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Kant's Threefold Synthesis on a Moderately Conceptualist Interpretation

6.1 Introduction

Often the first version of the Transcendental Deduction (TD), in the first edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason* of 1781 (henceforth A-Deduction), is thought to be less conceptualist than the later B-version from 1787 (henceforth B-Deduction). Certainly, it seems that in the B-Deduction Kant puts more emphasis on the role of the understanding in determining the manifold of representations in intuition. It also appears that in the A-Deduction the seemingly pre-conceptual aspects of a priori synthesis, namely, of the synthesis of apprehension and the imagination, are foregrounded more than in the B-Deduction. And quite evidently, in the A-Deduction judgement appears not to play any significant role (see Chap. 3), bolstering the view of the A-Deduction as less strongly conceptualist.

This view has had an influential pedigree ever since Heidegger's phenomenological/ontological reading of the Deduction (esp. Heidegger 1995) with its focus on the central role of the imagination as a source of human cognition that is independent of, and more fundamental than, or even the primordial *pre-logical* ground of, the discursive understanding.

Also in more recent times, despite the majority among Kantians preferring the B-Deduction, there have been interpreters who prefer the A-Deduction precisely because of its putative nonconceptualist or non-judgementalist nature (Allais 2009; Grüne 2009; Longuenesse 1998). For example, Stefanie Grüne (2009) has recently argued, on the basis of the arguments of the A-Deduction, for an independent set of rules governing the lower-level syntheses of apprehension and reproduction in the imagination, which are separate from the fully-fledged categorical rules under which objects are subsumed in judgement. Moreover, on Grüne's interpretation the application of the categories as "obscure concepts" is not *eo ipso* the fully-fledged application of the categories *in judgement*. Notice that she does not regard herself as a nonconceptualist strictly speaking, since unlike nonconceptualists such as Hanna and Allais she believes that categories as obscure concepts, rather than the categories as presumably being clear concepts applied in judgements, *are* involved in the lower-level syntheses, and these obscure concepts do involve the understanding in some sense (Grüne 2009:172). Hence she calls her reading "obscurist-conceptualist", to differentiate it from straightforward conceptualist (i.e. as involving the categories as clear concepts) and 'judgement-based' readings as well as from nonconceptualist readings, which argue that the lower-level syntheses do not involve the categories at all (regardless of the question whether they are clear or obscure). However, Grüne's reading can also be called nonconceptualist in a broader (weaker) sense, since standard Kantian nonconceptualism argues that some mental content does not necessarily entail the subsumption of that content under the categories *in a judgement*, given that the main claim in the Deduction concerns the application of the categories as a priori concepts, not empirical concepts or rules, whether obscure or not.

But it is unclear to what extent, on Kant's view, the application of the categories in judgement and the use of empirical concepts could be seen as separably possible—that is, for the employment of empirical concepts categories are required, and given that categories are nothing but functions of judgements categories are applied only in judgements, a judgement effectively being the application of empirical concepts. So it seems that application of the categories and the employment of empirical

concepts is not separably possible. Grüne furthermore consistently speaks of “sensory” synthesis (*sinnliche Synthesis*) rather than a priori synthesis—a term that to the best of my knowledge Kant never uses, although he does, confusingly, appear to make a distinction between empirical and a priori forms or uses of the threefold synthesis (e.g. A99–100; cf. A115), which then does not seem to play any significant role in the general argument. In my view, the kind of synthesis that is centrally at issue in the sections in the A-Deduction discussing the threefold synthesis is *a priori* synthesis, which is the transcendental condition of knowledge or experience, not any mere “sensory” synthesis.

6.2 Kant as a Moderate Conceptualist

In this chapter I shall argue for a moderately conceptualist reading of the A-Deduction, specifically the second section (A95–115), the so-called subjective deduction.¹ I argue that (1) despite appearances to the contrary all three levels of syntheses, including the synthesis of recognition in a concept, are interdependent and are not to be seen as operating separately from or independently of each other, and a fortiori of the categories; (2) *mere* apprehension, which is not a successive synthesis but “fills only an instant” (A167/B209), or mere intuition,² is *not* dependent on the understanding and the application of the categories and, (3) mere apprehension does not involve *a priori synthesis* of apprehension, and a fortiori synthesis of recognition, and hence is fully lawless in terms of Kantian a priori laws.

I believe, first, that Kant is a conceptualist in the A-Deduction in the sense that *all* syntheses involve the categories, or the understanding as the seat of the categories, and that insofar as the possibility of knowledge is concerned, intuition is subject to determination by means of the categories. I shall here leave out a discussion of the extent to which judgement is involved (for an account of judgement, see Chap. 3), also since Kant himself does not elaborate on its involvement in the A-Deduction, although I think that all syntheses at issue here also *eo ipso* involve judgement given that the categories *are* nothing but the forms of a priori synthesis and that they are nothing but the logical

functions of judgement insofar as the subsumed intuitions involved in judging are determined, and thus form concepts of objects. Hence, I do not see how some interpreters (such as Longuenesse and Grüne) could argue that the categories *but not judgement* (at least not directly) are involved in the so-called “sensible” synthesis of the manifold in intuition. (As said, the term “sensible” synthesis is not used by Kant; only a priori syntheses are at issue in TD [cf. B139–40].)

Secondly, I also submit that, despite some strong modal claims regarding apperception in subsection 3 of the first part of the A-Deduction,³ Kant is a *moderate* conceptualist in the sense that he allows room for the real possibility that some representations that one apprehends are not subsumed under the categories, or the understanding as the seat of the categories, or even *could* not be subsumed under the categories, or the understanding as the seat of the categories. Some representations fail to be accompanied, either de facto or in principle, by an act of apperception that would otherwise make those representations subject to an act of synthesis, and hence to the categories. Instantaneous representation that is short of objectively valid representation is unsynthesised representation, since it is not synthesised with other representations, and therefore does not stand under the categories. So Kant is not a conceptualist in the sense of the thesis that even to *have* representations, or indeed intuitions, already involves the categories. Categories are only involved for the a priori synthesis among representations, and a priori synthesis is required only for possible cognition of objects (whether they be objects of inner or outer sense). Hence, categories are only involved in the possible cognition of objects.

One could argue, as does Grüne (2009:149ff.), that there is a difference between having representations or sensations (in mere sensibility) and having an *intuition*, whereby intuition is understood in the narrow sense, as being a qualitatively and quantitatively complex representation referring to an object and, according to the *Stufenleiter* (B376–7), is to be considered an objective cognition, which at least involves synthesis. Mere representation in sensibility would then not amount to intuition, nor a fortiori require synthesis. But it seems impossible to me even to have a representation that is not also part of an intuition, since *all*

representations must have at least temporal form, and so be subject to time as the necessary form of intuition (A31/B47) or pure intuition (A124). Grüne (2009:151n.4) argues that intuitions, as quanta, are the representations that are first produced, by means of a priori synthesis, when sensations are brought under spatiotemporal form. But this suggests that sensations are not even given under the form of time, which cannot be true, because anything in inner sense, including representations of outer sense or sensations, which are the result of being affected by outer objects, is given under the form of time (B50/A34).⁴

On my reading Kant is to a certain extent also a nonconceptualist, in the sense of allowing for the possibility of representations that, either de facto or in principle, are not synthesised and thus subsumed under the categories. If conceptualism means that necessarily, *all* representations are either determined or determinable by the categories, then Kant is not a conceptualist. Kant is then a nonconceptualist to the extent that he does not subscribe to such a strong modal claim with regard to the entailment relation between representations and the categories. But I think it is better to call Kant a moderate conceptualist, rather than a nonconceptualist, since Kantian nonconceptualism, commonly construed, has features that I believe cannot be aligned with Kant's core theory of cognition, two of these being (a) the claim that nonconceptual content, or intuition, is synthesised content to some extent (see above) and (b) the claim that intuition, based on a strong construal of intuition delivering individuals in sensibility, yields objective cognition or reference independently of the categories (see Chap. 5). My view of Kant's nonconceptualism departs from either Allais's or Hanna's, as they believe that at least some kind of synthesis, namely, the synthesis of imagination, is involved in nonconceptual content, i.e. in intuitions of spatial objects, whereas I do not (see Chap. 5).⁵ My view of Kant's nonconceptualism is also more minimalist than either of the others', since on my view nonconceptual content merely amounts to sheer representations, without any objectively valid reference in the strict (Kantian) sense, i.e. mere sensations—so arguably, on my view there is not much *content* in such representations on a contemporary understanding of 'content', as being the object of an epistemic attitude, i.e. *intentional* content.

