

The Function of Derivation and the Derivation of Functions: A Review of Schulting's *Kant's Deduction and Apperception*

Abstract

In this review essay, I raise three principal concerns relating to Schulting's project of deriving the categories from apperception as elaborated in his recent book *Kant's Deduction and Apperception* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2012). First, I claim that Schulting overlooks a key ambiguity relating to '*ableiten*' and which contrasts with his strictly logical understanding of that term. Second, I dispute on textual and philosophical grounds Schulting's characterization of the subject's consciousness of its own identity in terms of the analytic unity of apperception. Finally, I raise an objection to Schulting's account of the derivation of the concept of substance from apperception, as I claim that at best Kant allows that the logical function underlying this category (rather than the category itself) can be so derived, and I note that this objection can be extrapolated to apply to the other derivations of the categories Schulting offers.

The Function of Derivation and the Derivation of Functions: A Review of Schulting's *Kant's Deduction and Apperception*

With *Kant's Deduction and Apperception: Explaining the Categories (KDA)*, Dennis Schulting has produced an erudite and ambitious study of the first step of the B-edition Transcendental Deduction. Key to Schulting's reading is Kant's claim in §19 that the categories, as "principles of the objective determination of all representations" are "all derived from the principle of the transcendental unity of apperception" (B142), and accordingly, the bulk of Schulting's book is devoted to the task of elaborating Kant's derivation of the categories from the *I think*. In spite of this narrow focus, Schulting manages to draw a number of conclusions of broader significance for the interpretation of the aim and method of the Transcendental Deduction. Thus he rejects as false the dichotomy between understanding the aim of the deduction in addressing the skeptic as either regressive or progressive (since on Schulting's reading it serves both purposes at once), and contends that acknowledging that the practice of writing *Deduktionschriften* in the Holy Roman legal system constitutes an important part of the context for Kant's Transcendental Deduction (as Henrich has shown) does not imply that it is not a deductive proof from concepts (as Schulting claims it is). As a result, readers interested in the detailed minutiae of the deduction as well as those interested in general issues confronting its interpretation will find something of interest in Schulting's well-researched yet accessible volume.

This is not, of course, to say that I find all of Schulting's reading of the deduction clear and compelling, and in these comments, I will focus on a number of issues relating to the narrower project in *KDA*. In particular, I would like to present three sets of comments and concerns about Schulting's account of the derivation of the categories from apperception and the role it plays in his interpretation of the "master argument" of the Transcendental Deduction. First, I will offer some general comments on some issues which I see confronting Schulting's project; in particular, I have questions about the initial textual basis for Schulting's interpretation of Kant's suggested "derivation" of the categories and about how Schulting conceives the relation between this attempted derivation and other elements of Kant's project in the Deduction chapter. Second, I will offer some critical remarks concerning what seems to me to be an important confusion regarding Kant's account of apperception and which leads to Schulting's claim of a "co-extensivity" between the analytic and synthetic unities of apperception that is presented as a key step in Kant's master argument in the deduction. Finally, I will raise an objection to the details of Schulting's account of the derivation of the category of substance from apperception but which nonetheless serves to bring out a larger challenge to the success of Schulting's project.

I will begin, then, with some general comments relating to Schulting's project in *KDA* as a whole. In his interpretation of the deduction, Schulting lays an unprecedented strong emphasis upon Kant's remark that the categories are derived [*abgeleitet sind*] from the transcendental unity of apperception. It bears noting that this is (as far as I am aware) the only place in the *KrV* where Kant makes this claim so baldly,¹ and indeed it is only made in the course of a broader discussion of how a judgment arises from the relation of representations in accordance with the necessary (objective) unity of apperception. Yet, given the importance of the passage for Schulting's project, it is surprising that he does not spend more time at the outset exploring alternative readings of it and motivating his own. So, while Schulting seems content to take this claim at face value, it nonetheless

