

THESIS

MIND AND WORLD IN KANT'S THEORY OF SENSATION

Submitted by

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In partial fulfillment of the requirements

For the Degree of Master of Arts

Colorado State University

Fort Collins, Colorado

Summer 2015

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## ABSTRACT

### MIND AND WORLD IN KANT'S THEORY OF SENSATION

In examining sensation as Kant presents it in the Critique of Pure Reason and understanding the problems exemplified in the debate which has arisen surrounding this topic, it becomes clear that Kant believed the objective world to be a product of the mind. This discussion of sensation follows three main themes: (i) the nature of sensation, (ii) the form of sensation and its contribution in determining the spatial properties of objects and (iii) the role of sensation in achieving object-directed cognition. In the first chapter I will present Kant's view on sensation as it relates to each of these themes.

In the second chapter, I will explore the conflict that seems to arise between the nature of sensation and its form and function in the cognitive process. I examine three proposed solutions to this conflict as they are presented by Rolf George, Lorne Falkenstein, and Apaar Kumar. George presents a constructivist account of sensation, while Falkenstein argues that sensations must be physical events in the body of the perceiver. Kumar provides clear evidence from Kant's writing that Falkenstein's position is unavailable to Kant and instead proposes a non-constructivist view of sensation. Understanding these concerns helps to highlight a different requirement of sensation in Kant's cognitive theory.

Finally, in the third chapter I provide evidence that Kant took the spatial form of the objective world to be a product of the human mind rather than something that exists "in itself." This perspective shows why each of the concerns presented in chapter two are important. However, they arise because of the fundamental misunderstanding that Kant took the spatial

properties of the external world to exist in its own right, before or aside from human consciousness. I will show how a correct understanding of the relationship between the mind and the external world in Kant's theory can resolve the conflicts that seem to arise in his theory of sensation.

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# CHAPTER 1 KANT'S SENSATIONS

## Introduction

*There is no doubt whatever that all our cognition begins with experience; for how else should the cognitive faculty be awakened into exercise if not through objects that stimulate our senses and in part themselves produce representations, in part bring the activity of our understanding into motion to compare these, to connect or separate them, and thus to work up the raw material of sensible impressions into a cognition of objects that is called experience?*<sup>1</sup>

These are Kant's first words in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. Through mental activity, we are able to make sense of the world around us. Sensation is the link between the mind and the outer world. Whatever sensation amounts to, it plays an integral role in the human cognitive process. Thus, any theory attempting to explain how the mind works will inevitably grapple with the nature of sensation as the connection to other things and the beginning of all knowledge. In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant attempts to discover the processes and boundaries of the human mind by providing formal proofs regarding the necessary conditions of human cognition.

In doing so, Kant presents a description of sensation as a fundamental feature of human cognition. This chapter is dedicated to Kant's description of sensation in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, which may be divided into three major themes. Thus, this chapter is divided into three sections, each of which explored Kant's views about a different facet of sensation. These three facets are the nature of sensation, the form of sensation, and the function of sensation in the cognitive process.

Therefore, the first section of this chapter will examine Kant's description of the nature of sensation. First, I will introduce passages where Kant describes sensation as a type of subjective modification in the state of the subject. Then, I will present his argument that

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<sup>1</sup> Kant, [B1]. \*All references from Immanuel Kant are taken from the *Critique of Pure Reason* unless otherwise stated.

sensation has the property of intensive magnitude. Finally, Kant also argues that sensation does not have the property of extensive magnitude. These three premises are each important to Kant's views regarding the nature of sensation.

The second section of this chapter is dedicated to Kant's description of the form of sensation. Kant argued that sensation takes the form of space and time. His argument for this involves situating sensation in the sensibility, the receptive faculty of the mind. It also involves an examination of the relationship of sensation to intuition. Much of what Kant has to say of sensation is in distinguishing it from other aspects of the cognitive process. I present these distinctions to establish a thorough description of sensation as it is initially received in the human mind.

Finally, the third section is dedicated to Kant's description regarding the function of sensation. For Kant, the function of sensation involves its role in achieving cognition of objects. This involves exploring how sensation is related to other mental activities such as perception and cognition. Furthermore, Kant situates sensation at the beginning of a mental process which also involves intellectual synthesis and the faculty of understanding. I introduce Kant's description of each of these and examine his arguments regarding sensation as it functions in this process.

### SECTION I: The Nature of Sensation

In this thesis, I have divided Kant's description of sensation into three distinct facets, the first of which involves the nature of sensation. The nature of sensation has to do with those properties which should be ascribed to sensation. Kant argues that sensations are subjective modification, and this involves examining sensation as it is related to the perceiving subject. For Kant, sensations are experiences, and this section is dedicated to exploring Kant's position on the

properties of sensory experiences. I will begin with a passage from [B376/A320], where Kant presents a basic definition of sensation and related mental events:

The genus is representation in general (*representatio*). Under it stands the representation with consciousness (*perceptio*). A perception that refers to the subject as a modification of its state is a sensation (*sensatio*).

In this passage Kant defines sensation simply as a modification in the state of the subject. Furthermore, sensation is defined as a type of representation. A *representation* is something which stands for something else. For Kant, a representation is any instance of experience and each representation stands for, or *represents* some feature of our world. At [Bxxxix-Bxl] in the preface to the B deduction, Kant presents a correction to explain exactly what he means by representation. Since mental events are representations, there is necessarily something else which is being represented. He writes:

Because there are some obscurities in the expressions of this proof between the third and sixth lines, I ask leave to alter this passage as follows: “But this persisting element cannot be an intuition in me. For all the determining grounds of my existence that can be encountered in me are representations, and as such they themselves need something persisting distinct from them, in relation to which their change, and thus my existence in the time in which they change, can be determined.” Against this proof one will perhaps say: I am immediately conscious to myself only of what is in me, i.e., of my representation of external things; consequently it still remains undecided whether there is something outside me or not. Yet I am conscious through inner experience of my existence in time (and consequently also of its determinability in time), and this is more than merely being conscious of my representation; yet it is identical with the empirical consciousness of my existence, which is only determinable through a relation to something that, while being bound up with my existence, is outside me.

In this passage Kant argues that representations are mental events which stand for things in the external world. For now we can set aside the issue of time mentioned here, but we can look at his use of the word representation in this passage to understand some very important distinctions. Kant uses representation as synonymous with any event which occurs in the mind. For any

possible experience, the content of that experience is a representation. The capacity for representation, then, refers to the human mind in all of its functioning.

This use of representation highlights some fundamental features of Kant's philosophy. First, Kant distinguishes between the inner and outer worlds. We can discuss the aspects of the world as they are experienced by the human mind or we can discuss the aspects of the world as they may occur apart from the human mind. As we can see in this passage, Kant does believe there *is* an external world, but any experience we have of the external world is a mere representation of it. Thus, the way something appears to us is not identical with its properties as they occur apart from the human mind.

Returning to Kant's original definition, sensations are defined as perception that refers to the subject as a modification of its state. As *perceptions*, sensations are representations with consciousness. That he makes this distinction indicates that there can be representations without consciousness, that is, things that are representations but not conscious ones. In any case, sensations are explicitly defined as experiences which refer to the subject (experiencer).

At [B34/A20], Kant provides another explicit definition of sensation:

The effect of an object on the capacity for representation, insofar as we are affected by it, is sensation.

Here, sensations are described as "the effect of an object." Thus, we have many kinds of representation, and sensations are distinct because they arise from contact with the external world. The exact meaning of the word *object* throughout the critique is inconsistent. Here, I believe Kant intends to use it to denote some feature of the external world. His use of object can lead to confusion and I think it does, especially in discussing the relationship between our mind and the world outside it. Throughout this paper, I will be clear about the sense in which (I believe) the word object is being used.

The important thing to take from this passage is that sensations, for Kant, are *effects* brought on by something which arises independently from the human mind, yet sensation itself is a mental event which is defined only *insofar as we are affected*. Thus, sensations are the connection between our inner and outer worlds, but when Kant defines sensation, he points only at the changes which occur in the person who is being affected, and not to anything in the external world, even those which are involved in producing the effect. Therefore, Kant's sensations are not properties of the external world, nor of objects in the external world. They are representations of it; representations which arise due to interactions with things in the external world. Still, sensations, for Kant, are descriptions of how the *experiencer* is changed or affected by that interaction, and by knowing everything we can about sensation, we know nothing in particular about the thing which influenced that change (only that it exists).

Kant writes:

Sensation, as merely subjective representation, by which one can only be conscious that the subject is affected, and which one relates to an object in general<sup>2</sup>.

Here, he argues that sensations arise because of influences which are independent of the person having the sensation. Yet, the content of sensation is the modification of the subject, and this modification is defined subjectively. I am going to start with a working definition of subjectivity for now, but it will continue to be revisited throughout this discussion. For now, something is *subjective* if every statement about it is also a statement about the person experiencing it, every statement about it is only a statement about the person experiencing it, and that this relationship follows with necessity. Though sensation is defined as the effect of some object, anything we know or say about sensation is something about the person who is having it.

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<sup>2</sup> Kant, [B207/A165]

Examples of sensations are sensory experiences such as color, taste, and smell. Kant writes that these modifications of sense are the *content* of sensation:

Things like colors, taste, etc., are correctly considered not as qualities of things but as mere alterations of our subject, which can even be different in different people<sup>3</sup>.

So, although it is intrinsic to the definition of sensation that it arise due to influence from the external world, any property of that sensation is a property of the subject who experiences it, and is not a property of the thing which caused it to arise. A thing in the world may even have different effects on different people. When I see an apple and say that it is red, I am referring to something which is happening in my experience. The redness that occurs happens for me only subjectively. Redness is something which happens for me and not something that happens for “the apple.”

The pleasant taste of a wine does not belong to the objective determinations of the wine, thus of an object even considered as an appearance, but rather to the particular constitution of sense in the subject that enjoys it. Colors are not objective qualities of the bodies to the intuition of which they are attached, but are also only modifications of the sense of sight, which is affected by light in a certain way<sup>4</sup>.

Sensations, then, are defined in relation to the subject alone. Yet, sensations are experienced as arising due to influence by some external force. Thus, sensations are only modifications of the subject, but they are modifications produced in a certain way. Sensations, though defined subjectively, are the way we relate to the external world and thus form the basis for our cognition of it. Because of this, we know something about the parts of the external world which we experience, namely that it has the capacity to be represented through contact with human sensibility.

Likewise, we can *anticipate* something about sensation in general even before any particular sensation is experienced. These anticipations tell us about the interaction of these

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<sup>3</sup> Kant, [B45/A29]

<sup>4</sup> Kant, [B44/A28]

systems aside from any particular content. It is in the “Anticipations of Perception” section of the first Critique which is devoted to the *a priori* principles of sensibility. Here, Kant discusses the fundamental properties that sensations must have, *a priori*, that is, necessarily, and before any particular experience occurs.

The key property of sensation in general is that it always appears to us as having intensive magnitude. Any magnitude is a quantity or amount, and intensive magnitude is a measure of degree or intensity. The quantity which denotes the intensity of a sensation is what Kant calls intensive magnitude.

Now I call that magnitude which can only be apprehended as a unity, and in which multiplicity can only be represented through approximation to negation = 0, intensive magnitude. Thus every reality in the appearance has intensive magnitude, i.e., a degree<sup>5</sup>.

Here we can see that intensive magnitude is magnitude which denotes the maintenance of unity and is not magnitude which denotes a composite (multiplicity). Any magnitude is an amount, yet in the case of intensive magnitude there are no numbered “parts” to count. Intensive magnitudes are considered unified because they occur as singular, unified events which cannot be broken down into parts.