However, I disagree with Grüne's (2009:185) view that the "run[ning] through" (A99) of the manifold merely concerns sensations and not intuition, since, on her reading, intuition is first produced by the taking together, reproducing and recognising of representations (sensations). On my view, having mere sensations amounts to the mere having of undifferentiated *intuitions*, for sensations *are* the material content of intuitions, of which space and time are the necessary a priori form. Intuitions, as such, are not different things than mere manifolds of sensations. So I agree with Allais's (2015, 2016) nonconceptualist view that the *having* of an *intuition* is wholly independent of any synthesis. It is in this sense that my interpretation may still be counted as nonconceptualist.

6.3 The Threefold Synthesis in the A-Deduction and the Analysis of Knowledge

While addressing the account of the threefold synthesis, we must keep in mind that the overall goal of TD is the analysis of the possibility of objective experience, whereby experience should be understood as empirical knowledge (*empirische Erkenntniß*) (B147–8). Indeed, the very heading of Section II of the A-Deduction, in which the theory of the threefold synthesis is presented, is titled "On the *a priori* grounds for the possibility of experience [*Erfahrung*]". This ties in with the inquiry into the possibility of the application of pure a priori concepts (the categories), that is, their justified employment (A96–7), which Kant stresses at the outset of the A-Deduction; showing the justified employment of the categories is to "prove that by means of them alone an object can be thought" (A97). Kant points out that for such an inquiry to take place, "we must first assess *not the empirical but the transcendental* constitution of the subjective sources that comprise the *a priori* foundations for the possibility of experience" (A97; emphasis added). These subjective sources are the three syntheses of apprehension, reproduction and conceptual recognition. It is striking and important

to be reminded of the fact that the ground of this threefold synthesis is *spontaneity*, as Kant says, and that this threefold synthesis is “necessarily found in all cognition [*Erkenntnis*]” (A97).⁶ (On the topic of spontaneity, see again Chap. 3.) In other words, these subjective sources constitute the analytical elements of *knowledge*, which are dissected in the Subsections 1–3 of the first part of the A-Deduction, where knowledge is to be understood, as Kant writes, as “a whole of compared and connected representations” (A97).

The account of the subjective sources of the three syntheses in the A-Deduction is thus meant to elucidate the a priori constitution of knowledge. They are the building blocks of knowledge, or, as the sub-heading of the introduction of the first part of the A-Deduction⁷ says, they are “the *a priori* grounds for the possibility of experience” (A95). The argument of the A-Deduction as a whole is therefore regressively structured, where we start from the main premise of the possibility of empirical knowledge or experience and regress to the a priori conditions which are the transcendently enabling ground of this knowledge or experience. While it might seem that, at least in the first part of the A-Deduction, Kant proceeds rather in a progressive manner, which can make it seem as if some psychological-cognitive process consisting of different stages were concerned which progressively leads, or as it happens fails to lead, from mere representation to knowledge,⁸ I believe the A-Deduction account of the threefold synthesis is a step-by-step analysis of what is contained in cognition in terms of its minimally required conditions, *given* the fact of knowledge. I thus agree with Anderson (2015:352ff.) that the “*expository* ordering” of the account of the threefold synthesis should not be mistaken for a “*dependence* ordering”, as if the syntheses were to be considered phases taking place in time, and either can or do not take place. ‘Bottom-up’ accounts get the dependence relation between the three types of synthesis wrong. I do not agree with Anderson though that this implies a strongly conceptualist reading of the threefold synthesis. This will become clear in the course of my account. Let us now address the first subsection of the account of the threefold synthesis, concerning the synthesis of apprehension, and dissect its argument.

6.3.1 Synthesis of Apprehension

Kant starts out from the minimal assumption that we have a manifold of representations in sensibility, that is, from the assumption that our representational capacity is discursive rather than intuitive or based on direct perception of objects. Kant is a representationalist (rather than a direct realist *sans phrase*),⁹ where his representationalism is dualistic: representations are either conceptual and mediately related to the object of representation or sensibly intuitive and immediately related to the object, whatever this relation to an object consists in (see Chap. 1 and further below). The fact that, for Kant, the relation of an intuition to an object is immediate and the claim that Kant is not a direct realist are not in tension with one another: in fact, direct realism cannot be here presumed to be Kant's position (even apart from the conflict with the assumed representationalism), as direct realism presupposes realism about given objects, whereas at this point in the analysis the status of 'object' has not yet been established. As it turns out, in the conclusion of Kant's argument, Kant's representationalism is in fact antithetical to direct realism, and is rather tantamount to an idealism, since the object is just a function of the unity among representations grounded in the unity of apperception. Many commentators believe that Kant's empirical realism is a direct realism (e.g. Allais 2015), but I think that is a mistake; Kant's empirical realism is grounded on his idealism, which is a form of representationalism that stipulates that an object is wholly a function of the unity of apperception of one's representations, given sensations that are the effect of things in themselves (see again Chap. 4).¹⁰

The representationalist position endorsed by Kant means that a representing subject has multiple representations that she needs to run through and take together, never just one singular representation. So, "[e]very intuition contains a manifold in itself" (A99). But this manifold is, in itself, nothing but an absolute unity, that is to say, it is undifferentiated, or more precisely, the manifold representations in the intuition are each "contained in one moment" and hence are nothing other than absolute unities, or, isolated instants (in time).¹¹ This does not mean that there is an absence of unity *of any kind* in the manifold,¹²

but just that, in this case, the manifold consists of units or moments that have not been unified *by an apprehending subject*, and so are not *recognised as* unified. This recognition is associated by Kant with a priori or *necessary* unity, since it is the kind of unity that makes that representations are united such that they first, non-arbitrarily constitute a relation to an object. Any intuition containing a manifold of representation is in itself nothing but a series of successive individual, isolated representations “entirely foreign” to each other (A97).¹³ For a manifold to be considered a manifold of *connected* representations, which first makes cognition possible, something needs to be added to the manifold. In fact, for the manifold to be regarded *as* a manifold, namely as a plurality of representations rather than just a consecutive series of isolated absolute unities (instants or boundaries), something more than just a manifold of representations in an intuition is needed. For the series of successive representations to be seen *as* a manifold it must be contrasted with the *representation of* the successive representations as being so, which requires something in addition to the mere series of successive representations. Only the *representation of* the successive representations *as* being a manifold of representations makes that the successive representations can be seen *as* a manifold of representations. In other words, a second-order representing is required for a manifold to be *regarded as* a manifold, that is, to see the *manifoldness* of the manifold, which involves the instantiation of the quantitative category ‘plurality’.¹⁴

Does Kant then rule out the possibility of a mere manifold in sensibility, a *mere* succession of representations? No, he does not. Does it mean that the *mere* manifold is not a manifold, strictly speaking (i.e. not complex *in some sense*), just because the plurality of a manifold of representations can be regarded as a plurality only by representing the series *as* a manifold? No, it does not. Instantaneous apprehension of a representation is an apprehension that collapses into the representation apprehended.¹⁵ Such representations are mere sensations that follow one after the other—i.e. the mere material content of an arbitrary empirical intuition.¹⁶ In this case, the representations would be represented “without distinction, just as they fell together”, as Kant says (A121). A mere manifold is then just a series of such representations that “without distinction” fall together, consecutively over time.

(This does not imply that sensations cannot be had simultaneously, e.g. the smell of an espresso being brewed and the concurrent sound of the moka pot percolating. The simultaneity of sensations need not be *noticed* for the sensations to *happen* simultaneously.) A great part of our representations are like that, e.g. when one merely stares out the window, when one is driving one's car etc.,¹⁷ and for infants or non-human animals this is probably the standard way of being aware of, or 'coping with', one's environment.

