

Apperception and Object

—Comments on Mario Caimi’s Reading of the B-Deduction

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In 2007, Mario Caimi published his 2004 Sorbonne lectures on Kant’s Transcendental Deduction in French (Caimi 2007). I read it at the time and found it useful in many ways. In 2014, an English translation of the revised text, with a new foreword, was published in the NAKS series *Kantian Questions* (Caimi 2014). It is this edition that I shall be commenting upon here. Caimi aims to provide an account of the Transcendental Deduction¹ in terms of a ‘line by line’ commentary. In this way, it ‘becomes evident that each step of the Deduction necessarily follows from the preceding step and is grounded in it’. Caimi says that ‘[t]he succession of steps is but the unfolding of the Principle of Apperception.... the commentary assumes that the entire argument of the Deduction consists in a progressive enlargement and enrichment of the Principle of Apperception’ (2014:xi).² This is a very profitable approach that I can only endorse. It is unlike any other recent reading of the Deduction.³ It takes Kant’s argument in the Deduction to be a progressive one, and it sees the Principle of Apperception as the premise of that argument.

Though I’m not as enthusiastic as Caimi about Dieter Henrich’s well-known reading of Kant’s deduction as modelled after the juridical procedures of Kant’s time (Henrich 1989), Caimi does maintain, rightly in my view, that ‘that does not mean that the Kantian Deduction of 1787 has no logical structure beyond these rhetorical features’; rather, ‘our hypothesis of interpretation aims at expounding the Deduction’s argumentative structure’ (2014:15). This ties in with my own dual approach to the meaning and structure

¹ Earlier, Caimi wrote an excellent paper on the Metaphysical Deduction (Caimi 2000).

² Caimi argues for the same in Caimi (2017). I shall occasionally be referring to this latter work, but there are some differences of formulations between the two works. My argument and critique here is oriented to the presentation of Caimi (2014).

³ I myself provided a reading that follows a similar path in Schulting (2018).

of the B-Deduction expounded in detail in Schulting (2018). Despite what many think (see e.g. Seeberg 2006), the juridical model to which Kant refers in §13 of the Deduction is not at odds with seeing the argument in terms of an ostensive proof of sorts.⁴ The argument in the Deduction operates at two separable levels, one more general and the other more specific or formal, and both of which are proofs in their characteristic ways that show that metaphysical categories are legitimately applied, or used, in judgements of experience about empirical objects in the world. This has to do with the old debate about whether the structure of the Deduction is regressive or progressive, with one school of commentators arguing that it is clearly progressive rather than regressive (e.g. Guyer 1987), and another arguing precisely the opposite (most prominently Ameriks 1978). No one has ever considered the possibility that the answer here might not be either/or, but rather both. It's good to see that Caimi thinks so too, whilst concentrating on the progressive nature of the argument.⁵

Caimi's book has many qualities that I must leave aside here. Across its manageable 125 pages, it offers a succinct but complete account of the argument of the B-Deduction. On some aspects of Caimi's interpretation I would disagree, and on others I agree or I would formulate it differently, which I think is inevitable with such a complex, multifaceted text as the Transcendental Deduction. Among many other useful points, Caimi rightly stresses that 'the objective validity of a judgment is not its truth' (2014:53), as 'the necessary unity expressed by the copula "is" should not be mistaken for a necessary connection of the actual predicate of a given judgment with its actual subject term, for the connection of the contents of an actual judgment may be contingent—as is the case in empirical judgments' (2014:53). Commentators often confuse objective validity of a judgement for its truth value, but this is a mistake. As Caimi rightly says:

The synthesis according to the necessary unity of apperception (viz. the synthesis which has the form of a judgment) allows representations to become possible cognitions (that is, it makes it possible that representations be referred to objects) by detaching them from mere subjective associations. Through such detachment, representations become candidates for cognition, and the judgments that connect them may be said to be either true or false.... Thus it would be wrong to interpret the necessity of judgment as if it meant that a certain predicate necessarily belonged to the concept of a given subject. (2014:54)

⁴ See my discussion of Seeberg's arguments in Schulting (2018), ch. 3.

⁵ For more on this, see Schulting (2018), ch. 4.

The necessity in a judgement, that which makes a unity of representations into an objectively valid unity of representations, is not the truth value of a judgement, let alone the truth of a judgement. Caimi says:

What is necessary is that the ground of [the] synthetic connection be the objective unity of apperception. This is necessary so that the connection be a connection in the object and not just in myself (as an empirical subject). *This is necessary even if the judgment were false. For even a false judgment belongs to the (possible) experience of objects* and is not just the passive record of subjective perceptions. (2014:54, emphasis added)⁶

Of course, one could still contend that objective validity *is* the truth value of a judgement, as do most commentators, just because it concerns both true and false judgements: objective validity is to be seen as that aspect inherent in judgement which makes a judgement either true or false. But to do so is to misunderstand what objective validity means for Kant: it signifies the primordial object-relatedness of a judgement in general *regardless* of whether any arbitrary empirical judgement is true or false.