¹ At *KDA* 218n1, Schulting cites some other passages where Kant makes a similar claim but, as I am sure Schulting would concede, none are as strong as that at B142. Moreover, some (such as that in the letter to Garve of 7 August 1783, where it is claimed that the *KrV* undertakes the project of "deriving [*ableiten*] out of its own nature all the objects within its scope" (10:340), fall prey to the same ambiguity I diagnose in the passage at B142 in what follows.

suffers from a key ambiguity in that the term ‘derived [*abgeleitet*]’ can be taken in (at least) two senses. The first sense, which is the only sense considered by Schulting, is that the categories are *derived* in the strict, logical sense that they are *deduced from* pure apperception, much in the same way that a conclusion is derived from premises. This is the sense of ‘*ableiten*’ that Kant routinely makes use of in his lectures on logic, for instance (cf. AA 9:114), as well as elsewhere in the *KrV* itself (cf. A300/B357).

However, and unacknowledged by Schulting, Kant will occasionally make use of another, looser sense of ‘*ableiten*’ where, generally, a representation, A, can be said to be *derived* from another, B, inasmuch as A is dependent upon B (for instance, as a condition of A’s possibility, or as the source of A’s content), but where A cannot be said to follow deductively from B. This is a sense of *derived* that Kant resorts to numerous times in the *KrV*, most famously perhaps in his assertion in the Second Analogy that “[i]n our case I must therefore *derive* [*ableiten*] the *subjective sequence* of apprehension from the *objective sequence* of appearances” (A193/B238—initial emphasis mine), but also previously in the B Deduction itself, where he writes that “the empirical unity of apperception [...] is also *derived* [*abgeleitet*] only from the former [i.e., transcendental unity], under given conditions *in concreto*” (B140—emphasis mine). In these cases (and arguably others, as in Kant’s talk of an “empirical derivation” at B127–8), it seems neither necessary or charitable to hold that Kant is laying claim to a strict, logical derivation, on the one hand, of the subjective sequence from the objective one or, on the other, of the merely subjectively valid unity of apperception from the objectively valid one, but rather only that, taking the first case, that it is in virtue of accounting for the conditions of the possibility of an objective order of appearances that we can proceed to distinguish a merely subjective order of our own apprehensions. As this relates to Kant’s claim in §19, a case could readily be made that, in claiming that the categories are derivable from the unity of apperception Kant is similarly making use of this looser sense of *derived*, and so that rather than claiming that the categories are derivable in the strict logical sense from the mere *I think* (i.e., as conclusions from a premise), Kant can rather be taken as asserting that the categories are merely dependent on the *I think* as, for instance, the original source of their unity (which reading might be preferable for other reasons we’ll consider later).

As a second general comment, it would be useful if Schulting could clarify how, precisely, he conceives the project of the derivation (in his sense) of the categories from apperception as relating to the other elements in Kant’s complex Deduction chapter. For instance, Schulting repeatedly reassures the reader that his results are intended to stand alongside influential studies of the Metaphysical Deduction, such as that of Klaus Reich, Michael Wolff, and Béatrice Longuenesse (see *KDA* 3 and 83). As becomes clear in the execution, however, Schulting’s account of the derivation of the categories from apperception threatens to replace (or at least make redundant) any effort to derive the categories by means of the forms of judgment; thus Schulting refers to a “reappraisal” of the results of the *Leitfaden* argument—see *KDA* 3). Indeed, Schulting promotes his own route for deriving the categories as an effective response to well-known criticisms of the Metaphysical Deduction going back to Hegel (*KDA* 8–12). It is not clear, then, whether Schulting views the derivation of the categories as an extension of, or as an alternative to Kant’s analysis in §§8–10 of the *KrV*.