The important point here is that intuition delivers a manifold of representations (cf. B160n.) but nothing beyond that in the sense of enabling a genuine perception or cognition of objects, or even a recognition of the manifold *as* manifold, *as* a plurality of representations in time, that is, *as* qualitatively or quantitatively complex.¹⁸ As Kant repeatedly says (e.g. B130, 134), the object itself is not generated in or through the manifold, nor do we just "*find* some sort of combination of the manifold already in inner sense" (B155). The manifold itself consists of "different perceptions" that "by themselves are encountered dispersed and separate in the mind", and do not have "the combination" necessary for cognition "in sense itself" (A120).¹⁹ Hence, Kant says here in subsection 1 of the first part of the A-Deduction that

in order for [*Damit*] *unity* of intuition to come from this manifold (as, say, in the representation of space), it is necessary first to run through and then to take together this manifoldness, which action I call *synthesis of apprehension*, since it is **aimed** directly **at** the intuition, which to be sure provides a manifold but can never effect this is as such [*dieses ... als ein solches ... bewirken kann*], and indeed as contained *in one representation*, without the occurrence of such a synthesis. (A99; boldface mine)

The last subordinate clause in this passage is tricky. What precisely does Kant mean by "effect" (*bewirken*)? And is what is effected, by means of synthesis, the manifold itself, or just its unity? From the added clause "und zwar *in einer Vorstellung* enthalten", and the whole context of the passage, it is clear that the synthesis effects the *unity* of the manifold, not the manifold itself—what Kant means by the fact that synthesis effects the manifold "as such" (*als ein solches*), is that the *representation*

of the manifoldness of the manifold relies on the synthesis too, as I explained earlier. Also, the synthesis of apprehension is directed *at* the intuition, implying that the latter cannot be first generated by the former.²⁰ At any rate, Kant makes a clear distinction between, on the one hand, the intuition that delivers or provides the manifold representations, since they are just “modifications of the mind” and “belong to inner sense”, as he says earlier at A98–9, and, on the other hand, *unity* of intuition. This unity is not already contained in the manifold of representations as mere modifications of the mind, but must be added by means of an action “aimed at” the intuition (cf. B129–30). True, representations, even as mere modifications of the mind, come in arrays or streams, they have a certain psychological structure or ordered arrangement—or, as I noted earlier, even a unity of sorts (e.g. a synoptic unity; cf. A97)—as they are prompted in the mind over time.²¹ But this is not the unity that Kant means in this context. As becomes clear from a later passage (A104–5), he means *necessary* unity here, namely a unity insofar as cognition of an object, or indeed “the representation of space” (A99), arises from it; that is, a unity that is recognised, by the subject of representation, *as* a unity, and thus as having an objective validity, as representing a genuine object that contrasts with the arbitrary (psychological) make-up of a subject’s mental arrangement (cf. A104–5).

The passage at A99 that we have just read is similar to a passage in §26 in the B-Deduction, where in a notoriously convoluted note Kant writes:

Space, represented as *object* (as is really required in geometry), contains more than the mere form of intuition, namely the *comprehension* [*Zusammenfassung*] of the manifold given in accordance with the form of sensibility in an *intuitive* representation, so that the *form of intuition merely gives the manifold* [*bloß Mannigfaltiges ... giebt*], but the *formal intuition gives unity* of the representation. (B160n; boldface mine)

Space as form of intuition is the *mere* form in which representations of outer sense are represented (mutatis mutandis, this holds for time as well, namely, time being the mere form in which representations are contained in inner sense, including those of outer sense [A34/B50].)

We could not have representations of objects outside of us unless space were the necessary form of such representation, just as we could not have representations at all if they did not have the form of time as their a priori condition of being given. Space, as form of intuition—what elsewhere Kant calls metaphysical space, which is an “originally, [...] subjectively given space”, rather than geometrical space (OKT, 20:420 [Kant 2014:309])²²—is the necessary condition of the possibility even of *having* a manifold of representations of outer objects, as much as time is the necessary condition of the possibility of *having* a manifold of representations at all. Space is the minimal condition of the cognition of objects, though not sufficient for it. For the mere having of a manifold of representations of an outer object does not give one a clear, that is, determined grasp of those representations *as* representing an outer object, a grasp of a determinate spatial object, which is constructible in geometric space. To put it succinctly, a mere given manifold of representations is not *objectively* valid, but only subjectively valid, even if those representations *are* in fact the result of the causal affection by outer objects.

The argument, here in subsection 1 of Section II of the A-Deduction, as well as the more elaborate parallel argument of §26 in the B-Deduction, is that in order to have a unified manifold in intuition, i.e. a unity of intuition, the manifold must be “run through” and “take[n] together” (A99). Only in that I perform this action of “running through” and “tak[ing] together” a manifold, will the manifold constitute a unity, a unitary representation of connected representations, which defines a cognition or experience. This action of, as it were, *producing* the unity is what Kant means by “effecting” (A99) a manifold as manifold in a unitary representation. (Again, both aspects of the *representation of the manifoldness* of the manifold and its unity are “effected” by synthesis. In producing the unity, also the manifold *as* manifold, as plurality, is grasped. Notice that synthesis does not *generate* the manifold itself, but rather enables a *grasping of a manifold as a manifold*. A manifold in itself, without it being represented as such, is just a consecution of separate “absolute unities”, discrete moments.) This action concerns the primordial uncaused causality that lies in the *act* of the spontaneous agent of synthesis (cf. B130). Hence, Kant claims at the start of the account of the threefold synthesis that spontaneity is their ground (A97).

It is important to note that Kant is not claiming that with the synthesis of apprehension space *itself* is first produced, as the reference to space at A99 might suggest, and as the concluding paragraph of subsection 1 appears to be saying, namely that

without [synthesis of apprehension] we could have *a priori* neither the representations of space nor of time, since these can be generated [*erzeugt*] only through the synthesis of the manifold that sensibility in its original receptivity provides. (A99–100)

We should be careful in reading such passages as the above. Kant appears to be saying that space itself (and time) is generated by the synthesis of apprehension, in conjunction with the synthesis of the imagination (see below). This is sometimes indeed argued to be the case by Kant's commentators, such as by Longuenesse (1998:219, 223; 2005:34) and Friedman (2012:248). And A99–100 provides the best textual evidence for such a reading. But neither space itself, nor the sui generis unity of space is dependent on the *spontaneity* of a synthesising subject, on an *act* of unification; for (1) there is clear textual evidence to the contrary and (2) phenomenologically it is impossible that the infinite magnitude of space should be grasped as such by a finite subject, let alone be produced by a finite subject (for detailed analysis, see Onof and Schulting 2014, 2015).

It is precisely for this reason, among others, that Kant makes an absolute distinction between receptivity and spontaneity, which though necessarily linked insofar as knowledge should be possible, are irreducible to each other. An act of spontaneity cannot *produce* receptivity itself, and a fortiori produce the subjective forms of receptivity (space and time) under which manifolds of representations are necessarily received. The roles of receptivity and spontaneity should not be conflated, nor their distinction blurred.²³ Receptivity is what “provides” (*darbietet*) (A99–100) the manifold, and hence the forms of such a mere manifold (cf. B160n.).²⁴ What the synthesis of apprehension (and in conjunction with it, the synthesis of imagination) generates is the *representation* of space and time, which involves ordering and connecting the given manifold, parts or instants, *in* space and *in* time respectively (cf. A98–9);

the synthesis does not generate the very forms of receptivity, or forms of intuition, space and time themselves, as if Kant collapsed the absolute distinction between intuition and concept after all. This is more clearly indicated when we look at the synthesis of reproduction in the imagination, with which the synthesis of apprehension, as Kant says, is inseparably linked (A102).