One element—a crucial one I believe—I shall be focusing on here is this: Kant’s main claim in the Deduction is that, put very boldly, the fundamental relation between self and object is a relation of identity, and that this identity establishes the rightful use of the categories in relation to objects of experience since it provides the necessary and (at least formally) sufficient condition for this use. The progressive argument in the Deduction is supposed to demonstrate this identity. But most commentators think that Kant fails to provide a good argument for his claim about any such alleged relation of identity.

How can two conceptual and real opposites, self and object, be in any way identical? It might be the case that self-consciousness, or, as Kant calls it, transcendental apperception, is in some ways a necessary condition for any judging about an object, but surely it can’t be the case that, as Caimi notes (2014:32–3), purely ‘because they belong to the Self’, in virtue of their ‘integral coexistence’ in the substantial Self, ‘representations ha[ve] objectivity’, as Kant still claimed in the *Duisburg Nachlass*. As Caimi says, ‘belonging to a self remained a necessary condition of objectivity in the Deduction of 1787, but it was no longer a sufficient one’ (2014:33). A new way of explaining had to be found as to ‘how those representations which originate in the Self ... “can ... relate ... to

⁶ See Schulting (2017, 2021).

objects” (B117)’ (2014:33). I happen to think that the argument in the *Duisburg Nachlass* is much less problematic than is often assumed, and that too much is made of the ostensibly dogmatic view about the substantial self that Kant presumably still endorsed in 1775.⁷ But let’s put this issue aside. Caimi, like many others, appears at first to separate the claim about the unity of representations in the Self, who is aware of himself, from any objective unity. The former concerns ‘just one condition of objectivity, i.e. that all representations must have such a form as to be apt to belong to the Self that possesses them ... that all representations must belong to the representing Self’ (2014:33). According to Caimi, in this case ‘we have not yet mentioned their reference to objects’ (2014:33). We have established only the necessary synthetic unity of the Self’s ‘diverse representations’. ‘It could very well be that such a claim would have no consequence for the objects’ (2014:33–4). It thus seems that, for Caimi too, there is a *prima facie* gap between the unity of the representations of the Self and any objective unity of representations that refers to an object, that is, has objective validity. Or put differently, there doesn’t seem to be any *identity* between self and object.

But, crucially, Caimi subsequently directs attention to a passage that forms the bridge between the argument of §16 and the one in §17, specifically how it is worded. Kant writes:

The supreme principle of the possibility of all intuition in relation to sensibility was, according to the Transcendental Aesthetic, that all the manifold of sensibility stand under the formal conditions of space and time. The supreme principle of all intuition in relation to the understanding is that all the manifold of intuition stand under conditions of the original synthetic unity of apperception. All the manifold representations of intuition stand under the first principle insofar as they are *given* to us, and under the second insofar as they must be capable of being *combined* in one consciousness; for without that nothing could be thought or cognized through them, since the given representations would not have in common the act of apperception, the *I think*, and thereby would not be grasped together in one self-consciousness [*in einem Selbstbewußtsein*]. (B136–7, trans. emended, underlining added)

Interestingly, according to Caimi, in the sentence that is underlined here ‘a new thought’ is introduced, namely, ‘the thought of an object’, namely implicitly through two words Kant uses: ‘nothing’ and ‘known’. Caimi says that

⁷ For more detail, see Schulting (2018:65ff.).

so far we have remained in the realm of the subject: we have considered its receptivity and its spontaneity, the manifold given in intuition, and the synthesis of that manifold by means of which it is incorporated [in the French original: *s'intègre*, D.S.] in the unity of the Self. Hereafter, we shall be dealing with knowledge, which implies knowing *something* (as opposed to nothing). To know means to know an object. (2014:36, emphasis added)

If we abstract for the moment from the underlying claim here that there is a transition of sorts going on in Kant's argument, I think the general point Caimi is making here is exactly right. The implicit reference in the underlined sentence of B137 is to the knowledge of *something*. In other words, the relatedness to an object, the concept of an *object in general* is already inchoately present. If the counterfactual expression of Kant's claim (K),⁸ i.e. the underlined phrase in the above-quoted passage at B137,

(K) '*...[W]ithout that **nothing** could be thought or cognized through them, since the given representations would not have in common the act of apperception, the "I think", and thereby would not be grasped together in one self-consciousness*'

is reformulated, then we get the following:

(K*) ***Something** can be thought or cognized through representations only if these representations have in common the act of apperception and they are combined into one consciousness.*

