacities and materials, so that the subject genuinely makes or constructs the objects of her knowledge. And while the metaphor of 'maker's knowledge' has been a popular one in the interpretation of Kant, it ignores one of his most vehemently made points—namely, that the objects of perception and knowledge exist wholly independently of us, and it is only what we know of them that depends on aspects of our subjectivity (Pr 4:293; Bxxvi–vii, B276–7, A491–2/B519–20).[44]

For some, these interpretative costs are beside the point, for the best, or at least most intelligible, *philosophical* position attributable to Kant, they hold, is a Phenomenalist one. If Phenomenalism cannot be squared with all the textual evidence, so much the worse for the texts.

Phenomenalism might seem less attractive an interpretation if we have a viable alternative with which to juxtapose it. I have argued that the Content View is not a viable interpretation of Kant. In the next section I want to suggest an alternative, compatible with Kant's Dictum, but without the problem of 'maker's knowledge' as raised by Phenomenalism.

5.2 *Acquaintance with the Environment*

Since, as I argued above, representation involving correctness conditions requires combination, and such combination can only be effected by an act of the understanding, intuition cannot itself provide a form of propositional (or propositionally structured) awareness. Instead, intuition must be a form of non-propositional awareness. Given the difficulties associated with sense-data views, and the general requirements on cognition as detailed by the Argument from Modality above, it seems best to see whether Kant might plausibly think of empirical intuition as immediately acquainting a subject with her environment.[45] Visual and tactile experience are perhaps the most prominent sense modalities for acquainting a subject with her environment, and do so in obviously distinctive ways. But both of these sensory modalities (as well as the others) provide a form of access to the environment—that is, they make it *immediately available* to consciousness in a particular sensory way.[46]

[44] See Hintikka 1965 for discussion of Kant on maker's knowledge. Pritchard 1909, Ch. 9 castigates Kant for thinking that maker's knowledge is a genuine form of knowledge. In contrast, Van Cleve 1999, p. 11 argues that it is the only way to make sense of Kant's 'Copernican Revolution.'

[45] The notion of immediacy I have in mind here is both psychological and epistemic. Psychologically speaking, there is no other psychological state of the (whole) subject in virtue of which she is acquainted with her environment. Epistemically speaking, the warrant a subject gains in virtue of being acquainted with her environment does not depend on warrant the subject has for any of her other doxastic states.

[46] Kant specifies that three of the five senses, namely sight, touch, and hearing, are forms of 'objective' empirical intuition (An 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 (7:154). It is thus possible that Kant thinks the sensory modes of taste and smell do not provide outer intuitions at all.

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.[47] 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.[48]

But if we reject these epistemic assumptions and instead construe acquaintance specifically in terms of a partially constitutive relation holding between the perceived environment and the mental state of the perceiving subject, then the way is open to reading Kant as endorsing a genuine form of mind–world acquaintance.[49]

The 'Environment View' that I shall characterize here is more the delineation of a family of views rather than a particular view itself. Its main claim is that the perceptual consciousness of a perceiving subject is partially constituted by her environment.[50] This Environment View construes mind and world as far more intimately related than typically allowed by externalist views of mental content, for it construes the nature of the mental states themselves, rather than simply their token instances, as determined by particular aspects of the subject's environment.[51] The subject's environment constitutes the contours of her experience in the way, to use one contemporary philosopher's turn of phrase, a hillside constitutes the contours of the landscape of which it is part (Fish 2009, p. 6). This intimate constitutive relation is typically appealed to in order to explain the phenomenal character which the experience has. But it may also be used to explain other aspects of our cognitive lives. I shall discuss three below—namely,

[47] For discussion for and against the epistemically privileged status of states of acquaintance see Lewis 1929, Price 1932, McDowell 1984, McDowell 1991, Brewer 1999.

[48] Russell 1912, 46–7; Russell 1910, reprinted in Russell 2004, Ch. 10.