Therefore, sensations are not quantified by the amount of “stuff,” they contain, as each sensation stands alone and cannot have more or less ‘stuff’ contained in it. Rather, the functioning of sensation occurs by the degree of influence of the senses, i.e., its proximity to zero, a state in which it is no longer intense enough to produce a sensation in the subject. For any sensation which is present, there is some other sensation which is possible that is closer to 0, i.e., for any sensation, there is always another which is less intense. Every sensation, no matter how small, still has a degree to which it affects the senses, otherwise it would not be experienced.

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<sup>5</sup> Kant, [B210/A168]

It is not necessary to have multiple sensations in order to anticipate that any particular sensation will have an intensive magnitude. We do not need to compare one sensation with another, e.g., lesser sensation to know that a quantity of this type can be ascribed. The property of intensive magnitude is necessary for the very possibility of sensation and thus can be considered an anticipation. The necessity apparent in this fact is exemplary of all principles determined *a priori*.

The other *anticipation* we have about sensation in general is that it has the property of *reality*. The content of our experience is said to be real. Kant uses the *real* to denote the world as it appears to us. It is in contrast to the external world, which *exists*. Thus for Kant, reality, like sensation, refers back to the subject and is not a property which can be ascribed to a particular object which is apart from the perceiver.

When there is an *absence* of sensation, Kant calls this negation, =0. All of this is expressed in this passage:

Now that in the empirical intuition which corresponds to the sensation is reality (*realitas phenomenon*); that which corresponds to its absence is negation = 0. Now, however, every sensation is capable of a diminution, so that it can decrease and thus gradually disappear. Hence between reality in appearance and negation there is a continuous nexus of many possible intermediate sensations, whose difference from one another is always smaller than the difference between the given one and zero, or complete negation.<sup>6</sup>

So we can know, *a priori* (before having any sensation in particular) that any sensation which arises will affect the senses to some degree (reality) and that this degree of influence can be quantified as an intensive magnitude based on the intensity of the effect. For example, every sound has a volume, i.e., a loudness which can be more or less loud than any other sound. This scale is a continuity as well, from nothing to the highest possible degree are infinite possible values, and from one value to the next there is always a smaller division between them.

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<sup>6</sup> Kant, [B210/A168]

It is important to note that we do not need to experience multiple sounds in order to know that sound in general has intensive magnitude. We may refer to other sounds to give a particular sound a value, but we do not need any multiplicity (or even a particular sound at all) in order to know that any sound which arises can be ascribed some volume as a general property and this is true for any sensation. While sensation can be characterized in terms of degree, Kant argues at length that all sensations are singular. This means that sensations do not have magnitude in the sense of a quantification which arises from the adding up of multiple parts. This type of quantified magnitude is called *extensive magnitude*.

If a sensation has no extensive magnitude, it is singular. This is because for Kant, extensive magnitudes are constituted by adding up the composite parts of a whole. A thing has more extensive magnitude when there is a greater quantity of ‘stuff’ there:

I call an extensive magnitude that in which the representation of the parts makes possible the representation of the whole... I cannot represent to myself any line, no matter how small it may be, without drawing it in thought, i.e., successively generating all its parts from one point, and thereby first sketching this intuition. It is exactly the same with even the smallest time<sup>7</sup>.

Extensive magnitude can only be conceptualized as a composition. Sensations, on the other hand, are singular and do not contain component parts. Kant explicitly writes that sensations do not have this type of magnitude:

Sensation in itself is not an objective representation, and in it neither the intuition of space nor that of time is to be encountered, it has, to be sure, no extensive magnitude<sup>8</sup>. In this passage, Kant clearly expresses that sensation is not something which shows extensive magnitude. He does so by stating that in sensation, there is no intuition of space or time. Still, there is apprehension of sensation in time, and therefore although it is not extended, it takes place

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<sup>7</sup> Kant, [B203/A163]

<sup>8</sup> Kant, [B208/A165]

in time. Extension occurs when things take up multiple points in space through multiple moments in time.

Kant further expresses that there is no smallest unit of space or time. For Kant, there is no amount of space, no matter how small, which does not exhibit extensive magnitude (= “the representation of the parts makes possible the representation of the whole,” i.e., the parts precede the whole (A162/B203). Since even the smallest amount of space or time can be ascribed the property of extensive magnitude, this means that sensation does not extend in space (sensations do not take up space). He expresses this differently in another passage:

Apprehension, merely by means of sensation, fills only an instant (if I do not take into consideration the succession of many sensations). As something in the appearance, the apprehension of which is not a successive synthesis, proceeding from the parts to the whole representation, it therefore has no extensive magnitude<sup>9</sup>.

This means, that for Kant, a sensation cannot be divided into parts. It takes place in time (“in an instant”) but is not extended. A thing which has the property of extensive magnitude has more than one part. If you take the line from Kant’s previous example, point A and another point B on the line may be identical but for the single fact that they can be said to be located in different places in space. The line has extensive magnitude because it can be broken up into multiple points.

On the other hand, a sensation may persist from moment to moment, but Kant’s definition of sensation itself does not allow that it is the same sensation which occurs at time A as it is at some other time B. It may be the same type of sensation and have the same intensive magnitude, but each successive sensation is itself a new sensation, as the same sensation cannot persist through multiple moments in time, according to Kant. It is the same way regarding the relationship between sensation and space. It may seem that a patch of redness contains multiple

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<sup>9</sup> Kant, [B209/A167]

points in space. However, on Kant's view, each of these must be considered a different sensation, as sensations themselves cannot take up multiple points in space. A sensation, for Kant, can only be a unity and never a composite which can be divided into component parts which are extended in space.

## SECTION II: The Form of Sensation

Discussion about the form of sensation centers around the conditions under which it is received by the perceiving subject. Kant situates sensation in the sensibility, so this section will explore Kant's views about that relationship and the necessary conditions of sensibility and thus sensation. For Kant, the human mind is set up so that it can only have a representation of something the external world when it has the capacity to be represented in space and time. Thus, all experience takes spatial and temporal form. This form is inherent in all sensation but is not sensation itself. Space and time are necessary conditions for any sensory experience to happen in a human subject. Space and time are considered *a priori* forms because they are necessary conditions for experience, and as such we do not rely on experience to form knowledge of them.

At [B38/A23], Kant presents one argument for the *a priori* form of space:

Space is not an empirical concept that has been drawn from outer experiences. For in order for certain sensations to be related to something outside me (i.e., to something in another place in space from that in which I find myself), thus in order for me to represent them as outside one another, thus not merely as different but as in different places, the representation of space must already be their ground. Thus the representation of space cannot be obtained from the relations of outer appearance through experience, but this outer experience is itself first possible only through this representation.

Kant argues that space is a necessary condition of experience. I do not represent things outside me and ordered in different locations with respect to one another without representing them in space. For this reason, Kant takes space to occur in the mind as a form of experience rather than something which we gather from experience itself. For Kant, we must have a

representation of space before we can represent content within it. Thus, our representation of space cannot come from our experience.

At [B39/A24], Kant presents another argument for the a priori form of space:

Space is a necessary representation, *a priori*, which is the ground of all outer intuitions. One can never represent that there is no space, although one can very well think that there are no objects to be encountered in it. It is therefore to be regarded as the condition of the possibility of appearances, not as a determination dependent on them, and is an *a priori* representation that necessarily grounds outer appearances.

So, Kant argues that space and time are necessary conditions for the possibility of experience.

Space is a representation, as all conscious events are representations, yet it is not something we come to know through experience. Instead, space is the necessary ground for all other representations. Anything we experience must be represented spatially. This is why Kant argues for space as one of the *forms* of our experience.

Space is called *outer sense* for Kant, because we cannot represent objects as outside of us without representing them spatially. We have another a priori form of experience; things must be represented in time, which Kant calls *inner sense*.

Time is a necessary representation that grounds all intuitions, in regard to appearances in general one cannot remove time, though one can very well take the appearances away from time. Time is therefore given *a priori*. In it alone is all actuality of appearances possible. The latter could all disappear, but time *itself*, as the universal condition of their possibility, cannot be removed<sup>10</sup>.

We see here that Kant presents time, like space, as a necessary form of our experience. We do not gain our representation of time through a succession of experience. Instead, time is a formal condition of experience in general and we cannot have representations of things unless they are represented in time. Kant argues that space and time are the two forms of the human sensibility, i.e., the necessary conditions of our experience.

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<sup>10</sup> Kant, [B46/A31]

Sensibility is one of the two main branches of human mental function. Sensibility refers to the capacity of the mind which changes in response to external influence:

The capacity (receptivity) to acquire representations through the way in which we are affected by objects is called sensibility<sup>11</sup>.

Sensibility is the branch of mental functioning which is modified through contact with the external world, and provides us with representations received in this manner. As such, sensibility is closely related to sensation. While sensation is defined as *the effect of an object* which is represented as a modification in the subject, sensibility is the *capacity to be affected by objects*. Thus, all sensation arises under the branch called sensibility.

So for Kant, sensations belong to sensibility; the category of mental events which originate ‘outside’ of the mind. However, not all representations which belong to sensibility are sensations. The term sensibility is used by Kant to refer to our mental capacity to receive information. The general term which is used to denote any instance of receptivity is called intuition. Thus, all objects are given in sensibility, and whatever mental events belong to sensibility are called intuitions:

Objects are therefore given to us by means of sensibility, and it alone affords us intuitions... all thought, whether straightaway (*directe*) or through a detour (*indirecte*), must, <by means of certain marks,> ultimately be related to intuitions, thus, in our case, to sensibility, since there is no other way in which objects can be given to us<sup>12</sup>.

Since sensibility refers to our capacity to relate to objects, it is clear that sensibility and intuition are closely linked. The term sensibility is used by Kant to refer to our mental capacity to receive information. The general term which is used to denote any instance of receptivity is called intuition. Thus, all objects are given in sensibility, and whatever mental events belong to

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<sup>11</sup> Kant, [B33/A19]

<sup>12</sup> Kant, [B33/A19]

sensibility are called intuitions. In Kant's words, we cannot partake of intuition independently of sensibility<sup>13</sup>. So, we cannot have intuition without sensibility nor sensibility without intuition.

Sensations belong to sensibility; the category of mental events which originate 'outside' of the mind. However, not all representations which belong to sensibility are sensations. Sensation occurs when sensibility is affected by sensible (empirical) aspects of the external world. Sensory receptors, in which a particular kind of experience is produced as a result of contact with some sensible object, are a type of receptive mechanisms. Our capacity for empirical representation includes the ability to interact with the world through our sensory systems; the primary ones being sight, smell, taste, touch, and hearing.

Thus, sensation is a type of intuition, but it is not the only type. Intuitions can be either pure or empirical:

Sensible intuition is either pure intuition (space and time) or empirical intuition of that which, through sensation, is immediately represented as real in space and time<sup>14</sup>.

It is easy to get confused here about the relationship between sensation and intuition. However, when Kant says "sensible intuition," he means intuition that can only occur through the sensory apparatus. Kant calls intuition with sensation "empirical intuition." Empirical intuitions involve sensory experience. In contrast, pure intuitions are representations which belong to sensibility (i.e., the receptive faculty) but only in abstraction from the sensory organs like sensation.

I call all representations pure (in the transcendental sense) in which nothing is to be encountered that belongs to sensation. Accordingly the pure form of sensible intuitions in general is to be encountered in the mind *a priori*, wherein all of the manifold of appearances is intuited in certain relations. This pure form of sensibility itself is also called pure intuition<sup>15</sup>.