Similarly, Schulting might clarify how he conceives the relation between his account and Kant’s subjective deduction which, in the A edition at least, Kant characterizes as a response to the question “How is the faculty of thinking itself possible?,” and which Schulting at one point seems to identify straightforwardly with the attempted derivation of the categories (see *KDA* 2). Yet inasmuch as the subjective deduction involves something like “the search for a cause of a given effect” (Axvii), it is not immediately clear what these undertakings might have in common. Lastly, but perhaps most importantly, it would be helpful if Schulting could clarify how much of the argumentation of Kant’s

Transcendental Deduction proper he takes to actually depend upon the success of the derivation of the categories from apperception as he understands it. In Schulting's later reconstruction of the "master argument" of the deduction (see *KDA* 210–11), the claim that "[t]ranscendental apperception [...] is constituted by the categories as the complete set of its a priori functions" (*KDA* 211) figures as a key premise. Yet, it seems *prima facie* unlikely that Kant's remark, made rather casually and without any further elaboration, that the categories were derived from apperception were to play such a prominent role in the central argument of the first half of the *KrV*. (It might be that Schulting would claim that this premise simply amounts to the conclusion of the Metaphysical Deduction, however it might be arrived at, but this is at any rate not made clear in Schulting's text.)

With these general comments in mind, we might now turn to the details of Schulting's reading of the first step of the Transcendental Deduction. In contrast to some recent commentators, Schulting argues that in the first step, Kant seeks to demonstrate the necessity *and* sufficiency of an appropriate (i.e., synthetic) unity of consciousness for objectivity, which Schulting terms the "reciprocity claim" (cf. *KDA* 53). Key to Kant's defense of the reciprocity claim, particularly inasmuch as it is to serve as the basis for a progressive response to the sceptic, is what Schulting refers to as the "co-extensivity" (or "equiprimordiality" or "isomorphism") of the analytic and synthetic unities of apperception. Taking the former to be that unity of consciousness in accordance with which I am aware of my representations as belonging to the single identical self (expressed in the *I think*), Schulting proceeds to argue that the analytic unity of apperception is integrally bound up with the synthetic unity of apperception. So, as Schulting writes, "no analytic unity of the self obtains without a prior synthesis, but also no a priori synthesis fails to result in an analytic unity of apperception" (*KDA* 112). Given this, the (evidently uncontroversial) assumption of an analytic unity of apperception brings with it the assumption of a synthetic unity of apperception but, as Kant argues in §17, this unity of apperception is just the unity of the manifold of representations in light of the concept of an object. It follows, therefore, that we cannot presuppose an analytic unity among our representations without also presupposing that those representations have the sort of unity characteristic of their relation to an object, which is to say that there is a reciprocity between the appropriate sort of consciousness and objectivity.

Assuming that my summary of this reconstruction of Kant's reasoning in the first step of the Transcendental Deduction is correct, I have a couple of concerns with Schulting's argument centring on his account, and use, of the analytic unity of apperception. By the analytic unity of apperception (AUA), Schulting understands "the unity of all those (conscious) representations that one has which share the same feature of self-consciousness (viz. the representation 'I think' as their common mark) [...]" (*KDA* 57). Accordingly, for Schulting, AUA is that global unity that obtains among all of my representations insofar as they belong to a single subject. Schulting's account of AUA, however, does not seem to me to fully accord with Kant's discussion in the Transcendental Deduction. For instance, in the B edition Deduction, Kant contends that "the analytical unity of consciousness" pertains to all common concepts (B133–4n), without proceeding (as Schulting would have it) to make the broader claim that this unity is characteristic of the unity of all my representations as such. Schulting might, of course, reply that Kant's point is precisely that the unity thought in a common concept is just the analytic unity of apperception (and so the former is merely an instantiation of AUA).

