Review of Henry Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Deduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015, 480pp., $116 (Cloth). ISBN 0198724861.

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In recent years, the notoriously obscure and difficult section of the *Critique of Pure Reason* entitled "On the Deduction of the Pure Concepts of the Understanding" (hereafter "Deduction") has seen renewed interest.[1] And though Henry Allison has previously written extensively on the argument of the second or "B-edition" of Kant's Deduction, he now offers us a more comprehensive view of Kant's argument. In fact, *Kant's Transcendental Deduction: An Analytical-Historical Commentary* provides not only a commentary on both versions of the Deduction, from the 1781 "A" and 1787 "B" editions of the first *Critique*, but also an analysis of the "pre-critical" ramp-up to the first *Critique*, starting with Kant's writings in 1762 and proceeding up through the so-called "silent-decade." As if this was not enough, Allison also discusses (in an appendix) the relationship between Kant and Tetens, as well as providing a separate chapter on the development of the argument of the Deduction in between the two editions of the first *Critique*, specifically Kant's discussion of the difference between judgments of perception and judgments of experience in the *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*, his extensive footnote concerning the Deduction in the *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science* (4:474-6) and a set of notes or "*Reflexionen*" (R5923-35) from the early-to-mid-1780s – marginalia to Baumgarten's discussion of causation in Kant's copy of the *Metaphysica*.

The result of such a wide ambit to the commentary is a rather large book (453 pages, not including front and back matter), and with actual focused discussion of the respective arguments of the two editions of the Deduction occupying less than half its total (211 pages).[2] Allison states in the introduction that "in order to understand Kant's novel project it is necessary to traverse the path through which he arrived at his understanding of the problematic to which it is addressed and his method of addressing it" (1). Whether or not such a strong

[1] Recent commentaries or extensive discussions of the Deduction include (Gomes 2010; Allais 2011; Griffith 2012; Schulting 2012; Krouglov 2013; Shaddock 2013; 2014; Rauscher 2014; Vinci 2014; Kaye 2015).

[2] Parenthetical citations, unless otherwise noted, are to Allison's commentary, except in cases where they refer to Kant's works, in which case citation will be by the standard A/B pagination of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, or by title and Akademie volume number.

stance on the path-dependence of Kant's argument is completely warranted, the historical commentary is very interesting and brings together a variety of material in one place that should be very useful to scholars who have otherwise ignored the way in which Kant's views develop from the 1760's into the 80's. However, Allison's contextual approach has a downside as well. The book at times comes dangerously close to mirroring, rather than clarifying, the dense thicket of Kant's argument. It also means that Allison's engagement with the vast secondary literature is rather selective, and this despite (or perhaps because of) a tendency towards prolixity on the part of the author.[3]

Allison claims that examining Kant's argument in the Deduction "historically and developmentally" (434) leads to a proper appreciation of how the Deduction introduces a "radically new" (433) kind of philosophical project. What is the radically new project? Allison seems to actually have two projects in mind. The first is the broader "critical" project, which Allison characterizes as "metametaphysics" or inquiry into "the nature and conditions of the possibility of metaphysics" (2). The second is the project of the Deduction proper, which is to show that the a priori concepts Kant calls the "categories" are legitimate in their application to objects of experience. For the purposes of this review we are interested in the latter. Of course, Allison's views on the broader project are well-known and influential. These views are, unsurprisingly, often referenced in Allison's commentary. I comment further on central aspects of his overall interpretation below.

One other thing that is important to note about Allison's commentary is that it is also a sustained, if qualified, *defense* of Kant's argument in the Deduction. Allison encourages us to ask whether the Deduction "succeeds in its self-defined task" (452) of providing a "restricted warrant for the use of the categories" (434), and defends the position that the argument of the Deduction "must be judged at least a qualified success" (452). This sets up different standards for evaluating his commentary, which takes on the task of not only elucidating Kant's argument(s) in the Deduction, but also showing that the Deduction is fit for purpose.

Given the scope and richness of Allison's discussion, I cannot focus on all issues of interest here. Instead, I first provide a brief summary of Allison's reading of the argument of the Deduction. Second, I raise several questions regarding not only the interpretation of the argument of the Deduction but also its supposed (qualified) success.