However, by suggesting that Kant presents here a 'new thought', and 'seems to start the entire argument afresh' (2014:36), and that 'here we are no longer concerned with the mere possession of representations (as modifications of the subject that bears them) [but] instead, we are concerned with representations insofar [as] they have a reference to something else ... the object' (2014:37), Caimi seems to be saying that we have moved from a discussion of *pure* subjectivity, the mere possession of the representations, in the preceding section of the Deduction (§16), to a wholly different discussion of objectivity in the current section (§17). This raises the question of how this sudden transition can be explained without begging the question against those who believe that Kant leaves open a

⁸ One could say that Kant argues here by reductio.

gap between the claim about self-consciousness as the necessary condition of the awareness of objects and a claim that self-consciousness is the sufficient condition of such awareness, or even the sufficient condition for the objectivity of an object. The standard objection against Kant's reasoning from §16 to §17 is that there is a huge leap from an account of self-consciousness to an account of objectivity without so much as providing any connecting internal link.⁹

Caimi himself points to such a possible objection (2014:49), but it is not entirely clear from his discussion how he believes he can counter it other than by stating that 'a connection of representations is objective insofar as the rule of this connection is the unity of apperception (or derives from it), since the connection is then necessary and unavoidable (necessity of the connection being an essential feature of its objective validity)'. It seems as if Caimi just takes this putatively unaccounted-for logical move at face value. This appears to be confirmed by qualifications such as 'the *mere* possession of representations (as modifications of the subject that bears them)' and 'instead we are concerned with representations *insofar* [as] they have a reference to something else' (2014:37). This suggests that the argument in §16 is about the necessary condition of having representations *simpliciter*, indeed about 'subjective representations' as 'distinguish[ed] ... from those that have objective referential content' (2014:37).

Caimi proceeds to make a point of the distinction between ways of synthesising representations which establish whether representations are either 'utterly subjective (i.e. nothing but modifications of the Self)' or indeed 'possess objective validity'. But it seems as if Caimi correlates this distinction with the transition between §16 and §17, whereby the argument in §16 is supposed to concern merely the way in which representations 'are synthesized either following the same order in which they occur or on a purely associative and contingent synthesis' (2014:37), and by contrast the argument in §17 concerns that 'synthesis of those representations that possess objective validity [which] is performed according to a rule'. Assuming that this is indeed what Caimi means, it appears he needs this contrast to make the argument that Kant presents 'a new thought' in §17 that presumably shows the transition from subjective to objective representations. The transitional passage at the start of §17 doesn't bridge a putative gap, rather it reinforces the contrast between a subject's representations and representations of an object. But in my view the problem with this approach is twofold:

⁹ For discussion and references, see Schulting (2018:64ff.).

- (1) The argument in §16 does not in any way concern the *mere* subjective, ‘associative and contingent’ connection between *any and all* representations, or indeed the necessary conditions for the mere possession of *any and all* representations by a subject.
- (2) If the argument of §16 were concerned with the purely subjective connection among representations or the necessary conditions for the mere possession of them, then it would be wholly unintelligible how and by what means there could be a *logical* transition, in the order of reasoning, *from* such a subjective connection of representations *to* an objectively valid set of representations that ‘purports to be about an object’ and is not just a reflection of a subject’s states. The transition to the argument about objectivity should be seen as a logical step implied by the previous step in the argument and cannot signify a mere contrast with the previous step in the argument if indeed, as Caimi claims, the argument should be an ‘unfolding of the Principle of Apperception’.

Ad (1)

The argument in §16 for the necessary unity among a self’s representations is often read in this way.¹⁰ However, the counterfactual that Kant mentions, and Caimi discusses (2014:27), namely ‘I would have as multicolored, diverse a self as I have representations of which I am conscious’ (B134), cannot be associated with ‘this “I” ... fragmented in a plurality of acts of consciousness’, as Caimi seems to suggest (2014:27), assuming that he means by ‘this “I”’, the ‘I’ of the ‘I think’ of the *Grundsatz* presented at the start of §16. Misleadingly, Kant himself of course uses the pronoun ‘I’ in this very passage at B134. However, strictly speaking there wouldn’t be an ‘I’ if it were ‘fragmented in a plurality’ of discrete selves since the various, discrete representations wouldn’t in that case have the ‘I’ of the accompanying ‘I think’ in common unless of course there were different senses of ‘I’—but certainly, it wouldn’t be the ‘I’ that thinks, i.e. the ‘I think’ of the *Grundsatz*. Representations have an ‘I think’ in common if and only if the ‘I think’ accompanies those representations.

This requires, as Kant argues in §16, that a synthesis among the set of representations that are accompanied is carried out: the ‘I think’ accompanies the set of representations *conjointly* (Van Cleve 1999:80), i.e. as synthesised, not separably. I come back to this further below. But suppose the ‘I think’ were to be taken to accompany representations *separably* (not an uncommon reading). In that case presumably a representation A is accompanied by an ‘I think’¹, a representation B is accompanied by an

¹⁰ I have discussed such interpretations at length in Schulting (2018), cf. Schulting (2017).

