

KANT'S UNCONSCIOUS 'GIVEN'*

Patricia KITCHER²

1 INTRODUCTION

The main doctrines of Kant's epistemological theory are well-known: Cognition requires both intuitions and concepts; it requires both *a priori* and *a posteriori* elements; it is empirically real, yet transcendently ideal. Oddly, however, none of these well-known claims can be fully appreciated without also understanding his view that cognition requires unconscious representations. In the next three sections, I try to clarify the role of unconscious representations in Kant's theory by contrasting his reasons for assuming such representations with those of his predecessors, in particular, with Leibniz's arguments for *petites perceptions* and by filling in the sparse account of unconscious representations in the *Critique of Pure Reason* by drawing on some of his unpublished notes and lectures. This material will show the direct link between his hypothesis of unconscious representations and his doctrines that cognition requires intuitions and *a posteriori* elements, and is empirically real.

In *Mind and World*, John McDowell argues that Kant's transcendental epistemology makes unacceptable use of the 'Given',³ because it has an isolable contribution from sensibility, namely the susceptibility of receptivity.

to the impact of a supersensible reality, a reality that is supposed to be independent of our conceptual activity ... (McDowell, 1994, p. 41).

McDowell's criticism rests on the widespread assumption that, for Kant, cognition must begin with noumenal 'affection.' In section 5, I argue that, despite solid textual evidence for this attribution, Kant's ultimate defense of the necessity of introducing *noumena* is not that empirical cognition must be grounded in noumenal objects affecting a noumenal self. The considerations

raised in sections 2 and 3 lay out the distinctively Kantian reasons for maintaining that human cognition can only begin with the receipt of unconscious representations. In section 6, I show that his theory of an unconscious given opens up a sound middle way between the myth of the Given and the myth that there is no isolable sensory contribution to cognition—but a way that is available only to those who are willing to follow other doctrines of transcendental idealism.

2 WHY ASSUME UNCONSCIOUS REPRESENTATIONS?

In prefatory remarks to the *New Essays on Human Understanding*, Leibniz presented a classic, if not entirely satisfactory, argument for the existence of unconscious perceptions. When a person is aware of the roar of the ocean, he is not conscious of (cannot distinguish) the sounds of the individual waves. Yet he must be aware of the sounds of the individual waves in some sense or he would not hear the combination of these sounds as a roar (Leibniz 1765/1982, 54). Hence

[e]very moment there is in us an infinity of perceptions, unaccompanied by awareness or reflection ... of which we are unaware because these impressions are either too minute and too numerous, or else too unvarying, so that they are not sufficiently distinctive on their own. But when they are combined with others they do nevertheless have their effect and make themselves felt, at least confusedly, within the whole. (Leibniz 1765/1982, 53).

Perhaps, however, each ocean wave does not make a sound, but contributes to a large sound-wave, which is then propagated to the hearer.⁴ Leaving this problem aside, it is natural to read Leibniz's preface as setting the stage for one of main controversies in the ensuing 'dialogue,' Philalethes's and Theophilus's debate over the existence of innate principles.

In the *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Locke had taken up the Cartesian challenge of providing an empirical basis for ideas claimed to be innate. With the ancient debate about nativism rejoined, Leibniz offered a critique of Locke's rejection of innate ideas and principles in the *New Essays*. Leibniz (in the persona of Theophilus) argued that since the principles of logic and mathematics were necessarily true, they could not be established by experience (Leibniz 1765/1982, 50, 86, 80). He countered Locke's preemptive rebuttal (delivered by Philalethes), that principles such as 'everything that is, is' could not be innate, because they were unknown to children (Leibniz 1765/1982, 76), with the hypothesis that the minds of cognizers have many principles of which they were not immediately conscious (Leibniz 1765/1982, 76). Thus, they know the principles, but not explicitly; they cannot articulate them. Again, Locke had considered this move and dismissed it as incoherent:

It seeming to me near a contradiction to say, that there are truths imprinted on the soul, which it perceives or understands not: imprinting, if it signify anything, being nothing else but the making of certain truths to be perceived. For to imprint anything on the mind without the mind's perceiving it, seems to me hardly intelligible. (ECHU 1:1:5).

Leibniz/Theophilus replies that there is another possibility

Why couldn't the soul ... contain things without one's being aware of them? ... Must a self-knowing subject have, straight away, actual knowledge of everything that belongs to its nature? ... [and] [o]n any view of the matter, it is always manifest in every state of the soul that necessary truths are innate, and that they are proved by what lies within, and cannot be established by experience as truths of fact are. (Leibniz 1765/1982, 78-79)

At this point, Philaethes makes the obvious reply on behalf of Locke. Knowledge of any truth must be subsequent to possession of the ideas from which it arises, and all ideas come from experience. Theophilus then notes that the ideas that are contained in necessary truths are intelligible (meaning presumably, that their elements are clear and distinct), whereas any idea that comes in from the senses is confused (Leibniz 1765/1982, 81).

The reply seems somewhat off the mark. The possibility of principles of which the possessor is unaware raises the specter of unconscious ideas, though it does not require it. Explaining that thinkers have clear and distinct intellectual ideas—of which they are conscious—exacerbates, rather than lessens, the problem of innate, but unknown principles. If cognizers have a clear conscious grasp of the ideas 'from which they [the principles] arise' (Leibniz 1765/1982, 81), then why are they not also cognizant of the principles?

Philaethes returns to the issue, observing that the ideas in which innate principles are couched are so general and abstract as to be alien to ordinary minds (Leibniz 1765/1982, 83). Leibniz/Theophilus replies that general principles are nevertheless in all thinking

General principles enter into our thoughts, serving as their inner core and as their mortar. Even if we give no thought to them, they are necessary for thought, as the muscles and tendons are necessary for walking. The mind relies on these principles constantly; but it does not find it so easy to sort them out and to command a distinct view of each of them separately, for that requires a great attention to what it is doing, and the unreflective majority are highly capable of that. (Leibniz 1765/1982, 83-84).

This reply also seems somewhat askew. Philaethes complains that general ideas are 'alien' to the ordinary person, that is, the ordinary person is unfamiliar with them, unaware of them. Theophilus replies that the innate principles are necessary for thinking.

Although Theophilus allows that innate principles are not known by children, he is less concessive about uneducated adults. He thinks that principles such as non-contradiction are known implicitly by laypeople. People constantly use the principle, when, for example, determining that someone is lying. And when presented with the principle, they immediately assent (Leibniz 1765/1982, 76). Leibniz's hypothesis is that just as reasoners use enthymematic premises in spoken and internal argumentation, laypeople make tacit use of the principle of non-contradiction in reaching their judgments (Leibniz 1765/1982, 76). To support the claim that people make constant use of implicit principles, he invokes the standard test of acceptance upon first hearing.

In a sense, Leibniz's argument for innate and so unconscious principles runs parallel to his argument for unconscious perceptions of the sound of each wave: It is possible to make sense of conscious mental states—hearing the roar or judging someone to be a liar—only on

the assumption of that these depend on perceptions or principles that are unconscious. As we have seen, however, the hypothesis that innate principles and their constitutive concepts are unconscious does not fit very well with his view of the relevant concepts. He regards those concepts not as confused, but as intelligible—indeed as far clearer than sensory perceptions. They would not be at all like his parade case of unconscious perceptions: the minute, numerous, and easily confused sounds of individual waves. Hence I think that Leibniz's prefatory example is not intended to pave the way for an acceptance of innate principles. He does not and need not rely on the existence of unconscious perceptions in this case, because he has two knockdown arguments for such principles—the principles are in constant use and, as necessary and universal, they could not be acquired from experience. Further, since they are recognized on first hearing, it is not much of a stretch to see them as known implicitly.

