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Kant's Critical Objection to the Rationalists in the B-Deduction

Abstract: According to a familiar reading of Kant, he *denies* the possibility alleged by the rationalists of our having non-sensible or intellectual intuition. I argue in this article that he simply holds the possibility to be *groundless*. To put the contrast in terms of a distinction Kant makes in the A-Paralogisms, he would raise a “dogmatic” objection to the rationalists in the former case, and a “critical” one in the latter. By analyzing the two-step argument in the B-Deduction, I defend the “critical” reading, which may, I hope, shed light on how Kant can justify his claim, which may be regarded as a second-order, methodological one pivotal to his Critical project, that possible experience serves as the only guideline for proving that we can cognize objects *a priori*.

Keywords: non-sensible or intellectual intuition, possibility of experience, B-Deduction, discursivity thesis, Henry Allison

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1. Introduction

In the *Critique of Pure Reason*¹ Kant puts forward a particular conception of “cognition of an object” (*Erkenntnis eines Gegenstandes*) that underpins his transcendental deduction of the categories (the Deduction, for short) and leads him to proclaim,

With us **understanding** and **sensibility** can determine an object **only in combination**. If we separate them, then we have intuitions without concepts, or concepts without intuitions, but in either case representations that we cannot relate to any determinate object.²

Henry Allison, in the revised edition of *Kant's Transcendental Idealism* and his more

¹ Citations from the *Critique of Pure Reason* in this article will generally follow the English translation by Guyer, Paul, and Wood, Allen W. In: *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant*. Eds. Guyer, Paul, and Wood, Allen W. Cambridge 1992ff. ‘A’ and ‘B’ are used to refer to the first and second editions of the *Critique* respectively.

² KrV A 258/B 314: “Verstand und Sinnlichkeit können bei uns nur in Verbindung Gegenstände bestimmen. Wenn wir sie trennen, so haben wir Anschauungen ohne Begriffe, oder Begriffe ohne Anschauungen, in beiden Fällen aber Vorstellungen, die wir auf keinen bestimmten Gegenstand beziehen können”.

recent book *Kant's Transcendental Deduction*,³ uses what he terms the “discursivity thesis” to capture Kant’s conception, which he explains by citing Kant’s claim, briefer than the above, that “neither concepts without intuition corresponding to them in some way nor intuition without a concept **can** yield a cognition”.⁴ According to him, in support of the thesis are three “bedrock epistemological assumptions”: (1) that “*cognition* of any kind requires that an object somehow be given (this applies even to the problematic intellectual or archetypal intuition)”; (2) that intuition for a finite mind like ours “must be sensible [or receptive rather than creative]”; and (3) that human cognition requires the cooperation of sensibility and understanding.⁵ As Allison further points out, this thesis “marks a radical break with the epistemologies of [Kant’s] predecessors (rationalists and empiricists alike), and [...] recognizing this fact is the key to understanding his idealism”.⁶ But Allison also finds it regrettable that Kant “tends to argue *from rather than for* the discursivity thesis, thereby suggesting that he viewed it as an unquestioned presupposition or starting point rather than as something that itself stands in need of justification”—even though, adds Allison, “at least the outline of an argument for this thesis is implicit in the *Critique*”.⁷

Kant does owe a justification of the discursivity thesis to his adversaries. For one thing, the rationalists have been seeking to prove the possibility of our having *a priori* cognition of objects that are supposed to be somehow given⁸ through a kind of

³ Allison, Henry: *Kant's Transcendental Idealism: An Interpretation and Defense*, revised and enlarged edition. New Haven 2004. And *Kant's Transcendental Deduction: An Analytical-Historical Commentary*. Oxford 2015.

⁴ KrV A 50/B 74: “[...] weder Begriffe, ohne ihnen auf einige Art korrespondierende Anschauung, noch Anschauung ohne Begriffe, ein Erkenntnis abgeben können”. See Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Deduction*, 100. A still briefer but memorable claim to the same effect is, of course, Kant’s dictum, “Thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind” (A 51/B 75: “Gedanken ohne Inhalt sind leer, Anschauungen ohne Begriffe sind blind”).

⁵ See Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism*, 77, original emphasis in (1).

⁶ *Ibid.*, xiv-xv.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 13, emphasis added.

⁸ As a referee points out, the rationalists may not all agree with the use of ‘given’ (*gegeben*) here if this is taken to impart what may be called a “givenness” condition on objects of any cognition. Allison’s first “bedrock” assumption seems to commit Kant to this condition. In the B-Deduction, Kant does use the word ‘given’ to describe and criticize a rationalistic assumption of “an object of a **non-sensible** intuition as given” (KrV B 149: “ein Objekt einer nicht-sinnlichen Anschauung als gegeben”); in the Phenomena and Noumena chapter, he also argues that “one cannot assume that such objects [i.e., objects in general] can be *given* without presupposing that another kind of intuition than the sensible kind is possible” (A 254/B 309, italics added: “[...] daß solche gegeben werden können, man nicht annehmen kann, ohne daß man eine andere, als sinnliche Art der Anschauung als möglich voraussetzt”). As I will show in this article, the grounds on which Kant would reject the rationalistic assumption mentioned above have nothing to do with the “givenness” condition in regard to things in themselves

non-sensible or intellectual intuition that differs somehow from what Allison portrays in the first two “bedrock” assumptions as “archetypal”, “creative” intuition, which, *ex hypothesi*, belongs only to God. Against them, Kant has often said things that imply the impossibility of non-sensible intuition for us. For example, at the outset of the Aesthetic he says that “all thinking [...] must ultimately be related to intuitions, thus, in our case, to sensibility, since there is *no other way* in which objects can be given to us”;⁹ when characterizing sensibility and understanding at the outset of the Transcendental Logic, he says in the same vein, “It comes along with our nature that **intuition** can never be other than **sensible**”;¹⁰ finally, as will be the focal point of this article, after holding cognition of an object to have “intuition” and “concept” as its two essential “components” (*Stücke*) in §22 of the B-Deduction, he fills in the first by saying, “Now all intuition that is possible for us is sensible (Aesthetic)”.¹¹ With good reason, commentators have generally interpreted Kant as *denying* the possibility of our having non-sensible intuition. Allison is no exception insofar as the second “bedrock” assumption holds that our intuition “*must* be sensible”. In this article, I will challenge this familiar reading of Kant by arguing that he should refrain from denying the possibility of non-sensible intuition for us. I will go to the B-Deduction as a testing ground for a different reading.

This different reading will be laid out and defended through the following steps: Section 2 clarifies some key concepts Kant uses for his Critical project. Section 3 explains in a preliminary fashion the kind of non-sensible or intellectual intuition in dispute by showing that Kant’s objection to its possibility for us is directed against rationalists like Leibniz and not empiricists like Locke, despite Allison’s attribution of what he calls “theocentric” model of human cognition to both camps. Section 4 introduces a crucial distinction Kant makes in the A-Paralogisms between three kinds of objections when he says, “All **objections** can be divided into **critical, dogmatic** and **skeptical** ones”.¹² Roughly, for a given proposition *p*, a “critical” objection holds it to

as objects of non-sensible intuition.

⁹ KrV A 19/B 33, italics added: “Alles Denken [...] muß sich [...] zuletzt auf Anschauungen, mithin, bei uns, auf Sinnlichkeit beziehen, weil uns auf andere Weise kein Gegenstand gegeben werden kann”.

¹⁰ KrV A 51/B 75: “Unsre Natur bringt es so mit sich, daß die Anschauungen niemals anders als sinnlich sein kann”.

¹¹ KrV B146: “Nun ist alle uns mögliche Anschauung sinnlich (Ästhetik)”.

¹² KrV A 388: “Alle Einwürfe können in dogmatische, kritische und skeptische eingeteilt

be *groundless*, a “dogmatic” one holds it to be *false*, and a “skeptical” one judges the issue over whether or not *p* is true as coming to a *standstill* in that the “dogmatic” objections raised by the opposing parties against each other are “of equal weight”.¹³

With this tripartite division in hand, I proceed to the B-Deduction where Kant makes the dogmatic-sounding claim in §22 that “all intuition that is possible for us is sensible”. I argue that, although this claim must be invoked in Kant’s well-known “two-step” argument in the B-Deduction, its justification can be interpreted as appealing to two further and more basic claims that render it “critical”, namely: (1) that the possibility of our having non-sensible intuition is groundless, and (2) that the possibility of our having *sensible* intuition is, by contrast, well-grounded. (1) is a critical objection Kant may be interpreted as raising in §23 when he criticizes the assumption of “an object of a **non-sensible** intuition as given”.¹⁴ In Sections 5-7, I show how Kant can argue for (1) and how it can play an argumentative role in the B-Deduction.

In Section 8, I turn to (2), which is a consequence of Kant’s proof, discernible in the B-Deduction,¹⁵ of the possibility of experience, where ‘experience’ primarily means “empirical cognition of objects”. I show that Kant must prove the possibility of experience in such a way that the possibility entailed by it of our having sensible intuition (a component of experience) must be understood as one in which *all* objects that can ever be given to us must be subsumable under the categories. So understood, the possibility of sensible intuition would be Achilles’ heel for Kant in that, if *some* objects of our sensible intuition are not so subsumable, the possibility of experience will not be proved in the way it must be for the purpose of justifying the objective validity of the categories. This is a problem of whether there can be unsynthesizable or, as it were, recalcitrant intuitions in us, and it lies behind the famous but elusive “difficulty” (*Schwierigkeit*), flagged at A 89-90/B 122, that Kant says he must come to grips with in the Deduction. I will explain why, in order to remove the difficulty, Kant must prove the possibility of experience and therewith (2).

werden”.