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<sup>13</sup> Kant, [B92/A68]

<sup>14</sup> Kant, [B147]

<sup>15</sup> Kant, [B34/A20]

The forms of space and time are thus forms of sensibility, because they are the necessary conditions of receiving representations of the external world. Intuitions, i.e., the representations of sensibility, are not always “objects,” and certainly not always physical ones. The key to sensibility is that the representations which arise in sensibility result because of contact with the external world, while representations which arise in the understanding do so as a result of the functioning of the mind itself. Space and time belong to sensibility because they are representations which are present in the way we *receive* the external world, yet they are distinguished from sensation as the formal conditions under which empirical representations are experienced.

The pure form of sensible intuitions in general is to be encountered in the mind a priori, wherein all of the manifold of appearances is intuited in certain relations. This pure form of sensibility itself is also called pure intuition. So if I separate from the representation of a body that which the understanding thinks about it... as well as that which belongs to sensation... something from this empirical intuition is still left for me, namely extension and form. These belong to the pure intuition, which occurs a priori, even without an actual object of the senses or sensation, as a mere form of sensibility in the mind<sup>16</sup>.

In any representation of a body, Kant argues, we can perform a thought experiment in which we start with a representation of some object and then subtract everything the mind itself contributed to that representation (that which the understanding thinks about it) and subtract everything which arose due to the interaction with the external world (that which belongs to sensation). He argues that if we subtract all of the content from our representations we are not left with nothing (empty mind). Instead we see that we still have the form of a representation in general and this form, for human beings, is space and time.

Kant makes an essential distinction between the *form* and the *matter* of experience. The form of intuition refers the necessary conditions for the possibility of experience (space and time), while the matter of intuition refers to the content of that experience (sensation).

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<sup>16</sup> Kant, [B35/A21]

Representations which pertain to the form are given *a priori*, while those which pertain to the matter of experience are called *a posteriori*.

Since that within which the sensations can alone be ordered and placed in a certain form cannot itself be in turn sensation, the matter of all appearance is only given to us *a posteriori*, but its form must all lie ready for it in the mind *a priori*, and can therefore be considered separately from all sensation<sup>17</sup>.

It is clear that for Kant, sensation is distinct from the form it must take is experience. The form is there in the mind prior to any particular experience and is not discovered through sensation in general. Thus space and time are the form that all sensations must take and are not themselves sensation, just as the sense organ through which the subject is affected is not itself sensation.

The content of empirical sensibility, that is, sensation itself, is only given through contact with the external world (*a posteriori*). Thus, we can anticipate that of sensation in general with regards to the way that it must be represented in intuition i.e., with the properties of reality and *intensive* magnitude, but we can never anticipate any information regarding the **actual** experience of a sensation until it happens.

It is like trying to imagine a color you have never seen. You can anticipate something about what it is to experience color in general just like for all sensation we know that it will occur in space and time. However, you have no information regarding the experience of the new color until you actually see the new color. Kant argues that human beings begin like this for all sensations. Thus, the qualitative experience of sensation is entirely *a posteriori*; or is only known insofar as the sensation is experienced.

### SECTION III: The Function of Sensation

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<sup>17</sup> Kant, [B34/A20]

The discussion about the function of sensation involves an exploration of the contribution of sensation to cognition. We have examined Kant's perspective regarding the first branch of human mental functioning, which is the receptive capacity, and therefore responsible for the interaction between the external world and the human mind. Once sensation occurs, we have a representation which is only a subjective modification, an effect on our sense organ. However, sensibility is only one faculty of the mind and we must examine its relation to the other faculties in order to get a full description of sensation in Kant's cognitive theory.

First we can distinguish sensibility from the understanding. For Kant, all cognition begins with experience in sensibility, but in sensibility the subject is aware only that she is affected. Sensation is not objective perception and thus has no object. Kant argues that the faculties of sensibility and understanding must be distinct from each other because the capacity for receiving sensible impressions cannot also be the faculty which puts those impressions together into objects.

The manifold of representations can be given in an intuition that is merely sensible, i.e., nothing but receptivity, and the form of this intuition can lie *a priori* in our faculty of representation without being anything other than the way in which the subject is affected. Yet the combination (*conjunctio*) of a manifold in general can never come to us through the senses, and therefore cannot already be contained in the pure form of sensible intuition; for it is an act of the spontaneity of the power of representation, and, since one must call the latter understanding, in distinction from sensibility<sup>18</sup>.

Kant makes this basic distinction between sensation (experienced as a change in the state of the subject) and cognition, wherein these modifications of sense are combined together under a single representation which can be called an object. It is only with the help of understanding that we can achieve cognition, which Kant defines as *objective perception*<sup>19</sup>. The "objectivity" of cognition distinguishes it from sensation. While cognitions are defined as "objective perception"

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<sup>18</sup> Kant, [B130]

<sup>19</sup> Kant, [B377/A320]

Kant explicitly states that sensation “is not itself an objective representation<sup>20</sup>.” Therefore the distinction between sensation and cognition consists in the relationship to an *object*.

If we will call the receptivity of our mind to receive representations insofar as it is affected in some way sensibility, then on the contrary the faculty for bringing forth representations itself, or the spontaneity of cognition, is the understanding. It comes along with our nature that intuition can never be other than sensible, i.e., that it contains only the way in which we are affected by objects. The faculty for thinking of objects of sensible intuition, on the contrary, is the understanding<sup>21</sup>.

It is only through sensibility that we can *relate* to an object, i.e., be affected by it.

However, sensibility does not recognize its representations as objective. Instead, sensations appear in sensibility only as modifications of self. It is in the understanding which we are able to combine sensible impressions into a single representation which can be thought as an *object*. The representations in sensibility are not representations of objects.

Individual sensations are what Kant calls “the raw material of sensible impressions.”

When we have a sensation, it doesn’t amount to anything we can recognize. It is just a change in the quality of our experience, which we associate with one of the sense organs. We saw that sensation has reality, yet it is real only insofar as we refer to the change which occurs in the subject. Even though sensation is brought about as the effect of an object, the real in sensation is limited to the effect it has on the perceiver (is subject-directed) while cognition points to something else (object-directed). In order to see these individual bits of sense data as anything meaningful, we have to combine some of the information together and call it one thing, while excluding other bits of information.

Therefore, we must recognize an active capacity of the mind (as opposed to the passive receptivity of sensibility) that allows us to make sense of those initial representations. Kant calls the second branch of mental functioning the *understanding*. Representations that arise through

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<sup>20</sup> Kant, [B208]

<sup>21</sup> Kant, [B75/A51]

activity of the mind itself belong to the understanding. It contains the systems which combine, process, and make sense of the representations gathered in sensibility. Understanding and sensibility are both necessary to produce cognitions (representations of objects). Thus, sensibility and understanding are what Kant calls the two “fundamental sources” of cognition.

Our cognition arises from two fundamental sources in the mind, the first of which is the reception of representations (the receptivity of impressions), the second the faculty for cognizing an object by means of these representations (spontaneity of concepts); through the former an object is given to us, through the latter it is thought in relation to that representation (as a mere determination of the mind)<sup>22</sup>.

Without any sense data from the sensibility, the understanding has no raw material to work with. Without being synthesized in the understanding, the sensations received in sensibility are not useful to us because we can’t understand them. They are a jumble, or “rhapsody” of sensations as he sometimes says. This is what Kant means when he says “neither of these properties is to be preferred to the other. Without sensibility no object would be given to us, and without understanding none would be thought. Thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind<sup>23</sup>. These two stems of cognitive function cannot produce cognition without one another. Thus, sensibility and understanding are together necessary to produce any cognition. It is important, for Kant, that both of these components necessarily come into play every time cognition is achieved.

Intuition and concepts therefore constitute the elements of all our cognition, so that neither concepts without intuition corresponding to them in some way nor intuition without concepts can yield a cognition<sup>24</sup>.

Though the real in sensation is merely subjective, it plays an integral role in achieving cognitions with objective reality. When Kant describes cognition as “objective,” he means that it

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<sup>22</sup> Kant, [B74/A50]

<sup>23</sup> Kant, [B75/A51]

<sup>24</sup> Kant, [B74/A50]

is related to an object. In this sense he takes object as something which has been given in the senses and which has also been processed in the understanding.

If a cognition is to have objective reality, i.e., to be related to an object, and is to have significance and sense in that object, the object must be able to be given in some way. Without that the concepts are empty, and through them one has, to be sure, thought but not in fact cognized anything through this thinking, but rather merely played with representations<sup>25</sup>.

Without intuition, we are left with a mere thought, or empty concept, with no objective reality.

Because sensible intuitions are the effects of objects, it is sensible intuition which is required in order to have objective cognition.

Now all intuition that is possible for us is sensible (Aesthetic), thus for us thinking of an object in general through a pure concept of the understanding can become cognition only insofar as this concept is related to objects of the senses<sup>26</sup>.

Now, we have seen the relation of sensibility to the understanding as the two “fundamental sources” of cognition. While Kant recognizes only two fundamental sources, he distinguishes between three *mental faculties*, each of which represents a different capacity (or functional ability) of the mind.

There are, however, three original sources (capacities or faculties of the soul), which contain the conditions of the possibility of all experience, and cannot themselves be derived from any other faculty of the mind, namely **sense**, **imagination**, and **apperception**. On these are grounded 1) the **synopsis** of the manifold *a priori* through sense; 2) the **synthesis** of this manifold through the imagination; finally 3) the **unity** of this synthesis through original apperception<sup>27</sup>.

So for Kant there are exactly three faculties of the mind and they are sense, imagination, and apperception. In sensation we have representations brought about by contact with the external world. In imagination these are *synthesized*. Finally, in apperception things are judged as belonging to some unified whole. For Kant, we do not have cognition until all three of these stages of processing have been achieved.

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<sup>25</sup> Kant, [B195/A156]

<sup>26</sup> Kant, [B147]

<sup>27</sup> Kant, [B127/A94]

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<sup>28</sup>.

It is sense that we have been most concerned with so far, and now we are to examine its function in the interaction with the other two. Imagination is the faculty under which sensible impressions are synthesized and apperception is the faculty through which the representations are judged as unified objects. We will explore each of these in turn.

Impressions from the world are received in sensibility and then taken up by the faculty called *imagination*. Kant defines imagination in general as “the faculty for representing an object even without its presence in intuition<sup>29</sup>.” In general, the imagination is the capacity to hold representations in the mind without being affected by the external world. While sensation is representation which arises from contact with an external source, imagination is a representation that occurs as a result of mental functioning, where no contact with an external object is involved. Imagination is also the faculty responsible for synthesis.

By synthesis in the most general sense, however, I understand the action of putting different representations together with each other and comprehending their manifoldness in one cognition. Such a synthesis is pure if the manifold is given not empirically but a priori (as is that in space and time)... Synthesis in general is, as we shall subsequently see, the mere effect of the imagination, of a blind though indispensable function of the soul, without which we would have no cognition at all, but of which we are seldom even conscious<sup>30</sup>.

For Kant, when we come into contact with something in the external world, we experience a representation called sensation. Yet we also have the capacity to represent the external world without direct contact, by way of imagination. It is in imagination that sense data

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<sup>28</sup> Kant, [B104/A79]

<sup>29</sup> Kant, [B151]

<sup>30</sup> Kant, [B103-4/A77-8]

is first combined or *synthesized*. However, sensation and synthesis are not sufficient to achieve cognition.

The synthesis of a manifold, however, (whether it be given empirically or *a priori*) first brings forth a cognition, which to be sure may initially still be raw and confused, and thus in need of analysis<sup>31</sup>.