[49] There are a considerable number of readings of Kant's doctrine of Transcendental Idealism which allow for cognitive relations with mind-independent objects. See, for example, Paton 1936, Langton 1998, Allison 2004, Ameriks 2005, Bird 2006. One interpretative line to which I am particularly sympathetic argues that in outer sense genuinely mind-independent objects appear despite the fact that features of their appearance importantly depend on the nature of perceiving minds. See Allais 2004, Allais 2007, Rosefeldt 2007, Allais 2011, Ameriks 2011 for discussion. However, I defend no specific interpretation of Transcendental Idealism here. All I wish to point out is that there are multiple readings of Kant's idealism available that are compatible with my suggested interpretation of his perceptual theory.

[50] Susanna Schellenberg calls this family of views 'austere relational views', See Schellenberg 2011. John Campbell articulates what he calls a 'Relational View' in Campbell 2002, ch. 6. In my terminology, austere relational views and Campbell's Relational View are all more specific versions of what I am calling the 'Environment View.' I think there are important similarities between Kant's view and Campbell's. However, since Kant never directly addresses many of the issues addressed by Campbell, there is some indeterminacy in what Kant would think regarding various specifics of Campbell's account. See Allais 2009 and Gomes forthcoming for discussion of Kant that draws upon Campbell's work.

[51] Tyler Burge, for example, argues that though we may assign particular objects to the content of particular token mental states in which perceptual demonstratives are applied, there is no sense in which the objects are actual *constituents* of those mental states. This holds despite Burge's rather radical externalism regarding the content of mental states generally. See Burge 1991, Burge 2009, Burge 2010 as well as the postscript to Burge 1977 in Burge 2007.

Kant's conception of the structure of thought, his Modal Condition on cognition, and his theory of perceptual error. All three, I argue, are best understood alongside his endorsement of the Environment View. We will take these points in turn.

First, Kant's motivation for endorsing the Environment View stems, at least in part, from his distinction between thought of the logically possible and cognition of the really actual (and therefore really possible). This in turn depends on Kant's model of the nature of the content of thought as (as I shall call it) 'specificational.'

One can think, for example, about aardvarks by thinking a thought which specifies discriminating features of aardvarks and predicates something of a thing or things satisfying those features, for example 'A medium-sized, burrowing, nocturnal mammal native to Africa makes a poor house pet.' Though there is no specific aardvark one thinks about in essaying such a thought, one is nevertheless thinking about aardvarks and not other things by thinking of features which they and only they all have, and predicating something of objects satisfying those features. When specification gets sufficiently rich one's thought is correspondingly less general, and may apply to just one object, such as the object corresponding to the thought that 'the largest outdoor sitting bronze Buddha is in Hong Kong.'

In contrast to thought via specification, one might think of an object *directly*, without appeal to a specification of its features. Direct thoughts might include, for example, indexical and demonstrative thought. One might think, for instance, on the occasion of seeing the largest outdoor sitting bronze Buddha, that '*that* is a big statue', where such a thought does not require the specification of its object via its features. The object is simply *there* before the mind. Call such thoughts 'direct' thoughts.

One important difference between specificational and direct thought concerns the conditions of their success or failure. This is most plain if we assume that in order for a thought to have a subject matter it must have a truth-value. Operating with this assumption we see that specificational and direct thoughts have very different conditions under which they may be assigned truth-values. Specificational thought does not require the existence of any particular object in order for it to have a truth value. If it successfully specifies an object or class and correctly attributes some property to it, it is true, otherwise it is false. Specificational thought thus has a subject matter whether or not any particular individual exists. Direct thought, in contrast, requires the existence and availability to thought of particular individuals if it is to have a truth-value, and hence a subject matter.