Allison aims to show that both versions of the Deduction in the two editions of the first *Critique* provide a single, if not always particularly clear, line of argument. Thus, Allison opposes the "patchwork thesis" as put forward most famously by Adickes, Vaihinger, and

[3] Allison focuses primarily on the work of a few select scholars in his engagement with the historical development of Kant's views prior to the critical period. See, e.g., (Carl 1989a; 1989b; Schönfeld 2000; Laywine 2003; 2005; Dyck 2014). There are some notable absences in the literature canvassed by Allison as well. In particular, Allison fails to engage with "metaphysical" readings of Kant's critical period that see his metaphysical views in the 1780's as closely connected, if not always continuous with, his prior, "pre-critical," view. For examples of this interpretive position see (Watkins 2005; Hogan 2009; 2013; Stang 2016).

Kemp Smith (189, 433-7). The single line of argument consists in demonstrating the truth of two claims. The first is that the categories are warranted in their application to objects of experience. The second is that the categories apply to the objects of experience with unconditional necessity (200). Here Allison takes Kant to be concerned primarily with the "specter" of a lack of "cognitive fit" between the categories and appearances that Kant speaks of at A90/B123. Allison argues that it is not sufficient for there to be a merely *de facto* fit of appearances to the categories, but instead there must be a necessary one "which can only be established a priori and which precludes the real possibility of the scenario described by the specter" (200). It is this issue of fit that Allison takes to constitute the real difficulty of the Deduction, as the "radical separateness of the sensible and the intellectual conditions of cognition" seems to generate a significant obstacle to the necessary application of the categories to appearances (191).

The particular notion of "necessity" that Allison has in mind with respect to the application of the categories to experience is what he calls "normative necessity" (e.g. 9-10, 237-8, 441-3).[4] This normative necessity contrasts with other forms, such as logical or causal (225-6), and concerns the way in which a subject takes the organization of their representations (concepts, judgments, etc.) as being normative for all other subjects. The categories supply a "second-order warrant" (10) to take judgments involving empirical concepts as normative for all rational subjects (e.g. that all rational subjects should apply the concept similarly in similar circumstances).

One worry concerning Allison's account of normative necessity is that he sometimes wavers between what one might say is a "merely" normative notion and a more "constitutive" notion. For example, in describing the role that apperception plays in the cognition of objects Allison says that

> the conditions of apperception are normative in the sense that they determine what counts as an object for beings such as ourselves, i.e. discursive cognizers. (285)

But this sounds as if the conditions of apperception are *constitutive* of the objects of discursive cognition, in the sense in which the rules of baseball are constitutive of the actions of a group of people counting as acts of *playing baseball*. If one is not playing according to the rules, one is not playing baseball. Contrast this with failing to heed traffic rules, in which case you are still driving (or count as a driver), albeit badly.[5] Similarly, Allison sometimes vacillates between the claim that the categories are necessary for being able to "recognize" a state of affairs as being really possible, and such a state of affairs' actually *being* really

[4] This position is of a piece with Allison's broader "normative" framework for understanding the doctrine of Transcendental Idealism. See, e.g. (Allison 2004, 48–49).

[5] There is some similarity between the normative vs. constitutive issue that Allison faces and recent literature concerning whether Kant construes the laws of logic as normative or constitutive of the operation of the understanding. See (MacFarlane 2002; Tolley 2008; Leech 2015) for representative discussion.

possible (e.g. 436). This suggests that the categories do not simply play a normative role, by providing a warrant for the application of empirical concepts. They also play a metaphysical role in *constituting* the objects of discursive cognition, and it is presumably in virtue of their playing this role that they can serve the epistemic function Allison indicates.[6] This would then require that the Deduction show more than simply that the categories are warranted in their empirical application. Instead, they would have to be necessary and (presumably at least partly) constitutive of the objects of experience as such. The resulting view would seem to require pushing Kant closer to a more robust form of idealism than Allison seems to want to countenance.