¹³ Ibid.: “von gleicher Erheblichkeit”.

¹⁴ KrV B 149: “ein Objekt einer nicht-sinnlichen Anschauung als gegeben”.

¹⁵ Here I follow Allison, who holds that Kant’s proof of the possibility of experience takes place in §26; see Allison, *Kant’s Transcendental Deduction*, 413-26.

I conclude in Section 9 by showing that, if combined with his proof of the possibility of experience, Kant's critical objection against the rationalists in regard to the possibility of our having non-sensible intuition may enable us to see how he can justify what may be called a "second-order, methodological" claim that he must appeal to in characterizing the "transcendental" nature of his Critical project, namely: that the possibility of experience is the only "guideline" (*Richtschnur*) for proving the possibility of our cognizing objects *a priori*.

2. Possibilities, Objects, and Kant's Transcendental Distinction

Before taking issue with Allison and the long tradition he subscribes to over Kant's opposition to the possibility of non-sensible intuition for us,¹⁶ I must explain how I will understand some relevant key terms as Kant uses them.

First, Kant distinguishes between logical and "real" possibilities by the "warning not to infer immediately from the possibility of the concept (logical possibility) to the possibility of the thing (real possibility)".¹⁷ It goes without saying that a concept is logically possible if what it is a concept of is consistently thinkable. Real possibility, on the other hand, is held by Kant to be ascribed to "things"¹⁸ that correspond to our concepts; and his warning is that the logical possibility of a concept does not imply the real possibility of what users of the concept may hold to be something "corresponding to and therefore also distinct from [it]"¹⁹ (the converse does hold, however: the concept of something really possible must be logically possible). Thus, Kant expresses the same warning, though in a disparaging tone, by saying that "the decep-

¹⁶ In §15 of the B-Deduction, Kant defines "synthesis of the understanding" as "combination", "whether it is a combination of the manifold of intuition or of several concepts, and in the first case either of sensible or non-sensible intuition" (KrV B 130: "[...] es mag eine Verbindung des Mannigfaltigen der Anschauung, oder mancherlei Begriffe, und an der ersteren der sinnlichen, oder nicht sinnlichen Anschauung sein"). Following the exegetical tradition exemplified by an emendation proposed by Georg S. A. Mellin, an early Kantian, and endorsed by Benno Erdmann and Norman Kemp Smith, Allison changes the phrase 'sensible or non-sensible' to 'empirical or non-empirical'; see Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Deduction*, 329-30 footnote 5.

¹⁷ KrV A 596/B 624 footnote: "[...] Warnung, von der Möglichkeit der Begriffe (logische) nicht sofort auf die Möglichkeit der Dinge (reale) zu schließen".

¹⁸ By "things" (*Dinge* or *Sachen*) whose real possibility Kant speaks of, he means things that either actually do or at least can exist, although, as is germane to his *epistemological* arguments, he also speaks of the real possibility of things which we may or may not be able to *cognize* as objects. I will explain "real possibility" shortly as it shows up in the latter context, where it pertains to the question whether or not one is justified in claiming to cognize something as an object. For a comprehensive account of Kant on real possibility, see Stang, Nicholas F.: *Kant's Modal Metaphysics*. Oxford 2016.

¹⁹ KrV A 104: "korrespondierenden, mithin auch davon unterschiedenen".

tion of substituting the logical possibility of the **concept** (since it does not contradict itself) for the transcendental [or real] possibility of **things** (where an object corresponds to the concept) can deceive and satisfy only the inexperienced”.²⁰ The issue over whether non-sensible intuition is “possible” for us has to do with real possibility. Kant typically, but not always, uses ‘possible’ or ‘possibility’ to mean real possibility in the *Critique*, which I will, unless otherwise noted, *invariably* do in this article while using ‘logical’ or ‘logically’ to indicate logical possibility. (I will say more about real possibility shortly.)

Second, Kant employs the word ‘object’ (*Gegenstand* or *Objekt*) in at least two senses, which he explains in the Second Analogy by saying,

Now one can, to be sure, call everything, and even every representation, insofar as one is conscious of it, an object; only what this word is to mean in the case of appearances, not insofar as they are (as representations) objects, but rather only insofar as they designate an object, requires deeper investigation.²¹

If “appearances as representations”—or in general, some if not all representations in us (whether intuitions or concepts, or combination of both)—can “designate an object”, then the “object” must be something that is at least possible as “an object corresponding to and therefore also distinct from [them]”. This may be called “object” in the *strong* sense. By contrast, in the case where “one can, to be sure, call everything, [...] insofar as one is conscious of it, an object”, it is presupposed merely that the “object” is consistently thinkable, not that it is possible. This may be called “object” in the *weak* sense. Kant’s conception of “cognition of an object” pertains to objects in the strong sense. Relatedly, for him, if (consistent) “thinking” in general, while by itself having an “object” in the weak sense, is to have an “object” in the strong sense and therewith “relation to an object” (*Beziehung auf einen Gegenstand*), then the object must be given through intuition of *some* kind that is possible for us, in which

²⁰ KrV A 244/B 302: “[...] das Blendwerk, die logische Möglichkeit des Begriffs (da er sich selbst nicht widerspricht) der transzendentalen Möglichkeit der Dinge, (da dem Begriff ein Gegenstand korrespondiert) zu unterscheiden, kann nur Unversuchte hintergehen und zufrieden stellen”; see also KrV A 220/B 267-8, B 302-3 footnote, and B xxvi footnote.

²¹ KrV A 189-90/B 234-5: “Nun kann man zwar alles, und sogar jede Vorstellung, so fern man sich ihrer bewußt ist, Objekt nennen; allein was dieses Wort bei Erscheinungen zu bedeuten habe, nicht, in so fern sie (als Vorstellungen) Objekte sind, sondern nur ein Objekt bezeichnen, ist von tieferer Untersuchung”.

case the thinking becomes (theoretical) “cognition of an object”. Unless otherwise noted, the word ‘object’ in this article will be understood in the strong sense.

Third, putting the two terms ‘possibility’ and ‘object’ together, let me explain how the possibility of objects can be proved according to Kant. In a well-noted footnote in the B-Preface he says,

To **cognize** an object, it is required that I be able to prove its possibility (whether [*case (1)*] by the testimony of experience from its actuality or [*case (2)*] *a priori* through reason).²²

(1) applies to particular objects (or kinds of objects) that empirical judgments are meant to refer to, whereas (2) applies to, among others, objects of empirical judgment *in general*, whatever they are. Andrew Chignell interprets the above requirement in terms of his so-called “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*”.²³ Using Kant’s “transcendental argument” in the Second Analogy to illustrate the “positive application” of the Condition in case (2), Chignell thinks Kant is required to prove that “[a] phenomenal cause is really possible [...] by appeal to the sort of *a priori* content that Kant typically calls a ‘schema’”.²⁴ This may well be right, but not applicable to the Deduction, where Kant is required to prove “*a priori* through reason” the possibility of objects of experience in general. As far as I can tell, Kant has a different and straightforward tactic to meet the Modal Condition in the Deduction. He once wrote that “[t]he conditions of the **possibility of experience** in general are at the same time conditions of the **possibility of the objects of experience**”.²⁵ This claim seems to rely on the following *analytic* truth: to say that it is possible for us to have *experience of something as an object* is the same as saying that it is possible for the something to be *an object of experience* for us. This makes the possibility of experience equivalent to the possibility of the objects of experience. Regarding the possibility of experience,

²² KrV B xxvi footnote: “Einen Gegenstand erkennen, dazu wird erfordert, daß ich seine Möglichkeit (es sei nach dem Zeugnis der Erfahrung aus seiner Wirklichkeit, oder *a priori* durch Vernunft) beweisen könne”.

²³ Chignell, Andrew: “Real Repugnance and our Ignorance of Things-in-Themselves: A Lockean Problem in Kant and Hegel”. In: *Internationales Jahrbuch des Deutschen Idealismus* 7, 2011, 146.

²⁴ See *ibid.*, 147.

²⁵ KrV A 158/B 197: “[...] die Bedingungen der Möglichkeit der Erfahrung überhaupt sind zugleich Bedingungen der Möglichkeit der Gegenstände der Erfahrung”. Essentially the same statement appears in the A-Deduction, at KrV A 111.

Allison thinks a proof of it can be found in the B-Deduction.²⁶ In agreement with him, I go so far as to think that for Kant such a proof yields, in virtue of the above analytic truth, a proof of the possibility of the objects of experience.