‘I think’², a representation C is accompanied by an ‘I think’³, and so on. In the latter putative case of a successive accompaniment of diverse representations by a series of ‘I think’s, representations would on that basis never achieve the unity that is a precondition of their belonging to *one* self-consciousness, their being had by an *identical* thinking ‘I’ (cf. Caimi 2017:383). As Kant says, in such a case ‘I would have as multicolored, diverse a self [i.e. ‘I think’¹, ‘I think’², ‘I think’³, etc.] as I have representations [i.e. representation A, representation B, representation C, etc.] of which I am conscious’ (B134). To each representation would be attached a different, singular ‘I think’^x, but there would never be a whole of them with an *identical* ‘I think’ attached to it. One would just end up with another manifold of representations.

Given Kant’s argument for the unity of consciousness, such a reading of ‘I think’ accompaniment of discrete representations would lead to a regress for there must be a further higher-order ‘I think’ which combines the lower-order series of ‘I think’¹, ‘I think’², ‘I think’³, etc. that accompany separately each of the representations into a unity (cf. Ameriks 2000:240). But there is no such higher-order ‘I think’: the ‘I think’ *is* the original self-consciousness more original than which there is none; no further ‘I think’ can accompany it (B132). Therefore, there are also no lower-order instantiations of the ‘I think’ that accompany representations severally. Of course, the analytic unity of consciousness means that each of the representations that is contained in this unity has the analytic characteristic ‘I think’ that accompanies them, but only if they are combined as having this same characteristic.

Many commentators read the analytic unity of consciousness, namely the unity of representations that share the ‘I think’, which they take to be a mere distributive unity of representations in the sense described above, as separable from the original synthetic unity of self-consciousness. And presumably, the analytic unity of consciousness holds for any relation between various representations, independently of the question concerning the original *synthetic* unity of consciousness. I think this view is mistaken, and have argued thus in previous work (Schulting 2017, 2018, 2021). The analytic unity of consciousness and the synthetic unity of self-consciousness aren’t separable (though they are of course formally distinguished): Kant clearly claims that ‘the *analytical* unity of apperception is only possible under the presupposition of some *synthetic* one’ or put differently, ‘it is possible for me to represent the *identity of the consciousness in these representations ... only because* I can combine a manifold of given representations *in one consciousness*’ in virtue of the synthetic unity of apperception (B134, my underlining). In other words, the two types of unity of consciousness are reciprocally conditioning. For representations to

share an identical ‘I think’, the sharing of which constitutes their *analytic* unity, they have to have been taken together by the ‘I think’ that they share with each other. This taking together is the act of original synthesis or combination. Note that the ‘I think’ is an act of spontaneity and *is* ‘the pure apperception’ or ‘the original apperception’ and ‘an original combination [*Verbindung*]’, as Kant says (B132), so there is no textual evidence for arguing that the act of combination and the accompaniment by an ‘I think’ are separable or that they are not necessarily relatable capacities or acts unless one, incongruously, were to claim that there are two kinds of original combining acts or two kinds of pure apperception.

Therefore, there wouldn’t be an analytical unity of consciousness of representations if there were no original synthetic-unity of apperception that takes them together, and any actual synthetic unity of apperception *eo ipso* implies an identity among representations that is characterised by the analytical unity of consciousness—the latter two (i.e. the identity and analytical unity of representations) are in fact equivalent, since the identity of the self does not concern a substantial self.

This rules out the idea that the ‘I think’ is dispersed among representations that wouldn’t have a ‘relation to the identity of the subject’, for there is no more original representation ‘I think’ that would accompany these putative discrete, non-identical ‘I think’s and combine them into a unity. The subject of thought is identical to the ‘I’ that does the thinking, so any representation and any accompanying consciousness that is not related to the identity of the subject—it concerns here an ‘empirical consciousness that accompanies different representations [and] is by itself dispersed and without relation to the identity of the subject’ (B133)—cannot be the ‘I’ that thinks, or an ‘I think’ (as defined in the *Grundsatz* at B131–2). In fact, Kant is clear that the relation to the identity of the subject, that is, to the ‘I’ that thinks, ‘does not yet¹¹ come about by my