If not the argument about innate principles, then what is the famous discussion of the roar of the ocean intended to presage? Since Leibniz appeals to minute, indistinguishable perceptions in his discussion of the metaphysics of personal identity, that seems a likely candidate. Leibniz/Theophilus introduces Locke's familiar view that personal identity is secured by continuity of consciousness or memory and immediately endorses it:

I am also of the opinion that consciousness or perception of the ego proves a moral or personal identity. (Leibniz 1765/1982, 236).

Leibniz's support for the memory criterion is unsurprising, since he had advocated it himself in the *Discourse on Metaphysics*, published four years before Locke's *Essay* (*Discourse* §34, Loemker, 1969, 325).

But the agreement on the importance of memory to moral identity masks a deep metaphysical disagreement between Locke and Leibniz. For Leibniz, the moral identity must rest on real substantial identity:

[he] should have thought that, according to the order of things, an identity which is apparent to the person concerned—one who senses himself to be the same—presupposes a real identity obtaining through each immediate [temporal] transition accompanied by reflection, or by the sense of *I*. (Leibniz 1765/1982, 236).

The transitions in question are from one conscious perception to another. Leibniz holds our consciousness of such transitions to be indubitable. Such consciousness cannot, in the natural order of things (i.e. without Divine intervention), be mistaken (Leibniz 1765/1982, 236). In a slightly later, discussion, however, he suggests that the real bond across the states of an individual rests on unconscious perceptions. In considering whether a spirit could lose all perceptions of past existence, Theophilus demurs:

[A] spirit retains impressions of everything which has previously happened to it ... but these states of mind are mostly too minute to be distinguishable and for one to be aware of them ... It is this continuity and interconnection of perceptions which make someone really the same individual. (Leibniz 1765/1982, 239).

That is, self-identity is carried by the train of 'petites perceptions.'

This doctrine is clear in the *Monadology* as well as in the *New Essays*. After explaining, in effect, how Monads could be substances—because they perdure through change understood as changes in their perceptions—he preemptively rebuts the obvious criticism that rocks, and so forth, do not have perceptions:

Monadology § 20. For we experience in ourselves a condition in which we remember nothing and have no distinguishable perception; as when we fall into a swoon or when we are overcome with a profound dreamless sleep. In this state the soul does not perceptibly differ from a bare Monad; but as this state is not lasting, and the soul comes out of it, the soul is something more than a bare Monad.

Monadology §21. And it does not follow that in this state the simple substance is without any perception. That, indeed, cannot be, for the reasons already given; for it cannot perish, and it cannot continue to exist without being affected in some way, and this affection is nothing but its perception ...

Monadology §22. And as every present state of a simple substance is naturally a consequence of its preceding state, in such a way that its present is big with its future.

Monadology §23. And as, on waking from stupor, we are conscious of our perceptions, we must have had perceptions immediately before we awoke, although we were not at all conscious of them; for one perception can in a natural way come only from another perception, as a motion can in a natural way come only from a motion. (Loemker, 1969, p. 645).

What is interesting about the reasoning of the *Monadology* is that it is exclusively metaphysical. Leibniz does not press the necessity of assuming *petites perceptions* in order to explain conscious cognitions, but in order to avoid gappy substances. If all perceptions had to be conscious, then his Monads would be liable to the same objection as Descartes' souls whose fundamental attribute was (conscious) thought: They would be annihilated by bouts of unconsciousness, including dreamless sleep. Leibniz turns this objection on its head and claims that waking from a stupor establishes the existence of unconscious perceptions in souls—on the further metaphysical assumption that perceptions can arise only from other perceptions. But if unconscious perceptions must be assumed in this case, they must be possible and so could also exist in soulless Monads.

Kant was aware of Leibniz's claims in the *Monadology*, since he criticized one of them⁵ in one of his earliest writings, the *Nova Dilucidatio* of 1755. That Leibniz's theory of self-identity rested on the assumption of *petites perceptions* also seems to have been generally accepted at the time. Johan Nicolaus Tetens catalogued and synthesized many then contemporary psychological and philosophical theories in his *Philosophische Versuche über die menschliche Natur und ihre Entwicklung* of 1777. Tetens attributes this view to Leibniz without explanation or argument:

The foundation and basis of the soul consists, as Leibniz said, in unperceived representations. (1777/1979, vol. I: 265).

Since Kant's reading of Tetens's *Versuche*⁶ has been well-documented, he would have been aware of the metaphysical character of Leibniz's support for *petites perceptions* both first-hand and as a matter of common knowledge.

Although Leibniz's striking hypothesis of a teeming unconscious was bound up with Monad metaphysics, other contributors to the debate offered epistemological arguments. For example, in 'An Essay On the Origin of Knowledge,' the French Sensationist, Etienne Bonnot de Condillac (1746/1987, 445) considered several phenomena that illustrated the problem of insensible or unreportable perceptions. In reading, the subject is aware of the sense, but not of the shapes of the letters. Condillac maintained that subjects must have been conscious of these shapes, because their conduct, reading, proved that they were. On his view, consciousness could sometimes be so superficial that it left no memory trace. Some of Kant's remarks indicate that he was aware of a position very like Condillac's. In "negative Magnitudes" (1763), he exclaimed:

But also what admirable bustle is concealed in the depths of our minds, which we fail to notice as it is exercised ... and that because the actions are very many and because each is represented only very obscurely. The good proofs of this are known to all; among these one only needs to consider the actions which take place unnoticed within us when we **read**.⁷ (AA 02: 191).⁸

Condillac's countryman, the naturalist Charles Bonnet, argued for a different view in the *Essai de Psychologie* (1755/1978). Bonnet starts with scientific assumption that the mind or brain is barraged by sensory information. It is an assumption also made by Hume when he noted that all we need to do is turn our heads to be confronted with an 'inconceivably rapid' succession of perceptions (1739/1978, 252-53). Since the brain can only be in one state at a time, Bonnet thought it more reasonable to assume that, when many stimuli come at once, the result is an impression that is a composite in which the different stimuli are weighted according to their intensity. That is, it is not that each perception is conscious for a flash, but then unrecalable. Rather, under these circumstances, the brain cannot represent the perceptions as distinct from one another (1755/1978, 113).

Christian Wolff, who is often taken to be a follower or even a systematizer of Leibniz's philosophy, tacitly invoked unconscious perceptions in a somewhat different epistemological debate. He began *Vernünfftige Gedanken von Gott, Der Welt und der Seele des Menschen, auch allen Dingen Überhaupt* (1751/1983), the so-called 'German Metaphysics', with an apparent endorsement of Descartes' claim for the epistemological priority of the *cogito*:

No one can doubt that he is conscious of himself and other things; For, how can he deny to me or bring into doubt if he is not conscious of himself or other things? ... Whoever is conscious of the one, which he denies or brings into doubt, is the same as that one (1751/1983, 1).

In fact, he is criticizing Descartes' priority claim, as a later passage makes clear:

This difference [between ourselves and other things] appears directly as we are conscious of other things. For should we be conscious of that which we cognize through the senses, we must recognize the difference between that thing and others ... This differentiation is an effect of the soul, and we

cognize therefore through it the difference between the soul and the things that are represented (1751/1983, 455-56).

That is, cognitive subjects can be conscious of themselves as such only through differentiating objects of consciousness. On Leibniz's view, not all perceptions were conscious or apperceived. Apperceiving takes some effort, perhaps like the effort of attending. In that case, however, self-consciousness could not precede consciousness of some object of consciousness, because the self as differentiator, must itself be differentiated from the things it differentiates.

Besides this indirect argument for unconscious perceptions, perceptions which must be present to be differentiated, thus allowing object and self consciousness, Wolff also provides a telling example in support of assuming them. A person might see something white in a far-off field without knowing what he is seeing, because he cannot separate one part from another [even though he must see the parts to see the white patch]. Under these circumstances the thought is said to be 'obscure' [*dunke!*] (1751/1983, §199, 111).