Fourth, and finally, in the passage cited three paragraphs back from the Second Analogy, Kant speaks of “appearances as representations”, which I labelled “objects in the weak sense”. But Kant also speaks of “**appearances**, i.e., objects of a possible **experience**”,²⁷ which, I take it, are (strong) objects designated or represented by “appearances as representations”. Kant has the latter and stronger sense of ‘appearances’ in mind when he says in the B-Preface that the distinction in which his “transcendental idealism” is couched between “appearances” and “things in themselves” is to be taken in a “**twofold meaning**”²⁸ of the word ‘object’, or according to a “twofold standpoint”²⁹ from which

the same objects can be considered [...] **on the one side** as objects of the senses and the understanding for experience [...] and **on the other side** as objects that are merely thought at most for isolated reason striving beyond the bounds of experience.³⁰

I will interpret Kant’s transcendental (and for some commentators incoherent) distinction between “appearances” and “things in themselves” in terms of this twofold standpoint, while being alert to the sense of “appearances” as “representations”. So taken, the distinction is one between objects as they are empirically given, or appear, to us and the same objects as they are in themselves, though with the Kantian caveat that, even though things in themselves are here called “objects”, the possibility of them as objects considered from the second standpoint for “isolated reason” can only be proved “*a priori* through reason” in a *practical* as opposed to theoretical manner.³¹

3. Leibniz and Locke

One might think that, as Allison interprets him, Kant’s polemic over the possibility of

²⁶ See footnote 15.

²⁷ KrV A 238-9/B 298: “Erscheinungen, d. i. Gegenstände einer möglichen Erfahrung”.

²⁸ KrV B xxvii: “zweierlei Bedeutung”.

²⁹ KrV B xix footnote: “zwei verschiedenen Seiten”.

³⁰ KrV B xviii-xix footnote: “[...] dieselben Gegenstände einerseits als Gegenstände der Sinne und des Verstandes für die Erfahrung, andererseits aber doch als Gegenstände, die man bloß denkt, allenfalls für die isolierte und über Erfahrungsgrenze hinausstrebende Vernunft”.

³¹ See KrV B xxvi footnote.

intellectual intuition for us is leveled against empiricists as well as rationalists, since Allison holds the discursivity thesis to mark “[Kant’s] radical break with the epistemologies of his predecessors (rationalists and empiricists alike)”, as we have seen. I will now argue that this is not in fact the case for Allison.

Kant expresses his fundamental disagreement with the rationalists and the empiricists by holding that “Leibniz **intellectualized** the appearances, just as Locke totally **sensitized** the concepts of understanding”.³² What might Kant mean by such a laconic comment? Just before making it, he criticizes Leibniz for the following:

[S]ensibility was only a confused kind of representations for [Leibniz], and not a special source of representations; for him appearance was the representation of **the thing in itself**, although distinguished from cognition through the understanding in its logical form [...].³³

Hence, Kant’s point seems to be that, whereas Locke mistook *a priori* concepts of the understanding for *empirical* ones that he thought have their origin *in the senses* and relate to objects as things in themselves, Leibniz went wrong in the *opposite* direction: he misidentified sensible representations of “appearances” as “a confused kind of representations [of things in themselves]”, thereby viewing, as Kant puts it in the Aesthetic, “the distinction between sensibility and the intellectual merely as logical”,³⁴ or as pertaining to “the form of distinctness or indistinctness”³⁵ rather than “origin and content”.³⁶ So it seems safe to say that for Kant the idea of intellectual intuition is lurking in Leibniz’s mistake but not in Locke’s.³⁷

Now, Allison does contend that *both* Locke and Leibniz have conceived human cognition on a “theocentric” model in which “an intellectual intuition...[is regarded as] a direct and complete acquaintance with an object as it is in itself (unmediated by any conceptual representation)”;³⁸ and that Kant has pitted his “anthropocentric” model,

³² KrV A 271/B 327: “**Leibniz** intellektuierte die Erscheinungen, so wie **Locke** die Verstandesbegriffe [...] insgesamt sensibilisiert”.

³³ Ibid.: “[...] die Sinnlichkeit war ihm nur eine verworrene Vorstellungsart, und kein besonderer Quell der Vorstellungen; Erscheinung war ihm die Vorstellung des Dinges an sich selbst, obgleich von der Erkenntnis durch den Verstand, der logischen Form nach, unterschieden”.

³⁴ KrV A 44/B 61-2: “den Unterschied der Sinnlichkeit vom Intellektuellen bloß als logisch”.

³⁵ Ibid.: “die Form der Deutlichkeit oder Undeutlichkeit”.

³⁶ Ibid.: “Ursprung und [...] Inhalt”.

³⁷ Whether Kant’s criticism is fair to Leibniz may be an issue. See, for example, Jauernig, Anja: “Kant’s Critique of the Leibnizian Philosophy: *Contra* the Leibnizians, but *Pro* Leibniz”. In: *Kant and the Early Moderns*. Eds. Garber, Daniel, and Longuenesse, Béatrice. New Jersey 2008, 41-63.

³⁸ Allison, *Kant’s Transcendental Idealism*, 32.

on which his discursive conception of human cognition is built, against the “theocentric” model. But according to Allison, Locke and Leibniz nevertheless “interpret [intellectual intuition] in *radically different* ways”.³⁹ Locke regards such intuition “*as if* it were perceptual in nature, albeit an *idealized* perception”.⁴⁰ Yet, “despite the infinite difference in degree or scope, Leibnizian rationalism assumes a commensurability or similarity *in kind* between human and divine knowledge”,⁴¹ so that we are, *in no “as-if” or “idealized” manner*, capable of an intellectual intuition that forever-remotely approximates to its archetype. For Allison, then, in arguing against the possibility of intellectual intuition for humans, Kant is targeting at Leibniz the arch-rationalist, but not at Locke.

4. Kant on Three Kinds of Objections

Whatever argument or justification Allison thinks he has found latent in the *Critique* for the discursivity thesis as he understands it, one thing it must do is to *disprove* the possibility of non-sensible or intellectual intuition for us, given the second “bedrock” assumption that “[our] intuition must be sensible”. But Kant merely holds that such intuition is something “the possibility of which we [...] cannot understand [or into which we can have no insight]”,⁴² or “of whose possibility we cannot in the least represent”.⁴³ So it may seem reasonable to expect Kant to choose to cast doubt on whatever argument the rationalists might offer for such an incomprehensible possibility as he sees it, rather than jumping to the offensive line with an argument against it (how can one argue against something one cannot comprehend?). Between the two options is a difference Kant is keenly aware of between discrediting an argument and holding that its conclusion is false.

As already mentioned, in the A-Paralogisms Kant says, “All **objections** can be divided into **dogmatic**, **critical** and **skeptical** ones”. He distinguishes between the *first two* by saying, “A dogmatic objection is one that is directed against a **propo-**

³⁹ Ibid., emphasis added.

⁴⁰ Ibid., emphases added.

⁴¹ Ibid., 29, emphasis added.

⁴² KrV B 307: “[...] von welcher wir [...] die Möglichkeit nicht einsehen können”.

⁴³ KrV A 256/B 312: “[...] von welchem wir uns nicht die geringste Vorstellung seiner Möglichkeit machen können”.

sition, but a critical one is directed against the **proof** of a proposition”.⁴⁴ As he goes on to elaborate, the first kind of objection “*requires an insight* into the constitution of the nature of the object [to which the proposition is intended to relate]”,⁴⁵ whereas the second, “because it *leaves the proposition untouched in its worth or worthlessness, and impugns only the proof*, does not at all need to have better acquaintance with [or insight into] the object [...]; it shows *only that the assertion is groundless, not that it is incorrect*”.⁴⁶ Noteworthy is how Kant characterizes the third kind of objection, the skeptical: it “puts the proposition and its opposite over against one another, as objections of equal weight, each alternatively a dogma with the other as an objection to it; thus on both opposed sides it is dogmatic in appearance”;⁴⁷ consequently, the two dogmas involved “must claim *as much insight* into its object as is necessary to assert something about it either affirmatively or negatively”.⁴⁸ A skeptical objector may be viewed as one who appears as a *dogmatic* objector to each of the two opposing parties to a dispute in that she confronts each with the other’s thesis or antithesis, which she holds to be “of equal weight” with, or as well-grounded as, its opposite. By contrast, if what she holds is, instead, that both the thesis and the antithesis are *equally groundless*, one is *critical* rather than skeptical, but might, in being “doubly” critical, still be called “skeptical” in a *weaker* sense than Kant has attached to the term.⁴⁹

Now, Kant stresses that his attack on the rational doctrine of the soul in the Paralogisms chapter counts as a *critical* objection, which does not, whereas both dogmatic and skeptical objections do, commit him to claiming “insight” into the soul about what its essential nature is or is not, but only to scrutinizing the proofs that he thinks the rationalists would offer in support of the doctrine. At the outset of the chapter in both editions, Kant hints at the critical objection when he says of the doctrine that “we

⁴⁴ KrV A 388: “Der dogmatische Einwurf ist, der wider einen Satz, der kritische, der wider den Beweis eines Satzes gerichtet ist”.

⁴⁵ Ibid., italics added: “[...] bedarf einer Einsicht in die Beschaffenheit der Natur des Gegenstandes”.

⁴⁶ Ibid., italics added: “[...] weil es den Satz in seinem Werte oder Unwerte unangetastet läßt, und nur den Beweis anficht, bedarf gar nicht den Gegenstand besser zu kennen [...]; er zeigt nur, daß die Behauptung grundlos, nicht, daß sie unrichtig sei”.

⁴⁷ KrV 388-9, italics added: “[...] stellet Satz und Gegensatz wechselseitig gegen einander, als Einwürfe von gleicher Erheblichkeit, einen jeden derselben wechselsweise als Dogma und den andern als dessen Einwurf, ist also auf zwei entgegengesetzten Seiten dem Scheine nach dogmatisch”.