Nonetheless, it seems to me that this would be to overlook important differences between the analytic unity of apperception as evinced in common concepts and the consciousness of the unity or identity of the subject. What it is to represent, say, a mark that occurs in the intensions of subordinate concepts or a feature, such as red, that occurs in a manifold of intuition, as a *conceptus communis* is to be consciousness of the identity of this partial representation across these instances (and potentially many more) such that it "can be encountered in anything, or [...] can be combined

with other representations” (B133n). A general concept, therefore, constitutes an analytical unity inasmuch as it involves the representation of the “consciousness of the identity in these representations” themselves (B133), or as Kant is recorded as having put this elsewhere, “[t]he concept is the consciousness that in one representation the same is contained as in another, or that identical marks are contained in the manifold of representations” (29:888). Yet, the identity of the subject as such is clearly not an element *in* the content of the manifold of representations (i.e., a partial representation); it is, as Kant stresses, that *to which* the entire manifold of representations belongs (B131–2). Given this, it is not clear precisely what the “mark” or feature of the thinking subject is, the identity of which we could be conscious of across the manifold of representations. Schulting attempts to finesse this by identifying the common consciousness as a “higher-order” or “super” representation (*KDA* 57 and 187), but this only invites trouble—doesn’t the manifold of “*all my representations*” which accompanies the *I think* also include putatively higher-order *representations*? It seems to me, then, that the consciousness of the single, identical subject of thought is not aptly characterized in terms of an analytical unity of consciousness.

This is not to say that Kant himself is hopelessly confused on the matter; rather, it seems to me that Kant distinguishes between the (logical) condition on discursive thinking, namely, that the manifold of representations be related (whether actually or merely possibly) to the identity of the subject, which condition I take to be expressed in the principle of apperception, and the analytic unity of apperception, which amounts to one way in which a manifold (in this case, of partial representations) can be brought to the unity of consciousness. As I understand Kant’s discussion in §16, it is only the former (the logical condition) that is essential to the argument, whereas the latter (AUA) serves only by way of illustrating the dependence of even common concepts upon the synthetic unity of apperception (a key point against the Leibnizian intellectualist). It is, in particular, on the basis of the necessary possibility of thinking the identity of the cognizer with respect to a manifold of representations, and of the fact that we (as discursive intellects) cannot represent our identity without combining the manifold of representation, that appending the *I think* to the manifold requires that it is brought into a synthetic unity, or as Kant puts it, that “this thoroughgoing identity of the apperception of a manifold in intuition contains a synthesis of the representations” (B133).

It seems to me that Schulting could (if he deemed it necessary) incorporate this distinction between the logical condition that the manifold be related to the identity of the subject and the analytic unity of apperception into his reconstruction of Kant’s argument without much cost. It would, of course, undermine his assertion of a “rigorous co-extensivity” between the analytic and synthetic unities of apperception, by which Schulting understands (roughly) the mutual implicativeness of these unities. On the reading just outlined, it is simply not the case that every instance of a synthetic unity involves the kind of unity proper to a common concept (though it remains the case that the only way in which it is possible to represent the identity of the thinking subject with respect to the manifold of representation is by means of effecting a synthetic unity in that manifold). Even so, it is not clear to me that Schulting needs, for the purposes of his reconstruction of the progressive argument, both parts of what he asserts is the bi-conditional relation between the analytic and synthetic unities of consciousness but can make do simply with the claim that any analytic unity of consciousness presupposes a synthetic one (inasmuch as, for instance, the “conception of the object” presupposes a synthetic unity of apperception).

Schulting’s reading of the Transcendental Deduction is, at any rate only a prelude to what he deems the “meat” of his project, namely, the derivation of the categories from apperception. While the exposition of this derivation occupies much of *KDA*, and so deserves more detailed treatment, I will limit my final critical comments to one of the specific derivations Schulting offers, namely that of the category of substance. Taking substance as that in which accidents inhere and which would