The third and final mental faculty must also come into play before we can call the representation before the mind a *cognition*. Kant calls this third faculty *apperception* and its job is to *unify under judgment*. Kant writes that “a judgment is nothing other than the way to bring given cognitions to the objective unity of apperception<sup>32</sup>.” It is with the capacity for judgment that we are able to achieve cognitions which carry objective validity rather than merely subjective, i.e., where we begin to attribute some experience to *belong to an object* rather than being something which is happening to us in sensation.

That is the aim of the copula is in them; to distinguish the objective unity of given representations from the subjective. For this word designates the relation of the representations to the original apperception and its **necessary unity**, even if the judgment itself is empirical, hence contingent, e.g., "Bodies are heavy." By that, to be sure, I do not mean to say that these representations **necessarily** belong to one another in the empirical intuition, but rather that they belong to one another **in virtue of the necessary unity** of the apperception in the synthesis of intuitions, i.e., in accordance with principles of the objective determination of all representations insofar as cognition can come from them, which principles are all derived from the principle of the transcendental unity of apperception. Only in this way does there arise from this relation **a judgment**, i.e., a relation that is **objectively valid**, and that is sufficiently distinguished from the relation of these same representations in which there would be only subjective validity, e.g., in accordance with laws of association. In accordance with the latter I could only say "If I carry a body, I feel a pressure of weight," but not "It, the body, is heavy," which would be to say that these two representations are combined in the object," i.e., regardless of any difference in the condition of the subject, and are not merely found together in perception (however often as that might be repeated)<sup>33</sup>.

It is through judgment that we achieve objective validity, that is, cognition of objects.

Given only the branch of the human mind which is called sensibility, we have only the capacity

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<sup>31</sup> Kant, [B103/A77]

<sup>32</sup> Kant, [B141]

<sup>33</sup> Kant, [B142] \*emphasis is Kant's

to *receive* impressions of the external world. All that can be experienced by way of sensibility alone is the manner in which we (as human subjects) are affected. These impressions are combined by the faculty of imagination in accordance with the laws of association,<sup>34</sup> and individual and singular sensations are synthesized to form new representations. Still, we are capable of making only subjective claims until a judgment comes into play, where finally we can say that there is cognition of an object. In judgment, we attribute the representations received in sensibility to be properties of some object rather than a mere modification of the self. In this example, the representation of a body and the representations of heaviness are *unified* in one object, a representation which has objective validity and it not attributed to a mere modification of the subject's state.

For Kant, judgment occurs in accordance with the categories.

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; consequently the empirical power of cognition of human beings necessarily contains an understanding, which is related to all objects of the senses, though only by means of intuition, and to their synthesis by means of imagination, under which, therefore, all appearances as data for a possible experience stand<sup>35</sup>.

We see here, that Kant asserts that sense and synthesis have already come into play by the time we arrive at judgment. We also see that the *necessary unity* provided by the understanding equates to the categories, i.e., the pure concepts of the understanding. The understanding relates to judgment as sensibility relates to sense, and the categories are the pure concepts of the

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<sup>34</sup> Which Kant argues is a matter for the discipline of psychology to study [B152]

<sup>35</sup> Kant, [A119]

understanding just as the pure forms of space and time are the conditions under which the sensibility operates a priori.

### Conclusion

I have presented Kant's description in this chapter in three sections, each of which covers a distinct theme in the definition of sensations, these being the nature, form, and function of sensation in Kant's cognitive theory. The nature of sensation is presented by Kant as a merely subjective modification of sense which is singular and unextended, where the mind, by sense alone, has no objective cognition. Then Kant describes sensation as adhering to the form of intuition, i.e., space and time. Kant places sensation in sensibility and asserts that sensation itself is presented spatially and temporally. Finally, the function of sensation is to contribute to the cognition of objects. It does so by being available to imagination, where it is taken up and first synthesized, so that finally a judgment can come into play, where we achieve objective cognition.

Therefore, sensation is the beginning of all experience. However, if sensation is the beginning, then cognition can be called the end, i.e., the product of mental functioning. To fully understand sensation as presented by Kant, we examined the nature of sensations themselves, then the form they take in the mind, and the function of sense in the cognitive process as it relates to the other two faculties of the mind. In the next chapter we will examine the interactions between these three themes of describing sensation, that is, its nature, form, and function.

## CHAPTER 2 THE DEBATE ABOUT KANT'S SENSATIONS

### Introduction

Chapter 1 explored sensation in Kant's cognitive theory in accordance with three major themes: the nature, form, and function of sensation. This chapter follows the same three, interrelated themes. Along the lines of each theme, there is evidence that Kant accepted three basic descriptions of sensation:

[NATURE]	The nature of sensation is subjective, singular, and unextended.
[FORM]	Sensation takes the form of space and time.
[FUNCTION]	Sensations are not themselves objective, but factor in cognition of objects.

In the first chapter I presented evidence that leads us to believe Kant held each of these descriptions of sensation. This chapter explores the interactions between these three facets of Kant's sensations through an analysis of the debate that has arisen on the subject. The debate will be represented here by Rolf George, Lorne Falkenstein, and Apar Kumar. Each of these authors begins by accepting the truth of one of these three basic descriptions and points to evidence for it in Kant's writing. Each then proceeds to explore the consequences for the truth of the other two facets of sensation, finding conflict and incompatibility. They attempt to resolve these difficulties by exploring alternative interpretations of the other facets of Kant's description of sensation.

I will explore the positions of each author in chronological order so I can present their direct objections to the position of previous writers. This means I will begin with Rolf George, who starts with the function of sensation as it contributes to cognition of objects. Taking the functional role of sensation as its most important feature leads him to argue that Kant's cognitive theory is perhaps a constructivist one, in which sensations act as building blocks to be combined in intellectual synthesis, which does the work to construct objects of cognition. Then he presents

the problem as it arises with the form of sensation and argues that spatial properties of objects are also “constructed” from sensations by some intellectual heuristic, or rule of combination.

Then I will introduce Lorne Falkenstein, who critiques George’s constructivist approach for the way it deals with the form of sensation in Kant’s picture. Falkenstein thus begins with the form of sensation as his guiding principle, holding the spatial arrangement of sensations themselves as their defining feature. This leads him to conclude that the nature of sensation must be physical and that sensations must be intentional with respect to objects. Falkenstein argues that the physical aspect of sensation is what allows it to contribute to the cognition of objects with spatial properties and also that the physical aspect of sensation allows us to achieve object-directed cognition.

Finally, I will present the view of Apaar Kumar, who rejects Falkenstein’s view for taking sensations as physical rather than psychic or conscious events. Kumar takes the nature of sensation as consciousness to be its most important feature. Kumar then presents arguments for how Kant might have had sensations, as conscious events, factor in with their expected form and function. In this view, sensations are related to cognitions by degrees of conscious awareness in the subject. According to this understanding, both spatial properties of objects and object-directed cognition are achieved by an increased sphere of conscious awareness of that object.

The purpose of this exploration is to clarify the conflict which seems to arise between these main three facets of Kant’s sensations. I present these authors to provide examples of the consequences of prioritizing different features of sensations as they are presented in the Critique. There is evidence that Kant held each of these three to be true. This chapter is concerned with the reasons those three might be seen as incompatible.

## SECTION I: Beginning with the Function of Sensation

Rolf George begins with everything Kant has to say about the function of sensation as it factors into cognition of objects. He argues that Kant's description of sensation in this regard adheres to the principles of Sensationism<sup>36</sup>. Sensationism is essentially a constructivist view, where sensations are like building blocks which are combined to make cognitions. First I will examine the main tenets of Sensationism as they are presented by George, along with his arguments for placing Kant in this tradition. Then I will show how George interprets Kant's position on the other facets of sensation.

George's main argument is that Kant's presentation of sensation aligns him with constructivists such as Condillac and Leibniz. The central thesis of Sensationism, according to George, is that sensations "are non-intentional mental states in which no object, other than the state itself, is present to the mind, and that they are the foundations of empirical knowledge<sup>37</sup>." According to George, these aspects of Sensationism can be backed by Kant's writings in the Critique of Pure Reason and, indeed, are not widely disputed.

George then argues that Sensationism means accepting three main principles. More specifically, he claims that "in the sensationist tradition reference to objects requires that there be sensations, that they be in some sense retrievable through the imagination, and that a judgment comes into play<sup>38</sup>." George intends to classify Kant as a sensationist by showing that Kant's cognitive theory includes these three sensationist requirements. When George makes this argument, he is focusing on Kant's description of sensation as it functions in the cognitive

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<sup>36</sup> \*All references from Rolf George are taken from the *article titled Kant's Sensationism*, Rolf George (1981) unless otherwise stated.

<sup>37</sup> George, p. 230

<sup>38</sup> George, p. 247

process, that is, as it contributes to cognition of objects. Thus, the sensationist principles are claims regarding the requirements for achieving reference to objects<sup>39</sup>.

George asserts that the first uniquely sensationist requirement is that reference to objects includes an instance of sensation. Stated differently, the Sensationists believe sensation is a necessary condition for achieving object-directed cognition. For Kant, it is in cognition that we successfully achieve “reference to objects.” Thus, we can show Kant accepts the claim that sensations are necessary for reference to objects because it is clear that Kant took sensations to be necessary for cognition.

Now all intuition that is possible for us is sensible (Aesthetic), thus for us thinking of an object in general through a pure concept of the understanding can become cognition only insofar as this concept is related to objects of the senses<sup>40</sup>.

All cognition begins with sensation for Kant. He also says that without sensations, we would have only the pure concepts of the understanding. Without sensation, there would be only ideas: pure concepts through which objects are thought<sup>41</sup>. Ideas without any corresponding sensation given in sensibility are empty of empirical value. So, ideas (pure concepts) alone are not sufficient for reference to objects either. We saw in the first chapter that there is evidence that Kant believed reference to objects requires an instance of sensation, i.e., sensible intuition.

The second sensationist principle is that sensations must be retrieved, in some sense, in the imagination. As we saw in the first chapter, Kant recognized the imagination as the second of three independent faculties of the mind wherein sensible representations are reproduced and synthesized into new representations. Therefore, if George is to classify Kant as a sensationist he

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<sup>39</sup> George, Falkenstein, and Kumar all use the words “referential” and “intentional” to label cognitive states. To avoid connotations with linguistics and meaning I will use “object-directed” to label mental states which point to something *in the world*, rather than to the self. In presenting the positions of these three philosophers, I cannot avoid the words “referential” and “intentional” because they use that language. However, it should be noted that Kant himself does not use this language.

<sup>40</sup> Kant, [B146]

<sup>41</sup> Kant, [B377/A320]

must hold that it is sensations which are synthesized in the imagination and, secondly, that this synthesis is required for reference to objects.

Kant, if George is correct, must believe that reference to objects occurs through intellectual synthesis. In the following passage, Kant outlines the role of intellectual synthesis in cognition:

By synthesis in the most general sense, however, I understand the action of putting different representations together with each other and comprehending their manifoldness in one cognition... The synthesis of a manifold, however, (whether it be given empirically or a priori) first brings forth a cognition, which to be sure may initially still be raw and confused, and thus in need of analysis; yet the synthesis alone is that which properly collects the elements for cognitions and unifies them into a certain content...

Synthesis in general is, as we shall subsequently see, the mere effect of the imagination, of a blind though indispensable function of the soul, without which we would have no cognition at all, but of which we are seldom even conscious. Yet 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<sup>42</sup>.