Kant does not allow that thought can take a direct form, for he describes the structure of human thought as involving inherently general concepts that can always apply to more than one particular object (A68/B93, A320/B377; JL 9:91).[52] This generality of concepts is antithetical

[52] For helpful discussion of this point see Thompson 1972, Anderson 2004, Anderson 2005, Grüne 2009.

in nature to direct thought, for even if such a general thought manages to specify just one individual, it could have been the case that another individual was instead so captured without the thought's changing character in any way.[53] This is in contrast to *intuition* whose singularity implies that only intuition can cognitively relate a subject to a particular object, or aspect thereof, in a manner which makes particulars significant for characterizing the subject's mental states (JL 9:91, 97; A655/B683ff.).

The motivation for Kant's endorsement of this model of thought is clearer when we set it against the early modern context from which it derived. When we examine the characterization of the content and structure of thought in the early modern era we can see that the specificationist model was widespread. Versions of it appear in the influential *Logic* of Arnauld and Nicole, in the nominal essences of Locke, and in the singular concepts of Leibniz.[54] And though Kant significantly departs from the early modern era's specificationist model in his denial of the possibility of specifying the complete characteristics of any individual in thought alone (JL §11, note 9:97; A655/B683ff.), he does seem to otherwise retain the common conception of thought as specification. The link between specification and generality could then credibly lead to a rejection of the notion that direct thought is possible.

So, on Kant's view, if we are to have cognitive access to particulars, they must be available in a way which is not thought-like in structure, and this is precisely the role of intuition (JL §15 9:99).[55] We can then make singular *use* of thought (LL 24:567), in conjunction with actual or previous intuitions, in order to have cognitions of particular empirical objects that may then be linked with other cognitions to form a body of scientific knowledge—a *Wissenschaft* (JL 9:72).

Second, adoption of the Environment View seems central to the satisfaction of Kant's Modal Condition on cognition. We have already seen, in section 4.3 above, that empirical intuition must provide a confrontation with really compossible features of things and not merely their logically compossible representation. If the Argument from Modality is correct then the Content View cannot satisfy the Modal Condition. Similar problems beset sense-data views, for they (Representative Realism and Phenomenalism both) separate what is subjectively apprehended (sense-data) from the subject-matter of empirical judgement (the public physical object), so there can be no subjectively apprehended proof of the real possibility of the judgement's subject

[53] For a similar point concerning Russell see Travis 2006, Ch. 2.

[54] See Arnauld and Nicole 1662/1996, pp. 39ff.; Buroker 1993, p. 470; Leibniz 1686/1989, Bks 8–9; Locke 1690/1975, II.xii.1–8, II.xxiii.3–14; Nuchelmans 1983, Ch. 4; Mates 1986, Ch. 5.

[55] Some readers may find this problematic, for they might read the argument of the Transcendental Deduction as attempting to show how even intuition must be propositionally cum categorically structured if anything objective is to be perceptually represented. Aside from the obvious way in which such a reading disregards Kant's Dictum, it also assumes that there is no other way to read the Deduction's argument. For some discussion see Tolley 2013, McLear forthcoming. I plan to address this issue further in future work.

matter.[56] But the Environment View, unlike these other proposed interpretations, does show how the Modal Condition could be satisfied. Empirical intuition provides the indefeasible warrant necessary for proof of real possibility in virtue of a perceiving subject's perceptual state being partially constituted by the very elements of her environment which constitute the subject-matter of her empirical judgements.[57] Thus the question of the real possibility of the subject-matter of an empirical judgement is trivially satisfied by appeal to the relevant empirical intuition which makes that subject-matter immediately cognitively available.

The Environment View also comports well with Kant's limitation of objectively valid judgement to within the bounds of sense. According to the Environment View, Kant understands sense perception (i.e. outer intuition) as immediate cognitive access to the sensible characteristics of a particular spatial and temporal thing. This access holds in virtue of the particular's sensible features being partially constitutive of the subject's perceptual state. Such cognitive access puts a subject possessing the requisite recognitional conceptual capacities in the position to know (barring defeaters) that judgements concerning the relevant perceived object are valid.[58] This is not to say that intuition is a necessary condition for one's thoughts to *have* a subject matter, for thoughts may limn the space of possibilities independently of intuition (at least in so far as one has the requisite concepts).[59] However, in order for one's thoughts to count as pieces of *knowledge* one must be able to demonstrate the actuality of their subject matter and the veracity of their specification, which is precisely the role that intuition fills with regard to concept-using beings.[60] Perception thus allows one to 'prove the possibility' of the object of one's thought, by presenting the very subject matter of the thought to the consciousness of the thinker (Bxxvi).