Kant offers a very similar example when introducing unconscious representations in *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Standpoint*:

If I am conscious of seeing a man in a far away meadow, though I am not likewise conscious of seeing his eyes, nose, mouth, etc., then actually I only conclude that this thing is a man; for if I wanted to say that, because I am not conscious of seeing these parts of the head (and also the other parts of the man), I do not at all have representations of these parts in my intuition, then I would also not be able to say that I see a man; for the whole representations is composed from these part representations. (AA 07: 135).

Although the passage is somewhat difficult to follow, the point seems to be that even though the observer cannot distinguish the parts of the head, he must still be intuiting those parts; otherwise he would not be seeing the man, but merely inferring his presence. On the other hand, the knowledge that he is intuiting these parts is not immediate, but inferential.

Taking stock, as Kant came to write the *Critique*, the reasons for assuming unconscious representations were many and varied. The scientific evidence pointed to a constantly changing stream of representations on the retina. Particular examples demonstrated the need to assume unconscious representations as the foundation of conscious cognitions acknowledged by all. Metaphysical considerations led Leibniz to hypothesize a myriad of unconscious perceptions as the basis of the continuity of Monads. Given the scientific, epistemological, and metaphysical support for unconscious ideas at this time, it is astonishing—or worse—that Freud claimed to have discovered them nearly two hundred years later.

3 KANT'S APPEAL TO UNCONSCIOUS REPRESENTATIONS

Although Kant's Anthropology lectures always assumed the existence of unconscious representations, his attitude towards them changed dramatically. In his early lectures (perhaps from 1772)⁹, he is reported as suggesting that the teeming world of the unconscious presented

a large field of obscure perceptions that it was up to the philosopher to clarify (AA 25: 22). The published *Anthropology* of 1798 still holds that we must conclude that there are a vast number of unconscious representations. He characterizes the immeasurable field of obscure sensory intuitions and sensations as a huge map in which just a few places are illuminated by consciousness (AA 07:135). Nonetheless, he now maintains that the study of unconscious perceptions does not belong even to pragmatic anthropology (let alone to philosophy). Since the obscure representations are sensory, the topic belongs to physiological anthropology (AA 07: 136).

Since the notes from the early lecture course are cryptic, it is not clear why Kant thought that unconscious representations would be such a fertile field for philosophy to study. Perhaps he had hoped that examining them might reveal how the mind dealt with sensory information. He took the study of logic to be important, because it made explicit the implicit principles by which people thought (see 16.18,19,31-32, 24.791). So he may have believed that studying unconscious perceptions would enable philosophers to determine the principles by which the mind organized conscious percepts. In the *Critique*, however, he clearly realized that it was not possible to study the mind's way of taking unconscious sensations and turning them into conscious perceptions. Both the data and operation of synthesizing them were closed from view (A78/B103). To determine the mind's contributions to sensory representations, a different method was required—what he called the method of 'isolation': first separate everything from a representation that is conceptual and then separate everything that belongs to sensation (i.e. everything that can be understood as being received through the sensory apparatus we have). The well-known results of applying the method were that representations of space and time did not enter cognition through the senses, but were 'forms of intuition' (A23/B38, A30/B46).

At this point, we can see a clear and distinctively Kantian reason for accepting unconscious representations. No one doubted that it seems to humans that they are aware of a succession of mental states. In the *Inaugural Dissertation*, Kant had objected to Leibniz's view that the representation of succession is abstracted from experience:

They [one sort of realist about time] conceive of it as something real that has been abstracted from the succession of internal states—the view maintained by Leibniz and his followers. Now the falsity of [this] ... opinion clearly betrays itself by the vicious circle in the commonly accepted definition of time (AA 02: 400-401).

Two pages earlier, he had laid out the definitional problem:

it is only through the idea of time that it is possible for the things which come before the senses to be represented as simultaneous or successive. Nor does succession generate the concept of time; it makes appeal to it. And thus the concept of time, regarded as if it had been acquired through experience, is very badly defined, if it is defined in terms of the series of actual things which exist one **after** the other. For I only understand the meaning of the little word **after** by means of the antecedent concept of time (AA 02: 399).

Although the criticism is directed at Leibniz, it applies equally well to Locke's account of the acquisition of the idea of succession:

Tis evident to any one who will but observe what passes in his own mind, that there is a train of *Ideas*, which constantly succeed one another in his Understanding . . . *Reflection* on these appearances of several *Ideas* one after another in our Minds, is that which furnishes us with the *Idea* of *Succession*. (ECHU 2.14.3, 182, my underscoring).

I will not try to evaluate the justice of this objection to Leibniz (or to Locke). My interest is in what the resulting view implies about the role of unconscious representations in Kant's epistemology.

Similarly, no one doubted that humans perceived objects to be represented in space. That was the common assumption of the Newton-Leibniz debate. But, again, Kant will argue that the intuitive representations of objects in space do not supply but presuppose the 'form' of space. When these doctrines are considered in relation to his claims about intuitions, the implications for unconscious representations are evident:

In whatever way and by whatever means a cognition may refer to an object, still **intuition** is that by which a cognition refers to objects directly, and at which all thought aims as a means. Intuition, however, takes place only insofar as the object is given to us; but that, in turn, is possible only—for us human beings at any rate—by the mind's being affected in a certain manner. The capacity (a receptivity) to acquire representation as a result of the way we are affected by objects is called **sensibility** (A19/B33).

This observation is interesting, in part, for its seamless blending of normative and psychological considerations. Cognition *must* refer to an object [and that is *possible* only insofar as there is a necessary relation between the cognition and the object (A92/B124)]. Given the psychological limitations of the human mind, this *necessary* relation can be secured only when the mind is affected by the object. But since space and time cannot be received by human sensibility, the representations it receives cannot be conscious representations, since human intuitions are either of 'outer' objects in space or of 'inner' mental states in time (A22/B37). More simply, true cognition requires sensory inputs; the senses cannot take in the spatial and temporal information required to form conscious perceptions; therefore the representations received from sensory stimulation by objects (A1/B1) that are necessary for cognition must be unconscious. Hence Kant's well-known *Stufenleiter* of representations has a clear place for unconscious representations (A320/B376).

Given that his theory clearly implies that unconscious representations are necessary for cognition, it might seem strange that Kant did not highlight them. There are two complementary explanations for this apparent neglect. The first, which we have already seen in part, is that the Leibnizian tradition already accepted them. Both Leibniz and Wolff offered robust defenses of them, and Kant's discussion in the *Anthropology* suggests that the issue was already settled (AA 07: 135). On the Lockean side, Tetens also assumed the existence of unconscious perceptions. What Tetens thought had to be explained was how a unified and seemingly simple perception emerged from unconscious representations:

This impression [*Empfindung*] may consist in a multitude, and a multitude of uncountable small feelings that follow each other. And each may contain many simpler simultaneous ones in it, it is,

for me, a **unitary feeling**, and one and the same **act of consciousness** through which I join these small feelings in a total feeling, distinguishes it as **one** impression. I observe no multiplicity in this act, and no series [*Folge*] and no parts ... (1777/1979, 1.389).

With then contemporary Lockean on board with unconscious perceptions, there would be no pressing need to defend them. Indeed, as De Vleeschauwer first observed, Kant appears to draw on Tetens's discussion of perception in offering his account of the first synthesis (of apprehension) in the A edition (1962, pp. 85-90).

The second, and complementary, explanation is that, as we have just seen, Kant does allude to unconscious representations in the *Critique*. Given the wide acceptance of such representations, he does so, however, with little fanfare. To a knowledgeable reader, his discussion of the synthesis of apprehension would carry a clear implication of unconscious representations:

In order for this manifold to become unity of intuition (as, e.g., in the representation of space), it must first be gone through and gathered together. This act I call the **synthesis of apprehension**. (A 99).

What can the pre-synthesized, non-spatial representations be but unconscious? Perhaps because he had moved away from Tetens's views, Kant was more explicit about the role of unconscious representations in the B edition transcendental deduction:

First of all, let me point out that by **synthesis of apprehension** I mean that combination of the manifold in an empirical intuition whereby perception, i.e., empirical consciousness of the intuition (as appearance) becomes possible. (B160).