In this passage, Kant defines synthesis as an act of combination, occurring as a simple and automatic function of the imagination, and as a necessary step in achieving cognition. He also says that “synthesis may initially still be raw and confused,” indicating that synthesis in itself is not sufficient for objective cognition. Rather, those synthesized combinations are not cognitions in the proper sense, this being achieved only after they have come under concepts, a process which occurs through judgment in the understanding.

Thus, George provides evidence that Kant would agree with this second sensationist requirement. For Kant, sensations do not refer to objects while cognitions do, and cognitions require both sensibility and understanding. It makes sense then, that since cognitions make reference to objects but sensations do not, that this object-directed cognition would occur by interaction with the other branch of cognitive functioning: the understanding.

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<sup>42</sup> Kant, [B103/A77]

The final requirement is that reference to objects does not occur until a judgment comes into play. George refers to the following passage to explain the function of judgment in Kant's cognitive theory:

... all manifold, insofar as it is given in one empirical intuition, is determined in regard to one of the logical functions for judgment, by means of which, namely, it is brought to a consciousness in general. But now the categories are nothing other than these very functions for judging, insofar as the manifold of a given intuition is determined with regard to them. Thus the manifold in a given intuition also necessarily stands under categories<sup>43</sup>.

This passage indicates that sensation and synthesis alone are not sufficient for cognitions in the proper sense (i.e., objective), which we can take to mean it is not sufficient for reference to objects. For Kant, synthesis is a basic and automatic function of the imagination. While synthesis is a necessary condition of cognition, it combines sensory input into "raw and sometimes confused" packages. These confused packages do not yet amount to objective cognition. As we saw in the previous chapter, Kant writes that judgment is necessary for unifying representations under a concept in order to achieve objective cognition. Thus, George argues that Kant's presentation of sensations satisfies all of the requirements necessary to place him within a sensationist, and thus constructivist, tradition.

George's strong focus on the function of sensation as part of the cognitive process has consequences for his views about the compatibility of this description of sensation with the descriptions Kant gives of its nature and form. When it comes to the nature of sensation, George's Sensationism leads him to accept Kant's description of the nature of sensations as mental states which are merely subjective i.e., refer only to the subject rather than referring to the object. George argues that Kant accepts Malebranche's insight that "the mental states initially

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<sup>43</sup> Kant, [B143]

induced are *non-intentional or non-referential*<sup>44</sup>.” Intentionality and reference both refer to the same thing about mental activity. When an object is present before the mind, we can say that the mental state is intentional. When there is no object before the mind, the mental state is non-intentional. George writes

I wish nevertheless to speak of sensations as non-intentional since they do not *have* objects, even if they *are* (in a sense) objects<sup>45</sup>.

What George is distinguishing, here, is the difference between two uses of the word object. The first use is in the subject/object dualism I mentioned in chapter 1. In this sense, the consciousness or mind which is aware of anything has an object before it, with object defined as something which a subject can hold in awareness. The second use of object denotes fully formed cognitive objects, things like apples and chairs, which require synthesis and judgment to achieve. George accepts that Kant made this distinction, and held sensations to be objects insofar as the subject is aware of them but do not themselves have objects as fully formed cognitions have objects.

George paints a picture of how Sensationism fits into the historical discussion of intentionality. He argues that Malebranche was the first to recognize sensations as states which do not make reference to external objects, and that this reference occurred by further mental processing rather than being present in the initial reception of the sensation. He believes the main philosophical issue at hand is how we come to attribute properties to the external world rather than mere products of the mind. Yet if it is something in the source or reception of those impressions, which, “can only be resolved only after it is explained how such an intentional state as having an idea before one’s mind, as opposed to merely having a sensation, are possible in the first place.”

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<sup>44</sup> George, p. 229

<sup>45</sup> George p. 229

George then introduces Condillac and his statue, a thought experiment in which there is a statue capable of sensory experience but for whom all senses can be “shut,” reopened one by one. At first, the statue is aware only of the fact the itself is affected. Initially, it does not have the ability to attribute sensation as coming from anything external to itself, it has only the impression that it is undergoing change in sensory experience. Yet what he is looking for is a description of the way we come to form impressions of objects external to ourselves. Condillac’s solution to this is to argue that the senses, working together, can deduce the existence of external objects. For Condillac, the sense of touch is especially important, as we can follow contours with the hand and this process informs the eyes as to which impressions belong together as one object.

The argument presented by George, then, is that “we can learn much about Kant’s theoretical philosophy by studying Condillac’s Sensationism. Both philosophers were puzzled by the same question: “how do we contract the habit, asks Condillac, or relating out sensations to outside things?”” George’s argument is that we gain a better understanding of Kant’s description of the nature of sensations as non-intentional mental events when we place him in the sensationist tradition and compare his philosophy to his sensationist predecessors. According to George, Kant holds the same basic premises about sensations as Condillac, yet instead of relying on the sense of touch to inform the other senses about *space*, Kant believes we achieve reference to external objects through intellectual synthesis. Thus, George argues that Kant’s constructivist description of the function of sensation in the cognitive process is crucial in answering the core Sensationist problem; how to move from non-intentional sensations to cognitions which achieve reference.

How we achieve reference to objects was particularly important question, specifically when it comes to the reconciliation of spatial properties of objects. As we saw with Condillac,

one way to arrive at the spatial form of external things is to posit that we come to know about space by our sense of touch. However, it is clear from chapter 1 that Kant does not take space to be discovered in sensation. Instead, George argues that Kant's attempt to solve the sensationist problem is to move from the "discovery" of space in sensations themselves to a construction of space in intellectual synthesis. Thus, when it comes to the form of sensation, George argues that Kant is a constructivist, not only when it comes to (cognitive) objects, but also when it comes to the spatial properties of those objects.

The debate about the form of sensation centers around making sense of unextended sensations situated in sensibility which takes the form of space and time. Further, sensations factor into cognition of objects which do have the property of extension, yet themselves contain no spatial information and thus cannot hold the key to their own arrangement into objects with spatial properties. All of the philosophers presented in this chapter interpret Kant differently on this matter. George holds to the evidence that sensations are initially unextended and singular. He does so by arguing that sensations are retroactively ordered in space and time during the construction of cognitions, which for Kant would occur in intellectual synthesis. In this way, they can remain unextended by nature and Kant was not contradicting himself when he argued sensations contained no spatial information. However, this view requires that Kant adopt constructivism about the spatial properties of cognized objects.

George argues that, since Kant adheres to the important sensationist principles, it is likely that he would commit to dealing with sensations in the same way the Sensationists did. He further argues that Sensationism was not readily accepted because early Sensationists failed to provide an adequate account of the way in which we came to hold visual representations of spatially extended objects. Like Kant, Sensationists took sensations to be singular and

unextended modifications of sense organs, yet they were not able to explain how sensations, as such, could contribute to cognition of the world as we experience it.

Condillac agreed that visual representations, initially received, contained no spatial information. He attempted to resolve the issue about spatial properties of objects by proposing that we come to visually represent the boundaries and extension of objects by our sense of touch. His proposal was that we can gather the information from the physical world and translate it into our visual representations of objects. George recognized that there is a problem with this, namely that this just moves the problem back a step. We run into the same question whether our spatial representations of objects are encountered in the visual or tactile organs. We run into the same problem when we consider the sense of touch; so far we have failed to explain how some sensory information is included in the representation of the object while others are not.

Kant objected to Leibniz and Condillac (constructivists), and George argues that Kant's disagreement with is on these grounds. Instead of dismissing constructivism entirely, George argues that Kant intended to oppose it only because he intended to propose a better intrinsic heuristic, i.e., rule of combination, by moving the heuristic out of the sensory organ itself and taking it instead to be a function of the mind. George writes:

[Kant] did not take the needed heuristic to reside in the selective ability of the sensory organ. Rather, he thought it to be a capacity of the imagination. It seems that he wants to claim that the imagination somehow knows how to identify and reproduce just that subset of a given sensory manifold that forms an image for an appropriate concept<sup>46</sup>.

George goes on to say that Kant makes no attempts to explain how the imagination might be capable of this. However, George interprets Kant's Second Analogy as an example of one such heuristic that allows for temporal ordering. Kant writes:

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<sup>46</sup> George, p. 247

I perceive that appearances succeed one another, i.e., that a state of things exists at one time the opposite of which existed in the previous state. Thus I really connect two perceptions in time. Now connection is not the work of mere sense and intuition, but is here rather the product of a synthetic faculty of the imagination, which determines inner sense with regard to temporal relations. This, however, can combine the two states in question in two different ways, so that either one or the other precedes in time; for time cannot be perceived in itself, nor can what precedes and what follows in objects be as it were empirically determined in relation to it. I am therefore only conscious that my imagination places one state before and the other after, not that the one state precedes the other in the object; or, in other words, through the mere perception the objective relation of the appearances that are succeeding one another remains undetermined<sup>47</sup>.

George argues that the concepts of cause and effect are used in the understanding for synthesizing and ordering sensations in time. Though Kant does not discuss any heuristic for spatial ordering, George argues that it makes sense for space and time to be constructed by similar processes, as they are both considered to be natural forms of all sensibility. For the Sensationist, intellectual synthesis does all the work. In dealing with spatial properties of objects, George argues that Kant would've argued they are constructed in intellectual synthesis.

George presents Sensationism as a constructivist account of cognition. As a consequence, he takes Kant to be a constructivist about space, yet we saw in the previous chapter that Kant takes space and time to be pure forms of sensibility. This indicates that spatial properties of objects come about as a necessary condition of the way they are received, not constructed retroactively in intellectual synthesis. Falkenstein begins at exactly this place, objecting to George on the grounds that his position ignores the importance of form in Kant's description of sensation.

## SECTION II: Beginning with the Form of Sensation

As George began with Kant's description of the functional role of sensation, Falkenstein begins with Kant's description of its form in sensibility. Falkenstein prioritizes space and time as

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<sup>47</sup> Kant, [B233/A188]

the form of sensation and proceeds from there to explore the consequences of this facet for the other two facets i.e., the nature and function of sensation. Thus, his basic premise is that Kant must arrive at spatial properties of object through the form of sensation in sensibility. He objects to George's position on the grounds that it compromises the most important feature of Kant's sensations.

Falkenstein argues that sensations, as part of sensibility, are subject to the forms of space and time. His argument is that sensations must occur in space, though he recognizes that, for Kant, sensations are not extended. Falkenstein argues that mental events do not have location, and certainly are not located relative to each other. He argues that this is the root of the conflict, yet he points to evidence in the Critique that we cannot gather spatial information from anywhere except the form of intuition.

He does this by first arguing that there are four possible sources of cognition, one of which is the form of intuition. Then he argues against all of the other options, ultimately concluding that the only option available is to accept that Kant held that sensations must be located in space by the form of intuition. Falkenstein's first premise is that there are four places Kant can look for knowledge of space:

Kant recognizes only two sources for human knowledge: sense intuition and intellectual synthesis of the sensory array (A50-2-B74-6). Our knowledge of space is no exception. If we do not first learn about it from noting the manner in which sensations are disposed in our intuitions, then there are only three other places to which we could turn: the sensations themselves, pure intellectual concepts (Kant's 'categories') or intellectual synthesis. To suppose, against all four of these alternatives, that our intuitions consist of various matters which are arrayed in space but which cannot properly be identified as sensations would be to postulate the existence of what are in effect extra-sensory intuitions – a decidedly un-Kantian option<sup>48</sup>.

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<sup>48</sup> Falkenstein, p. 72 \*\*All references from Lorne Falkenstein are taken from his article titled *Kant's Account of Sensation* (1990) unless otherwise stated.

Falkenstein goes on to explain that the information gathered in sensations themselves, pure intellectual concepts, and intellectual synthesis are inadequate for achieving cognition of objects with spatial properties. Thus, he concludes, spatial properties of objects must arise by the manner in which sensations are disposed in the intuition.