6.3.2 Synthesis of Imagination

In subsection 2, which addresses the synthesis of reproduction in the imagination, the general background premise is again the possibility of object cognition or knowledge, and concomitant with it the justified employment of the pure concepts of the understanding, these being the a priori concepts of an object that are the necessary conditions of experience or knowledge. After the synthesis of apprehension, the synthesis of reproduction in the imagination is the next elementary necessary condition of the possibility of objective cognition. This synthesis is “inseparably combined” (A102) with the synthesis of apprehension, because only in tandem with the synthesis of reproduction does the synthesis of apprehension enable a genuine connection of the manifold that is required in order to have an objective cognition.²⁵

But there are some *prima facie* problems with the A-Deduction account of the imagination, which in the B-Deduction Kant has sought to eliminate, namely the suspicion that a *mere* power of empirical association or reproduction is at issue. It seems as if, here at A100–1, Kant were arguing that mere association—he talks about “a merely empirical law” of association or reproduction—already presupposes that the “appearances [i.e., objects] themselves are actually subject to [...] a [constant] rule”, since without being subject to a constant rule, “our empirical imagination would never get to do anything suitable to its capacity, and would thus remain hidden in the interior of the mind, like a dead and to us unknown faculty”. The very subjective capacity for associative imagination would, on this view, be *psychologically* impossible if there were not a definite rule with which appearances themselves must accord, taking these appearances to be the objects of experience.

This, at first blush at any rate, appears indeed what Kant means, since the examples he adduces point to real objects of experience. I discuss these shortly.

By contrast, in the B-Deduction, Kant explicitly excludes such a psychological reading of the imagination from the transcendental account of the possibility of knowledge. The imagination that is connected with an act of spontaneity, and which he therefore calls “productive”, is explicitly contradistinguished from the *reproductive* imagination,

whose synthesis is subject solely to empirical laws, namely those of association, and that therefore contributes nothing to the explanation of the possibility of cognition *a priori*, and on that account belongs not in transcendental philosophy but in psychology. (B152)

But the apparently psychological account of imagination in A should, I contend, also be read in a non-psychologistic manner. Also in A (at A118), Kant contradistinguishes the productive and reproductive forms of imagination, the former being the transcendental, *a priori* power that is the necessary condition of the latter. That the reproductive imagination, as it features in subsection 2, should not be read merely psychologically becomes clear if we analyse the examples Kant adduces.

We should keep in mind that the background premise in all of the examples is that there is some actual knowledge of, or a knowledge claim about, the object at which the reproductive imagination is directed. Here is the passage with which the account of the reproductive synthesis of the imagination begins, and where Kant gives the examples that illustrate its functioning:

It is, to be sure, a merely empirical law in accordance with which representations that have often followed or accompanied one another are finally associated with each other and thereby placed in a connection in accordance with which, even without the presence of the object, one of these representations brings about a transition of the mind to the other in accordance with a constant rule. This law of reproduction, however, presupposes that the appearances themselves are actually subject to such a rule, and that in the manifold of their representations an accompaniment

or succession takes place according to certain rules; for without that our empirical imagination would never get to do anything suitable to its capacity, and would thus remain hidden in the interior of the mind, like a dead and to us unknown faculty. If cinnabar were now red, now black, now light, now heavy, if a human being were now changed into this animal shape, now into that one, if on the longest day the land were covered now with fruits, now with ice and snow, then my empirical imagination would never even get the opportunity to think of heavy cinnabar on the occasion of the representation of the color red; or if a certain word were attributed now to this thing, now to that, or if one and the same thing were sometimes called this, sometimes that, without the governance of a certain rule to which the appearances are already subjected in themselves, then no empirical synthesis of reproduction could take place. (A100–1)

I focus on one example. In the case of cinnabar (*Zinnober*), i.e. the red mineral ore mercury sulphide, it is not the contingent association of some arbitrary red-coloured object with a similar object which, by contrast, is black-coloured that is at issue here, as if indeed one *could not* have a chance encounter with a red-coloured piece of cinnabar, followed by an encounter with black cinnabar, without indeed knowing what one has in front of one, assuming certain a priori enabling rules for so knowing—call this weak association. That is not the point of the illustration.²⁶ I submit that Kant's reasoning is rather the following.

I know, by means of my capacity for reproductive imagination, that if I were presented with a specific red-coloured object, it is heavy cinnabar that one looks at, and if, in a second instance, one were presented with a black object, it is light cinnabar that one looks at, *if and only if* I know what cinnabar is and thus know that red cinnabar blackens when exposed to light, i.e. that cinnabar is vulnerable to degradation. Only under the objective condition that red cinnabar blackens under exposure to light, *and that one has knowledge of this condition*, is one capable of knowing that, under normal, stable conditions, cinnabar is red-coloured.²⁷ Thus, only on this objective condition is one a fortiori able to associate, *in the strong sense*, black with red cinnabar. Therefore, Kant says that “without the governance of a certain rule *to which the appearances are already subjected in themselves*, then no empirical synthesis of reproduction could take place” (A101; emphasis added).

Again, this does not mean that empirical reproductive imagination as such, i.e. *weak association*, is absolutely grounded on, or precisely maps onto, the order and stability of objects (as empirically given), but it means that empirical reproductive imagination is meaningfully *about* objects only under the assumption of a certain necessary a priori rule that governs those objects themselves, as objects of possible knowledge, and enables *strong association* or knowledge thereof. The possible association is not dependent on the constitution, order and stability of objects existing independently of my faculty of association, but on the same rules to which those objects, such as cinnabar, themselves are subject in order to be possible objects of my association. This may sound question-begging, but must be understood against the backdrop of Kant's idealist claim that the "*a priori* conditions of a possible experience in general are at the same time conditions of the possibility of the objects of experience" (A111). It is the one set of a priori conditions of possible experience that establishes both the experience (association) of objects and the objects so experienced (the associated appearances).

The necessary a priori rule governing both experience (association) and objects is provided by the "transcendental synthesis of this power" (A101), that is, by the transcendental *productive* imagination (A118), which grounds the empirical reproductive synthesis in the imagination, *insofar* as it should yield objective empirical knowledge. The reproductive synthesis basically consists in the retention of each successive part of the manifold in intuition, whether they be parts of a line that I draw in space, the preceding parts (instants) of time in the observation of an event (such as the exposure of cinnabar to light, which blackens it), or "the successively represented units" when counting numbers (A102; cf. A103).²⁸ The synthesis of apprehension and the synthesis of the imagination together enable a "whole representation", which is not an absolute, undifferentiated unity, but a unitary representation of a complex manifold of representations, whether this unitary representation be a single object or an objective event involving one or more objects, such as the exposure of cinnabar to light.

If we look at the B-Deduction, in particular §§24 and 26, where Kant expounds on the *synthesis speciosa* or figurative synthesis and the synthesis of apprehension respectively, it becomes clear that these

syntheses are responsible for the construction of particulars in geometric space and the perception of empirical spatiotemporal objects in physical space respectively (see further Chap. 7). It should be noted again (cf. Chap. 5, Sect. 5.2), as Kant indeed points out in §24 of the B-Deduction, that transcendental imagination is the determining factor in sensibility, not *that which* is determined, i.e. the determinable. Nor does the determining factor produce or generate the determinable, namely, what is received in sensibility. Even though transcendental imagination is said to belong to sensibility (B151), it cannot be equated with sensibility itself, in terms of that which is *given* in and through the senses, nor with the forms of sensibility as such (space and time), and nor is the imagination the principle of sensibility itself, as Hegel thinks it is (see Chap. 8).²⁹ Transcendental imagination is “a faculty for determining the sensibility *a priori*”, and is “an effect of the understanding on sensibility and its first application [...] to objects of [...] intuition” (B152). Neither the understanding nor transcendental imagination, as an effect of the understanding, are *constitutive* of the forms of intuition, contrary to what commentators like Longuenesse suggest.³⁰ Hence, despite what Kant might appear to say at the start of the ‘second step’ of the B-Deduction (§21), it is not merely how objects are first *given* in receptivity, or presented to us, which is at issue in the ‘second step’, but the way they are first *constructed* in sensibility, *as complex particulars or singular objects*.