Again, if conscious perception requires a synthesis, then the representations that are available to be synthesized can only be unconscious.

As we see in the next section, it is not easy to figure out exactly how Kant thinks unconscious representations can provide a basis for synthesizing conscious representations. My point here is that his belief that they must is an integral and unwavering part of his empirical realist epistemology. When first introducing his hypothesis of the forms of intuitions in the *Inaugural Dissertation*, he explains that

just as the sensation which constitutes the **matter** of sensory representation is evidence for the presence of something sensible ... so to the **form** of the same representation is undoubtedly evidence of a certain respect of relation in what is sensed. (AA 02: 393).

Thus, Kant's theory of forms does not commit him to the implausible view that the sensations a cognizer receives are irrelevant to whether he perceives something to be square or triangular; spatial representations reflect something in the sensory data.

In the *Inaugural Dissertation*, Kant distinguished a world of sense from a world of intellect, so that, whatever it was about sensations that was supposed to be reflected in the spatial or temporal properties of representations, it could not be something tied to conceptual representation. This doctrine is changed completely in the *Critique*. As noted, one of its central themes is that cognition requires both intuitions and concepts. Further, he had come to believe that the synthesis that was necessary to form conscious perceptions (the *synthesis speciosa* in the B edition) was carried out by the imagination under the guidance of the understanding (B151, B160).¹⁰ In that case, if he still held that the spatial or temporal properties of a perception reflect something in the sensations, then that something would be reflected in the perception through originally being reflected in the way the sensations were conceptualized.

Were there no reflection of sensory elements—if categories and forms were applied irrespective of the given sensory materials—then Kant's epistemological theory would be liable to the charge he raises against Rationalist metaphysics. This field is rife with errors precisely because its proponents forego the touchstone of experience. So, for example, rather than seeing the idea of a simple soul as a regulative idea of reason (the Psychological Ideal), they take the idea to amount to knowledge:

[It is] indeed very easy for reason, but it also entirely ruins and destroys all natural use of reason according to the guidance of experiences. [It leads the 'dogmatic spiritualist' to bypass] ... for the sake of his convenience, but with the forfeiture of all insight—the sources of cognition that are immanent in experience (A 690/B 718).

And, for reasons we have seen, the 'guidance' provided by experience can only be the guidance provided by unconscious representations. Since this guidance is a pervasive and systematically necessary feature of Kant's view, it is reasonable to believe that he had some notion of how it might be possible.

4 SEARCHING FOR SUBSTANCES AND CAUSES

At the dénouement of the transcendental deduction in the A edition, Kant lays out the central claim of transcendental idealism:

Hence the order and regularity in the appearances that we call **nature** are brought into them by ourselves; nor indeed could such order and regularity be found in appearances, had not we, or the nature of our mind put them into appearances originally. (A125).

Since that order and regularity cannot be independent of sensory evidence—or the guidance of experience would be forfeited—his account of how the understanding puts order into experience would be a promising place to look for his understanding of the relation between unconscious sensory or *a posteriori* elements and the *a priori* forms of cognition.

I quote his subsequent discussion of the issue at some length:

The understanding is always busy scrutinizing [*durchzuspähen*] appearances with the aim of uncovering some rule in them. Rules, insofar as they are objective (and hence attach to cognition of an object necessarily) are called laws. Many laws are indeed learned by us through experience. Yet these laws are only particular determinations of still higher laws. And the highest among these (those under which all others fall) issue *a priori* from the understanding itself. These laws are not taken from experience; rather, they must provide appearances with the latter's law-governedness, and precisely thereby must make experience possible. Hence understanding is not merely a power of making rules for oneself by comparing appearances; understanding is itself legislative for nature. I.e., without understanding there would not be any nature at all, i.e. any synthetic unity in the manifold of appearances according to rules; for appearances, as such, cannot occur outside us, but exist only in our sensibility. (A126-27).

This passage may seem merely to repeat the claim that the regularities found in nature are put there by the understanding rather than to explain it. One thesis is clear: Particular empirical laws that are discovered through comparing observations can be found in the appearances of the senses only because they are species of higher level laws that were put there perhaps by the understanding.

Much later in the text, in the discussion of the Regulative Use of the Ideas of Reason (in the Appendix to the Dialectic), Kant suggests that the understanding succeeds in forming concepts and finding laws, because reason has prepared the realm in which the understanding is to operate:

Hence reason prepares the understanding's realm by these means: (1) by a principle of the **homogeneity** of the manifold under high genera; (2) by a principle of the **variety** of the homogeneous under lower species—and in order to compete the systematic unity, reason adds (3) also a law of the **affinity** of all concepts... (A657/B685).

My concern is not with the details of Kant's claims about the regulative ideas of reason, but with the general picture he presents.

According to the A deduction passage, the understanding operates by scrutinizing appearances to find a rule in them. An obvious way to illustrate this process is through a search for causal laws. The understanding would run through the representations provided to it by the senses to see if any can be understood as instances of causation, as an instance of an object altering from being in state A to being in state B in the presence of some other object C.¹¹ However many instances of A-type properties being succeeded by B-type properties in the presence of objects of type C, it is impossible to conclude that the succession from A to B in the presence of C is necessary. The law that Cs cause objects to alter from state A to state B could never be extracted from sensory data. Yet some sensory data can be interpreted as instances of it.¹² The understanding looks for possible instances of causal rules and when it finds candidates, when A-type properties are always followed by B-type properties in the presence of C, it pronounces the relation to be one of cause and effect.

But how is the understanding guaranteed to succeed? Why must there be rules to be found? It is not enough that the understanding is urged by reason to look for the homogeneous,

although this might be a necessary condition for discovering laws. In a way, success cannot be guaranteed. If there is nothing homogeneous to be found in the data of sense, then the search for laws is hopeless. Even assuming some homogeneity, however, the search for laws of nature will still be doomed unless the understanding not only seeks the homogeneous, but excludes or ignores, the totally irregular. The only way that the understanding's scrutiny in search of empirical causal laws could be guaranteed to succeed is if the appearances had gone through an earlier scrutiny that culled all and only representations that exhibited the regularity necessary to make them possible instances of causal laws. In effect, this earlier scrutiny would be governed by the principle that all alterations that count as such are caused. Under these circumstances, the search for natural laws can succeed and the laws discovered empirically will be species of the higher level law that the only appearances of alterations or events that count as real are those that fall under causal laws—because that law has been put into appearances.

Kant does not present what I have described as an 'earlier' scrutiny in the *Critique*, except perhaps obliquely in the claim that the understanding is constantly scrutinizing. He does so, however, in a Reflection from around 1772-73 that Wolfgang Carl (1989) regards as the first draft of the transcendental deduction. The main point of the Reflection is to draw a contrast between (merely) logical actions or functions and 'real' functions:

The real function consists in the way in which we posit a representation in and for itself; thus it is an action (*a priori*) which corresponds to every *dato* (*a posteriori*) and by means of which the latter becomes a concept ... From these arise all cognition: namely how we can grasp *data* and form something for ourselves that is called cognition. In nature no *data* can come before us unless, when one perceives the laws therein, they correspond to the universal kinds according to which we posit something, because otherwise no laws would be observed, or any object whatsoever, but only confused internal alterations. Therefore, since we can represent objects only by means of our alterations, insofar as they have in themselves something in conformity with our rules for positing and negating, the real functions are the ground of the possibility of the representation of things, and the logical functions are the ground of the possibility of judgments, and consequently of cognitions (R4631, 17.615, see also R1608, 16.34–35).

Kant's view is that *a posteriori* or sensory materials may arrive in the mind, but they can come before the mind as sensory data (perceptual appearances) for human cognizers only if there is something in them that accords with the principles associated with universal kinds (i.e. categories). Only in this way is cognition possible, because the realm in which understanding is to produce cognition is prepared for it.