When it comes to sensations themselves, Kant is clear in the Critique of Pure Reason that sensations themselves are singular and have no extensive magnitude. Falkenstein goes on to argue that space cannot arise out of sensations themselves because knowledge of space is a priori. He argues

The notion that we might have sensations of space is also a non-starter. Kant explicitly says that space is not to be found in sensations (B208), and in any case his commitment to the a priori status of space could not be accommodated were space given in sensation<sup>49</sup>.

It is the definition of an a priori cognition that nothing of sensation can be found in it. Since sensations are the mark of empirical cognition, the a priori cognition of space would not be found in sensations themselves but would instead be devoid of any information from the senses.

Next, Falkenstein argues that knowledge of space cannot be found in the pure concepts of the understanding.

Taking space to be a pure concept imposed by understanding is even more in conflict with Kant's stated position... for in virtue of what rule would intellect array intuitions in space? It could not be because of any spatial characteristic of the experiences, if they have no such characteristics. Neither could it be because of any particular feature of the region of space, if space is perfectly homogenous...<sup>50</sup>

Here Falkenstein argues that spatial properties of objects cannot arise due to pure concepts unless the pure concepts have some way of arranging things in space. Because Kant's view is in conflict with this, Falkenstein argues that this option is unavailable to Kant.

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<sup>49</sup> Falkenstein, p. 72

<sup>50</sup> Falkenstein, p. 72

Finally, Falkenstein says that the argument that “there may be some non-spatial aspect to our sensations which allows intellect to synthesize them with an independently intuited spatial form is much more plausible<sup>51</sup>.” He places George in this camp, and directly opposes him by arguing that the sensations must be ordered by the manner in which they are received and denying that this ordering is constructed by some rule or heuristic of ordering that would occur in intellectual synthesis.

The route followed by George can claim textual support from the *Critique's* ‘Transcendental Deduction,’ where Kant hints that sensations are successive only in time (A99) and that their spatial order is due to the unity of apperception (B160n). The *Critique's* ‘Analogies of Experience’ likewise hint that spatial order is intellectually generated (A182-B226, A189-B324)... But there are problems with situating Kant in this tradition. His position, as he persistently states, is that space is a *form of intuition*<sup>52</sup>.

Thus, Falkenstein rejects George’s position on the grounds that this position is simply unsupported in Kant’s writing because it ignores his presentation of space as a form of sensible intuition. This means that spatial properties of (cognitive) objects are fundamentally tied to the form of sensibility, and thus that spatial properties of objects cannot be constructed.

So Falkenstein’s position begins with space and time as the form sensation must take. Our cognition of objects with spatial properties cannot be constructed, as George says, but must be inherent in the way sensations are received. According to Falkenstein, George’s position compromises (the most) important feature of Kant’s sensations. Falkenstein believes this requires radically different interpretations of the nature and function of sensation in Kant’s cognitive picture.

As for the nature of sensation, Falkenstein believes the consequence of adhering to space as the form of sensations themselves requires that Kant hold sensations as physical states rather than mental ones. He supports his conclusion that Kant must take sensations as physical events

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<sup>51</sup> Falkenstein, p. 72

<sup>52</sup> Falkenstein, p. 73

by first providing textual evidence that Kant took sensations *themselves* to be received in space, as we have seen. Then, he argues that mental events cannot be received spatially alongside each other in the way that physical events can. These premises together, if correct, support his claim that Kant must take sensations to be physical states.

According to this argument, sensations must be tied to the physical body because mental events would not adequately be presented as having location.

My representations may certainly refer to or describe objects with spatial properties, and they may themselves occur after one another in time, but they cannot themselves have spatial properties. The book may be to the left of the inkwell, but my representation of the book is not to the left of my representation of the inkwell<sup>53</sup>.

Because he believes taking sensations as mental events removes the possibility of sensations being located in space, he concludes that Kant must have meant to define sensation in terms of the physiological reaction that happens in the body of the perceiver. Thus, sensations take spatial form in their connection to a specific site in the sensory organ. Falkenstein believes this is the only way to resolve the problem.

Falkenstein presents physicalism about sensation as an unappealing concession Kant must make in order to maintain coherency of his position. Either Kant is stuck with an incoherent theory of cognition, or else he accepts physicalism about sensations and undermines his own project. Falkenstein writes that the implications for the rest of Kant's theory are grim:

It is clear that he took sensations to be physical states of the body of the perceiving subject. But that he fully appreciated just how radically this undermines the way of ideas is dubious<sup>54</sup>.

Furthermore, Falkenstein states that physicalism about sensations is not widely accepted around the time Kant is writing:

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<sup>53</sup> Falkenstein, p. 68

<sup>54</sup> Falkenstein, p. 87

This consequence may well be surprising, especially if seen from the Cartesian perspective, where cognition is taken to be a purely psychic process<sup>55</sup>.

Falkenstein presents physicalism as Kant's only option in making sense of these conflicts, yet he also recognizes that physicalism about sensations is not something Kant would have accepted. He acknowledges that taking this position weakens Kant's position on ideas as concepts of reason. It further requires that Kant accept that cognition relies on a physical body when Kant argues at length against assumptions about material or objective existence.

Falkenstein's argument for sensations as physical events is not based on textual evidence that Kant held this view. Rather, it is based on lack of evidence to the contrary, along with the fact that physicalism about sensations helps Kant avoid what seem to be the unresolvable conflicts on the form and function of sensation in his position.

There is, however, no support for identifying sensations with mental events in the few, brief remarks Kant makes on the ontology of sensations. At A19-B34 he describes sensations as 'effects of objects on the representative capacity,' but this is an expression so broad it could as well apply to electrical impulses in the nerves as to thoughts in the mind. The same hold for his later definition of sensation as 'modifications of the state of the subject' (A320-B377)<sup>56</sup>.

Falkenstein also highlights evidence that Kant acknowledged the physiological component of sensation, but the brunt of his argument is that Kant is committed to this on the grounds that he cannot resolve the conflict with the form of sensation without viewing sensations as physical properties.

Before Kant can be convicted of being involved in an absurdity here, something more needs to be established: that by 'sensation' (ontologically considered) Kant meant to refer to something purely psychic, to which spatial determinations do not apply. The conflict between the spatiality of sensations and the aspatiality of mental events can, after all, easily be resolved by simply denying that sensations are mental events<sup>57</sup>.

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<sup>55</sup> Falkenstein, p. 64

<sup>56</sup> Falkenstein, p. 83

<sup>57</sup> Falkenstein, p. 83

With this, Falkenstein concludes that Kant must accept that sensations are physical events in the body of the subject. The important thing is that, for Falkenstein, Kant must define sensations physically, and the effect from an object is necessarily a physical effect, because without the physical correlation to objects (in the world), sensations would not be received already ordered and arranged in space, as the form of intuition requires.

Furthermore, Falkenstein believes another consequence of taking sensations as physical states is that Kant is also required to accept the distinction between sensations and sensible qualities, where sensations are the physiological effects on the body of the perceiver and sensible qualities are the experience of those effects.

Sensible qualities are ‘secondary qualities’ which could not plausibly have been taken to be real qualities of any physical object, including the human body, by any early modern philosopher. But it is equally implausible to suppose that they could be effects on the mind, so that the mind would literally become red or wine-tasting when it has these sensations. And even if this strange possibility were admitted, some sensible qualities (colours and tactile sensations, at least) are located and arrayed in space, which would entail the even more unacceptable thesis that the mind, in taking on these qualities, must also take on extension and shape.

The only route open, short of ascribing inconsistent views to Kant, is to take sensations as effects on the subject and sensations as sensible qualities to be two different things. Sensible qualities are best accounted for, not as effects on the subject, but as the intentional objects of such effects<sup>58</sup>.

He argues here that sensible qualities such as taste and color cannot be effects on the mind or effects on the body. If sensible qualities are not physical events, they cannot be sensations. Thus for Falkenstein Kant is required to distinguish between these two. As with his argument for sensations as physical states, Falkenstein argues that this interpretation is necessary in order to avoid a contradiction in Kant’s view rather than showing evidence that Kant meant to take sensations and sensible qualities as different things. Falkenstein believes Kant conflates the two under the term sensation, but that Kant’s view can be rescued by inserting this distinction.

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<sup>58</sup> Falkenstein, from *Kant’s Intuitionism*, p. 128

Falkenstein believes there is room in Kant's theory for this distinction. Kant discusses both the matter of intuition and the matter of appearance. Falkenstein argues that Kant meant for sensations to be the matter of intuition, while sensible qualities are the matter of appearance. These two are related to one another by 'correspondence.' There has been debate about the nature of 'correspondence' (or the relationship, in general) between Kant's sensations and other things, especially objects, which Falkenstein believes are the matter of appearance.

According to Falkenstein, sensations and sensible qualities *correspond* on the basis of their intensive magnitude.

One and the same intensive magnitude of sensation, in other words, is thought of or intended in one way in perception, in another way in objective experience. Thus, the colour quality thought in perception is not an effect on the subject, but an object of appearance that the subject thinks of or intends as an ultimate result of being affected... But the colour quality also expresses a certain intensive magnitude, and this intensive magnitude corresponds to something actually given in intuition as sensation<sup>59</sup>.

Here Falkenstein argues that sensations and sensible properties cannot be the same thing for Kant. Under this view, sensations are physiological and belong to intuition while sensible qualities are particular experiences of objects such as colors, tastes, and smells. Falkenstein argues here that these two are connected to each other by intensive magnitude. Sensations and sensible qualities both have intensive magnitude, and this intensive magnitude is the same thing for both. Sensible qualities, then, arise because of the effects on the subject which occur in sensation, and they correspond to the extent that they share the same intensive magnitude.

For Falkenstein, then, a sensible quality is the object of sensation. In other words, sensations are intentional, or achieve reference to sensible qualities. This means that sensations factor in cognition as physical events which are intentional representations of things in the world. For Falkenstein, sensations *make reference to* sensible qualities, even though they themselves are

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<sup>59</sup> Falkenstein, from *Kant's Intuitionism*, p. 130

effects on the subject. This is directly opposed to George's view that sensations are non-intentional mental states.

Falkenstein's view does not negate Kant's view that sensations are subjective modifications, but it does take this to mean something different than George (and later Kumar) takes it to mean. Subjective, in one sense, points to the experiencer or perceiver. One way to think of consciousness is to say that any instance of awareness has a fundamental duality. One side of this duality is that which *is aware* and the other is that which it is *aware of*. When discussing this duality, we would call that which is aware the *subject* or experiencer. We would call that which the subject is aware of the *object* of experience. When we discuss subjectivity in this sense we mean to denote a consciousness which has awareness of something, and specifically we are referring to the aspect of that occurrence which pertains to the experiencer (rather than what s/he is experiencing).

Subjective can also be used differently. In we can say that something is subjective to denote that which is true or real from the perspective of an individual. Objective, as it's opposite, would denote that which is true or real apart from the perspective of any individual. Falkenstein argues that Kant must take sensations to be physical events. This assertion requires that essential definition of sensation is not a description of consciousness. Taking sensations to be physical events rather than mental ones requires interpreting Kant as claiming that sensations are subjective modifications in only the second sense, as in, real from the perspective of the experiencer, and not in the first, as this would require taking sensations as instances of consciousness.

Falkenstein makes the distinction between sensations and sensible qualities to account for each of these. Sensible qualities are subjective in the first sense, meaning, they are things the

subject experiences or is aware of. Sensations, then, as physical states, relate to the subject but are not themselves intentional objects of conscious awareness (experiences) in the same way that, for example, the color red is experienced in conscious awareness.