remain were all of some thing's accidents to be removed, Schulting contends that the category of substance can be derived from the *I* of apperception inasmuch as the *I* is that to which thoughts are attributed and which cannot in turn be attributed to something else (*KDA* 131). Of course, Schulting recognizes that any attempt to derive the category of substance from the peculiar status of the *I* might invite a comparison with the fallacious argument for the substantiality of the soul exposed in the first paralogism. Nonetheless, Schulting claims that the category of substance as derived from apperception does not imply the assertion that the *I* is, in fact, a substance in the sense of a real subsisting thing since there is no "standing and abiding intuition" of the self that can be determined through the category. Indeed, that the category of substance should have its source in pure apperception is something Kant had claimed explicitly in a number of pre-Critical texts which Schulting does not refer to in his exposition. So, in *Reflexionen* from the 1770's, Kant claims that the *I* is in fact the original source of our concept of substance, writing that the "idea of substance actually comes from the representation of oneself [*repraesentatione sui ipsius*]" (R 3921, 17:346; cf. also R 5294 [18:145] and R 5312 [18:150]), and that it is "from this *I* [that] we have borrowed the concept which we have in general of all substances" (28:226).

Even so, it is not clear that this account, or something similar, would survive the Critical turn. As Kant stresses, it is only the logical function of the understanding that underlies the category of substance that remains once the category is considered apart from any relation to a manifold of intuition: "nothing is left in my concept of substance except the logical representation of the subject, which I try to realize by representing to myself something that can occur solely as subject (without being a predicate of anything)" (A242/B300). With respect to what might be derived from the *I think*, it is merely the logical function and not yet (or no longer) the full-fledged category of substance; as Kant writes, with respect to the *I think*, "the concept of substance is used only as a function of synthesis" (A356). In light of this, the basis for Kant's pre-Critical claim to have derived the concept of substance from the *I* can be seen to be the fact that he (mistakenly, in retrospect) assumed the *I* to be given immediately in inner intuition (i.e., as a standing and abiding intuition), and so that the logical function was provided with an object, yet this is no longer the case with Kant's Critical rejection of the assumption that the self is given as an object. Consequently, any putative derivation of the *category* of substance (as opposed to the mere logical function) from pure apperception is doomed to be unsuccessful.

While this would be a problematic result for Schulting's attempted derivation of the category of substance, it threatens larger problems for his project if left unaddressed. On the basis of the resources offered by the mere *I think*, it would seem that, generally speaking, only the logical function is capable of being derived (at least in the strictly logical sense of 'derivation' Schulting emphasizes). This would, however, fall short of what Schulting wants, namely, a derivation of the full-fledged category from apperception, since a category is the (general representation of the) function of the understanding considered in relation to a manifold of sensible intuition (A79/B104–5).² The best that we can do, then, in any derivation (in the strict sense) from apperception would only be to derive the functions of judgment, and Kant even acknowledges as much, writing that "[a]ll *modi* of self-consciousness in thinking are therefore *not yet themselves concepts of the understanding of objects (categories)*, but mere functions" (B406–7, latter emphasis mine; cf. also B428–9). Returning to the passage at B142 in which Kant originally claims that the categories, as objective principles, can be derived from the unity of apperception in light of this result, it might be reasonable to opt to take

² Schulting seems simply to identify the category (in its unschematized form) with its underlying logical function (see for instance, *KDA* 93–4), yet Kant clearly distinguishes (in the passage quoted previously, and in the passage I proceed to quote) the category from the underlying function inasmuch as the former involves, in addition, the relation to the manifold of intuition (and so to an object).

Kant's talk of a 'derivation' to be in the less strict sense elaborated above. That is, the categories might be understood to be "derived" from apperception only insofar as they find the original source of their unity in the identity of the thinking subject (given that each function constitutes "the *unity* of the action of ordering different representations under a common one"—A68/B93).

In closing, while I might have my concerns with some aspects of Schulting's project, he has undoubtedly produced a rich and informative study, the principal virtue of which lies in the fresh perspective it brings to a difficult argument while thoroughly engaging much of the recent as well as the canonical scholarship. Schulting's *Kant's Deduction and Apperception* is a welcome, and distinctive contribution to the literature on the chapter, and is certain to provoke further, fruitful discussion of Kant's perpetually elusive but unavoidable Transcendental Deduction.

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