It is tempting to object that I am misreading a straightforward normative claim as an endorsement of a suspect psychological process. Perhaps Kant's point in the dénouement of the A deduction, the ensuing discussion, and even the Reflection is just that humans use the essential cognitive norm that putative alterations and events that cannot be given causal explanations must be rejected as phantasms. He would certainly endorse this claim. What he is trying to argue in the transcendental deduction and principles chapter, however, is that

the categories of the understanding apply not only to all judgments about objects, but also to everything that is presented in intuition:

The categories of understanding ... do not at all represent to us the conditions under which objects are given in intuition. Therefore, objects can indeed appear to us without having to refer necessarily to functions of understanding, and hence without the understanding's containing *a priori* the conditions of these objects. Thus we find a difficulty that we did not encounter in the realm of sensibility: viz: how **subjective conditions of thought** could have **objective validity**, i.e., how they could yield conditions for the possibility of all cognition of objects. (A89-/B122).

That is, the aim of the transcendental deduction is to show that whatever is represented in (conscious) perceptions must fall under the categorial concepts.¹³ He makes the same point in summarizing the B deduction in section 26:

We must now explain how it is possible, through **categories**, to cognize *a priori* whatever objects **our senses may encounter**—to so cognize them as regards not the form of their intuition, but the laws of their combination—and hence as it were, to prescribe laws to nature, and even to make nature possible. (B159-60).

Given this more ambitious goal, his claim cannot be just that falling under a causal law is a normative principle governing what is to count as an event. It must be that the higher faculties somehow use this principle in working up

the raw material of sense impressions into a cognition of objects that is called experience. (B1).

Otherwise, there would be no guarantee that everything the senses may encounter must fall under the categories. This processing of sensory impressions is not further discussed in the *Critique*, except perhaps in the 'scrutiny' passage, but it seems to be the topic of the Reflection cited above.

Unfortunately, none of this material sheds any light on how the processing of raw materials could operate so that it both depends on the character of the sensations and regiments them under categories. The problem becomes more difficult when we realize that what I have called the 'earlier' scrutiny cannot work in the way that I have presented the understanding as scrutinizing for particular laws of nature. The understanding could not fasten on cases of regular succession in the sensory data, because the senses do not register succession. It is this aspect of Kant's view that stands behind the frequent complaint that his account of the necessity of using the causal concept in the Second Analogy is circular (e.g. Cheng, 1997, p. 368). He argues that humans can determine the succession of their mental states only by tying them to objective succession or events, and so to causation (A193/B238), but he knows that the standard view is that causal laws can be discovered only by observing the constant succession of different states of affairs (A195/B240).

Although Kant does not say what it is about sensations that the scrutiny of the understanding can latch onto, we have a description of the feature: It must be something that is

a reliable indicator of the presence of succession and/or causal relations. Further, he would have been aware of the obvious candidate.¹⁴ Motion, or real motion, was widely understood as a sign of causation; further, common motion was widely understood as an indicator of a single object. What is different now is that we have some understanding of how the brain detects motions.¹⁵ The nervous system is set up so that some higher level visual cells fire only if the lower level cells to which they are connected fire in a particular order, e.g., n_1, n_2, n_3 , whereas others fire only when the lower level cells fire in the opposite order. In effect, these assemblies allow the nervous system to register a point of light, say, moving from left to right or from right to left in the visual field; hence they also allow it to derive right position *after* left position or vice versa. Although the nervous system makes use of temporal relations - it is set up to take advantage of the time lag in which it receives different information - it does not detect time, but motion.

A motion detector singles out sensory data that could be involved in three interconnected types of claims: a light *moves* from A to B, the light was at B *after* it was at A, the *succession* of the state of being at A to the state of being at B is *necessary* or rule-governed. It is thus an ideal candidate for the means by which the understanding scrutinizes sensations in order to find materials that are likely to stand in lawful relations. Those alterations that were unrelated to motion (or to the surrogates of other categorial principles) would fail to be posited as representations of objects or events. Still, the mechanism, as I have described it, does not do justice to Kant's claims that the understanding scrutinizes for rules or that it is guided by reason to look for homogeneity. So the process needs to be more complex. To be presented to the mind as sensory *data*, materials must not only be singled out by a motion detector, but those singled out must be surveyed to see if they contain successions of similar representations and only those which do will be retained as representations of real events. This additional processing would presumably require some further mechanisms which register when sensations are qualitatively similar. With this more complex preceding scrutiny, the understanding can succeed in scrutinizing appearances for the (particular) laws in them.

My claim is not that Kant had a fully worked out theory of how the mind scrutinizes unconscious impressions in order to introduce order into its conscious perceptions. As we have seen, and as he seemed to understand, any such theory would need to invoke physiological mechanisms that he was in no position to discover. Further, I have considered only one category, causation, and I have given no reason to think that Kant was right that similarity was essential to working up sensory impressions into suitable materials for causal cognition. Perhaps humans do not fasten on causal relationships by looking for constant conjunctions, but by seeking a causal mechanism (Ahn and Bailenson, 1996). My concern has only been to show that the scrutiny process that he sketched (in Reflections and briefly in the *Critique*) could be developed in a way that it honored his goals: the order and regularity in the appearances that humans call nature is made possible through the activities of the 'higher' faculties, yet it is still guided by—because dependent on—the receipt of sensations and their particular qualities. It is still grounded in unconscious representations.

5 THE UNCONSCIOUS AND THE NOUMENAL

As I understand it, the beginning of the cognitive process that Kant describes in the familiar opening statements of the Introduction involves unconscious representations:

There can be no doubt that all our cognition begins with experience. For what else might rouse our cognitive power to its operation if objects stirring our senses did not do so? In part these objects by themselves bring about representations. In part they set in motion our understanding's activity, by which it compares these representations, connects or separates them, and thus processes the raw material of sense impressions into a cognition of objects that is called experience (B1, my underscoring).

For reasons we have seen, the representations brought about by objects can only be unconscious. A venerable critical tradition takes a very different view of Kant's account of how cognition must originate. It does not begin with unconscious representations caused by (phenomenal) objects, but with real or noumenal objects affecting a noumenal self and thereby making possible the creation by that self of a phenomenal world of appearances.

McDowell's rejection of Kant's 'transcendental story' of epistemology (McDowell, 1994, p. 41) is rooted in the long-standing view that he must—but cannot legitimately—appeal to *noumena* to explain cognition of appearances. And since *noumena* are, by definition, outside the realm of human concepts, the dependence of Kantian epistemology on *noumena* means that it relies on the myth of the Given. Many careful scholars have agreed that Kant's theory commits him to an incoherent notion of noumenal affection,¹⁶ so the interpretation must rest on fairly substantial evidence. We don't have to look far to find the evidence, since Kant provides it himself in justifying the introduction of the concept of '*noumenon*' in the A edition¹⁷:

But as for the cause why one, being not yet satisfied by the substratum of sensibility has added to the phenomena also *noumena* that only the understanding can think, it rests exclusively [*lediglich*] on the following. Sensibility—and its realm, *viz.*, that of appearances—is itself limited by the understanding so that it deals not with things in themselves but only with the way in which, by virtue of our subjective character, things appear to us. This was the result of the entire Transcendental Aesthetic; and from the concept of appearance as such, too, it follows naturally that to appearance there must correspond something that is not in itself appearance. For appearance cannot be anything by itself and apart from our way of representing; hence if we are not to go in a constant circle, then the word appearance already indicates a reference to something the direct representation of which is indeed sensible, but which in itself—even without this character of our sensibility (on which the form of our intuition is based)—must be something, i.e., an object independent of sensibility.

Now from this consideration arises the concept of a *noumenon*. But this concept is not a determinate cognition of some thing, but signifies only the thinking of something as such—something in which I abstract from all form of sensible intuition. (A251-52, my underscoring).

