

„Erkenntnis in Kant’s Logical Works“, to appear in *Akten des 12. Internationalen Kant-Kongresses*. Eds. Violetta L. Waibel and Margit Ruffing. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2018.

Erkenntnis in Kant’s Logical Works

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Abstract

In this paper, I aim to shed light on Kant’s notion of Erkenntnis or cognition by focusing on texts pertaining to Kant’s thoughts on logic. Although a passage from Kant’s *Logik* is widely referred to for understanding Kant’s conception of Erkenntnis, this work was not penned by Kant himself but rather compiled by Benjamin Jäsche. So, it is imperative to determine the passage’s fidelity to Kant’s thought. I compare the passage with other sources, including Reflexionen and students’ lecture notes. I argue that several of the text’s peculiarities stem from Jäsche rather than Kant, but that nevertheless Jäsche largely got Kant’s view right, with two major exceptions. First, Jäsche’s text fails to reproduce Kant’s key thesis that kennen and verstehen are jointly sufficient for Erkenntnis. Second, Jäsche’s text is not a reliable source for attributing to Kant the view that animals have consciousness.

1. Degrees of Erkenntnis in the *Logik* and *Reflexionen*

In the *Logik*, there is a commonly-cited passage for understanding Kant’s conceptions of Erkenntnis and other mental states. Many commentators use this passage either without acknowledging that Kant himself did not pen the text or without investigating its fidelity to Kant’s thought.¹ I aim here to begin such an investigation. Jäsche had access to Kant’s personal copy of Georg Friedrich Meier’s *Auszug aus der Vernunftlehre*, and it is clear that Jäsche used many of Kant’s Reflexionen written in that book for compiling the *Logik*.² For the passage in question, it is evident that Jäsche used Reflexion 2394.³ Here are the two passages side-by-side, excluding the last degree of comprehending something [etwas begreifen]:

Log, AA 09: 64-65

Refl, AA 16: 342-343 (R2394)

In Ansehung des objectiven Gehaltes unserer

Folgende Grade sind zu unterscheiden

¹ See: Allais, Lucy: *Kant, Non-Conceptual Content and the Representation of Space*. In: *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 47/3 (2009): footnote on 392f.; Keller, Pierre: *Kant and the Demands of Self-Consciousness*. Cambridge 1999: footnote on 245; Kitcher, Patricia: *Kant’s Thinker*. Oxford 2011: 19f.; McLear, Colin: *Kant on Animal Consciousness*. In: *Philosopher’s Imprint* 11/15 (2011): 5.

² Ameriks, Karl and Steve Naragon: *Translators’ Introduction*. In: *Lectures on Metaphysics*. Cambridge 1997: xvi–xviii.

³ Adickes gives the following possible dating: 1769? 1769–70? 1764–66? The Reflexion appears at §140 of Meier’s text, where Meier discusses what he means by comprehension [begreifen].

