

Prompt 2: Step Two of the B Deduction

1 Kant argues that since the synthesis of apprehension depends on formal intuition and formal intuition is conditioned by the categories, then the categories condition the synthesis of apprehension, through which perception becomes possible. Therefore, since the categories serve to structure perception, they are valid *a priori* of “all objects of experience” (B161).

2 Kant’s argument for such a conclusion (that all objects of the sense stand under the categories) is laid out in §26 in three key premises. Before going into these premises, it is crucial to first situate §26 in the larger context of Kant’s arguments in the *Critique*.

3 As Karl Ameriks articulates in “Kant’s Transcendental Deduction as a Regressive Argument,” Kant’s earlier argument that the categories apply to representations which are unified in an intuition leaves open the question whether the categories apply to representations not so united (64). The first step of the Transcendental Deduction concludes that the intuitions are subject to the categories insofar as they *already possess unity* (B143). Hence, one wonders whether it is necessary for the elements of mere perception (prior to their unification in an intuition) to be in agreement with the logical forms of judgment. As Kant puts it, the question is: Must the empirical “synthesis of apprehension” necessarily be in agreement with the intellectual “synthesis of apperception” (B162 footnote)? Kant’s answer in the premises subsequently invokes the Transcendental Aesthetic, which has shown that all our representations must be in space or time and that they are knowable *a priori* as forms of our mind.

4 In order to show that the categories stand in a necessary connection with empirical intuition rather than merely the thought of objects, Kant introduces the phrase “synthesis of apprehension” for the first time in the B edition in §26 (B160). Kant defines the synthesis of

apprehension as "the composition of the manifold in an empirical intuition, through which perception, i.e., empirical consciousness of it (as appearance), becomes possible" (B160). Noting the terminological differences, Kant is claiming that empirical intuition (meaning the content thereof) only becomes perception (understood as an actual consciousness of this content) when its manifold is apprehended, that is, synthesized or taken up in a single empirical consciousness.

5 Bearing all these in mind, Kant puts forth his premises in §26. Firstly, he argues that the synthesis of apprehension has to agree with forms of space and time. This synthesis of apprehension must be exercised *a priori* for without it we could have *a priori* neither the representations of space nor of time, since these can be generated only through the synthesis of the manifold that sensibility in its original receptivity provides. Later in §26, Kant uses the perception of a house and of the freezing of water to demonstrate that the transcendental synthesis of the imagination is the form of the empirical synthesis of apprehension. With this premise, Kant shows the connection between the synthesis of apprehension in perception and the *a priori* intuitions of space and time. In this example, the apprehension of the space occupied by a house or the succession of two states of water is governed by the *a priori* synthesis that determines space and time.

6 Secondly, Kant claims that space and time are not just forms of intuition but also unified intuitions. In the footnote attached to this section, Kant distinguishes between a form of intuition and a formal intuition. The form of intuition merely "gives the manifold" while the formal intuition "gives unity of the representation" (B160 footnote). Here, Kant is establishing that space and time are not only principles but also *objects* — namely, unified intuitions. This underscores Kant's point (already made in §24) that space and time are intuitions with a

manifold (content) of their own. As such, they can only be represented insofar as their manifold is unified.

7 What then is the vehicle for this unification? This leads us to Kant's third premise: the unity of formal intuition has to come from the 'I think' and the categories. The claim is that a given intuition can become a unitary representation only when the intellectual functions of the understanding are applied to it. Kant's examples of our perception of a house and the freezing of water are two illustrations of the function of a category as a rule of apprehension. To apprehend a determinate space or temporal sequence presupposes the synthetic unity of space and time, and thus a synthesis governed by a category (in this case, quantity and causality). As such, Kant is seeking to argue that, since all unity (and hence too the unity of space and time) "presupposes a synthesis which does not belong to the senses" (B160 footnote) but to the understanding and its categories, "everything that is to be represented as determined in space or in time" must conform to the categories (B161). With this premise, Kant invokes not only the unity of space and time but also their *universality* to guarantee the "universally possible use" of the categories in perception (B159).

8 Having posited these three premises, Kant brings us to his conclusion. Since he has shown that the synthesis of apprehension depends on the formal intuitions of space and time, as unified by the categories, then it logically follows that the categories also condition the synthesis of all apprehension. Consequently, perception, which is made possible through synthesis (as earlier mentioned in paragraph 4), also stands under the categories. Here, Kant crucially moves from perception to experience, appealing that since "experience is cognition through connected perceptions," the categories are valid *a priori* of "all objects of experience" (B161).

9 An objection that can be raised would be against the footnote at B160-61, which has implications for whether Kant is a conceptualist or a nonconceptualist about intuitions or our representations of objects. That, is, are intuitions conceptual or non-conceptual? The possibility of nonconceptual intuition results in a gap in the argument of the B Deduction and Kant's larger stance throughout the *Critique* that "thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind" (B76). The possibility of nonconceptualism would allow for intuitions to which the categories do not apply. In this vein, one could question if there is a unity of space that precedes the understanding and synthesis (e.g. that which consists in the singularity and infinity of space, and dependence of the parts on the whole of space). This would undermine Kant's premise in §26 that the unity of formal intuition such as space and time has to come from the understanding.

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Works Cited

Ameriks, Karl. "Kant's Transcendental Deduction as a Regressive Argument." *Kant-Studien*, vol. 69, no. 1, 1978, pp. 273–287.

Kant, Immanuel, *Critique of Pure Reason*, translated by Paul Guyer and Allen Wood. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.