⁴⁸ KrV A 389, italics added: “[...] müssen beide so viel Einsicht ihres Gegenstandes vorgeben, als nötig ist, etwas von ihm bejahend oder verneinend zu behaupten”.

⁴⁹ I am indebted to a referee for this weaker sense of ‘skeptical’.

can, in accordance with the nature of a transcendental philosophy, quite appropriately investigate its ground or groundlessness”.⁵⁰ We shall, he says, look at it “with a critical eye”⁵¹ from whose perspective any claim of “insight” into the soul—a claim that both the dogmatic and the skeptical must carry with them—must be deemed as going beyond the bounds of experience and thereby vitiating “the nature of a transcendental philosophy”. To this extent, Kant’s position on both the rational doctrine of the soul and its denial is critical and so also “skeptical” in the weak sense suggested above. Perhaps Kant should take the same critical-cum-“skeptical” position on the possibility of non-sensible intuition for us. Let me now go to the B-Deduction to test this interpretive hypothesis.

5. The Assumption of “an Object of a **Non-Sensible** Intuition as Given”

Halfway through the B-Deduction, which begins with §15, Kant surprisingly tells us in §21 that he has managed *only* to reach “the beginning of a **deduction** of the pure concepts of the understanding”.⁵² According to Kant, before §21 “I must abstract from the way in which the manifold for an empirical intuition is given”,⁵³ even though “[i]n the above proof [...] I still could not abstract from one point, namely, from the fact that the manifold for intuition must already be **given** prior to the synthesis of the understanding and independently from it; how, however, is here left undetermined”.⁵⁴ Allison proposes that Kant is making a transition in §21 from investigating how the understanding works on the manifold of sensible intuition *in general* (i.e., sensible intuition of *any* possible kind, which non-human finite intelligent beings, if any, would possess, but which does not necessarily have space and time as its “forms”) to investigating how it works together with sensibility and imagination on the manifold of *human* sensible intuition (which must be given in space and time as its “forms” according to the Aesthetic). As Allison interprets it, this is a

⁵⁰ KrV A 342/B 400: “[...] deren Grund oder Ungrund wir hier ganz schicklich, und der Natur einer Transzendentalphilosophie gemäß, untersuchen können”.

⁵¹ KrV A 348/B 406: “mit einem kritischen Auge”.

⁵² KrV B 144: “der Anfang einer Deduktion der reinen Verstandesbegriffe”.

⁵³ Ibid.: “[...] ich [...] von der Art, wie das Mannigfaltige zu einer empirischen Anschauung gegeben werde, abstrahieren muß”.

⁵⁴ KrV B 145: “Allein von einem Stücke konnte ich im obigen Beweise doch nicht abstrahieren, nämlich davon, daß das Mannigfaltige für die Anschauung noch vor der Synthesis des Verstandes, und unabhängig von ihr, gegeben sein müsse; wie aber, bleibt hier unbestimmt”.

transition, signaled in §21, from the first step of Kant's argument to the second,⁵⁵ with which "a **deduction**" has only just begun.

Kant then proceeds to the ensuing §22 by first stating his particular conception of "cognition of an object":

To **think** an object and to **cognize** an object are thus not the same. For two components belong to cognition [of an object]: first, the concept, through which an object is thought at all (the category), and second, the intuition, through which it is given; for if an intuition corresponding to the concept could not be given at all, then it would be a thought as far as its form is concerned, but without any object, and by its means no cognition of anything at all would be possible [...].⁵⁶

Because it is no more than one component of cognition of an object, the thinking of an object cannot amount to cognition without its presumed object being given through the other component, "intuition". For Kant, if the presumed object of thinking could not be given through "intuition", the thinking would yield a thought without (relation to) an object, and consequently no cognition of an object would be possible through such a thought. So there must be intuition of *some* kind through which the object to be thought can be given to us if we are to have cognition of it as a (determinate) object.

That we *can* "think an object" is alluded to by Kant in the A-Deduction when he says of the categories that "it is already a sufficient deduction of them and justification of their objective validity if we can prove that *by means of them alone an object can be thought*".⁵⁷ It also figures in an argument outlined in the section "Tran-

⁵⁵ Dieter Henrich has famously advocated a "two-steps-in-one-proof thesis" about the B-Deduction; see Henrich, Dieter: "The Proof-Structure of Kant's Transcendental Deduction". In: *Review of Metaphysics*, 22, 1969, 640-59. Although the thesis has been much debated, Kant's division of the argument in the B-Deduction into two steps is unquestionable, the issue being chiefly what he does in each step and how they are knit together. For Allison's criticism of Henrich, see Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Deduction*, 327-9, and 322 footnote 3; *Kant's Transcendental Idealism*, 161-2; and "Reflections on the B-Deduction" in Allison, Henry: *Idealism and Freedom*. Cambridge 1996. I agree with Allison, and will adopt an essentially Allisonian account of the two steps, *minus* his reading of Kant as committed by arguments in the *Critique* to denying the possibility of non-sensible intuition for us.

⁵⁶ KrV B 146: "Sich einen Gegenstand denken, und einen Gegenstand erkennen, ist also nicht einerlei. Zum Erkenntnis gehören nämlich zwei Stücke: erstlich der Begriff, dadurch überhaupt ein Gegenstand gedacht wird (die Kategorie), und zweitens die Anschauung, dadurch er gegeben wird; denn, könnte dem Begriffe eine korrespondierende Anschauung gar nicht gegeben werden, so wäre er ein Gedanke der Form nach, aber ohne allen Gegenstand, und durch ihn gar keine Erkenntnis von irgend einem Dinge möglich".

⁵⁷ KrV A 96-7, italics added: "[...] es ist schon eine hinreichende Deduktion derselben, und Rechtfertigung ihrer objektiven Gültigkeit, wenn wir beweisen können: daß vermittelst ihrer allein ein Gegenstand gedacht werden kann".

sition to the transcendental deduction of the categories” in both editions when Kant says that “they [the categories] then are related necessarily and *a priori* to objects of experience, since *only by means of them can any object of experience be thought at all*”.⁵⁸ Thus, Kant seems to have considered the first step of his argument in the B-Deduction as enabling him to conclude that we can think an object *a priori* by means of the categories (as “concepts of an object in general”⁵⁹). This conclusion seems to be no longer considered “already a *sufficient* deduction” in the second edition, as it was in the first, but *only* the “beginning” of one. A “sufficient” deduction is now held to require a *further* step, which takes into account the kind of sensible intuition through which an object to be thought can be given to human beings, so that Kant can prove, as he now realizes he must in the Deduction,⁶⁰ that “only by means of [the categories] can any object of *experience* be thought at all”.

It is when he brings in the second component “intuition” that is possible for us that Kant asserts in §22, “Now all intuition that is possible for us is sensible (Aesthetic)”. By appeal to this dogmatic-sounding claim, he immediately concludes,

[T]hus for us thinking of an object in general through a pure concept of the understanding can become cognition only insofar as this concept is related to objects of the senses.⁶¹

This enables Kant to derive the final conclusion of §22, that “[t]he categories consequently have no other use for the cognition of things except insofar as these are taken as objects of possible experience”.⁶² Then he begins §23 right away by holding this

⁵⁸ KrV A 93/B 126, italics added: “[...] alsdenn beziehen sie sich notwendiger Weise und *a priori* auf Gegenstände der Erfahrung, weil nur vermittelt ihrer überhaupt irgend ein Gegenstand der Erfahrung gedacht werden kann”.

⁵⁹ “Begriffe von einem Gegenstande überhaupt”; see, e.g., KrV B 128.

⁶⁰ In question here is the “objective side” of Kant’s investigation in the Deduction; see KrV A xvi-xvii for his distinction between the “objective” and “subjective” deductions.

⁶¹ KrV B 146: “[...] also kann das Denken eines Gegenstandes überhaupt durch einen reinen Verstandesbegriff bei uns nur Erkenntnis werden, so fern dieser auf Gegenstände der Sinne bezogen wird”. To be exact, an additional premise is needed, and Kant argues for it by claiming that “[t]he pure concepts of the understanding, consequently, even if they are applied to *a priori* intuitions (as in mathematics), provide cognition only insofar as these *a priori* intuitions [space and time], and by means of them also the concepts of the understanding, can be applied to empirical intuitions” (KrV B 147: “Folglich verschaffen die reinen Verstandesbegriffe, selbst wenn sie auf Anschauungen *a priori* (wie in der Mathematik) angewandt werden, nur so fern Erkenntnis, als diese, mithin auch die Verstandesbegriffe vermittelt ihrer, auf empirische Anschauungen angewandt werden können”). For Kant, cognition of “objects” constructed *a priori* in pure mathematics can become genuine cognition of objects only if those presumed “objects” *can* be given as objects of possible experience, which space and time *themselves* cannot.

⁶² KrV B 147-8: “Folglich haben die Kategorien keinen anderen Gebrauch zum Erkenntnis der

conclusion to be “of the greatest importance, for it determines the boundaries of the use of the pure concepts of the understanding in regard to objects”.⁶³ To be sure, insofar as we can think an object (in general) by means of the categories, they “are free from this limitation and extend to objects of intuition in general, [...] as long as it is *sensible and not intellectual*”.⁶⁴ However, “this further extension of concepts [the categories] beyond **our** sensible intuition does not get us anywhere”,⁶⁵ for it leads to no (theoretical) cognition of anything as an object. All this reiterates what Kant has already held in §22 after specifying the two components of the kind of cognition of an object that he thinks is possible for us.