Space, and also time, are first “made representable”, as Kant puts it (B156), by the act of the productive imagination, that is, as for time, “under the image of a line, insofar as we draw it”. Space can only be determined by the act of the productive imagination through determining spatial regions *in* space; space as such, as an infinite given magnitude, can never be determined (space itself is fundamentally under-determined³¹). Thus in constructing a geometrical object such as a triangle, a spatial region is determined *in* space, which itself is presupposed as a given whole, or an infinitely divisible quantum, as background space. Now of course, in TD Kant is not primarily interested in the possibility of geometry or the construction of geometrical objects per se, but rather in the possibility of real spatiotemporal objects in experience (whether they be sensibly perceivable or perceivable only by

inferring their existence through the relations of my occurrent perceptions to sensibly perceivable objects). But the crucial claim, in TD, is that the possibility of objects is grounded on the objective determination of space into determinate spaces with definite boundaries, given that, as per the argument of the Aesthetic, objects that are accessible to human intuition must be spatial.

Indeed, as Kant suggests at B138, the claim is that the act of the synthesis of imagination first generates an *object* as a determinate space itself within the larger space in which it is contained by delimiting or placing boundaries in unbounded space, in conformity with the constraints of the human forms of intuition under which such a construction is possible. The unity of the act of synthesis, by the imagination, which occurs by means of an act of constructing in accordance with a definite rule of the understanding (category) defines an object as an object of specifically human intuition; hence Kant calls it *figurative* synthesis, to distinguish it from other possible forms of sensible synthesis. He writes:

Thus the mere form of outer sensible intuition, space, is not yet cognition at all; it only gives the manifold of intuition *a priori* for a possible cognition. But in order to cognize **something in** space, e.g., a line, I must *draw* it, and thus synthetically bring about a determinate combination of the given manifold, so that the unity of this action is at the same time the unity of consciousness (in the concept of a line), and **thereby is an object (a determinate space) first cognized.** (B137–8; boldface mine)

Now the action of the synthesis of the imagination “exercised immediately upon perceptions” *is* the synthesis of the apprehension, as Kant says in A120, which is also argued in the ‘second step’ of the B-Deduction, §26, which concerns the possibility of perceptual knowledge, and whose argument is directly entailed by the argument in §24 concerning figurative synthesis (see further Chap. 7). So, the synthesis of apprehension *is* in fact the figurative synthesis or the productive imagination, insofar as real *empirically given* spatial objects, rather than just geometric or imaged objects, are determined in *physical* space, rather than in geometrical space. The possibility of apprehending

or perceiving such objects in physical space is grounded on figurative synthesis or the productive imagination. This argument is based on the argument that figurative synthesis generates geometric space (i.e. the *representation* of space; A99)³² in which any empirical determinate object, a phenomenon, must be constructible as a spatial object with determinate boundaries in physical space.

6.3.3 Recognition in a Concept

Now how does all this tie in with Kantian nonconceptualism, where such nonconceptualism is defined as the dual thesis that some mental content is not subsumed or subsumable under the categories, and so not constrained by the understanding, and that such content is synthesised by a *sui generis* non-intellectual synthesis, that is, the presumably independent syntheses of apprehension and of the imagination, which enable the representation of spatiotemporal objects?³³ Well, it doesn't. The thesis of Kantian nonconceptualism, so construed, conflicts with both the A- and B-accounts of how the imagination must be regarded as an act that is inseparable from the understanding's role, and hence dependent on the involvement of pure concepts by virtue of the synthesis of recognition. This last element is what Kant argues in subsection 3 of Section II of the A-Deduction. Some commentators (e.g. Allais 2009) have argued, on the basis of a passage at B104 in §10 of the Metaphysical Deduction (MD), that the synthesis of apprehension and the synthesis of imagination can be seen as operating independently of the application of concepts (i.e. pure concepts of the understanding), that is, independently of the synthesis of recognition in a concept, to put it in the terms of the A-Deduction. Let us look at this passage. Kant writes at A78–9/B104:

Transcendental logic [...] teaches how to bring under concepts not the representations but the *pure synthesis* of representations. The first thing that must be given to us *a priori* for the cognition of all objects is the *manifold* of pure intuition; the *synthesis* of this manifold by means of the imagination is the second thing, but it still does not yield cognition. The concepts that give this pure synthesis *unity*, and that

consist solely in the representation of this necessary synthetic unity, are the third thing necessary for cognition of an object that comes before us, and they depend on the understanding.

In line with Kant's observation, just prior to this passage, that "[s]ynthesis in general is [...] the mere effect of the imagination, of a blind though indispensable function of the soul" (cf. A124) and that "to bring this synthesis *to concepts* is a function that pertains to the understanding, and by means of which it first provides cognition in the proper sense" (B103/A78), it is argued by Allais (and others) (1) that the synthesis of the imagination and the role of the understanding in conceptualising this synthesis are two separable acts, and (2) that the synthesis of imagination does not necessarily entail the conceptualising act by the understanding.³⁴ I think this reading is mistaken. First, it misapprehends the primary dual goal of TD of proving the legitimacy of the application of the categories to experience and explaining the possibility of objective experience (or knowledge), which occurs precisely by virtue of the synthesis of the imagination. Secondly, it conflicts directly with the claim of the guiding thread section, immediately following the quoted passage, at A79/B104–5. Thirdly, it misunderstands the regressive nature of the argument in the A-Deduction, where each element of the analysis is equally and simultaneously constitutive of possible experience or knowledge (time is not involved in the analysis). And fourth, and most problematically, it leads to an infinite regress. For, as regards the last point, what makes that, on the separability reading, the pure synthesis of the imagination is, presumably in a subsequent act, *in fact* "brought under concepts" by the understanding so as to form judgements, given that the synthesis of the imagination is already the original a priori synthesis, a more original synthesis than which does not exist? Is this subsequent act of the bringing under concepts a different and separable act from the original synthesis of the imagination? (This concerns what Hanna [2013] has called the "schmimagination" problem.)³⁵

In my view, transcendental imagination constructs objects in space in accordance with a rule of the understanding, i.e. a concept, which is argued in subsection 3; and since concepts are required for the action

of the imagination, nonconceptualists cannot argue that the synthesis of imagination operates independently of the categories and the understanding or, given that empirical as well as pure concepts are used only in judgements (A68/B93), that the synthesis of imagination occurs outside of judgement, which, I believe, also goes against Grüne's 'obscurist-conceptualist' reading of the relation between synthesis, categories and judgement. The construction takes place in tandem with the understanding (and hence judgement), as that which provides the rule in accordance with which the construction necessarily occurs in intuition. Without the understanding's involvement, there simply is no construction. Let me expand.

I concentrate on the third aspect, concerning the regressive nature of the account of the threefold synthesis, which necessarily includes the synthesis of conceptual recognition. Let us turn to A103, with which the third subsection of Section II of the A-Deduction (A95–110), concerning the synthesis of recognition in the concept, starts. Kant writes:

Without consciousness that that which we think is the very same as what we thought a moment before, all reproduction in the series of representations would be in vain. For it would be a new representation in our current state, which would not belong at all to the act through which it had been gradually generated, and its manifold would never constitute a whole, since it would lack the unity that only consciousness can obtain for it. If, in counting, I forget that the units that now hover before my senses were successively added to each other by me, then I would not cognize the generation of the multitude [*Menge*] through this successive addition of one to the other, and consequently I would not cognize the number; for this concept consists solely in the consciousness of this unity of the synthesis. / The word 'concept' itself could already lead us to this remark. For it is this *one* consciousness [*dieses eine Bewußtsein*] that unifies the manifold that has been successively intuited, and then also reproduced, into one representation. (A103)

The possible reproduction in the imagination of the successive parts in intuition, by means of which "a whole" or unitary ("one") representation is first constituted rests on an additional condition apart from the syntheses of apprehension and of reproduction, namely, the condition of the agent

of reproduction being conscious of the necessary unity of her representations in the gradual bringing forth of them and reproducing them. The synthesis of the imagination in successively adding representations to one another, and, importantly, retaining these, so as to connect them as necessarily belonging together, such as the representations of <heavy cinnabar> and <redness>, would not be possible *without* this unitary consciousness.³⁶ (Notice that, of course, <cinnabar>, <heaviness>, and <redness> do not as mere concepts belong together necessarily, but they belong together necessarily in the synthetic judgement “Heavy cinnabar is red-coloured”, given that heavy cinnabar *is* red-coloured [cf. B142].) The reproduction in the imagination is made *necessary* if and only if there is this unitary consciousness in a concept (A105; A108), which is the concept of an object (in general) (A104) that corresponds to the “whole” that is produced as a result of the apprehension and reproduction of the manifold of representations. The “whole” that comprehends the representations <redness>, <heaviness>, and <cinnabar> as necessarily belonging together in the judgement “Heavy cinnabar is red-coloured” constitutes the concept of an object, in this particular case of the object ‘red-coloured, heavy cinnabar’, and is made possible by the unity of consciousness of all these representations so combined.