¹¹ The temporal adverb ‘yet’—the German particle ‘noch’ doesn’t have the temporal connotation—might mislead one into thinking that what is the case here is that first the ‘I think’, as an *empirical* consciousness, accompanies discrete representations presumably in virtue of an analytic unity of apperception, and then in a second instance, the relation to the identical subject is established in virtue of the synthetic unity of apperception. But this is mistaken as it would then be unintelligible why Kant claims that ‘the *analytical* unity of apperception is only possible under the presupposition of some synthetic one’ (B133, my underlining), which means that there can’t be an analytic unity of apperception unless there is a synthetic one. The relationship is not temporal, but logical: for there to be an analytical unity of consciousness of representations an original synthetic unity of apperception is *necessarily* presupposed. Where there is no such synthetic unity of apperception involved, such as in the case of discrete representations that are severally accompanied merely by an *empirical* consciousness, there is no analytic unity of apperception either, and hence no ‘I think’ accompanying those representations. Secondly, if the analytic and synthetic unities of apperception were indeed separably instantiatable, and the ‘I think’ were indeed not the identical subject of thought, then this would lead to a regress: which synthetic unity unifies the analytic and synthetic unities of consciousness so that the relation to the identical subject is established, given that the synthetic unity of apperception *is already* an original synthesis more original than which there is none?

accompanying each representation with consciousness' (B133).¹² There can't, logically, be an 'I think' that accompanies representations while these representations are at the same time not related to the identity of the subject, because this subject and the thinking 'I' are identical.

Of course, Caimi also focuses on the original synthetic unity of consciousness and emphasises the reciprocal relation between the analytic and synthetic unities of consciousness. But it is not entirely clear to me how he sees the relation between the *analytic* unity of consciousness and the dispersed nature of any arbitrary set of discrete representations of which Kant speaks at B133, or indeed whether he supports the idea that such a relation exists. If he means that any arbitrary set of representations is united by definition in an analytical unity of consciousness, which some of his phrases do suggest, then that poses a problem for his claim that the principle of apperception grounds the objective unity of apperception since clearly there is an unsurmountable gap between just any set of merely subjectively valid representations and the *objective* unity of apperception that is constitutive of objectivity—just as Caimi himself indicates by emphasising the contrast between the two. I'd like to hear more about what Caimi thinks about the relation, if he thinks it exists, between the *analytic* unity of consciousness and any set of *merely* subjectively valid representations of which there may be an empirical consciousness.

An indication in the direction of an answer can already be gleaned from what Caimi says on the transitional section 18 in the B-Deduction, where the objective unity of apperception is contradistinguished from the subjective unity of consciousness, 'which is a determination of inner sense, through which that manifold of intuition is empirically given for such a combination' (B139). Caimi says of the representations that are thus subjectively united that 'what accompanies those empirical representations is not the universal Self, but the "self" of a singular subject—a "Myself"' (2014:47). A little later, he says that the consciousness that accompanies such representations cannot 'achieve ... the representation of the empirical "myself" and its various states' (2014:48). This seems to confirm that at any rate those representations are not related to the identical 'I think', 'the identity of the subject', just as Kant says in §16 (B133).

But the problem here is that Caimi relates this to the discussion in the *Prolegomena*, where Kant still makes a distinction between judgements of perception, which are merely subjectively valid, and judgements of experience. However, with Kant's

¹² There is a philosophically relevant distinction—in the literature mostly overlooked—between the use of the determiner 'each' at B133 and the determiner 'all' at B131. For an explication, see Schulting (2018:144–5, 229–31).

new definition of judgement introduced in the B-Deduction, the former distinction cannot simply be carried over to the discussion in the B-Deduction.

Secondly, Caimi still considers the subjective unity of consciousness to be dependent on ‘the universal conditions of unity, especially ... the unity of apperception, upon which all unity depends’ (2014:47). This is how he reads an admittedly somewhat cryptic passage at B140:

That [original] unity [of consciousness] alone is objectively valid; the empirical unity of apperception, which we are not assessing here, and which is also derived only from the former, under given conditions *in concreto*, has merely subjective validity. (B140)

If Caimi indeed reads the derived nature of the empirical unity of apperception or consciousness in terms of a *necessary* dependence of it on the transcendental unity of apperception (2014:xi, 15), then this creates a problem for his reading of §18 since (1) Kant says here that the empirical unity of apperception is not at issue in the Deduction, so he can’t mean this derivation—whatever it means—to point to the unity of *self*-consciousness as being dependent on the transcendental consciousness, which was discussed in §16, since (2) the empirical unity of apperception is a merely contingent unity and (3) the representations that are associated in it are not as such *necessarily* related ‘to the one I think’ as Kant says.¹³

Caimi himself confirms that the series of representations in an empirical unity are not accompanied by the ‘universal Self’, assuming he means by the latter the original thinking ‘I’, or the identical subject of which Kant speaks. I agree, but this implies that one can’t maintain that the empirical unity of representations is still necessarily or logically dependent on the original unity of apperception such that the original unity of apperception or transcendental apperception is a necessary condition for any empirical unity of representations *simpliciter*. Put differently, though the original synthetic unity of apperception as a necessary, a priori synthesis is a necessary condition for an *objective* unity of representations that constitutes an object as well as for the identity of a thinking self, it is *not* a necessary condition for a contingent, merely subjectively valid series of representations *to be that series*, i.e. a merely associative series of representations. Caimi

¹³ One could claim that the transcendental unity of apperception is the necessary form under which the subjective unity of consciousness stands. But stated this way and given that Kant says such a unity has merely subjective validity (B140), this would mean, contradictorily, that what establishes a necessary synthesis among representations and yields universal validity is the necessary condition for the contingent unity of associated representations which don’t have universal validity.

often talks about associative or contingent *synthesis* here, but I think in the Deduction Kant reserves the term ‘synthesis’ for the necessary, a priori synthesis that is at issue in the argument for the possibility of objectivity and ‘grounds a priori the empirical synthesis’ (B140), which yields empirical knowledge. One should not confuse an associative or contingent unity of representations with that empirical synthesis, which is always rule-governed in accordance with an a priori synthesis as its pure form.