Kant’s remark in the first paragraph of §23 on the boundaries of the theoretical use of the categories and their “further extension” to objects of sensible intuition in general is supposed to be grounded in the dogmatic-sounding claim in §22. But in the following second paragraph of §23 he somehow finds it necessary to address one who “assumes an object of a **non-sensible** intuition as given”.⁶⁶ For Allison, and perhaps for readers of the *Critique* generally, what is involved here is no more than “a *counter-factual* issue of the application of the categories to objects of a non-sensible intuition, i.e., noumena”.⁶⁷ But I suggest that it is with a view to making the boundaries fixed *beyond all doubt* that Kant follows up on §22 by taking into consideration the alleged possibility for finite beings like us of any intuition that lies *outside* of “sensible intuition in general”, the latter being marked out by him to be the range over which his “further extension” thesis about the use of the categories holds true.

Kant argues in the second paragraph of §23 that, if pressed to spell out what the

Dinge, als nur so fern diese als Gegenstände möglicher Erfahrung angenommen werden”. See also the heading of §22.

⁶³ KrV B 148: “[...] von der größten Wichtigkeit; denn er bestimmt eben sowohl die Grenzen des Gebrauchs der reinen Verstandesbegriffe in Ansehung der Gegenstände”. See also B xxvi, where Kant speaks of “the limitation of all even possible speculative cognition of reason to mere objects of **experience**” (die Einschränkung aller nur möglichen spekulativen Erkenntnis der Vernunft auf bloße Gegenstände der Erfahrung). The seamless continuation of §23 with §22 may help explain why the former section has no heading.

⁶⁴ Ibid., italics added: “[...] sind von dieser Einschränkung frei, und erstrecken sich auf Gegenstände der Anschauung überhaupt, [...] wenn sie nur sinnlich und nicht intellektuell ist”.

⁶⁵ Ibid.: “Diese weitere Ausdehnung der Begriffe über unsere sinnliche Anschauung hinaus, hilft uns aber zu nichts”.

⁶⁶ KrV B 149. It may be noted that Kant defines, at B 307, “noumenon in a **positive** sense” (Noumenon in positiver Bedeutung) as “an **object of a non-sensible intuition**” (ein Objekt einer nichtsinnlichen Anschauung”).

⁶⁷ Allison, *Kant’s Transcendental Deduction*, 378, emphasis added.

assumption of “an object of a **non-sensible** intuition as given” amounts to, one can “merely indicate what the intuition of the object **is not**”,⁶⁸ and can only say of its presumed object that “**nothing belonging to sensible intuition pertains to it**”.⁶⁹ This leads at once to the conclusion, implicit in the context, that nothing *positive* or *substantive* can be said of non-sensible intuition and its presumed object (though, as we shall see in a moment, this conclusion does not tell the whole story). If, as Kant argues, all that we can be told is trivially that *non-sensible* intuition is *not* sensible, we cannot understand what is meant, even though we cannot say, either, that it is *logically impossible*. What we *can* say is that nothing substantive follows from such trivial, tautological talk. If so, Kant can conclude that such a *negative* characterization gives no ground for the possibility of non-sensible intuition for us.

But the rationalists would certainly point out here that, if it is to be *positively* characterized, the non-sensible intuition that they think is possible for us can at least be said to be “active” in contrast to sensibility, which is “receptive” or passive.⁷⁰ Kant did not consider such a reply in §23, but he would rejoinder by invoking the final conclusion of §22 to the effect that we can have no cognition whatsoever of things other than objects of experience. The “activeness” of non-sensible intuition makes it something that cannot be an object of our experience, and hence something into which we can have no “insight”. In this way, the conclusion of §22 warrants a *critical* objection both to the possibility of our having such “active” intuition and to its impossibility.⁷¹ Kant is, then, a critical-cum-“skeptical” objector on this score.

It may be noted that Allison, who thinks “[our] intuition must be sensible” for Kant, reads the second paragraph of §23 in a manner that turns out to go along the critical line. According to him, Kant’s point in the paragraph is “simply that such purely negative predication [of the object alleged to be given non-sensibly] would not

⁶⁸ KrV B 149: “[...] bloß anzeige, wie die Anschauung des Objekts nicht sei”.

⁶⁹ Ibid.: “[...] ihm nichts zur sinnlichen Anschauung Gehöriges zukomme”.

⁷⁰ I thank a referee for reminding me of this possible (and typical) reply to Kant from the rationalists.

⁷¹ It must be noted that, for Kant, it is rather the understanding as a faculty of thinking that is “active” or “spontaneous”. This causes serious problem for him, for a critical objection may be turned against him, namely that the possibility of our having an *active understanding* is also groundless if that of our having an *active intuition* of a non-sensible kind is groundless. Kant would fend off such an objection by arguing that the former possibility must be grounded, not in any “insight” into the active understanding itself, but in the “synthetic unity” that he maintains is “added” through synthesis of the understanding to manifold representations we passively receive through sensibility; see Section 6 below.

constitute cognition, since there could be no way of determining whether such an object is even possible”.⁷² Allison in effect interprets Kant as holding that there could be no way of *affirming or denying* the possibility of the object of non-sensible intuition. Given that the possibility of an object of non-sensible intuition is equivalent to the possibility of such intuition itself,⁷³ there could be no way, either, of affirming or denying the possibility of our having non-sensible intuition. Not only does this make for a critical objection, it also excludes any objection that is dogmatic or skeptical (in Kant’s stronger sense). Moreover, since this critical objection holds that the possibility and impossibility of non-sensible intuition for us are equally groundless, it is critical-cum-“skeptical”, as argued in the last paragraph.⁷⁴

6. Intellectual Self-Intuition of the I in the “I Think”?

The issue over non-sensible intuition has in fact already confronted Kant, though in a slightly different form, in the first step of his argument in the B-Deduction. The first step is supposed to land him on the “principle of the synthetic unity of apperception” (*Grundsatz der synthetischen Einheit der Apperzeption*; the “PUA”, hereafter), thereby enabling him to go on to prove that we can think an object in general. Though he is eager to stress in §§16 and 17 that the PUA is “itself identical, thus an analytical proposition”,⁷⁵ he has been charged with contradiction, especially if one interprets the following principle formulated in the A-Deduction as its counterpart:

The synthetic proposition that every different **empirical consciousness** must be combined into a single self-consciousness is the absolutely first and synthetic principle of our thinking in general.⁷⁶

⁷² Allison, *Kant’s Transcendental Deduction*: 378.

⁷³ This is analogous to the analytic truth attributed to Kant in Section 2.

⁷⁴ A referee comments that some philosophers even to this day still argue for the possibility of our having non-sensible intuition (of some non-divine kind). In reply, I must stress that, as Kant understands it, a critical objection to a proposition *p* seeks to show that *p* is unjustified, not that it is false, thereby leaving *p* “untouched in its worth or worthlessness”, as we saw in Section 4. The cited phrase, with the evaluative terms it contains, suggests that for Kant there should be room for *p* (and not-*p*) to be argued for and against among scholars so that critical objections can be publicly raised to it until, and unless, a consensus can be reached that *p* (or not-*p*) is unquestionably what should be regarded as true. Now, let ‘*p*’ stand for the proposition that non-sensible intuition is possible for us. As long as Kant stays “critical” about *p*, I think he would by all means be attentive to philosophers who would take *p* to be *worthy* of being taken seriously by others and would offer their grounds for it. This might not be the case for Kant if he was “dogmatic” in taking *p* to be false, as he has been traditionally taken to be. My defense of an interpretation along the “critical” line is aimed at presenting the more palatable Kant. And I tend to think the B-Deduction can be read accordingly.

⁷⁵ KrV B 135: “selbst identisch, mithin ein analytischer Satz”.

⁷⁶ KrV A 117 footnote: “Der synthetische Satz: daß alles verschiedene empirische Bewußtsein in

This “first and synthetic principle of *our thinking in general*” and what Kant speaks of in the B-Deduction as “the supreme principle of *all use of the understanding*”⁷⁷ (one of Kant’s terms for the PUA) do seem to be intended to assert the same principle, and yet he calls the former *synthetic*, the latter *analytic*.⁷⁸ I think this apparent contradiction can be dissolved as follows.

Kant explains the analyticity of the PUA by formulating it this way:

[A]ll **my** representations in any given intuition must stand under the condition under which alone I can ascribe them to the identical self as **my** representations, and thus can grasp them together as synthetically combined in an apperception, through the general expression **I think**.⁷⁹

But, strictly speaking, he intends this whole statement to explain what he has noted just before it, namely that the PUA is “itself analytic, although, to be sure, it makes synthetic unity into the condition of all thinking”.⁸⁰ We may accordingly divide the statement into two parts, the first being:

[A]ll **my** representations in any given intuition must stand under [C1] the condition under which alone I can ascribe them to the identical self as **my** representations [...].

And the second part:

[A]ll **my** representations in any given intuition must stand under [C2] the condition under which alone I can [...] grasp them together as synthetically combined in an apperception, through the general expression **I think**.