That is, it is necessary to find some correlate of sensory appearance—the thing whose representation is sensible. Kant believes that it follows from transcendental idealism that the thing in question cannot be characterized in terms of the forms of intuition, because those elements of cognition are not received from objects, but added through the processing of what

is received. Since the object must then be understood in abstraction from such forms, it can only be thought in this abstract manner and not sensed, and thus should be understood as a creature of the mind or as a *noumenon*. Notice, however, that this claim seems inconsistent with the claim on which it rests—namely that the direct representation of this thing is sensible.

There is also a serious, but understandable, flaw in Kant's reasoning. By his theory, a green thing, such as a tree, does not produce a spatial representation in a subject when it strikes her senses; it conveys only greenness and other sensory qualities. Now assume the standard account that objects produce sensations of green in humans because some feature of their surface structures reflects green light that is received by the cone cells of the retina. Even if he is right that the immediate effect of objects on the senses conveys no spatial information, it hardly follows that spatial predicates cannot be used to describe what it is in objects that enables them to produce sensations of green. Alternatively, whatever information is conveyed to cognitive subjects through objects stirring their senses, cognitive theorists are not restricted to that information in describing how objects stir the senses.

Kant's error is understandable, because the empirical psychology of his day was limited to introspection. In a passage in the Amphiboly of Concepts of Reflection, he returns to the difficulty of determining the causes of sensations and pins the problem on the inadequacies of inner sense:

[W]e have not been given [the ability] to observe even our own mind for it in lies the secret origin [*Ursprung*] of our sensibility—by means of an intuition other than that of our inner sense. Sensibility's reference to an object, and what may be the transcendental basis of this objective unity, this doubtless lies too deeply hidden so that we, who are acquainted even with our own selves only through inner sense and hence as appearance, might with so unfitting an instrument of our investigation discover anything other than what are always in turn appearances—whereas it was the nonsensible cause [*Ursache*] of those appearances that we hoped to explore (A278/B334, my underscoring).

The immediately preceding discussion highlights the problem of description, noting that humans could not understand an account of the cause of appearances even if it were offered, because they cannot understand anything that does not supply an intuition to give the words meaning (A287/B334). As noted, this problem can be overcome by contemporary science. In the text just cited, the problem is one of access. The states to which inner sense has access are inner appearances or conscious perceptions. With no access to what is immediately received by the senses, there is no opportunity to investigate the reception of information by the senses in order to determine how appearances are constructed on that basis. This limitation is consistent with his crucial appeal to the method of isolation: The method works by determining properties that cannot be received by the senses; it cannot reveal how the senses receive the information they do or how that information is used by the mind's active faculties to form appearances.

The passage from the chapter on phenomena and *noumena* was omitted from the second edition. Still, it was present in the first edition for all to see, and it seems to give Kant's *imprimatur* to the interpretive thesis that transcendental idealism is committed to noumenal affection. Fortunately he also returns to the issue of the reception of sensory data in section

6 of the Antinomy of Pure Reason. The focus of the passage is another key concept, that of a ‘transcendental object’:

Our power of sensible intuition is, in fact, only a receptivity, i.e., a capacity to be affected in a certain way with representations. The relation of these representations to one another is a pure intuition of space and time (which are nothing but forms of our sensibility); and insofar as these representations are connected and determinable in this relation according to laws of the unity of experience, they are called **objects**. With the nonsensible cause [*Ursache*] of these representations we are entirely unacquainted, and hence we cannot intuit it as object. (1) For such an object would have to be represented neither in space nor in time (which are merely conditions of sensible representation), and without these conditions we cannot think of any intuition at all. We may, however, call the merely intelligible cause of appearances as such the transcendental object, just so that we have something that corresponds to sensibility, which is a receptivity. (2) To this transcendental object we may attribute the whole range and coherence of our possible perceptions, and about it we may say that it is given in itself prior to all experience. But appearances are given, in conformity with the transcendental object, not in themselves but only in this experience. For they are mere representations, which signify an actual object only as perceptions; they do so, *viz.*, if such a perception coheres with all others according to the rules of the unity of experience (A494-95/B522-23, my numbering).

The point of the passage I label (1) is to explain the difficulty in characterizing the correlate of sensory appearances, or that which corresponds to sensible representations. Kant maintains that given the theory of transcendental idealism, it cannot be described in terms of time or space. The issue here is thus exactly the same as that in the passage from the A edition Phenomenal/Noumenal chapter: There must be correlate of a sensible appearance, yet that correlate could not be represented sensibly [even though it is directly sensed].

So how is that which gives what the senses receive to be characterized? Kant solves the problem in this passage by introducing an abstract description, ‘transcendental object.’ Since he describes the transcendental object as ‘nonsensible’ in segment (1), it is somewhat shocking that he then claims in the segment I indicate as (2) that humans attribute to it the whole range and coherence of their possible perceptions. This abrupt change has led Henry Allison to claim that the passage presents two very different roles for ‘transcendental object’ in Kant’s theory (1983, 251-52).¹⁸ One difficulty with Allison’s hypothesis is that Kant’s discussion flows seamlessly from the occurrence of this expression in (1) to its occurrence in (2). The second usage is explicitly tied back to the first by the anaphoric description, ‘to this transcendental object.’ I offer a simpler hypothesis.

What Kant means by ‘transcendental object’ in the Antinomy passage is basically what he meant by the ‘transcendental object=X’ at A105, namely, a formal description of an object of empirical cognition. Since, roughly,¹⁹ any object of empirical cognition must (a) cause sensory representations in subjects and (b) have properties that could all belong to one object both characteristics are part of the description. With the notion of a ‘transcendental object,’ he is able to solve what he takes to be the difficulty of characterizing the correlate of sensation without using forms of intuition—and without sacrificing his empirical realist principles. Even if humans cannot have an intuition of the correlate of sensation, they can still think abstractly about aspects of empirical objects as the causes of sensations. As indicated in condition (b)

above, at the end of the cognitive process, subjects attribute a range of sensory and other properties to empirical objects. The ordinary person has no qualms about characterizing the causes of sensations as objects with various properties. By contrast, the scientifically informed epistemologist who knows the limits of the senses believes (falsely, it turns out) that he must be circumspect in characterizing the correlate of sensibility, and so falls back on an abstract description, 'transcendental object.' In introducing the concept of the 'transcendental object' he thus saves the phenomena as causes of sensations. What he does not do in the passage is appeal to noumenal causes.²⁰

As we have seen, however, in the first edition, Kant employed the concept of a '*noumenon*' to characterize that 'which corresponds to appearance.' Since a '*noumenon*' is a creature of the mind—i.e. something thought of as independent of sensibility, there is something very odd about this terminology. He acknowledges as much, with the admission that the representation of this correlate, is 'indeed sensible' (A252, cited above). The discussion takes an even stranger turn after the introduction of the concept '*noumenon*.' He points out that it is entirely negative—meaning that it with it we think of something as such — something in which [we] abstract from all form of sensible intuition. (A252, also cited above)

He goes on to discuss the notion of a 'transcendental object':

[this is] the wholly indeterminate concept of something as such. This object cannot be called the *noumenon*. For I do not know concerning it what it is in itself, and have no concept of it except merely the concept of the object of a sensible intuition as such—an object which, therefore, is the same for all appearances. I cannot think it through any categories: for a category holds only for empirical intuition in order to bring it under the concept of an object as such. (A253, my underscoring).

Given the Antinomy passage, which is common to both editions, and the Amphiboly passage, which also labels that which is the basis of appearances a 'transcendental object'²¹ and which is also common to both editions, he is being inconsistent. Both the '*noumenon*' and the 'transcendental object' correspond to appearances, but they are not to be identified.