My view is that the representations in a *mere* empirical unity of consciousness or apperception are indeed those discrete representations referred to in the counterfactual statement at B134, to which Caimi earlier also referred, and as such have no relation to the identical self, and hence are not representations that share an *analytical* unity of consciousness, i.e. an identical ‘I think’. I have the impression that Caimi’s view comports with mine, but I’m not sure, so it would be helpful if he could bring somewhat more clarity to his position.

Ad (2)

Caimi writes that the rule-governed synthesis that establishes the objective validity of one’s representations ‘shows a certain necessity, which is nothing but the necessity by which the elements of a concept require one another to build that concept’ (2014:37). It is the rule-governed synthesis, in contrast to a synthesis that is ‘just following the mere association of thoughts’, that yields objective validity of one’s representations (2014:37), whereby ‘objectivity is nothing but the necessity possessed by *certain* syntheses (2014:39, emphasis added). What strikes me as a relevant remark of Caimi’s in this context is that he says that ‘the rule furnished by the concept *has a necessity of its own*’ (emphasis added) and that this leads to an ‘independence of that synthetic representation with regard to contingent occurrences and the arbitrariness of subjective associations’ (2014:37). This suggests that Caimi believes that there are two kinds of necessary synthesis at work, which reflect the transition between a *merely* subjective unity among one’s own representations to an objectively valid unity of representations that refers to an object.

If I’m correct in assuming this, then this would appear to conflict with the dialectic of Kant’s reasoning. Distinguishing between two kinds of necessary synthesis also fails to capture the true nature of Kant’s central claim in the Deduction: thought itself is object-directed, from within itself. Put differently, the very self-reflection on our capacity for thought reveals its own objective content, its objectivity or objective validity, namely in the way it relates mediately to the object that is immediately given in an intuition, through its own act of combining a manifold of given representations. The necessary

synthesis that is expressed by an act of thought *is* the necessary synthesis required for the conception of an object; there is no additional synthesis necessary for the possible conception of an object. Moreover, if such an additional synthesis were necessary, then we would land in a regress: for which additional necessary synthesis is there which synthesises the necessary synthesis in thought and the necessary synthesis required for the conception of an object such that we have a judgement about an object? The central question here is to see that this ‘bridge’ between thought and object lies in thought itself, thought’s own combinatory activity.

On account of Caimi’s own reading, ‘each step of the Deduction necessarily follows from the preceding step and is grounded in it’ (2014:xi).¹⁴ This means that the argument, in §17, about the necessary synthesis that alone yields objective validity among one’s