Kant seems to think that whatever constitutes (C1) also constitutes (C2), so that the first part, which expresses the PUA *itself*, implies the second, which is therefore also analytic. Moreover, the condition is just the “synthetic unity” that Kant says the PUA

einem einigen Selbstbewußtsein verbunden sein müsse, ist der schlechthin erste und synthetische Grundsatz unseres Denkens überhaupt”.

⁷⁷ KrV 136, italics added: “das oberste Prinzip alles Verstandesgebrauchs”.

⁷⁸ Allison argues for the “analytic” option; see Allison, *Kant’s Transcendental Deduction*, 343ff. Paul Guyer and Patricia Kitcher argue for the “synthetic” one as what Kant should have settled on. See Guyer, Paul: *Kant and the Claims of Knowledge*. Cambridge 1987, 133ff. And Kitcher, Patricia: “The Critical and ‘Empty’ Representation ‘I Think’”. In: *Kant’s Critique of Pure Reason: A Critical Guide*. Ed. O’Shea, James R. Cambridge 2017, 151ff.

⁷⁹ KrV B 138: “[...] daß alle meine Vorstellungen in irgend einer gegebenen Anschauung unter der Bedingung stehen müssen, unter der ich sie allein als meine Vorstellungen zu dem identischen Selbst rechnen, und also, als in einer Apperzeption synthetisch verbunden, durch den allgemeinen Ausdruck Ich Denke zusammenfassen kann”.

⁸⁰ Ibid.: “[...] selbst analytisch, ob er zwar die synthetische Einheit zur Bedingung alles Denkens macht”.

“makes into the condition of all thinking”. The second part may then be interpreted as asserting that synthetic unity is “the condition of all thinking” (where “thinking” is understood as synthetically combining representations “in an apperception”⁸¹).

This unity later comes to be identified by Kant in §21 as what his “abstraction” in the first step enables him to “attend” (*sehen*) to, and also what must have been “added to the intuition through the understanding by means of the categories”.⁸² Thus, Kant does not simply work with the mere *concept* of the synthetic unity in question all along, but eventually theorizes how what it is a concept of is brought about.⁸³ To this extent, the synthetic unity as “the condition of all thinking” must be taken, and indeed proved, to be possible *for us* (by proving that we can think an object in general), so that the PUA can be held to apply to *our* understanding, which must consequently be recognized as a faculty of cognition we have whose task is to confer synthetic unity upon all sensible intuition given to it. Thus, though “*itself* analytic”, the PUA in its application to our understanding may be interpreted as tantamount to “the absolutely first and synthetic principle of *our* thinking in general” in the A-Deduction. The apparent contradiction mentioned above then disappears.

In the first step of his argument, Kant finds it necessary to pinpoint the kind of understanding for whose use the PUA can be a principle. As he says in §17,

This principle, however, is not a principle for every possible understanding, but only for one through whose pure apperception in the representation **I am** nothing manifold is given at all.⁸⁴

This point was intimated in §16:

An understanding, in which through self-consciousness all of the mani-

⁸¹ It is also the “thinking” that Kant speaks of in the Second Paralogism as “‘I think’ (the manifold in a representation)” (KrV A 354: “Ich denke (das Mannigfaltige in einer Vorstellung)”), even though he is there concerned, not with the “thinking” and the synthetic unity of representations processed by the understanding through “thinking”, but with the I and its “absolute unity” in the “I think”. See also B 145 in §21, where Kant equates “thinking” with that in which the “entire capacity” (ganzes Vermögen) of the understanding consists.

⁸² KrV B 144: “[...] in die Anschauung vermittelt der Kategorie durch den Verstand hinzukommt”.

⁸³ Theorizing in this way seems to be what Kant refers to in the A-Preface as “the search for the cause of a given effect [i.e., the synthetic unity being theorized about]” (KrV A xvii: “eine Aufsuchung der Ursache zu einer gegebenen Wirkung”). He fears that the search may look “hypothetical”, but notes that “this is not in fact how matters stand” (ibid.: “es [...] sich in der Tat nicht so verhält”). Whether or not he is right about it, he would look at the nature of the theorizing in question according to this note.

⁸⁴ KrV B 138: “Aber dieser Grundsatz ist doch nicht ein Prinzip für jeden überhaupt möglichen Verstand, sondern nur für den, durch dessen reine Apperzeption in der Vorstellung: Ich bin, noch gar nichts Mannigfaltiges gegeben ist”.

fold would at the same time be given, would **intuit**; ours can only **think** and must seek the intuition in the senses.⁸⁵

The two remarks reflect a concern voiced both in the B-Deduction (especially in the second half of §24 and in §25), and in new passages added to the Aesthetic in the second edition, as when he says,

Everything that is represented through a sense is to that extent always appearance, and an inner sense must therefore either not be admitted at all or else the subject, which is the object of this sense, can only be represented by its means as appearance, *not as it would judge of itself if its intuition were mere self-activity, i.e., intellectual.*⁸⁶

Kant submits that “how a subject can internally intuit itself” is a question that causes “difficulty [...] common to every theory”.⁸⁷ But the difficulty is aggravated in his own theory by the account he offers in §15 of “synthesis of the understanding” as “self-activity”, which means “freedom” of the I in the “I think”.⁸⁸ Although for Kant this account cannot be grounded in any alleged “insight” into such an I (otherwise, he would fall into transcendent metaphysics), one may wonder why, if equipped with a capacity for “self-activity”, the I cannot affect itself through it, thereby intuiting itself intellectually the same time it “thinks” or performs “synthesis of the understanding”. Kant’s reply would be that, although the I as such must have (what I would call) “pure subjecthood”⁸⁹, such an I is not ours if it is thought to be able to intuit itself through

⁸⁵ KrV B 135: “Ein Verstand, in welchem durch das Selbstbewußtsein zugleich alles Mannigfaltige gegeben würde, würde anschauen; der unsere kann nur denken und muß in den Sinnen die Anschauung suchen”.

⁸⁶ KrV B 68, italics added: “Alles, was durch einen Sinn vorgestellt wird, ist so fern jederzeit Erscheinung, und ein innerer Sinn würde also entweder gar nicht eingeräumt werden müssen, oder das Subjekt, welches der Gegenstand desselben ist, würde durch denselben nur als Erscheinung vorgestellt werden können, nicht wie es von sich selbst urteilen würde, wenn seine Anschauung bloße Selbsttätigkeit, d. i. intellektuell, wäre”.

⁸⁷ Ibid.: “[...] Schwierigkeit [...] jeder Theorie gemein”.

⁸⁸ See KrV A 418/B 446, where Kant speaks of “**self-activity** (freedom)” (Selbsttätigkeit (Freiheit)).

⁸⁹ Due to this “pure subjecthood”, the I in the “I think” can in no way be treated as an *object* of intuition or of cognition. This explains why Kant says in the B-Deduction that “I therefore have no **cognition** of myself **as I am**, but only as I **appear** to myself” (KrV B 158: “[...] ich habe also demnach keine Erkenntnis von mir wie ich bin, sondern bloß wie ich mir selbst erschein”); and why he speaks of the I in the Paralogisms as “the simple and in content for itself wholly empty representation **I**” (KrV A 345-6/B 404: “die einfache und für sich selbst an Inhalt gänzlich leere Vorstellung: Ich”). The I in the phrase ‘**as I am**’ is meant to be a pure *subject*, whereas the I in ‘**cognition** of myself [...] as I **appear** to myself’ is meant to be an *object*. Even though the I *qua* subject and the I *qua* object are supposed to be numerically identical, it is only the latter I that can be cognized. Thus, while Kant takes the I *qua* thinking subject to be that which self-actively and hence spontaneously or freely performs synthesis of the understanding, he would not hold this to be what we can cognize theoretically, so that his account of such synthesis involves no transcendent-metaphysical cognition of such an I, but only

“self-activity”, nor can the PUA be applied to the kind of understanding that belongs to it.

More important is how Kant argues that the PUA *can* be applied to, and only to, an understanding that “thinks” without itself being able to intuit. This he does at the end of §17 as follows,

But for the human understanding it [the PUA] is unavoidably the first principle, so that the human understanding cannot even form for itself the least concept of another possible understanding, either [*case (1)*] one that would itself intuit or [*case (2)*] one that, while possessing a sensible intuition, would possess one of a different kind than one grounded in space and time.⁹⁰

What Kant means by the phrase ‘one of a different kind than one grounded in space and time’ might seem to be *sensible* intuition of a *non-human* kind, which makes (2) a case of an (allegedly) possible understanding possessing *both* human and non-human sensible intuitions. But this possibility seems odd, and its role at this juncture in Kant’s argument obscure. A more plausible reading of (2) together with (1) may, I take it, go as follows: To begin with, both are supposed to be what we “cannot even form for [ourselves] the least concept of” as a different understanding than what Kant thinks is ours. (1) is a case where an understanding can intuit apart from sensibility, hence intellectually; (2) is a case where it can, while possessing sensible intuition, *also* possess intuition of a *non-sensible* kind. In saying that we cannot form “the least concept” of (1) and (2), Kant might mean *either* that the concept is *logically impossi-*

offers a *logical* possibility that he makes use of in an effort to explain, by way of a “synthetic unity” we can be aware of as a contribution of the understanding to sensible intuition, how we *qua* subjects can cognize objects. Further, the “pure subjecthood” of the I *qua* subject means that the I in the “I think” as an expression of “pure” or “transcendental” apperception cannot be “thought” as an *object* in general. This explains why Kant says in the Paralogisms, “Through this I, or He, or It (the thing), which thinks, nothing further is represented than a transcendental *subject* of thoughts = x” (KrV A 346/B 404, italics added: “Durch dieses Ich, oder Er, oder Es (das Ding), welches denket, wird nun nichts weiter, also ein transzendentales Subjekt der Gedanken vorgestellt = x”), as opposed to “the non-empirical, i.e., transcendental *object* = X” (KrV A 109, italics added: “der nichtempirische, d. i. transzendentale Gegenstand = X”). Thus, although Kant’s argument in the B-Deduction begins with the dictum “The **I think** must **be able** to accompany all my representations” (KrV B 131: “Das: Ich denke, muß alle meine Vorstellungen begleiten können”), the “I think” itself cannot be “accompanied” by any further “I think”, which saves him from the dizzying regress from “I think that...” to “I think I think that...”, *ad infinitum*. For a knowledgeably comparative treatment of issues over the Kantian I as subject, see Longuenesse, Béatrice: *I, Me, Mine: Back to Kant, and Back Again*. Oxford 2017.