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Erkenntniß überhaupt lassen sich folgende	1. sich etwas vorstellen.
Grade denken, nach welchen dieselbe in dieser	2. etwas wissen. mit Bewusstseyn vorstellen. (§
Rücksicht kann gesteigert werden:	sich mit Bewusstseyn vorstellen.) (§ wahrnehmen
Der erste Grad der Erkenntniß ist: sich etwas	<i>percipere</i> .) (§ <i>apprehendere</i> fassen : der Anfang
vorstellen;	des <i>percipere</i> .)
Der zweite: sich mit Bewußtsein etwas	3. etwas kennen. Dadurch in der Vergleichung
vorstellen oder wahrnehmen (<i>percipere</i>);	von andern unterscheiden.
Der dritte: etwas kennen (<i>noscere</i>) oder sich	4. etwas verstehen (§ was ich kenne und
etwas in der Vergleichung mit andern Dingen	verstehe, das erkenne ich.) (§ anderen vortragen
vorstellen sowohl der Einerleiheit als der	und mittheilen können.) etwas durch den
Verschiedenheit nach;	Verstand erkennen. (§ <i>concipere</i> : durch einen
Der vierte: mit Bewußtsein etwas kennen, d.h.	Begrif erkennen. <i>intelligere</i> : durch ein Urtheil.)
erkennen (<i>cognoscere</i>). Die Thiere kennen auch	(§ wissen -- meynen.)
Gegenstände, aber sie erkennen sie nicht.	5. etwas einsehen. (§ <i>perspicere</i> .) etwas durch
Der fünfte: etwas verstehen (<i>intelligere</i>), d.h.	die Vernunft erkennen. (§ <i>a priori</i> etwas
durch den Verstand vermöge der Begriffe	verstehen.) (§ durch Gründe: entweder mögliche
erkennen oder concipiren. Dieses ist vom	oder auch wirkliche.)
Begreifen sehr unterschieden. Concipiren kann	[...]
man Vieles, obgleich man es nicht begreifen	
kann, z.B. ein <i>perpetuum mobile</i> , dessen	
Unmöglichkeit in der Mechanik gezeigt wird.	
Der sechste: etwas durch die Vernunft erkennen	
oder einsehen (<i>perspicere</i>). Bis dahin gelangen	
wir in wenigen Dingen und unsre Erkenntnisse	
werden der Zahl nach immer geringer, je mehr	
wir sie dem Gehalte nach vervollkommen	
wollen.	
[...]	

There are several striking differences between the two texts, and these suggest that Jäsche took a bit too much liberty in compiling the *Logik*. Nevertheless, a careful consideration of the differences between the two texts, along with several other texts, will help us better understand Kant’s views as well as support many of Jäsche’s own modifications.

2. Erkenntnis as Genus and Degree of Itself

Jäsche’s most puzzling modification is to make *Erkenntnis* a degree of itself. In this section, I explain how this can be made sense of and show how it is related to Jäsche’s additional modification of treating the degrees as graded in terms of “objectiver

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Gehalt”.

Kant’s Reflexion does not state what these degrees are of, and it only includes six degrees, none of which are labeled as Erkenntnis. So it is quite a significant departure for Jäsche both to describe the degrees as being ones of Erkenntnis and to insert Erkenntnis as a fourth degree of itself. Given this, it appears that Jäsche is responsible for the confusing view that Erkenntnis is itself a degree of Erkenntnis. And if we limit ourselves to the above Reflexion penned by Kant, we are given no evidence to think of Erkenntnis either as a degree suitable for this sort of list or as the overall genus of the degrees.

Jäsche’s additions raise two important questions. First, what did Kant himself take these degrees to be degree of, i.e., what is the genus of which the degrees are species? Second, how does cognition relate to these degrees? In this section, I limit my focus to the first of these questions, and I turn to the second in the next section.

Let us consider first the textual evidence concerning what Kant might have taken to be the genus of the degrees. As far as I have been able to determine, there are only three other writings penned by Kant himself that give similar lists of degrees.⁴ Unfortunately, none of these attribute the degrees with a genus, and these lists also differ from each other in what are counted as degrees. In students’ notes of Kant’s lectures on logic, we find similar but nevertheless varying lists of degrees. There are at least six different descriptions of what the degrees are of: 1) Erkenntnis,⁵ 2) “human Erkenntnis”,⁶ 3) “our Erkenntnis”,⁷ 4) “concepts”,⁸ 5) “distinctness”,⁹ and 6) different manners of representing things.¹⁰ Thus, explicit textual evidence concerning the genus of the degrees is inconclusive.

Nevertheless, Kant’s well-known “Stufenleiter” gives us a hint for explaining Jäsche’s choice to characterize the degrees as being of Erkenntnis.¹¹ According to the Stufenleiter, what is distinctive about Erkenntnis is that it relates to an object

⁴ Refl, AA 16: 81f.; 536f.; 538f.

⁵ V-Lo/Blomberg, AA 24: 132.

⁶ V-Lo/Blomberg, AA 24: 134.