¹⁴ By contrast with statements in the book we are discussing, in his later article (Caimi 2017), in a comment on Allison’s recent reading of the Deduction (Allison 2015), Caimi seems to be denying that there is a logically ‘linear’ route in Kant’s reasoning in the Deduction. But it is not clear how a denial of this relates to Caimi’s above-quoted claim that there is an argumentative, even ‘logical’, structure that takes the Principle of Apperception as its basis (2014:15). Caimi writes: ‘Ich möchte aber darauf aufmerksam machen, dass die im vorliegenden Aufsatz vorgeschlagene Auffassung der Deduktion auf etwas ganz anderes abzielt als eine direkte formallogische Ableitung aus dem Apperzeptionsprinzip. Ich möchte die Entwicklung der Deduktion aus dem Prinzip der Apperzeption als keine formallogische, sondern als eine solche Folgerung verstanden wissen, die durch synthetische Bereicherung des Prinzips vermitteltst Zusätzen erfolgt, die im Laufe der Beweisführung dem Prinzip hinzugefügt werden. Solche Zusätze werden nicht analytisch gewonnen. Sie bereichern das Prinzip durch neue Bestimmungen, die in seiner ursprünglichen Formulierung nicht vorhanden sind’ (2017:381n.13). Caimi talks about a ‘strukturellen Aspekt der Beweisführung’ (2017:383), but if the argumentative steps are not linked logically, i.e. analytically, as Caimi claims they don’t, then it is hard to see what the persuasive, argumentative force is of the ‘additions’ that are supposedly being ‘added’ to the starting principle. One would think that in some way ‘[t]he succession of steps’ which is ‘but the unfolding of the Principle of Apperception’ must be such that the ‘additions’ that these steps establish must be seen to be internally connected to the principle whose elements they unpack; they can’t be arbitrary additions. In other words, the process of ‘unfolding’ must have an internal logical structure that demonstrates the probative force of the ‘succession of steps’. The subsequent step may show a new insight that was not immediately present in the previous step (hence, the emphasis on synthesis), but in order for the steps to constitute a coherent deductive argument, the various steps must know an internal logic, and therefore be linked analytically. Caimi’s notion of ‘Bereicherung’, or later on the notion of ‘synthetischer Vervollständigung’ (2017:383), remains vague. I agree with Caimi that synthesis plays a crucial role in the way that the ‘Entwicklung der Deduktion aus dem Prinzip der Apperzeption’ unfolds. While the method may be synthetic, the synthetic and analytic unities of apperception are inextricably intertwined, as Kant makes it plenty clear in §16. Kant himself says that the principle of apperception itself is analytic, which ‘explains’ (B135) the synthesis. This interdependence of the formally distinguishable unities of consciousness plays out on the level of the argument about apperception and the deduction of the categories itself. The synthetic enrichment, as Caimi calls it, is but a teasing out of all the logical implications of the analytic principle that is the *Grundsatz* with which the Deduction proper begins. Otherwise, Caimi cannot explain why precisely out of one particular step in the argument the following step follows, or even when one step is to be seen as the *contrast* of the previous step, why this is a necessary contrast; at any rate it then remains difficult for him to maintain, as is his main thesis, that the argument is an unfolding of the Principle of Apperception.

representations must follow from the argument for the synthesis of one's own representations. Indeed, Caimi's own thesis is that 'the unity of consciousness is ... the uppermost condition of the reference of representations to an object' (2014:41), i.e. objectivity is 'that synthetic unity which is based upon the necessary unity of apperception' (2014:40). I concur with this.

Caimi is right to emphasise the groundedness of objectivity on the 'fundamental and necessary unity expressed by the Principle of Apperception' (2014:41) and to maintain that 'the synthetic unity of consciousness is the condition upon which intuitive representations can become objects' (2014:43). But it is not entirely clear to me how Caimi justifies the transition from the 'other kind' of necessary synthesis that he appears to suggest is at issue in §16, namely one that unites a self's representations, to the necessary synthesis that establishes the objective validity of representations, topic of §17. In his later text (Caimi 2017) Caimi seems to be saying something different than what is suggested in the book under discussion here. The later view is more in line with my reading, namely, *the very synthesis* that establishes the belonging of a manifold of representations to an identical subject *is* the synthesis that constitutes the representation of an object. Caimi says:

Die notwendige Synthesis ist nun das, worin sich eine objektive Vorstellung (die Vorstellung eines Gegenstandes) von einer bloß subjektiven Vorstellung unterscheidet, die durch willkürliche Assoziation gewonnen wird. ... *Die der Synthesis eigene* (ursprünglich im „muß“ beim Element B ausgedrückte)¹⁵ *Notwendigkeit erweist sich jetzt als das Merkmal und Kriterium der Objektivität.* Die notwendige Handlung des Verstandes, durch die alles Mannigfaltige der Vorstellungen unter das ‚Ich denke‘ gebracht werden muss, ist dieselbe Handlung, die die Form der Objektivität hervorbringt. (Caimi 2017:385, emphasis added)

I suppose the adjective 'eigen' ('own' in the earlier quoted English text from 2014:37) threw me off course, as it seems to suggest that there are two separable syntheses at work. In the German text quoted here, this no longer seems to be the case. The same necessary synthesis, i.e. the same act, that brings a manifold of representations under the unity of the thinking 'I', is the necessary synthesis that produces the form of an object. But as in his earlier book Caimi does not offer any detailed argument for stating this identity.

As Caimi himself indicates, the argument of the deduction should proceed in terms of an analytical procedure of elucidating the understanding and 'distinguish[ing] its

¹⁵ Caimi means with this the verb phrase 'muß ... begleiten können' in Kant's *Grundsatz* at the start of §16.

component parts'.¹⁶ What is at issue in the Deduction is an 'analysis of the faculty of understanding itself' after all (A65/B90). This means that we start out with a first logical step, the 'I think' *Grundsatz* with which the deduction proper starts, from which we proceed by way of unpacking its necessary, logical implications, or all of the component 'elements' that must be analysed (Caimi justly points to the title of the first part of the *Critique*: 'Transzendente Elementarlehre', A17/B31).¹⁷ This in turn means that the argument-step arguing for the necessary synthesis that establishes objective validity must follow analytically from the argument about the necessary synthesis that unites a self's representations and cannot merely be seen *as in contrast with* the latter, which would just invite the objection about the supposed gap that I talked about earlier.