⁹⁰ KrV B 139: “Aber für den menschlichen Verstand ist er doch unvermeidlich der erste Grundsatz, so, daß er sich sogar von einem anderen möglichen Verstande, entweder einem solchen, der selbst anschauete, oder, wenn gleich eine sinnliche Anschauung, aber doch von anderer Art, als die im Raume und der Zeit, zum Grunde liegend besäße, sich nicht den mindesten Begriff machen kann”.

ble, in which case it turns out to be a self-contradictory thought, hence no concept at all, of “another possible understanding”; *or else* that, though logically possible, it can relate to no object at all and is therefore *empty*. Kant means the *latter*, for he once spoke of “an *empty* expression with which we cannot connect *the least concept*”.⁹¹

However, it is one thing to maintain that the concept of “another possible understanding” that can intuit is empty, and another to *deny* that this empty concept can be applied to our understanding. Kant obviously does deny this, in which case he may seem to hold that, while (1) and (2) assert only logical possibilities, it is really *impossible* for our understanding to be of the kind conceived according to either of them. But does he really hold this? In particular, in arguing that the PUA is “unavoidably the first principle” for human understanding, does he have to deny that the states of affairs represented by the two logical possibilities are really possible for us?

7. The Dual Role of Kant’s Critical Objection

(1) and (2) may be so conceived that they both imply a state of affairs in which we possess, in addition to a capacity for sensible intuition in regard to appearances, *also* one for non-sensible intuition in regard to things in themselves (no matter whether this capacity is identical to the understanding itself or distinct from it). In the first step of his argument, Kant does not seem to have explicitly denied that such a state of affairs is (really) possible for us. Since this possibility is virtually the same as that of our having non-sensible intuition, what I have argued in Section 5 applies to both: Kant would hold the alleged possibility to be groundless rather than deny it.

We find Kant unmistakably going for the former, “critical” option in the Phenomena and Noumena chapter:

Hence to this extent the categories extend farther than [our] sensible intuition, since they think objects in general without seeing to the particular manner (of sensibility) in which they might be given. But they do not thereby determine a greater sphere of objects, since one cannot assume that such objects can be given without presupposing that another kind of intuition than the sensible kind is possible, which, however, we are *by no means justified* in doing.⁹²

⁹¹ KrV A 325/B 382, italics added: “[...] ein ganz leerer Ausdruck, mit welchem wir nicht den mindesten Begriff verbinden können”.

⁹² KrV A 253-4/B 309, italics added: “Daher erstrecken sich die Kategorien so fern weiter, als die

Kant is here arguing in effect that, although it has been established under the abstraction in the first step of his argument in the B-Deduction that we can think objects in general “without seeing to the particular manner (of sensibility) in which they might be given”, still it cannot be assumed that we can think objects as given to us through non-sensible intuition. Kant’s reason for this is simply that we are “by no means justified” in “presupposing that another kind of intuition than the sensible kind is possible [for us]”. The critical objection attributed to Kant serves to illustrate how he would argue that this presupposition is “by no means justified”, i.e. groundless. Admittedly, the above passage is the only textual evidence I could adduce for my critical reading of Kant. But insofar as it epitomizes what Kant argues in §23 for the further extension of the categories to objects of sensible intuition in general, I think this might strengthen my reading to some degree.

It also seems arguable that the critical objection plays a dual argumentative role in the B-Deduction. On the one hand, to begin the *second* step of his argument, Kant must assume that the only kind of *intuition* we can be justified in holding to be possible for us is sensible in regard to appearances. On the other hand, he must assume in the *first* step that the only kind of *understanding* we can be justified in holding to be possible for us is one that thinks without being able to intuit or assisted by another capacity for non-sensible intuition. The critical objection can be used to justify the two assumptions at once, given that, logically speaking, our intuition is either sensible or non-sensible or both.

In this way, the critical objection can play its supporting role for the two assumptions regardless of whether or not Kant has *actually* justified the possibility of sensible intuition for us. It seems enough if this possibility is shown to be *justifiable*. However, I will argue in what follows that Kant must offer a justification of this possibility for a larger purpose than supporting the two assumptions. To a first approximation, the possibility of sensible intuition for us may be incontrovertible if such intuition is considered *in separation* from the understanding, but not if it is

sinnliche Anschauung, weil sie Objekte überhaupt denken, ohne noch auf die besondere Art (der Sinnlichkeit) zu sehen, in der sie gegeben werden mögen. Sie bestimmen aber dadurch nicht eine größere Sphäre von Gegenständen, weil, daß solche gegeben werden können, man nicht annehmen kann, ohne daß man eine andere, als sinnliche Art der Anschauung als möglich voraussetzt, wozu wir aber keinesweges berechtigt sind”.

considered *in necessary connection* with it. The possibility of sensible intuition in the latter case is, as we shall see, correlative to the possibility of experience. Commentators such as Lucy Allais have thought that Kant has taken for granted the possibility of experience (and so also that of sensible intuition) in the Deduction.⁹³ But this would miss an essential part of the Deduction. To this part I will now turn.

8. The “Possibility of Experience” and Kant’s Difficulty

The first step of Kant’s argument in the B-Deduction must begin under the assumption, stated explicitly in the A-Deduction, that “we have to do only with the manifold of our representations, and that X which corresponds to them (*the object*) [...] is *nothing for us*”.⁹⁴ It is because this assumption must be made at the outset that Kant says in §21, as already noted, that the abstraction in the first step is required in order for him to “attend only to the unity that is added to the intuition through the understanding by means of the categories”. Kant can leave the assumption behind in his transition in §21 to the second step once he has proved this unity to be possible by proving that we must be able to think objects in general *a priori* through the understanding, as required for the first component of “cognition of objects”. Then he turns in §22 to *human* sensible intuition for the second component. What he turns to is in fact what he speaks of in §21 as “the intuition, which must be given to it [i.e., to the understanding, and for the sake of its cognizing something] *through the object*”.⁹⁵ Thus, when Kant gets human sensible intuition into the second step, he must assume that it is possible for *objects* to be given through sensibility *and* thought through the understanding. In short, he must assume that experience is possible for us. Further, Kant must prove this possibility of experience *a priori* in the second step⁹⁶ if he is to arrive in §26 at the final conclusion of the B-Deduction, namely that “the categories

⁹³ See Allais, Lucy: *Manifest Reality: Kant’s Idealism and His Realism*. Oxford 2015, 262. Allais adds a footnote to this reading of the Deduction, saying that Kant later provides the requisite proof in the Refutation of Idealism. But she may be wrong; for this, see footnote 102 below.

⁹⁴ KrV A 105, italics added: “[...] wir es nur mit dem Mannigfaltigen unserer Vorstellungen zu tun haben, und jenes X, was ihnen korrespondiert (der Gegenstand), [...] vor uns nichts ist”.

⁹⁵ KrV B 145, italics added: “[...] die Anschauung, die ihm durchs Objekt gegeben werden muß”.

⁹⁶ The A-Deduction counterpart of this proof seems to be the argument “from beneath” (von unten auf) that Kant carries out after saying, “Now we will set the necessary connection of the understanding with the appearances by means of the categories before our eyes” (KrV A 119: “Jetzt wollen wir den notwendigen Zusammenhang des Verstandes mit den Erscheinungen vermittelt der Kategorien dadurch vor Augen legen”).

are conditions of the possibility of experience, and are thus also valid *a priori* of all objects of experience”.⁹⁷

Now, the phrase ‘*all* objects of experience’ in this conclusion indicates something more *demanding* than what the possibility of experience might be thought to imply. The possibility of experience that is presupposed by the final conclusion stated in §26 requires what Kant calls in §27 “a **necessary** agreement of experience with the concepts of its objects [i.e., the categories]”.⁹⁸ Allison aptly calls this “agreement” a kind of “cognitive fit”,⁹⁹ which is meant to ensure that *all* objects that can ever be given to us through sensibility be somehow connected with the objects in general that we are supposed to be able to think *a priori* through the understanding.¹⁰⁰ It is the question how such connection can be established in order for the categories to have objective validity that leads to Kant’s advance warning, in both editions, of a “difficulty” (*Schwierigkeit*) that he says the Deduction will have to deal with, as follows,

how **subjective conditions of thinking** should have **objective validity**, i.e., yield conditions of the possibility of all cognition of objects; for appearances can certainly be given in intuition without functions of the understanding.¹⁰¹

The last phrase (beginning with ‘for appearances [...]’) suggests that the difficulty arises from what Allison refers to as a “Kantian specter” of the world being such that things might appear to us without conforming to the categories.¹⁰² If this “possibility” had been actual, we would have been unable to develop our capacity for thinking in general, nor therefore for any kind of cognition at all, let alone experience. Suppose, as I think Kant would, that it is at least *logically possible* for there to be “intuitions

⁹⁷ KrV B 161: “[...] sind die Kategorien Bedingungen der Möglichkeit der Erfahrung, und gelten also a priori auch von allen Gegenstände der Erfahrung”.