⁷ V-Lo/Blomberg, AA 24: 136.

⁸ V-Lo/Philippi, AA 24: 418.

⁹ V-Lo/Wiener, AA 24: 845.

¹⁰ V-Lo/Busolt, AA 24: 636.

¹¹ KrV A319f./B376f.

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[Gegenstand]. R2394 fits this characterization of cognition insofar as each of the degrees it gives pertain to representing *something* [etwas]. In addition to the Stufenleiter, Jäsche had access to many other passages that suggest that what is distinctive about Erkenntnis is its having a relation to an object.¹² If Jäsche consulted these texts, he quite reasonably would have taken Erkenntnis in general to be a mental state or act that relates to an object. And since Kant’s handwritten note portrays different degrees or manners in which objects are represented, we can see why Jäsche might have taken their genus to be Erkenntnis.¹³

Furthermore, Kant’s logic textbook itself, Meier’s *Auszug aus der Vernunftlehre*, seems a likely additional ground for Jäsche treating Kant’s degrees as being of *Erkenntnis*. Near the beginning of his work, Meier treats “Vorstellung” as identical with the Latin terms “repraesentatio” and “perceptio”.¹⁴ Following this, he characterizes Erkenntnis in the following manner:

Die Erkenntniss (cognitio) ist entweder ein Inbegriff vieler Vorstellungen, oder diejenige Handlung, wodurch eine Vorstellung einer Sache gewürkt wird. Man kann auch, ohne einen merklichen Irrthum zu besorgen, Vorstellungen und Erkenntniss für einerlei halten.¹⁵

This passage imparts three lessons. First, it helps explain not only why Jäsche might have used the notions of representation and Erkenntnis interchangeably but also why Kant often does so. Second, Kant’s handwritten note occurs around §140 of his copy of Meier’s *Auszug*, in the middle of a discussion of varying types of clearness and distinctness of Erkenntnis. This is significant because Meier classifies and grades Erkenntnis in these passages according to the manner of sophistication in which it represents *an object*. Hence, if Jäsche were to have consulted Meier’s work, he would have been given reason to take Kant’s own degrees as being of Erkenntnis. Third, Christian Wolff’s *Deutsche Metaphysik*—a significant influence on Meier—treats Erkenntnis as a mental state or act that relates to an object.¹⁶

¹² KrV Bixf., Bxviii.; Refl, AA 16: 83.08-10, 85.10-14, 246.01f., 538.17f.

¹³ I also suspect, for this and other reasons, that Jäsche had access to the Blomberg notes on Kant’s logic lectures, which provide the only other lists of degrees that treats the genus as being cognition. See V-Lo/Blomberg, AA 24: 132, 134, 136.

¹⁴ Meier, Georg Friedrich: *Auszug aus der Vernunftlehre*. Halle 1752: §10.

¹⁵ Meier, Georg Friedrich: *Auszug aus der Vernunftlehre*. Halle 1752: §11.

¹⁶ Wolff, Christian: *Vernünfftige Gedancken von Gott, der Welt und der Seele des Menschen, auch allen Dingen überhaupt*. Ed. by J. Ecole, H. W. Arndt, R. Theis, W. Schneiders and S. Carboncini-Gavannelli.

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Jäsche’s recognition of the intimate tie between Erkenntnis and objects is likely the source of his grading the degrees according to “objectiver Gehalt”. Although this is a phrase which as far as I can tell Kant himself *never* uses, Jäsche’s use of it seems to be on the right track. For unlike the *Stufenleiter*, Kant’s logical grading in R2394 is not meant to be a categorization or ranking of our mental states *in general*; rather, it ranks only those mental states *that relate to an object*. Accordingly, whereas the *Stufenleiter* starts with representation *in general*, the *Logik* passage starts with representation *of something*. Although the *Stufenleiter* passage suggests that representations do not necessarily have an object—as that only comes in at the level of Erkenntnis in the *Stufenleiter*—his use of “Vorstellung” sometimes does treat representations as having objects merely in virtue of being representations.¹⁷ But again, given Meier’s treatment of representation and Erkenntnis as equivalent, and given Kant’s familiarity with Meier, this is not so surprising. This does not mean that Kant assumes that all representations have objective content; rather, it means that Kant often considers only those representations that have objective content. Even if the notion of “objectiver Gehalt” comes ultimately from Jäsche, it nevertheless seems to be an apt way of expressing how each higher degree in Kant’s list at R2394 presents an object in a more sophisticated manner than the last.