The difference between the concept of '*noumenon*' and that of 'transcendental object' is that the former is a label for an object thought of as independent from any form of sensible intuition at all, whereas the latter is a label for an object thought of as independent from any particular form of sensible intuition—as an object of sensible intuition in general. This difference suggests that the way to resolve the inconsistency is to drop the already implausible idea that the *noumenon* is that which is directly represented sensibly. And that appears to be what happens in the second edition, where the two passages assigning the correlate of sensation to the 'transcendental object' are retained and the passage assigning it to the '*noumenon*' is dropped. The argument for the necessity of using the concept of a *noumenon* in the second edition is reduced to the consideration raised at the end of the first edition (and repeated in the second):

The concept of a *noumenon*, i.e. of a thing that is not to be thought at all as an object of the senses but is to be thought (solely through a pure understanding) as a thing in itself, is not at

all contradictory; for we cannot, after all, assert of sensibility that it is the only possible kind of intuition ... (A254/ B310).

That is, what transcendental idealism implies is that since some properties of objects reflect the forms of human sensibility, it is possible to think of objects that are independent of those (or any other) forms of sensibility. On this point, I agree with the main conclusion of Gerold Prauss's exhaustive study of Kant's uses of 'thing in itself,' 'transcendental object,' and '*noumenon*.' This 'restriction' argument is the central consideration in favor of the necessity of using a concept of '*noumenon*' (Prauss, 1974/1989, p. 90ff.).

By contrast, Kant's 'considered' (i.e. second edition) view is that the origins of human cognition are beyond its purview, not because they are noumenal, but because they are inaccessible by either human sense or intellect. They are inaccessible by sense, because outer sense cannot divulge the workings of the mind (as Kant believes) and inner sense can display only conscious perceptions already cloaked in the form of time. And since temporal determinations do not enter through the senses, what does enter is not an inner appearance/ conscious perception. Neither can this process be understood intellectually, since the mind's intellectual resources—the categories—can be employed to produce knowledge only when they can be applied to intuitions (A253, cited above, second underscored segment). Still, despite the human incapacity to know how cognition works in any detail, some general features are known (and admitted by all in debates about cognition): knowledge of particular states of affairs and of particular concepts can be acquired only by causal interaction with objects. Hence the confident assertion at B1 that there can be no doubt that cognition begins with objects stirring the senses. Kant believes that humans can also come to understand through reading the *Critique* (or through their own efforts²²) that their cognition must (or seems to) employ certain universal principles as norms for empirical reality. Thus they may have an explicit—but certainly have an implicit—abstract notion of a sensible object as such, an object that corresponds to the sensations it causes and whose properties meet certain standards of coherence. So, although he emphasizes the opacity of cognitive processes for humans, he thinks that they are far from clueless about the bases of their knowledge.²³ To capture what humans do know implicitly (and possibly explicitly) about objects of cognition, while acknowledging what they don't know, he introduces the concept of a 'transcendental object.' This concept, which is importantly different from that of a '*noumenon*,' fits very well with his account of the blind synthesizing of obscure representations in the transcendental deduction.

6 HOW CAN AN UNCONSCIOUS GIVEN 'GUIDE' COGNITION?

McDowell believes that Kant would have avoided the myth of the Given if he had not offered a transcendental story of noumenal affection (1994, 41, 46). Since noumenal affection is not Kant's considered view, it may seem that all is fine. In fact, the situation is more complicated. In a recent essay, McDowell endorses the Kantian position that while cognition depends on both intuitions and concepts, there is no reliance on an aconceptual Given, because

the unity of intuitions is also a result of the activities of the understanding that produce the unity of concepts (McDowell, 2008, p. 8). Because of this fact

an intuition's content is all conceptual, in this sense: it is in the intuition in a form in which one *could* make it, that very content, figure in discursive activity. (McDowell, 2008, p. 8).

This position is part of Kant's view. It captures his claim that cognition is possible only because reason 'prepares' the field for the understanding in such a way that all perceptions can be brought under the categories (and so under concepts). It does not, however, do justice to his insistence that intuitive and conceptual representations must be anchored in sensations—in the effects that objects produce in cognizers.

McDowell takes Kant, as well as Sellars, to reject the idea that

sensitivity by itself could make things available for the sort of cognition that draws on the subject's rational powers (McDowell, 2008, p. 2).

This claim admits of two interpretations. On one it is incontestable: No cognizer could justify a perceptual claim by appealing to a sensation—especially one of which he is unconscious. On the other, however, it denies exactly what Kant asserts: The understanding is able to direct the imagination to construct conscious perceptions only because sensitivity has made available a pattern of sensations that can serve as an input to the mechanisms that carry out the construction.

McDowell may be struck by the fact that when Kant characterizes the *synthesis speciosa*, he lays great emphasis on the spontaneity of the understanding in directing the synthesis and contrasts that with the receptivity of sense:

The synthesis of imagination is an exercise of spontaneity, which is determinative, rather than merely determinable, as is sense... (B151-152).

But three cautions are in order. Although the synthesis of apprehension is spontaneous, it does not produce concepts, but intuitions. Further, the production of the intuition is not a rational, but a causal process, since both the materials and the processing of them are unconscious. Finally, although the understanding and its imaginative synthesis are determining rather than determinable, they cannot float free of the character of the sensations or Kantian epistemology would lose the guidance of experience. The understanding may dispose, but only when the senses propose—only when they make available a pattern of sensations that can be determined in one of the ways in which the understanding is able to determine.

In a recent paper, Hannah Ginsborg has objected to the approach to the given just sketched on the grounds that it concedes too much to Empiricism and so ends up begging the question against the position. It concedes too much because Kant's

empiricist opponent might well simply insist ... that, insofar as the unconceptualized manifold determines whether an object is to be represented

as a substance endowed with the quality of being green, or as a substance endowed with the quality of being blue, then it is, *eo ipso* representing what is given to us as green or as blue. (Ginsborg, 2006, p. 72).

I think the term ‘determine’ is not quite right. As I understand Kant’s view of the relation between a sensation and a perception, it is analogous to the relation between a planar projection and a solid object.²⁴ A planar projection does not determine the object of which it is a projection, since differently sized and oriented objects can produce identical projections. The object information is not given in the projection. Nonetheless, the projection provides guidance for its three-dimensional interpretation; the interpretation does not float free of the projection. By analogy, the patterns and characters of sensations do not determine the conscious perceptions to which they give rise, because they don’t determine the types and patterns of sensations that can be made into conscious perceptions.²⁵ The understanding does that. In actual cases, however, the determination can be carried out only when a suitable determinable has been made available by the senses. Hence the question is not begged against the Empiricist, since the materials made available through the senses are guiding but not determining in producing the conscious perception that is able to provide a reason for a judgment. On Kant’s picture, the unconscious given and the conceptual capacities of the understanding provide constraints on each other in the production of an intuition that can be the basis of a rational belief.

As I present it, the Kantian solution to the problem of the myth of the Given has a very odd feature. Although the understanding is supposed to be spontaneous and the basis of rational thought, its ‘direction’ of the synthesis of apprehension by the imagination is a ‘blind,’ ‘brute causal’ process. Both McDowell and Ginsborg recognize that the understanding can be involved in both the production of intuitions and the production and use of concepts only if it operates in somewhat different ways in the two cases (Ginsborg, 2006, p. 91²⁶). Still, it is reasonable to object that my Kant has the understanding functioning in perception in a most un-understanding fashion. It seems to operate here just like the mechanical processes of the animal mind that Kant, Leibniz, and other moderns used as the contrast case for the human mind.

In a sense, this is correct. The only ‘rationality’ involved in the understanding’s direction of the synthesis of apprehension is that of Mother Nature; it is her ‘norms’ that lead to the ‘positing of a representation as such’ (R4631, 17.615) or to the construction of a conscious perception (A120n.). There is, nonetheless, a crucial difference between the cases, one that provides a warrant for Kant’s claim that the understanding is at work in constructing perceptions. In the human case, Nature’s norms have an additional purpose, because they are useful to humans in a special way. Unconscious processes work up the raw materials of sensation in such a way that they are apt for the understanding’s capacity to look for rules in the appearances of conscious perception. In this way, the understanding can discover or make explicit the rules operating in the phenomenal world and so come to use such rules normatively, by testing and rejecting them, by appealing to them to explain why the world is as it is. Kant could assign the task of processing sensations into understanding-friendly conscious perceptions to a different higher faculty. As noted, he sometimes assigns it to ‘reason.’ Since the fit is so close—representations are posited as representations of objects insofar as they conform to the principles associated with the categories

of the understanding—it seems extravagant to hypothesize two faculties that operate in accord with the same basic principles. So he opts instead for one faculty with two modes of operation, one blind and one where the cognizer can be aware of his representations as instantiating rules and so of the rational relations among them.