⁹⁸ KrV B 166: “eine notwendige Übereinstimmung der Erfahrung mit den Begriffen von ihren Gegenständen”.

⁹⁹ See Allison, *Kant’s Transcendental Idealism*, 160, and *Kant’s Transcendental Deduction*, 8-10.

¹⁰⁰ See the second half of the last and very long statement in the paragraph at KrV B 150-1, in §24.

¹⁰¹ KrV A 89-90/B 122: “[...] wie [...] subjektive Bedingungen des Denkens sollten objektive Gültigkeit haben, d. i. Bedingungen der Möglichkeit aller Erkenntnis der Gegenstände abgeben: denn ohne Funktionen des Verstandes können allerdings Erscheinungen in der Anschauung gegeben werden”.

¹⁰² Allison helpfully contrasts the Kantian specter with the “Cartesian” one of a “global, external world skepticism”; for him, it is the Cartesian as opposed to the Kantian specter that is attacked by Kant in the Refutation of Idealism, see footnote 99 for reference. Overlooking this difference between the Kantian and Cartesian specters, Allais holds that it is not until the Refutation of Idealism that Kant comes to vindicate his assumption in the Deduction that we do have experience; see Allais, *Manifest Reality*, 262 footnote 3.

without concepts” in us. Then what Kant must prove is that the foregoing imagined scenario is *really impossible* for us. And he must do so by establishing the “**necessary agreement**” and, therewith, the *a priori* objective validity of the categories in regard to *all* objects of sensible intuition.

For Kant, then, the possibility of *our having sensible intuition through which an object is given* amounts in the present context to the possibility of *our thinking objects in general for all objects given through sensible intuition*, and this in turn to the “possibility of experience” in the demanding sense in which Kant must prove it in the B-Deduction. If so, then neither the possibility of experience* (hereafter with an ‘*’ to indicate its demanding sense) nor the correlative possibility it entails of sensible intuition for us can be unproblematic for Kant, given what Allison calls “the radical separation of sensibility and understanding” that generates the Kantian specter.¹⁰³

Regarding how the “**necessary agreement** of experience with the concepts of its objects” is to be established in principle, Kant says in §27 that there are “only two ways in which [the agreement] can be thought: either the experience makes these concepts possible or these concepts make the experience possible”,¹⁰⁴ and that only the latter is fit for the categories as *a priori* concepts. He then says that the categories “contain the *grounds* of the possibility of all experience in general from the side of the understanding”.¹⁰⁵ Thus, if it is indeed the case that the categories make experience possible “from the side of the understanding”, Kant will appeal to them as the only *a priori* grounds (or conditions) for the possibility of experience*. This would suffice for Kant to forestall any *critical* objection that holds the possibility of experience* to be groundless. Moreover, if *the only* grounds for the possibility of experience* are *a priori*, then no *a priori* grounds can be found for its denial, given that “necessity” is a mark of apriority.¹⁰⁶ Consequently, there can be no room for any *dogmatic* objection

¹⁰³ See Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Deduction*, 101, 116, 191. On the last page referred to, Allison interprets the “separation” as so ineliminable from Kant’s taxonomy of our cognitive faculties that it “underlies the entire problematic of the Deduction”.

¹⁰⁴ KrV B 166: “[...] nur zwei Wege, auf welchen eine notwendige Übereinstimmung der Erfahrung mit den Begriffen von ihren Gegenständen gedacht werden kann: entweder die Erfahrung macht diese Begriffe, oder diese Begriffe machen die Erfahrung möglich”.

¹⁰⁵ KrV B 167, italics added: “[...] von Seiten des Verstandes die Gründe der Möglichkeit aller Erfahrung überhaupt enthalten”.

¹⁰⁶ See KrV A 2, B 3-4.

to the thesis that affirms the possibility, nor, therefore, can there be room for any *skeptical* objection, which concedes “equal weight” to the thesis and its antithesis. The possibility of experience* is then well-grounded, so, therefore, is its correlative possibility of our having sensible intuition. Further, taking into account Kant’s critical objection to the possibility of *non*-sensible intuition for us, it follows that, for him, all intuition that we can ever be justified in holding to be possible for us is sensible. This gives a *critical* reading of Kant’s *dogmatic-sounding* claim as it occurs in §22 that “all intuition that is possible for us is sensible”.

9. Conclusion: Kant’s Second-Order, Methodological Claim

Let me now take stock by fleshing out an important result of interpreting Kant as both a critical objector to the possibility of non-sensible or intellectual intuition for us and a defender of the possibility of experience* as immune to all possible objections.

The “difficulty” anticipated at A 89-90/B 122 leads Kant to prove the possibility of experience*, which he does in accordance with a “principle” pronounced in his “Transition” to the Deduction as follows,

The transcendental deduction of all *a priori* concepts therefore has a principle toward which the entire investigation must be directed, namely this: that they must be recognized as *a priori* conditions of the possibility of experience (whether of the intuition that is encountered in it, or of the thinking).¹⁰⁷

Kant goes on to point out that “[w]ithout this original relation [of *a priori* concepts] to possible experience, in which all objects of cognition are found, their relation to any object could not be comprehended at all”.¹⁰⁸ Elsewhere he calls possible experience a “guideline” by saying, “In transcendental cognition, as long as it has to do merely with concepts of the understanding, this guideline is possible experience”.¹⁰⁹ Now, as it figures in the principle cited above, the “possibility of experience” and, for that

¹⁰⁷ KrV A 94/B 126: “Die transz. Deduktion aller Begriffe a priori hat also ein Principium, worauf die ganze Nachforschung gerichtet werden muß, nämlich dieses: daß sie als Bedingungen a priori der Möglichkeit der Erfahrung erkannt werden müssen, (es sei der Anschauung, die in ihr angetroffen wird, oder des Denkens”.

¹⁰⁸ KrV A 94/B 126-7: “Ohne diese ursprüngliche Beziehung auf mögliche Erfahrung, in welcher alle Gegenstände der Erkenntnis vorkommen, würde die Beziehung derselben auf irgend ein Objekt gar nicht begriffen werden können”.

¹⁰⁹ KrV A 783/B 811: “Im transzendentalen Erkenntnis, so lange es bloß mit Begriffen des Verstandes zu tun hat, ist diese Richtschnur die mögliche Erfahrung”. See also A 156/B 195.

matter, the “intuition” and “thinking” mentioned in parentheses should be read in the demanding sense implied by the “**necessary** agreement of experience with [the categories]”. Moreover, for Kant, the possibility of experience* (or possible experience) is *the only* “guideline” for any deduction of *a priori* concepts. That the possibility of experience* is the only such guideline may be called a “second-order, methodological” claim in terms of which the “transcendental” nature of Kant’s Critical project must be understood. Kant should be able to justify this second-order claim; otherwise, if the guideline is at most *a* guideline rather than *the only* one, then he could at most demonstrate the objective validity of the categories in regard to objects of experience, but not to them *alone*.

From the inference indicator ‘therefore’ in Kant’s wording of the principle, he seems to intend the second-order claim to be a consequence of what he has argued in the preceding paragraph at A 92-3/B 124-6. However, at a crucial point in the paragraph, Kant seems to beg the question against the rationalists when he introduces what is essentially the same distinction we have seen him make in §22 between two “components” of cognition of an object, “intuition” and “concept (the category)”. As he says, “But there are two conditions under which alone the cognition of an object is possible”,¹¹⁰ the first being “**intuition**, through which it is given, *but only as appearance*”.¹¹¹ This condition is meant to be *sensible* intuition, and the two conditions, those of sensible cognition of an object. Here Kant may seem “dogmatic” in leaving out non-sensible cognition of an object as if it was impossible for us. However, from what I have argued in this article, a different route to this claim may be available to Kant. In a nutshell: *first*, Kant’s proof of the possibility of experience* implies that we can be justified in holding sensible intuition to be possible for us, but *not*, as yet, that it is *the only kind* of intuition that we can be justified in holding to be possible for us; *second*, to obtain the latter, which is the dogmatic-sounding claim in §22 *read critically*, Kant can argue “critically” that the possibility of our having non-sensible intuition is groundless; and *finally*, if the two steps go through, the second-order methodological claim is justified.

¹¹⁰ KrV A 92/B 125: “Es sind aber zwei Bedingungen, unter denen allein die Erkenntnis eines Gegenstandes möglich ist”.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, italics added: “Anschauung, dadurch derselbe, aber nur als Erscheinung, gegeben wird”.