### SECTION III: Beginning with the Nature of Sensation

Kumar begins with the nature of sensation as it is described by Kant. He attempts to preserve sensations as Kant described them without accepting that Kant conflated sensations with sensible qualities. In direct opposition to Falkenstein, Kumar provides extensive evidence from Kant's writings to show that Kant took sensations to be non-referential and non-durational (not extended in time). Falkenstein does acknowledge those facets of Kant's description of sensation, but he believes it is necessary that Kant conflated sensations and sensible qualities under the same term sensation, and that we must distinguish between the non-referential and referential aspects of sensation i.e., between sensible qualities and sensation. Even then, for Falkenstein, sensible qualities belong to the objects as the matter of appearance.

Kumar's view takes sensations as subjective in the sense of an experiential subject/object duality i.e., Kumar argues that sensations and sensible qualities are the same thing for Kant. Instead of accepting the distinction between them made by Falkenstein, Kumar presents an alternative way of explaining how the nature of sensations as conscious events can fit with the form of sensations in intuition and the function of sensation in forming cognition. He argues that sensations are mental events, or instances of consciousness, where the move from sensation to perception to cognition is a matter of a shift in our awareness, further arguing that we discover spatial properties of objects by the same shift in awareness. He proposes this shift-in-

consciousness as an alternative to the constructivist account that Falkenstein rejected, while preserving Kant's definition of sensation as mental or conscious phenomena.

Kumar argues, like George did, that Kant took sensations to be non-referential. Kumar objects that Falkenstein does not adequately consider Kant's explicit statements that sensation is *merely* subjective. If sensations are merely subjective, all properties ascribed to them refer back to the subject only, and though these properties arise in connection with some affecting object, they do not refer to or describe that object. Sensation, then, as "merely subjective" would not be referential i.e., would not have an object.

Kumar finds particular fault with Falkenstein's argument that there is room in Kant's theory for sensations to be referential because of his interpretation of the passage at A320/B376. Kumar takes Falkenstein's main argument for the possibility of referential sensations to be as follows:

At A320/B376, Kant characterizes *Empfindung* as relating solely to the state of the subject. Falkenstein admits that *Empfindung* is characterized as a subjective feeling in this passage... However, Falkenstein rejects the idea that this passage represents Kant's official definition of *Empfindung*... Thus, according to Falkenstein, the characterization of *Empfindung* in this passage should be discounted if our aim is to comprehend Kant's definition of *Empfindung*<sup>60</sup>.

He follows this with a refutation of Falkenstein's argument. Kumar disagrees with Falkenstein that the definition of sensation as merely subjective can be dismissed. Falkenstein believes there is room in Kant's theory for referential sensation because at A320/B376 Kant's aim is to distinguish his use of the term "idea" from less precise definitions used by other philosophers.

Falkenstein writes:

[The passage at A320/B376] has little to do with explaining the role of sensation, intuition, or concepts in cognition. It was not written for that purpose, but for the purpose of correcting the tendency – most vicious in Locke and Hume – of employing the term

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<sup>60</sup> Kumar, p. 271 \*All references from Apaar Kumar are taken from his article titled "Kant's Definition of Sensation" unless otherwise stated.

‘idea’ to designate almost any mental representation. In accord with this purpose one of Kant’s concerns is to point out that ‘idea’ should not be employed to designate a feeling in the subject, and to this end he distinguished ‘idea’ from ‘sensation.’ It is just that ‘subjective feeling’ is not the *only* sense of ‘sensation.’ But Kant does not remark on that here because his purpose is not to explain what sensations are but what ideas are<sup>61</sup>.

Kumar counters this by arguing that even if Kant’s intention was to clarify the term ‘idea,’ it would not lead him to incorrectly characterize related terms. In fact, writes Kumar, Kant should be more likely to correctly define sensation in its general use rather than in specific characterization of it as part of the receptive faculty of sensibility. Kumar further supports his opposition to Falkenstein by pointing to a reflection of Kant’s [R2836] in which he again characterizes sensation as merely subjective, and there it is not in order to clarify his use of the term ‘idea’<sup>62</sup>.

Kumar begins with the nature of sensation. Kumar highlights many different passages in the Critique which support the view that Kant took sensations to be non-referential. There are multiple passages where Kant discusses sensations as “merely subjective,” as “alterations or movement” in the perceiving subject, and as a neutral feeling. He concludes from this evidence that Kant intended sensation to be non-referential, in direct opposition to Falkenstein.

As we saw in the first chapter, there are passages where Kant defines sensation as “merely subjective modification.” Kumar adds to this by providing further evidence from the reflections along the same lines<sup>63</sup>. There is substantial evidence that Kant intended to characterize sensations as the effect on the subject rather than as something which makes reference to an object in the world. Kumar emphasizes that the influence of the object is a necessary condition of sensation, but the experience of sensation, or the nature of it, does not belong to that object but to the affected subject. Kant defines sensation in terms of subjective

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<sup>61</sup> Falkenstein p. 79

<sup>62</sup> Kumar, pp. 272-274

<sup>63</sup> Kumar, pp. 275-276

modification. This definition of sensation is incompatible with sensation as something which refers to an object in the world.

Kumar goes on to point to passages in the reflections where Kant defines sensation in terms of some alteration or movement<sup>64</sup>. Kant explicitly defines sensation as a “differential” which has “nothing positive and no border, rather bounds<sup>65</sup>.” Kumar argues that we should take this characterization of sensation to mean that sensation is non-referential. He argues:

“The real of consciousness must be considered merely subjective, since the notion of synthesis is merely subjective for Kant. Thus, if *Empfindung* is real, and the real when associated with consciousness is merely subjective, then *Empfindung*, construed as a differential at R5582, must also be merely subjective (= non-referential).”

He also points to passages in the reflections where Kant refers to sensation as “alteration” or “movement.” Kumar argues that Kant characterized sensation as “the non-referential change in the representational quality of the subject<sup>66</sup>.” If sensations are defined in terms of a change in the representations of the perceiver, they cannot also be ascribed to some object in the world.

Kumar then supports the nature of sensations as non-referential by pointing to AA XV: R619, a reflection Kant published in 1769. Here Kant distinguishes sensations as feelings in the subject from appearances, which relate to outer objects<sup>67</sup>. As further evidence that Kant took sensations to be non-referential, Kumar presents a historical argument. He writes that Kant was heavily influenced by the work of philosopher Tetens, and nowhere does he criticize or directly set himself apart from Tetens’ view on the matter. Therefore, it seems to make sense that Kant agreed with Tetens that sensations should be taken (solely) as a neutral feeling in the perceiver.

Indeed, Falkenstein’s tack is to *find room for* sensations as referring to objects rather than providing evidence that Kant explicitly thought of them that way. The reason for this is his belief

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<sup>64</sup> Kumar, pp.277-280

<sup>65</sup> Kant, [R5582]

<sup>66</sup> Kumar, p. 279

<sup>67</sup> Kumar, p. 281

that sensations must be physical events because that is the only option available to Kant when confronted with the difficulties of reconciling the nature of sensation with its form and function. Kumar emphasizes the nature of sensation as merely subjective conscious or psychic phenomena and proceeds from there to find another way of explaining the form and function of them in Kant's theory. If Falkenstein is wrong about the necessity of sensations as physical events and the distinction between sensation and sensible qualities, the necessity of *making room for* sensations as referential is no longer an issue.

Kumar presents a view of sensation which distinguishes between different types of consciousness. With this position, Kumar attempts to reconcile the subjective nature of sensation and the form it takes (space and time). He argues that Kant's writing can be more accurately understood if we consider sensations as obscurely conscious phenomena. Kumar arrives at the definition of sensations as obscurely conscious by examining Kant's comparisons of them with related terms; perception and cognition.

For Kumar, the shift from sensation to perception occurs as a move from obscurely conscious phenomena (sensation) to clearly conscious phenomena (perception). Kumar further argues that cognition factors in as a third shift in awareness, from clearly conscious perception to distinctly conscious cognition. In this model, perception is an intermediate between sensation and consciousness.

Perceptions are always clearly conscious; cognitions require perceptions and are always distinctly conscious; and *Empfindungen* must always be obscurely conscious<sup>68</sup>.

Kumar argues that Kant's cognitive theory describes shifting levels of consciousness from sensation to perception to cognition. In this view, we are less conscious of sensations than cognition, or at least differently conscious of them.

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<sup>68</sup> Kumar p. 297

Kumar's view about the nature of sensation as obscurely conscious influences his views on the function of it as it factors into the formation of cognition. He presents the example of the painting to explain how sensation factors into cognition.

A minor figure in a Pieter Brueghel painting that has a plethora of shapes and colors can exist without my being conscious of it, even if I am clearly conscious of the painting as a whole. When I am clearly conscious of the whole painting, the minor figure cannot be considered a nothing for me, because it contributes to my experience of the whole painting. And yet it is not nothing for me either. It can become something for me only if I can perceive it clearly as an individual object. In other words, I am obscurely conscious of the minor figure in my clear consciousness of the painting as a whole, and I can become clearly conscious of this minor figure only if I make the effort to perceive it clearly<sup>69</sup>.

Based on this example, we can be clearly conscious of some object and obscurely conscious of some of its parts. If perceptions are clearly conscious, we have a certain level of awareness of those perceptions. Individual sensations factor on as part of those perceptions of which they are made. In the painting example, we are obscurely conscious of the minor figure, but only insofar as it is part of the composition of the painting of which we have clear consciousness. Yet Kumar argues that it is possible to become clearly conscious of the minor figure. Based on this example, it seems that for Kumar the key defining difference between sensations, perceptions, and cognitions is the level of awareness they receive in consciousness.

Kumar recognizes other definitive differences as well. Perceptions must always be accompanied by sensation for Kumar because it is in perception where we achieve the "indeterminate object," as the role of perception in cognition is to relate sensation to an object in space and time. He writes:

For Kant, a perception must always be accompanied by an *Empfindung*, and involves the application of an *Empfindung* to an object in general, thereby engendering an "indeterminate" object. Indeterminacy here means that the subject can perceive a spatiotemporal object, but cannot represent it *as* something, or cognize it. Further, empirical cognition is the determination of an object by the understanding. The

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<sup>69</sup> Kumar, pp. 299-300

understanding cannot relate directly to obscurely conscious *Empfindungen*, but synthesizes the clearly conscious indeterminate objects of perception. Therefore, perception must mediate between *Empfindung* and cognition<sup>70</sup>.

Here Kumar argues that the process of moving from sensation to cognition is more than a mere shift in awareness. He takes sensation, perception, and cognition as definitively different in their level of consciousness, but also as playing different functions. Under Kumar's view, we are aware of sensations only obscurely, and it is in perception that the subject first perceives a spatiotemporal object. In cognition, that spatiotemporal object in general is brought under the concepts of the understanding. Thus, for Kumar, perceptions are always accompanied by sensations and cognitions are always accompanied by perceptions. They proceed in order from sensation to perception to cognition, where perceptions are necessary intermediaries linking sensations to an object in general which occurs in space and time.

This view of sensation also leads Kumar to take a different approach to the issue of sensations and their form. Kumar writes that "although Kant does not say this explicitly, *Empfindungen* should be viewed essentially as the matter of consciousness<sup>71</sup>." He argues that sensations must be the matter of consciousness because they cannot be either the matter of intuition nor the matter of appearance. He believes they cannot be the matter of appearance because that would mean sensations belong to the objects which affect the subject rather than as modifications of the subject.