We can now address what exactly Kant’s degrees are of and how they are graded. The overall list is one of mental states or acts that relate to objects, and these come in degrees insofar as a mental state or act can portray an object in more or less sophisticated manners. This seems clear enough, whether or not we want to follow Jäsche in characterizing all the degrees either as Erkenntnis or as having objektiver Gehalt.

3. Kenntnis, Verstehen, and Erkenntnis

Although we have seen reasons why Jäsche was warranted in treating the degrees as being of Erkenntnis, it is still peculiar why he would add Erkenntnis itself as a fourth degree, thereby making the characterization of Erkenntnis circular. Out of all of Kant’s own various lists of degrees and students’ lecture notes, only two list Erkenntnis or the Latin “cognition” as a distinct degree of its own.¹⁸ But in R2394 quoted above, Kant

Hildesheim 2003: §278.

¹⁷ This is most prominently suggested at KrV A104.

¹⁸ Refl, AA 16: 81.19-21, 538.17f. It is also notable that neither of these lists mention acquaintance [etwas kennen], leaving only R2394 as the primary source for Kant’s own thoughts concerning that notion.

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introduces the notion of Erkenntnis in his presentation of the fourth degree: “etwas verstehen”. This degree is represented in most of the various lists of degrees to be found in Kant’s Reflexionen and in students’ lecture notes.

The relation between cognition and understanding is tricky to discern in R2394. In what Adickes took to be the original Reflexion, Kant describes verstehen as “etwas durch den Verstand erkennen”. This would seem to support not only that Jäsche distinguished the two from one another but also that he treated understanding as a species of cognition. Nevertheless, Adickes’s dating suggests that the original Reflexion was from Kant’s pre-critical thought. I suggest that if we want to use the passage for understanding Kant’s critical thought, we should place greater weight on what Adickes took to be a later addition to the Reflexion, namely the claim that “was ich kenne und verstehe, das erkenne ich”.

This last claim is more noteworthy for interpreting Kant’s critical thought because it gestures at the important doctrine that Erkenntnis requires both intuition and concepts.¹⁹ For there is good reason to take kennen to occur through intuition and verstehen to occur through concepts. To be acquainted with something [etwas kennen] is to represent an empirical object as identical to or different from other things, and intuition makes this possible insofar as identical or different characteristic marks of empirical objects are represented by means of intuition. To understand something [etwas verstehen] further allows for that thing to be distinctly represented, such that a characteristic mark of a thing is “cognized as a characteristic mark of the thing”.²⁰ Hence to understand something is not only to represent that thing as identical to or different from other things but also to be capable of becoming aware of one’s reasons for such discriminations between things. Understanding in this sense occurs by means of concepts because an awareness of such reasons requires that one make judgments,²¹ which for Kant always use concepts.²²

I suggest, then, that *if* we are to place Erkenntnis as a degree of its own on Kant’s list, it should come after understanding rather than before, as in Jäsche’s text.

¹⁹ KrV A51f./B75f.

²⁰ DfS, AA 2: 58.26.

²¹ DfS, AA2: 58.27.

²² KrV A68f./B93f.