In situations where the Modal Condition goes unfulfilled one lacks the wherewithal to *know* or *demonstrate* that one's thoughts have successfully specified their subject matter. This lack

[56] A sense-data view may well be able to provide proof of real possibility, and thus indefeasible warrant, for beliefs concerning *sense-data*, but it cannot provide the necessary warrant for beliefs concerning aspects of one's physical environment. Thanks to an anonymous referee for urging clarification on this point.

[57] Note though that while being acquainted with elements of one's environment might be necessary for the provision of such warrant, it may well not be sufficient. I leave the issue of sufficient conditions open here.

[58] For a contemporary defence of similar views see Johnston 2006, Kalderon 2011, though neither attributes such a view to Kant.

[59] A nice example of this is Mendeleev's having delineated the basic character and number of elements in the Periodic Table in 1869 without having had experimental cum empirical evidence for the existence of many of the specific elements occupying places on the table.

[60] Allais 2009 occasionally suggests the stronger claim that intuition is necessary for thought to have content or objective reference. For example, she says that, 'the role of intuition is that of ensuring that our thoughts latch onto the world—that we succeed in referring to objects. Referring to an object is most standardly taken to mean something which happens at the level of thought: having a thought which succeeds in latching onto the object' (p. 391). If her claim were correct then specificational thought could not have a subject matter independent of the possibility of that subject matter being presented in perceptual experience. For reasons that I state below I think this cannot be the correct interpretation of Kant.

of knowledge of the success of one's specification means that not only does one lack insight into the successful reach of a thought to its object, one also lacks any insight as to whether the thought is *unsuccessful* in reaching its object. We see this clearly in what Kant says in the chapter on phenomena and noumena concerning the application of the categories beyond the bounds of possible experience.

> I call a concept problematic if, although containing no contradiction and also cohering with other cognitions as a boundary of given concepts involved in them, its objective reality cannot be cognized in any way … we have an understanding that problematically extends further than this sphere of appearances. (A255/B310)

Hence, the categories may well reach all the way to things in themselves (i.e. noumena) and thus allow us to think of things in themselves in a (logically) structured manner. The problem is that since objectively valid judgement depends upon access to the subject matter of the judgement, and thus upon input from sensibility, we cannot have knowledge of the successful or unsuccessful specification of noumenal objects (i.e. objects as they are in themselves) by the unschematized categories. Thus, our claims concerning such objects must always be problematic in nature—neither their success nor failure can be demonstrated.[61]

This way of understanding the reach of our concepts also helps explain Kant's stance concerning the theoretically doubtful but still rationally legitimate status of beliefs concerning God and the non-empirical self. The fact that we cannot have any sensory consciousness of such entities does not entail that we cannot have thoughts about them, for we may nevertheless be able to think of them specificationally. But since our only access to such beings (if they exist) is specificational, we cannot make objectively valid judgements concerning them, for we could never demonstrate their real possibility, which entails that our judgements concerning them cannot count as knowledge. This makes clear how God and the soul could be both intelligible topics of inquiry while nevertheless failing to be topics of knowledge.[62]

A potentially helpful way of thinking about intuition, and one that is in line with Kant's propensity for juridical analogies, is to think of intuition as a cognitive analogue of the writ of *habeas corpus*. In the court of Reason, where cognitive claims are made by the Understanding, one must be able to 'produce the body' which those claims concern. If one cannot produce

[61] Ameriks 1985 makes a similar point: 'the Kantian can say that (*pace* Jacobi) what goes beyond the sensible is not a wholly amorphous domain but rather something which can be allowed some sort of conceptual order. This order is one that holds for all thinkers, and it can even be made determinate by us as long as we have another type of data than the spatiotemporal to make use of, as in fact occurs with our moral faculty' (p. 24). Ameriks here also makes the salutary point that, according to Kant, there are other means by which we gain knowledge (if only *practical* knowledge) of the validity of our concepts—namely, by means of our practical moral faculty.