Grüne (2009:176–177) observes that the ‘thinking’ involved in the consciousness *that* the various representations belong together is not propositional or judgemental, in the sense that I need *consciously judge* that the representation <heavy cinnabar> must be connected with the representation <red-coloured>. I think this is right to the extent that Kant here explains how judgement, and thus discursive thought, is first made possible on the basis of a priori synthesis, so that what grounds it, i.e. the unitary consciousness, cannot itself be what it grounds, i.e. an explicit judging of the form *S is P*. However, I disagree with Grüne’s suggestion that the unity of consciousness is completely divorced from the unity of judgement. Although the consciousness that the various representations form a unity does not *itself* have the character of a judging, it does form an integral part of a judgement, that is, it is that which transcendental-logically grounds judgement and thus also only takes place *in* judgement; the unity of consciousness is as it were adverbial to the judgement (as was argued in Chap. 3). The grounding relation or ground does not lie *outside* judgement.

Of course, Grüne wants to argue that for what she calls a *Wahrnehmungserlebnis* judgement is not required, and I agree. But, unlike Grüne, I would argue that such an event as the hearing of two tones as an interval and thus as a unity of sorts, to use her example, does not require any *synthesis* in Kant's a priori sense either, nor a fortiori any judgement; only an explicit recognition of the specific intervallic width between two pitches requires an a priori synthesis, for this ability presupposes at least some musical knowledge, and so by implication my capacity to judge is required. There is a clear difference between merely hearing different tones and specifically knowing and judging about what I hear, just as there is a clear difference between perceiving (and enjoying) sounds as noise and judging it to be music. (Grüne makes a distinction between a priori synthesis and "sensible" synthesis, and she argues that in the above case only "sensible" synthesis is at issue. But I do not see evidence of this distinction in Kant's argument for the threefold synthesis, which is an *a priori synthesis in a sensible manifold*, not a "sensible" synthesis *in contrast to or separable from a priori synthesis*.)

Now this unitary consciousness, or what from subsequent passages turns out to be the unity of apperception (A119) or transcendental apperception (A107),³⁷ is nothing but the recognition of the manifold of representations as unified in a concept, namely, of the manifold being subsumed under the set of pure concepts or the categories (A119), which first enables the genuine cognition of objects, such as red-coloured heavy cinnabar, or objective events, such as the degradation of cinnabar under exposure to light. The grounds or a priori rules of recognition *are* the categories and it is these categories that a priori ground the synthesis of the imagination (A125); so insofar as the pure productive imagination is concerned, the synthesis of conceptual recognition, *by means of the categories*, is necessarily involved.

For example, in order even to construct a triangle by means of the synthesis of imagination, I need to be "conscious of the composition of three straight lines in accordance with a rule according to which such an intuition can always be exhibited", this rule being the concept of an object in general (some *x*), "which I think through those predicates of a triangle"³⁸ (A105).³⁸ The concept of an object in general is constituted of the set of pure concepts, that is, the categories, which first establish

what it is to conceive of an object. ‘Concept of an object in general’ is therefore shorthand for the set of twelve categories as the necessary conditions of objective experience or knowledge. I am able to construct a triangle in the imagination only because I connect the various lines in accordance with a rule or rules that prescribes how to construct a triangular object (either an imagined one or one drawn on the blackboard). Without this rule or, more precisely, set of rules that makes the connection of the manifold in an intuition a necessary one, there is no synthesis among the manifold perceptions (e.g. lines) that constitute the representation of an object (e.g. a triangle); no construction of an object in the imagination is possible without it and nor would the apprehension of a determinate empirical object in empirical intuition be possible without it, given that the synthesis of apprehension *is* the synthesis of the imagination in the domain of perceptions. (It might be argued that the synthesis of the imagination is just the *condition* of the synthesis of apprehension, rather than that it *is* the synthesis of apprehension in the domain of perceptions, or in sensibility. But at A120 Kant writes: “There is thus an active faculty of synthesis of this manifold in us, which we call imagination, and *whose* action exercised immediately upon perceptions I call apprehension” [emphasis added]. Kant here identifies the synthesis of the imagination as the synthesis of apprehension, at least insofar as the former synthesis connects the manifold in sensible perception.)

The object of the intuition that is apprehended and successively synthesised *is* nothing but “the concept of something in which [appearances] are necessarily connected” (A108) (cf. the account of objectivity in Chap. 4). Without such a concept, one would be left with a mere “stream of inner appearances” that have some subjective validity at best (A107). A “swarm of appearances” could “fill up our soul”, as Kant writes (A111), but no experience would arise out of it, because “all relation of cognition to objects would also disappear” for lack of the necessary unity among the representations contained in it. We would have “intuition without thought, but never cognition” (A111). This latter quote affirms Kant’s residual nonconceptualism.³⁹ But importantly, against the standard nonconceptualists and the ‘obscurist’-conceptualists,⁴⁰ who argue for the possibility of intuition that is independent of the capacity

to judge, such intuition without thought would also *not* be synthesised mental content, either by virtue of the synthesis of apprehension or of the imagination (or, as Grüne argues, by means of the synthesis of recognition through the application or guidance of categories as *obscure* concepts); nor would it refer strictly to an object, given that, as we have just seen, the idea of there being an object is dependent on their first being an act of synthesis that connects representations as necessarily belonging together in a *conceptual* unity, namely, the synthesis of recognition in a concept. An intuition without thought is a mere intuition, it just does not provide us with an objectively valid cognition, or, absent the necessary synthesis of recognition in a concept, with a reference to an object.

To recap, the threefold synthesis that is the necessary multi-aspect element of the cognition of objects consists of the three necessarily intertwined syntheses that only together enable the cognition of objects. The synthesis of the imagination's "action exercised immediately upon perceptions" is the synthesis of apprehension (A120). The imagination brings "the manifold of intuition into an *image*", and "must therefore antecedently take up the impressions into its activity, i.e., apprehend them" (A120). But this apprehension alone would not connect the apprehended impressions together if there were not some ground on the basis of which the apprehended impressions are considered to belong together necessarily. This ground is provided by the reproductive imagination, which in its turn requires "a rule in accordance with which a representation enters into combination in the imagination with one representation rather than with any others" (A121), that is, the rule provided by the synthesis of recognition in a concept and which ipso facto involves the categories.

6.4 'Mere' Reproductive Imagination

There is one issue left standing regarding the A-Deduction account of imagination. As I hinted earlier, at A118 and further at A123, Kant talks about the productive imagination, which is the "transcendental function of the imagination" (A123), as distinct from the reproductive imagination, which rests on "conditions of experience" (A118), just like

the account of the B-Deduction (B151–2). The reproductive faculty of imagination is “merely empirical” and also subjective (A121). The transcendental productive imagination, on the other hand, is the pure a priori synthesis and “concerns nothing but the connection of the manifold *a priori*” and is the “pure form of all possible cognition” (A118), which provides the element of necessity to the connection of representations in intuition that first constitutes the knowledge of objects; this pure form corresponds to the forms of the pure understanding, i.e. the categories (A119), and is the objective ground of the associative power of the imagination (A121).⁴¹ Of course, the reproductive synthesis is also thereby required, as it rests on the necessary *material* conditions of empirical experience and provides the matter of intuition, which constitutes the empirical content of a judgement.