In other words, given the nature of Kant's proof—a 'Beweis' (B145)—the necessary synthesis that unites representations so that they have objective reference *is*, by the logic of this proof, nothing but what is already implied in the necessary synthesis that unites a self's representations that is aware of his representations as his own, and can thus be teased out by way of analysis. There is an *identity* between the unitary self and the unity that establishes objectivity.

To put this differently, the 'new thought' that Caimi says is introduced at the start of §17, namely the 'something' that is 'the thought of an object', is implicitly already present in the argument for the identity of self-consciousness, and explicitly so in the section that is preliminary to the actual deduction argument, namely §15: in §15 Kant explicitly indicates that the central argument revolves around the possibility of necessary synthesis as an act that is 'not given through objects', and that synthesis signifies the fact that 'we can represent *nothing* as combined in the *object* without having previously combined it ourselves' (B130, emphasis added); notice the similar formulation as the later passage at B137: 'nothing' can be thought without being 'combined' into a unity of consciousness. Objectivity is clearly indicated there, in the preamble of the deduction proper, as a function of a priori synthesis, or combination, that is carried out by the understanding. The analytical *Grundsatz* of the 'I think' presented at the start of §16 is the principle that expresses this synthesis,¹⁸ as Kant subsequently concludes at the beginning of the second part of §16 (B133 [Ak III: 109.13–15] and somewhat further below,

¹⁶ See the interesting points Caimi makes on the aspect of whether Kant follows a synthetic or analytical method in the *Critique of Pure Reason* at (2014:11–13, esp. 13n.49), and also the historical reference Caimi here makes to Kant's early '62/'63 work.

¹⁷ See also A64/B89: 'This Analytic is the analysis of the entirety of our a priori cognition into the elements of the pure cognition of the understanding' (A64/B89).

¹⁸ See also Caimi (2017:382).

at the start of the third paragraph of §16 (Ak III: 110.19–23). This means that the analysis of objectivity comes down to, and in fact is nothing but, the analysis of the one a priori synthesis. The dialectic is between subject and object from the very start of the Transcendental Deduction.

The centre of focus throughout is the object-relatedness of thought.¹⁹ If we go back right to the start of §16, when he introduces the ‘I think’ proposition, it is interesting to note—in a similar fashion to Caimi’s remark about the passage at the start of §17—that Kant uses the pronoun ‘something’ in the counterfactual statement ‘for otherwise something would be represented in me that could not be thought at all’. The possibility at issue here is the capacity to think something that is represented in me, which Kant subsequently works out in terms of what is presupposed in this capacity (note the difference between ‘think’ and ‘represented’).²⁰ The ‘I’ or the thinking subject has a necessary relation to its own object, at this point in the analysis still only a minimal ‘something’ that is the necessary *object* of thought, an implied thought-content for which the ‘I think’ is the necessary form. For one to be able ‘to represent the identity of consciousness’ in the manifold representations (the thought-content), a synthesis of these representations (a thought-form) is required.

What is important in this context is the idea that the identity of consciousness, which is the same as the identity of the ‘I think’ that is the shared characteristic of all the representations accompanied conjointly by the thinking ‘I’, is equally a consciousness of identity, of a *something* that is the correlate of this identical consciousness: not something substantial, not as yet a numerically identifiable object, but a determinate something nonetheless. It is the analytically united set of accompanied representations that forms the ‘something’ that the ‘I’ thinks. It forms the correlate of the thinking ‘I’. That is why Kant speaks in the A-Deduction of the ‘transcendental object’. Caimi rightly mentions this (2014:40). The transcendental object is the correlate of the ‘transcendental subject’, a locution that Kant does not use in the context of the Deduction (only in the Paralogisms chapter, e.g. A346/B404 and A355 (*Etwas überhaupt*)).

From the start, the ‘possibility of a priori cognition’ is thus the central issue (B132). The unity of apperception is the ‘supreme [principle] in the whole of human cognition’ (B135). It enables ‘all my determinate thinking’ and then Kant immediately

¹⁹ See Brons (2015:74).

²⁰ Often the ‘I think’ proposition is read in terms of the trivial principle that any representing requires an agent of representation. But this is based on a misreading of what Kant actually says: the principle concerns the capacity to *think* what is represented in one, that is the question of how representations can be *thought* by a higher-order representation.

repeats the claim first presented in §15 that ‘combination does not lie in the objects’ (B134). This is all still in §16. The transition to §17, which introduces the account of cognition (*Erkenntnis*) as the ‘determinate relation ... to an object’, is the immediate corollary of these earlier arguments. In other words, what Kant says in the first paragraph of §17, the passage Caimi points to, is not so much a ‘new thought’ as what was already indicated, implicitly, in the argument of §16, namely thought’s own object-directedness or objective validity.²¹

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²¹ Thanks are due to Christian Onof for his comments on the penultimate draft.

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