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4. Non-Human Animal Representations

The last notable addition of Jäsche’s that I want to address concerns the representations of non-human animals. Recall that the third degree in Jäsche’s list is to be acquainted with something [etwas kennen] and that the fourth degree is to cognize [erkennen] something. In the discussion of the fourth degree, Jäsche writes that cognition is acquaintance with consciousness, and he clarifies this by stating that animals are only acquainted with things but do not cognize them. Since for Kant human beings have cognition and not just acquaintance, it would seem that whatever produces cognition over and above mere acquaintance is what distinguishes us from animals. Indeed, this fits the claim of my previous section that Kant holds that cognition requires understanding in addition to acquaintance. In many places Kant maintains that understanding is required for cognition,²³ and there is abundant evidence that he holds—following Wolff and Baumgarten—that animals lack understanding.²⁴

To this extent, Jäsche is faithful to Kant’s thought. Nevertheless, commentators have been misled by what the *Logik* states about animals’ representational capacities.²⁵ Jäsche’s text both asserts that animals have acquaintance and presents acquaintance as coming after *wahrnehmen*, “sich mit Bewußtsein etwas vorstellen”. Taking these features of Jäsche’s text together, it might seem that Kant attributes animals with consciousness. But this appearance is mistaken. First, there is sizable evidence that Kant denies that animals have consciousness.²⁶

Second, there is good reason to think that Kant is committed to denying animal consciousness. Kant uses “Bewusstsein” to refer to two different things. On the one hand, it can refer to empirical consciousness, which is treated as equivalent to either inner sense²⁷ or empirical apperception.²⁸ On the other hand, “Bewusstsein” can refer to pure consciousness, which is treated as equivalent to transcendental apperception.²⁹ Kant

²³ KrV Bxviii f., A67f./B92f., A78f./B104; Refl, AA 16: 298.07-14, 300.08-10; V-Met/Mron, AA 29: 800.

²⁴ DfS, AA 02: 59f.; KU, AA 05: 464; V-Met/Dohna, AA 28: 689f.; V-Met-L1/Pölitiz, AA28: 276; V-Met/Mron, AA 29: 878f., 906f.; V-Met/Volckmann, AA 28:448-450.

²⁵ E.g., McLear, Colin: *Kant on Animal Consciousness*. In: *Philosopher's Imprint* 11/15 (2011).

²⁶ PhilEnz, AA 29: 44f.; V-Met/Dohna, AA 28: 689f.; V-Met-L2/Pölitiz, AA 28: 594; V-Met/Mron, AA 29: 845-847.

²⁷ KrV B153; Refl, AA 16: 80.08, AA 18: 72; V-Met-L1/Pölitiz, AA 28: 265, 277.

²⁸ KrV A107; V-Met/Dohna, AA 28: 670-673.

²⁹ Anth, AA 07: 134, 140-142; V-Met/Dohna, AA 28: 670f.; V-Met/Mron, AA 29: 878.

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clearly denies that animals have transcendental apperception. This point is not only asserted in several of the earlier-cited passages concerning animals but also suggested most prominently at the start of the *Anthropologie*.³⁰ So, it is clear that Kant does not attribute animals with pure consciousness or transcendental apperception. That leaves us with the possibility that animals might have empirical consciousness. But Kant is also explicit that empirical consciousness or inner sense presupposes transcendental apperception.³¹ Thus, since animals lack the latter, they lack the former as well. Hence, Kant is committed to denying that animals have any form of consciousness.

Conclusion

We have seen that Kant himself does not characterize Erkenntnis circularly, but rather that Jäsche ended up with this result in trying to flesh out Kant’s handwritten note. Jäsche correctly discerned both that “Erkenntnis” for Kant designates a mental state or act that relates to an object and that Kant’s own handwritten degrees are graded in terms of the sophistication of the manner in which an object is represented. Nonetheless, Jäsche’s text is misleading in two ways. First, it mistakenly treats understanding as a species of Erkenntnis, where Kant clearly maintains that understanding is a condition for Erkenntnis. Second, it suggests that Kant held that animals have consciousness, even though it is more plausible that Kant denies that animals have consciousness.

³⁰ Anth, AA 07: 127.

³¹ KrV A117, B139f., B154; V-Met-L2/Pölitiz, AA 28: 590f.; V-Met/Mron, AA 29: 448-450.