[62] For extensive discussion see Chignell 2007, Chignell 2009, Chignell 2010, Chignell 2011; cf. Pasternack 2011.

such a body then the status of those claims must remain problematic, rendering the court unable to come to a determinate verdict.

Finally, the Environment View also seems the best fit for Kant's theory of perceptual error. As noted in section 4.1, Kant indicates that error is due to an act of judgement by the understanding rather than any misrepresentation of things on the part of the intuitions delivered by sensibility. Kant thus seems to think that perceptual error is *doxastic*, in the sense that perceptual error is the outcome of erroneous belief formation, rather than taking error to be something that can be inherent in perceptual experience itself.[63]

Hence, the theory of perception which best satisfies Kant's Modal Condition, and is also most compatible with the views of sensibility, understanding, and judgement as elaborated by the Argument from Deception and the Argument from Combination, is one according to which perceptual experience is a form of acquaintance with one's environment—that is, the Environment View must be Kant's view.

6 Summary

The Content View attempts to explain perceptual experience in terms of a relation to a representational content. I have marshaled three arguments (Deception, Combination, and Modality) showing why an interpretation of Kant according to the Content View is deeply problematic. Hence, *pace* the Content View, intuition does not err or deceive, and the intellectual acts of combination necessary to generate representational content capable of being correct or incorrect are performed by the understanding, they are not present in intuition.

Since, on pain of violating what I have called 'Kant's Dictum', we must nevertheless respect the role of intuition in giving objects to consciousness, I suggested that we reject the presumption that perceptual states must aim at ways the world might be, and in that way be correct or incorrect concerning how things are. Rejection of this assumption leaves the interpreters with some version of an acquaintance view, which we can sort into two general kinds—namely, sense-data views and environment views. I argued that sense-data interpretations face significant textual and philosophical hurdles in being attributed to Kant. I then sketched my positive alternative—the Environment View—which interprets Kant as endorsing a conception of perception as acquaintance with one's environment. The notion of acquaintance was cashed out

[63] A doxastic explanation of perceptual error seems to have been relatively widespread in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Descartes suggests such a view in the fourth of his *Meditations* (Descartes 1985; II 39–40). Arnauld and Nicole also put forward such a view in their *Logic* (Arnauld and Nicole 1662/1996, p. 59). Closer to Kant's time, we saw that Meier endorsed a view of error as a product of judgement (see n. 20 above). For contemporary proponents of a doxastic theory see Brewer 2008, Genone 2014. There is obviously much to say about whether such a doxastic theory is a convincing theory of perceptual error, but I shall not pursue that matter further here.

in terms of the subject's perceptual state being partially constituted by her environment. It is in virtue of this constitutive relationship that perceptual experience can fulfil its role in giving objects to consciousness, thus proving the real possibility of empirical judgement and providing the necessary grounds for cognition.

Interpreting Kant as advocating a perceptual acquaintance theory is surely controversial. But I believe the Environment View holds great promise for bringing together a variety of strands in Kant's thought concerning our cognitive relation to the world while being both consistent with his central texts, and without appealing to a kind of idealism which he abhorred, wherein we are supposed able to literally bring into existence the objects of our thought and experience.[64]

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An: *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*
CPrR: *Critique of Practical Reason*
CJ: *Critique of Judgement*
FS: *The False Subtlety of the Four Syllogistic Figures*
JL: *Jäsche Logic*
LL: *Lectures on Logic*
LM: *Lectures on Metaphysics*
MFNS: *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science*
NM: *Attempt to Introduce the Concept of Negative Magnitudes into Philosophy*
Pr: *Prolegomena to any Future Metaphysics*
RL: *Reflections on Logic*

* * *

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