However, it appears that in A there is still a place for the *mere* reproductive imagination in the analysis of *possible* objective knowledge, a role firmly rejected in the B-Deduction account (B152). The faculty for associating perceptions, on purely subjective grounds, would then still be possible *only* on the assumption of the objective ground that is the unity of apperception, the latter providing the concept of an object and changing the associated perceptions into a necessary unity of perceptions.⁴² It might seem that the synthesis of the imagination in its empirical mode (rather than as transcendental power) is at work here, but on the other hand, Kant associates a merely subjective reproductive imagination with an act where the representations are reproduced “without distinction”, “just as they fell together”, which results in “merely unruly heaps” without any cognition arising from it (A121); this does not comport with the synthesis of the imagination as an integral necessary element of possible cognition of necessary connections among representations as constitutive of objects, nor with a reproductive faculty that *retains* apprehended features so as to connect the manifold in an empirical intuition. There is a *prima facie* ambiguity about the role of the empirical reproductive imagination in A.⁴³ It is for this reason, one surmises, that this kind of merely subjective reproduction of causally affected representations is excised from the main argument in the B-Deduction: the mere association of perceptions only provides an “entirely undetermined and

contingent" (A122) unity or aggregate, a "stream of inner appearances" (A107), which fails to contribute to the cognition of objects as necessary connections of manifolds. Such merely subjectively valid associative reproduction is simply the foil of rule-governed reproduction, which is grounded on the transcendental, productive imagination, and thus has no role in the transcendental analysis of possible experience, just as Kant says in the B-Deduction (B152).

6.5 Concluding Remarks

Let me conclude by saying something more on Kant's putative nonconceptualism. I have claimed that in the account of the threefold synthesis Kant must be considered a moderate conceptualist in that all three syntheses of apprehension, imagination and conceptual recognition are intertwined and must be seen as only jointly grounding possible knowledge, which contrasts with the view of standard Kantian nonconceptualism which claims that some mental content is synthesised (by means of the syntheses of apprehension and imagination) without being synthesised by means of the synthesis of conceptual recognition and a fortiori determined by the understanding. If by Kantian nonconceptualism the latter view is understood, then on my reading Kant is not a nonconceptualist. But there is a sense in which Kant can be called a nonconceptualist. He is a nonconceptualist in the sense that the receptivity of manifolds, and thus the *having* of intuitions (contra Grüne, e.g. Grüne 2009:217n.41), is not a product of the understanding, nor of the imagination, nor of any form of necessary synthesis, i.e. synthesis understood in the sense of B129. This concerns the sense in which space and time, as pure forms of intuition with their sui generis nonconceptual phenomenological characteristics, are not reducible to being the product of the imagination under a rule of the understanding.⁴⁴

One might object that at A121–2 Kant seems to be denying that it would even be possible to have a sensibility, where representations, and thus consciousness would be separated, without it belonging to a unitary consciousness. In other words, Kant seems to be making the strong modal claim that, necessarily, all appearances in intuition already

have an objective affinity, which makes the associability by means of the imagination first possible (the subjective ground). All representations or intuitions are then by definition subject to the unity of apperception (A122), and a fortiori subject to the categories. Transcendental apperception would be the necessary condition “even of all possible perception”, such that “all consciousness belongs to an all-embracing pure apperception” (A123). If anything, these claims would show Kant to be a super-conceptualist, rather than a nonconceptualist.⁴⁵

However, if these prima facie strong modal claims are read in their proper context, namely the analysis of the possibility of cognition, thereby observing that Kant often adds qualifying phrases to these strong modal claims,⁴⁶ then we see that he is only claiming that insofar as representations are to contribute to cognition are they necessarily subject to the principle of transcendental apperception (see Chap. 4). Hence, properly construed, the argument of the A-Deduction shows Kant to be a *moderate* conceptualist.

Notes

1. On the localisation of the so-called subjective deduction, see Schulting (2012:279n.15).
2. Grüne (2009) argues that *all* intuition is dependent on synthesis, and that any intuition is in fact first generated by synthesis, i.e. by the threefold synthesis (see esp. Grüne 2009, Chap. 3, e.g. p. 146). She disputes the view that intuition as such, interpreted strictly, is equivalent with a manifold of mere sensations. I do not believe that the textual evidence that Grüne presents indeed backs up her view.
3. At A121–2, Kant seems to be making the strong modal claim that, necessarily, all appearances in intuition already have an objective affinity, which makes the associability by means of the imagination first possible (the subjective ground). All representations or intuitions are then by definition subject to the unity of apperception (A122), and a fortiori subject to the categories. Transcendental apperception would be the necessary condition “even of all possible perception”, such that “all consciousness belongs to an all-embracing pure apperception” (A123). See the discussion in Schulting (2012, Chap. 6).

4. In a later article (2016), Grüne appears to have importantly modified her position as now saying that only intuitions of finite spaces and times, but not the pure intuitions of space and time, are generated by synthesis. This modified view implies that all representations of objects that are phenomenally present to a subject are subject to a synthesis. At the same time, it seems that Grüne still believes that *any* manifold in an *empirical* intuition is subject to the threefold synthesis for it to count as an intuition.
5. I should note that Allais has changed her view somewhat in more recent work (Allais 2015, 2016), which brings her view closer to mine. Allais (2016) argues that synthesis of apprehension and reproduction is “what is required to represent an object as a unified subject of properties over time, and with the connection between this and representing a unified subject of properties at a time”, and “not with binding a mass of sensation to put us in a position to attend to a distinct particular”, and that this synthesis involves the categories, which are “rules governing ways we synthesize”. In other words, also for Allais the objects represented in accordance with this threefold synthesis are not the particulars we are merely presented with in intuition, i.e. in so-called non-conceptual content.
6. “Diese [i.e., referring to *Spontaneität* in the previous sentence] ist nun der Grund einer dreifachen Synthesis, die notwendiger Weise in allem Erkenntnis vorkommt [...]”
7. When I mention “first part of the A-Deduction”, I refer to what Kant himself labels the *zweiter Abschnitt* (Section II) of TD in its A-version. The *erster Abschnitt* of TD (§§13–14) is common to both the A- and B-versions.
8. I agree with Grüne’s (2009:184–185) critique of Hanna and (early) Allais in this respect.
9. See again Chap. 1 for an account of the sense in which Kant is to be considered a representationalist.
10. See also Schulting (2016a).
11. Obviously, Kant cannot mean here absolute unity in the sense of a metaphysical simple, as this would conflict with his stricture on absolute metaphysical knowledge. *Augenblick* must here be seen in terms of ‘instant’; see A169/B211, where *Augenblick* is translated as ‘instant’.
12. For instance, the manifold representations come in arrays, in the way they are prompted in the mind. Any such array could be termed a unity

of sorts. Importantly, such a unity is epistemologically arbitrary, in the sense of wholly a posteriori causally dependent on the neurophysiological patterns or make-up of the parts of the brain that are responsible for producing mental states.

13. A mere manifold of isolated representations is not ipso facto qualitatively or quantitatively simple (Kant indeed denies the possibility of the quantitatively simple; A169/B211). Cf. Longuenesse (1998:38) and Thöle (1991:216). In fact, I believe that unsynthesised representations of outer sense are already quantitatively complex, but since synthesis first determines this complexity *as* complex, unsynthesised representations are ex hypothesi not recognised *as* complex. Grüne (2009:161) says, rightly, that sensibility “delivers complex representations, whose content is however not represented as something complex”.
14. See further my earlier account in Schulting (2012:194–195).
15. Carl (1992:153) writes: “Das momentane, auf einen Augenblick beschränkte Erleben ist nach Kant charakteristisch für die ‘Apprehension bloß vermittelt der Empfindung’ (A167/B209).”
16. Recall that, for Kant, the term ‘representation’ is the genus of which ‘sensation’ is a species. A sensation is a “*perception* that refers to the subject as a modification of its state” (A320/B376). Often it is held, among Kant commentators, that sensations are not really representations, but this is mistaken, as the *Stufenleiter* makes plainly clear. Sensations are just the material content of an intuition (A19–20/B34; A42/B60).
17. See Schulting (2015a:113).
18. See Grüne (2009:70) for a definition of intuition as qualitatively and as quantitatively complex.
19. Grüne (2009:156–158) points to a seeming contradiction between Kant’s account of sensations as the result of the affection by outer objects, and these sensations as being quantitatively simple, that is, they do not have extensive magnitude (B208), and on the other hand, Kant’s observation that the given manifold is “comprehended” (*zusammengefasst*) in the form of intuition, as mere manifold, in B160n. But to my mind, the contradiction is only apparent, if we appreciate the fact that the sensations are the inner representations of what is outer, and do not (yet) reflect (‘represent’) the quantitative complexity of the manifold in outer sense *as* manifold. Only the synthesis of our sensations results in an awareness of the quantitative complexity of the manifold of representations in outer sense, as Grüne also seems to suggest.