Allison's views of the structure of the two versions of the Deduction are fairly standard. He sees the A-Deduction as structured in three parts – viz. an introductory section (A84-94), a "preliminary" discussion of the central issues of the Deduction "intended to prepare rather than to instruct" (197) and introducing the reader to the now famous three forms of synthesis (A95-114), and, finally, the more systematic exposition of the argument (A115-28). The argument of the third part itself divides into two – viz. the "argument from above" (A115-19) and the "argument from below" (A119-28).[7] The former of these is construed by Allison as starting with the concept of pure apperception and moving to a conclusion concerning the necessary relation of appearances to the understanding and the categories. The latter he takes to start with empirical appearances and move to the conclusion that apperception and the categories are necessary conditions of their cognition.

Allison takes the "central thesis" (242) and "heart" (264) of the A-Deduction to be Kant's argument for the necessary existence of a "transcendental affinity" of the manifold of representations (A121-3), which is required by their empirical affinity (roughly, the associability of empirical representations). Here Allison takes up the charge leveled most famously by Paul Guyer, that Kant's argument mistakenly pursues a conclusion concerning the "unconditional" necessity of this transcendental affinity (i.e. necessarily, appearances stand in a thoroughgoing affinity, provided by the understanding and the categories), when he can at best achieve only a "conditional" conclusion (i.e. *if we are to cognize appearances*, then necessarily they must stand in thoroughgoing affinity, etc.).[8]

Allison argues that the objection can be averted once we recognize that

> the putative normative force that is built into even empirical concepts on Kant's

[6] Typically, such a constitutive role for the subject is taken to entail a form of phenomenalism – see, e.g., (Van Cleve 1999, 5–6). For a metaphysical reading that is not phenomenalist see (Allais 2015).

[7] The argument monikers are inspired by Kant's remark at A119 of "beginning from beneath." As Allison notes, Paton makes a similar division but labels the two arguments as "progressive" and "regressive." See (Paton 1936, 1:457–98). These arguments appear to survive into the B-edition version of the Deduction. See (Pereboom 1995) for discussion.

[8] See (Guyer 1987). Guyer phrases the objection in various ways, but the key claim is that he takes Kant to assert at various points in the *Critique* that necessarily (or "de re") appearances are such as to be unified by the categories, but that the best Kant might hope to show is that a "de dicto" necessity holds of the appearances that we cognize.

> view requires a warrant or justifying ground that cannot itself be merely empirical. Rather, it must be transcendental. Accordingly, the denial [of this necessary transcendental ground constituted by apperception and the categories] … entails the denial of the possibility of empirical concepts, and therefore, empirical cognition, not to mention the a priori variety (268).

Allison argues that recognition of this point is "sufficient to reject Guyer's charge of a modal fallacy on Kant's part" (268), but I find his confidence concerning this point perplexing. Recall that the antecedent of the conditional modal claim concerns our having cognition of appearances. It allows that *if* we have such cognition (as Kant conceives of cognition), *then* we need the categories. Allison's reply to Guyer merely seems to affirm the status of this conditional. It does not show that we have such cognition, much less that we have it necessarily.

Perhaps Allison takes it as obvious that we have empirical concepts, and that they have the structure and normative force that Kant takes them to have had. If this were undeniable, then perhaps the relevant form of unconditional necessity would be secured. But this assumption concerning the nature of empirical concepts seems to be exactly what is at issue for the Humean, who needn't deny their normative force (contra Allison's construal of the division between norms and causes at 226), but only the underlying rational nature of such norms. Thus, asserting that we have empirical concepts whose application is subject to normative evaluation is not enough to refute the charge that Kant commits a modal error in his conception of the necessity with which the categories apply to experience.

Allison correctly points out that there is what he calls a "performative impossibility" of representing the contents of a disunified empirical consciousness to oneself (269). But, again, the fact that this is "not something a cognizer could represent to itself as actual" (269) does not show that it is impossible for there to *be* such disunified states of empirical consciousness. It only shows that cognzing subjects could not directly attribute such states to themselves, not that they could not have such states.