Although I have defended Kant's use of unconscious representations in avoiding the Myth while preserving the essential role of the sensory given in ways that his successors, as well as his predecessors, have not always managed, his solution comes at a high cost. It is only because he insists that human cognition is possible only if it conforms to the categorical principles that the first scrutiny works. Without this (in essence simplifying) assumption, he could account for the inevitable suitability of conscious perceptions for the application of concepts only by the implausible proposal that rules associated with all concepts conjointly act as norms for positing representations of objects as such. Similar hypotheses are currently on offer, but most philosophers reject them as extravagant. Since most philosophers are equally incredulous about Kant's categories, it's far from obvious that looking to his philosophy for a dissolution of the myth is going to be fruitful. This is not surprising, because he wasn't trying to solve the problem of the *a posteriori*, the given, but that of the *a priori*, the constructed. That's why the solution his theory implies for the given depends on a commitment to *a priori* categories.

ABSTRACT: Kant appeals to unconscious representations for reasons that are deeply connected to his distinctive theory of cognition. He is an empirical realist, accepting the Empiricist claim that cognition must be based in sensory data. He is an idealist about spatial and temporal representations. He believes that human perception is always of objects or events with temporal and spatial properties. It follows from these three claims that the sensations that must begin the process of cognition lack spatial and temporal properties and so are not perceived, but unconscious.

KEY WORDS: unconscious representation – cognition – Leibniz - personal identity - empirical realism.

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NOTES

* First published in P. Giordanetti/R. Pozzo/M. Sgarbi (eds.), *Kant's Philosophy of the Unconscious*, Berlin/New York, W. de Gruyter, 2012, pp. 5-36.

2 Patricia Kitcher is Roberta and William Campbell Professor of Humanities and Professor of Philosophy at Columbia University. She works on Kant's theoretical philosophy, especially his theories of mind and cognition. A more recent interest is Kant's moral psychology.

3 McDowell (2008) revises this estimation. There he suggests, in essence, that Kantian intuitions provide a model for a non-objectionable given. As I argue in section 5, however, intuitions can play their role in Kant's empirical realist epistemology only because they depend on materials given in unconscious sensations.

4 I owe this objection to Philip Kitcher.

5 The thesis he criticizes is that a Monad can change from having one perception to having another through the work of an inner principle (1.411).

6 The oft-recounted story from Hamann is that Tetens's book lay open on Kant's desk as he wrote the *Critique*. See BONA-MEYER (1870, p. 56). Kant also reports his reading of Tetens in a letter to Marcus Herz of April 1778 (10.232).

7 Kant's view seems to be somewhat different from Condillac's, since he focuses on the unconscious acts of perceiving the letters, rather than on the unconscious perceptions of the letters.

8 References to Kant's works, other than the *Critique of Pure Reason*, will be to Kant 1900—and will be cited in the text by giving volume and page numbers from that edition. References to the *Critique of Pure Reason* will be in the text, with the usual 'A' and 'B' indications of editions. In providing English translations, I usually rely on PLUHAR (1996), but I also use KEMP SMITH (1968), and GUYER and WOOD (1998) at points. I do not, however, follow Pluhar rendering 'Vorstellung' as 'presentation,' but use the more standard 'representation.' When I alter a translation beyond rendering 'Vorstellung' as 'representation,' I indicate that the translation is amended. In all citations I follow the suggestion of Guyer and Wood and indicate Kant's emphasis with boldface type. When citing Kant's literary remains, I follow standard practice and cite the R (for *Reflexion*) number assigned by the editors of the Academy edition.

9 Beyond *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Standpoint*, Kant's views on anthropology are available in the form of student lecture notes from his Anthropology courses, now available in Vol. 25 of the Academy edition (Kant 1900-), and in his own notes published in Vol. 15 of that edition. Although the student notes cannot be presumed to be accurate representations of Kant's changing views (especially since they are not actual lecture notes, but later transcriptions that are often hard to date), I appeal to them when they are consistent with, but amplify, views expressed in his published work. For fuller discussion of this issue, see my 2011, chapter 2 and accompanying endnotes.

10 In notes that are often regarded as an early draft of the transcendental deduction, the so-called *Duisburg Nachla*, Kant had suggested that the syntheses of the understanding depend on those of apprehension: "Everything that is given is thought under the universal condition of apprehension. Hence the subjective universal of apprehension is the condition of the objective universal of intellection" (R 4675, 17.653.).

11 Here I follow MELNICK (1973) and, subsequently Guyer (1987) in interpreting Kant as taking causation to be a three place relation among powers or events, and earlier and later properties of substances.

12 My discussion here is dependent on Hannah Ginsborg's clear and useful analysis of the argument of the Appendix to the transcendental ideal (GINSBORG, 1992 draft)

13 The view that the transcendental deduction is supposed to establish the applicability of the categories to anything that can be sensed is a central theme of CARL'S (1989, 1992, 1998). See also GINSBORG 2006.

14 Kant links the concept of succession to mental motion: "What first produces the concept of succession is motion, taken as act of the subject (rather than as a determination of an object) and consequently as the synthesis of the manifold in space". (B154-55) His point here is not that motion indicates succession or causation, but that the representation of succession presupposes a spatial representation, which in turn presupposes the mental act of constructing a spatial representation. In making the point, however, he tacitly acknowledges that object motion is a standard way of explaining the representation of succession.

15 Here I follow HARPER'S (1984) helpful presentation of the relevant science.

16 Among others, F. H. JACOBI (1787/1983) was the first to offer this objection between the editions of the *Critique*; STRAWSON (1966) provided its canonical 20th century version in terms of the notion of 'noumenal affection'; ADAMS (1997) offers a recent version.

17 Other passages also suggest noumenal affection, but the passage I discuss provides the strongest support. Further, as I show in my 2011, they can be handled in the same way in which this key passage is handled.

18 The two roles are that of the 'correlate' of sensibility and the cause or ground of the "matter" of human knowledge in general. (ALLISON 1983, p. 251-52)

19 I say 'roughly,' because I am leaving out objects that cannot be sensed, such as the other side of the moon, or objects that can no longer be sensed, because they existed in the past. Kant takes these sorts of objects to be knowable by a chain of inference from objects that can be sensed (A225/B272-A226/B273) and A493/B521). The discussion of how to understand receptivity is introduced in terms of the problem of knowledge of the past.

20 On this basic point, I am in agreement with ALLISON'S analysis (1983, p. 251-54).

21 This is the text: "The transcendental object, however, which may be the basis of this appearance that we call matter, is a mere something, about which we would not understand what it is even if someone were able to tell us. For we cannot understand anything except what carries with it, in intuition, something corresponding to our words". (A278/B334)

22 For further discussion, see Chapter 13, section 4 of my 2011.

23 This point is crucial for Kant, since he thinks that what is distinctive about human cognition (as opposed to 'lower' types of cognition common to animals) is that humans know the reasons for their judgments. I offer evidence for this claim in Chapter 9, section 3 of my 2011.

24 This analogy would have been familiar to Kant, because Leibniz used it in the *new Essays* to characterize the relation between primary and secondary qualities (1765/1982, p. 131). On the other hand, I've used the analogy before (1999) in a discussion with which Ginsborg is familiar, so she may not find it persuasive (though the context was somewhat different).

25 GINSBORG (2006, p. 73) rejects this sort of account on the grounds that it undermines the distinction between empirical and a priori concepts. As a general point, this is correct, but on Kant's view, empirical concepts are merely specifications of categorical concepts.

26 See also LONGUENESSE (1998, p. 63).