20. Incidentally, this disproves Grüne's interpretation that the synthesis of apprehension first generates the intuition (Grüne 2009:160, *et passim*)—i.e. not just “determinate” intuition but “all kinds of outer intuition” (Grüne 2009:181)—because here Kant says the former is directed at the latter, which presupposes that the latter already obtains or is given before it can be directed at. Grüne (2009:152) attempts to explain this apparent inconsistency of her reading by claiming that here Kant means intuition in a sense that deviates from its “official” meaning (as given in the *Stufenleiter*).
21. Cf. Allais (2016) and Schulting (2012:141–144).
22. For discussion, see Onof and Schulting (2014). See also Chap. 7 (this volume).
23. Hegelians tend to argue that the fixed separation of receptivity and spontaneity cannot be upheld. For a critical account of this view, see Schulting (2016b). See also Chap. 8 (this volume).
24. Hence, Heidegger (1995:135) appropriately refers to a “syndotical” unity of space as form of intuition. It is the *given* unity of the manifold in intuition, as opposed to the unity conferred on the manifold by the understanding (through the imagination). Cf. Onof and Schulting (2015:32–33n.42).
25. This does not mean, as Anderson (2015:354) claims, that “intuitive representations *cannot be given independently* of the synthetic activity of the imagination”.
26. The other examples, specifically the meteorological one, do appear to describe unalterable facts about objects or objective events themselves, upon which our capacity for reproductive imagination is grounded. The phrase in the last sentence, “a certain rule to which the appearances *are already subjected in themselves*” (emphasis added) seems to confirm the impression that the constitution, order and stability of objects and objective events dictate our faculty of imagination, which means that our very capacity for freely associating representations is governed by the constitution, order and stability of objects and objective events. For example, it seems that I cannot but associate the longest day with a fruits-covered rather than a snow-covered land, since it is a fact in our actual world that the longest day is the summer solstice and in summer one does not normally expect snowfall (with climate change, one can never really exclude the unlikely possibility, in the Northern Hemisphere, of snow and ice on June 21st, or indeed 21 °C

at Christmas, as indeed happened on *Heiligabend* in 2012 in Munich). Also here, and with the example of the shape of a human being, Kant's point is that under normal circumstances, *we have come to expect* that on the longest day of the year we do not see snow and ice covered landscapes.

27. Cf. Robinson (1986:60n.24).
28. For an account of the retention of representations and the constructive nature of quantitative synthesis in counting, see Schulting (2012:190–191, 195–196).
29. See also Schulting (2016b).
30. For a critique of Longuenesse on this point, see Onof and Schulting (2015).
31. That is, given that space is an infinite given magnitude (A25/B39), the ultimate boundaries of space cannot be determined, indeed delimited, for any determinate space is itself again contained in a larger space, as background space, or can be subdivided in ever smaller determinate spaces. See Onof and Schulting (2015).
32. Notice that geometric space is not another space than the originally given metaphysical space, but is rather the finite *representation* of a part (parts) of space.
33. Cf. Hanna (2005, 2008) and Allais (2009).
34. Alternatively, one could argue that the synthesis of the imagination does indeed involve the understanding in some sense, but that this does not entail that judgements must be formed or a fully-fledged application of the categories as *clear* concepts is at issue (cf. Longuenesse 1998; Grüne 2009). Such a reading depends on the possibility of separating the capacity of the understanding and the capacity to judge, or of separating the capacity of the understanding and/or judging and the capacity to formulate propositions. I believe it is vulnerable to the same problems as the reading that the synthesis of the imagination does not depend on the capacity of the understanding.
35. For further discussion, see again Chap. 5 (this volume), and Schulting (2015b).
36. On the aspect of retention in the synthesis of reproduction and recognition, see further Schulting (2012:190–191, 194–196). Cf. Grüne (2009:176).
37. By contrast, Grüne (2009:196–197) believes that the unitary consciousness, i.e. the consciousness of the unity of the content of

representations, for which, on her view, obscure concepts as rules are required, should not be associated or identified with the “consciousness of this unity of the synthesis” (A103), that is, in her view the consciousness of unity in the manifold is not consciousness of synthetic activity. I believe there are no grounds for disentangling the consciousness of the unity in the manifold from the consciousness of the synthesis that unifies the manifold. They are contemporaneous acts, or to be more precise, two aspects of the same act (see Schulting 2012:111ff.). Grüne’s reason for denying the identity—namely, that the synthetic activity is mostly not conscious, as Kant suggests (A103)—seems to rely on the reading that the consciousness of the unity in the manifold were literally to do with perception (Grüne 2009:196). This brings to mind Patricia Kitcher’s famous critique of the idea of ‘synthesis watching’ (Kitcher 1990:111, 126–127). But I believe this is a mistaken interpretation of necessary unitary consciousness in the manifold: contrary to what Grüne suggests, it is not the kind of consciousness that first enables perception *simpliciter*, nor is the consciousness at issue psychological in any sense; rather, it is a *logical* consciousness. Moreover, the notion of concept as consciousness of unity, on which Grüne’s reading focuses, is as per Kant’s claim in e.g. B133–4, esp. the note, by definition to be seen as presupposing the synthetic unity of apperception, i.e. the “consciousness of [...] the synthesis”, as Kant calls it at A103.

38. The set of categories as necessary rules for objective cognition make up the concept of ‘object’. I argued this in Schulting (2012, esp. Chap. 10). See also Chap. 4 (this volume).
39. See Onof (2016).
40. The intimate connection between the unitary consciousness in a manifold and conceptuality, as Kant indicates at A103, is taken by Grüne (2009:182–183) to show that concepts are required for the *having* (*das Vorliegen*) of intuitions. But such a view is dependent on her reading of the having of intuitions as presupposing the threefold act of synthesis, and this is again built on the assumption that Kant distinguishes between a derivative and an original notion of intuition. I believe both of these assumptions are mistaken. However, it should be noted that her reading seems to be confirmed by A105: “[W]e say that we cognize the object if we have effected synthetic unity in the manifold of intuition. But this is impossible if the **intuition** could not have been produced [*hervorgebracht*] through a function of synthesis [...]” (boldface mine).

41. “*The unity of apperception in relation to the synthesis of the imagination is the understanding, and this very same unity, in relation to the transcendental synthesis of the imagination, is the pure understanding. In the understanding there are therefore pure a priori cognitions that contain the necessary unity of the pure synthesis of the imagination in regard to all possible appearances. These, however, are the categories, i.e., pure concepts of the understanding; [...]*” (A119).
42. For an account of the ambiguities and potential confusion in Kant’s A-account of reproductive imagination, see Aquila (1989, Chap. 4).
43. Cf. Grüne (2009:233–234). It does not concern the reproduction of previously caused representations.
44. See Onof and Schulting (2015). See also Allais (forthcoming).
45. Grüne (2009) is different here, as she appears to argue that the a priori syntheses are indeed responsible for the very possibility of consciousness of one’s representations, implying that sensations are not yet conscious. But this view is not plausible, given Kant’s endorsement of Leibniz’s Law of Continuity (see Schulting 2015a).
46. A113: “[T]his identity must necessarily enter into the synthesis of all the manifold of appearances *insofar as they are to become empirical cognition*” (emphasis added); A116: “[...] and through this alone is cognition possible”; “[...] that can ever belong to our cognition”.

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