Allison's treatment of the B-Deduction is broadly similar to his previous treatments. However, it develops his prior discussion in helpful ways. For example, Allison here provides a much more thorough treatment of the problem of combination that Kant poses in §15 of the Deduction. He also proposes a solution to a problem left open in his previous treament of the argument of the B-Deduction – viz. the relation between the "mathematical" and the "dynamical" categories in the experience of objects as extended in space and time.[9]

Allison takes the overall argument of the B-Deduction as proceeding in two steps.[10] The first (§§15-20) aims to articulate the problem of combination, and the role of a "transcen-

[9] See (Allison 2004, 201) for the original problem and p. 425 of his commentary for his proposed solution that "the two classes of categories [are] interdependent."

[10] See (Henrich 1969, 642) for the original "problem" of how to construe these steps and their content.

dental" self-consciousness as both necessary and sufficient for the cognition of objects of intuition. The second step (§§21-26) then *limits* the reach of the categories by showing that, due to the independence of fundamental features of the a priori intuitions of space and time (what Allison, following Onof and Schulting, calls the "unicity" of space and time), they are merely *necessary* for the cognition of objects of human intuition (413).[11]

While Allison is right to emphasize the importance of Kant's positions that the pure intuitions of space and time have features which are completely independent of any synthesis by the intellect, his attempt to avoid the "triviality" (328) of the inference from the first to the second step of the B-Deduction by appeal to the unicity of space and time is problematic. First, one might worry that Allison is mistaken in construing the account of apperceptive synthesis in §17 as both necessary and sufficient for the representation of an object (352-5). Allison attempts to reply to this worry by claiming that Kant only intends the necessity and sufficiency of a synthetic unity of consciousness for representing an object in a "thin" sense of representing an intentional object (353).

However, as Allison notes, the strategy of appealing to such a "thin" sense of an "object" threatens the supposedly substantive argument of the first step of the Deduction (355). The sufficiency claim is also not required by Kant's text, since his use of "alone" [*allein*] in the claim that "the unity of consciousness is that which alone constitutes the relation of representations to an object" (B137) can also easily be read as saying that the relation to an object is constituted by the same process, synthesis, as that which explains our knowledge of the unity of our own consciousness. But this is straightforwardly compatible with Kant's *also* thinking that there may be additional intellectual requirements for relating to an object than merely engaging in this process of synthesis.[12]

Second, Allison's recognition that the a priori forms have structural features independent of any intellectual exercise presents a problem for his claim that Kant provides an argument for the unconditional necessity of the application of the categories to appearances. The issue is that it seems contingent that we have the forms which we in fact have (B72; Real Progress, 20:267) and it is also necessary that our forms have sufficient structural complexity, such as possessing more than one dimension, if we are to achieve knowledge of anything they present to us.[13] Given these two points, there must be *some* contingency in the application of the categories to appearances, because what can appear to a subject depends on what forms the subject has, and we might have had forms of intuition that would not allow for proper categorization. If this is correct, then Kant seems to at best be able to argue that the categories are necessary for cognition of the kinds of appearances capable of being

[11] For the discussion of unicity of space and time on which Allison depends see (Onof and Schulting 2015; cf. Messina 2014; McLear 2015).

[12] See (Pereboom 1995, 20–24) for critical discussion of the sufficiency claim.

[13] For an example of this problem see Kant's discussion in the *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science*, of the non-scientific status of introspective psychology, based partly on the fact that time has only one dimension (4:471).

presented to human beings, based on our possessing the forms of space and time, which seems rather close to the conditional claim advocated by Guyer and discussed above.

However, even if Allison's interpretation does not ultimately convince us of the success, even qualified, of Kant's argument in the Deduction, the commentary he provides is nevertheless extremely rich. It usefully presents a developmental account of Kant's views while providing a characteristically accessible account of Kant's arguments. Allison's commentary thus clearly belongs on the bookshelf of anyone interested in traversing an argument which Paton compared to the Great Arabian Desert (1936, 1:547) and Van Cleve to a tropical jungle (1999, 79). Whatever taste for landscapes one might happen to have, Allison proves a helpful guide.

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