However, Kumar believes they cannot be the matter of intuition either, arguing that intuitions are "fully temporal in the sense of having both extensive and intensive magnitude<sup>72</sup>." He argues that Kant refers to sensations as the matter of intuition because the matter of intuition is the same as the matter of perception and, according to his view, sensations are present

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<sup>70</sup> Kumar, p. 301

<sup>71</sup> Kumar, p. 305

<sup>72</sup> Kumar, p. 306

whenever perceptions occur. Given this framework, Kumar believes it is in perception and not sensation that a representation is related to space and time. This view avoids the physiological characterization of sensations by dealing with spatial properties and the function of sensation in cognition differently, but it does so under the assumption that perception mediates between sensation and cognition and is ascribed all of the formal and functional roles that sensation might have had.

### Conclusion

In this chapter I presented three different criticisms of Kant's description of sensation. Each philosopher takes a position which begins with one facet of Kant's description and argues that the other facets are incompatible or problematic. In the following chapter, I defend Kant's position against these criticisms by arguing that Kant cannot accept the proposed interpretations of these philosophers. In doing so, I argue that all three facets of Kant's description of sensation are compatible when we have a correct understanding of Kant's views on the relationship between mind and world.

## CHAPTER 3 MAKING SENSE OF KANT'S SENSATIONS

### Introduction

Each philosopher presented in the preceding chapter began with a different aspect of Kant's description of sensation. From there, he argued that the consequence of accepting this essential component of sensation is that we must do away with something else which Kant seems to ascribe to sensations. That is, each philosopher begins with either the nature, the form, or the function of Kant's sensations and then proceeds to find himself in conflict with one or more of the others. These conflicts are "resolved" with intricate reinterpretations of the text regarding all but the limited definition of sensation with which the author began. In this chapter I argue that Kant can preserve all three facets of sensation as it is described in the critique of pure reason.

Sensation becomes so crucial to cognitive theory because, whatever sensations amount to, they are the bridge between our mind and the world. It is by sensation that we form impressions of the world. Thus, a description of sensation is also a description of our connection to the world. It is this issue we must investigate now. The fundamental puzzle in all of this is determining the relationship between ourselves and the world we inhabit and sensation sits right in the middle of it. It is Kant's business to lay out a theory of the precise workings of this interaction. Right away, we can distinguish between two things: ourselves and the world.

This business about sensation is all about deciding where the various mental phenomena belong. Based on this picture of the world, we have two categories to put each thing in. We can say something belongs to the person or that it belongs to the external world. What does it mean to say something *belongs* to one of these categories? I use this to signify the category of origin

for a certain aspect of experience. Kant makes the distinction between reality and existence. Something *exists* when it continues to *be*, even without a person perceiving it. Alternatively, things are *real* when they are dependent on a person's experience of them. Let us consider the visual field only for one moment. If I see a chair, I might ask myself whether it exists. If I ask whether it exists, I'll need to know whether it is still there when I look away, so I close my eyes and ask a friend 'is the chair still there?' The matter of existence is slightly more complicated for Kant, because, in his case, he is asking what exists outside of all human experience. – 'what belongs to the world without ourselves?' It is more complicated is that there is no 'friend' to ask; we cannot step outside of human experience to "view" the world as it is apart from ourselves. Existence is a term used to denote things which *are* aside from human experience of them. With regard to something's existence, it is what remains of it when the human aspect is removed.

We have also another term and that is the real. Reality refers to things which are experienced by humans. Thus, with regard to something's reality, if the human aspect is removed, then there is nothing left to discuss. Reality is something in experience which, although it may be related to or even caused by the object, ceases when the human ceases to have the experience. Thus, if sensation is our connection to the outside world, then there is a fundamental duality between the person and the world which is inherent in even the most basic definition of sensation. Each of the philosophers mentioned in this thesis accepts this fundamental duality, and has different assumptions about each side.

Now even Falkenstein, who argues that the essence of sensation must be defined in physical terms, recognized a conscious or experiential aspect of sensation which occurs in the mind. In any case, cognition is a capacity of the mind, so if sensation is to contribute to cognition

it must provide information by experience which can be represented mentally. This chapter critically evaluates sensation as the connection between the human mind and the world as it exists outside of human experience. This is necessary because the conflicts in Kant's definition of sensation arise due to the fact that each author assumes that objective, physical, and spatial properties belong to the external world, when Kant argues that they belong to the human mind. My main conclusion is that Kant's three faceted definition of sensation is coherent, and that conflict among the three facets of sensation are due to a misinterpretation of Kant's view regarding the relationship between the human mind and the external world.

#### SECTION I: Kant Cannot Be Sensationist

The strength of George's Sensationism is that it emphasizes direct evidence that Kant describes sensations as non-referential phenomena whose function in forming cognition is to fall under synthesis and then judgement to allow the subject to achieve cognition of an object. However, George deviates from the evidence in Kant's writing in the second part of his argument, when he assumes spatial properties of objects are constructed in intellectual synthesis by the same process through which the objects themselves are constructed. Kant writes that sensation takes the form of space as a necessary condition of human experience. If we adhere to this, spatial properties cannot arise by being put together or discovered by way of intellectual synthesis the same way as sensible properties. Properties of objects which pertain to their spatial arrangement must arise due to the way they are received in sensibility.

George's conclusion that spatial properties are constructed by a heuristic of intellectual synthesis is incompatible with Kant's view that space is a form of intuition. George arrives at this conclusion because he believes spatial and temporal properties of objects are cognized in the

same way that sensible properties of objects are cognized. In cognition for Kant, the content of sensation (tastes, smells, etc) is combined and ordered in intellectual synthesis. If spatial properties were the same, they, too, would follow this model. I argue that maintaining Kant's description of the function of sensation does not require that we take a constructivist account of spatial properties because there is evidence in Kant's writing that he took sensible properties and spatial properties to have different origins and to be cognized by different processes.

Sensations are modifications of the sense organs i.e., taste, touch, smell, sight, sound. Thus, sensible properties are those properties which can be ascribed to objects that first arise due to a modification of sense e.g., bitterness, softness, redness. Spatial properties, on the other hand, deal with the location of a thing and the amount of space it takes up (extensive magnitude). Kant distinguishes between these two types of properties:

So if I separate from the representation of a body that which the understanding thinks about it, such as substance, force, divisibility, etc., as well as that which belongs to sensation, such as impenetrability, hardness, color, etc., something from this empirical intuition is still left for me, namely extension and form. These belong to the pure intuition, which occurs a priori, even without an actual object of the senses or sensation, as a mere form of sensibility in the mind<sup>73</sup>.

Here Kant states that different properties of objects arise due to two fundamentally different stems of cognitive function in the human mind. The difference is not in the mental functioning of each stem but rather the origin. Sensibility is receptive while understanding is active. Things such as impenetrability, hardness, and color, which arise due to modification of the sense organs, belong to sensation. Separate from these are the properties pertaining to extension and form, which arise as a result of the pure intuition and do not rely on any content of our experience i.e., any particular sensory experience.

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<sup>73</sup> Kant, [B34/A20]

That sensible and spatial information both require combination in the understanding may be the reason for George's confusion in arguing that spatial properties of objects are constructed in cognition as sensible properties. Individual instances of sensible and spatial intuitions require combination in understanding in order to be tied together in the cognition of a single object. However, it goes against Kant's definition of spatial form to say that spatial properties of objects are discovered by the process of intellectual synthesis, or to say that which pertains to an object in space arises as a product of intellectual synthesis. The spatial form of every representation belongs to the non-sensible (pure) intuition *a priori*. Thus the content for cognizing an object with spatial properties cannot belong to the work of the understanding, and must also be distinguished from the very content of the representation (i.e., sensation). So, although Kant argues that spatial information is combined together into *spatial properties* and "objectified" in the understanding, the origin of extension and form belongs to pure intuition.

Sensation is the content of any empirical representation, initially received as a unity with no extensive magnitude, meaning, it does not take up multiple spaces or multiple times. Yet it is still given in a location; it still occurs in a space and at a time. Something can occur in space without taking up a multitude of spaces. First, Kant directly states in the Anticipation of Perception that

Apprehension, merely by means of sensation, fills only an instant (if I do not take into consideration the succession of many sensations). As something in the appearance, the apprehension of which is not a successive synthesis, proceeding from the parts to the whole representation, it therefore has no extensive magnitude; the absence of sensation in the same moment would represent this as empty, thus =0<sup>74</sup>.

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<sup>74</sup> Kant, [B209/A167]

If a sensation *fills* an instant, it is located at some point in time. Likewise, Kant discusses the *absence of sensation* as an *emptiness*. If a moment is empty (of *reality*<sup>75</sup>) when sensation is not present and full when sensation is present, sensation occurs in time. We can see that in this same passage Kant states that any single sensation does not take up multiple moments (or spaces), it still fills just one as a singular reality.

Distinguishing between the origin of spatial properties (the form of pure intuition) and sensible properties (empirical intuition) allows us to maintain Kant's original description of the function of sensation in the cognitive process without adopting a view which states that spatial features of objects are discovered or produced by the process of combination. At the root of this is that our sensible representations are always received already in space and time. Spatial properties may be attached to objects in understanding, but the raw spatial data for doing so is present in the initial receptivity of any representation.

In addition to the fact that both sensible and spatial properties are attributed to objects by combination, I believe George makes the assumption that they are derived from the same source because of the history of Sensationism. George presents this history as a process of answering the question of reference to objects, that is, how we move from non-referential sensations (which refer only to ourselves) to mental states which reference objects (which are represented as something other than ourselves).

The Sensationist problem occurs because at the core of sensationist belief is the premise that everything in experience consists in sensation. The sensationist problem occurs when one also includes the premise that all sensation is non-referential with respect to objects, i.e., is a statement about ourselves. If everything must be grounded in sensation, and sensation never

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<sup>75</sup> Kant goes on to argue that we can never prove empty space or time by experience, because even if nothing *real* (i.e., sensible) is present there may still be something extended into that space, just not something perceptible to us.

makes reference to any object external to the subject, we have a system from which there is no escape. Only sensations are possible for us and all sensation refers to ourselves. The conclusion we must accept along with these two premises is that we can only ever experience ourselves.

The obvious drawback of this position is that we must deny one of these premises in order to get outside ourselves and achieve reference to objects. George recognizes that Kant resolves this issue in his manner of dealing with space. However, it is because Kant takes representations of space to be intuitions rather than sensations themselves and not, as George argues, because Kant takes the spatial ordering of sensations as a function of the mind rather than a function of sense. Kant takes space as a necessary condition of experience rather than something which comes from sensations themselves.

Kant states that all knowledge begins with experience, even in experience of the senses, yet he does not mean that sensation is all there is. Inherent in any experience along with the content (sensation) is its form (space and time). Thus for Kant there is something else, namely pure intuition. We also saw that we cannot represent *empty* space either, so the sensory content of experience and its location in space occur together as the matter and form of experience.

George interprets Kant as providing a theory which is an extension of Condillac's, solving the problem of reference by claiming that it occurs in intellectual synthesis. Yet if this were the case, if the only input for intellectual synthesis was data which referred only to modifications of the self, i.e., *self-referencing* inputs, we always run into the same problem: How do we get from self-directed or *subjective* sensations, to object-directed, or *objective* cognitions? For Kant, it is the *form of space* which provides us with outer sense – a spatial framework which allows the mind to cognize things outside ourselves:

Space is not an empirical concept that has been drawn from outer experiences. For in order for certain sensations to be related to something outside me (i.e., to something in

another place in space from that in which I find myself), thus in order for me to represent them as outside one another, thus not merely as different but as in different places, the representation of space must already be their ground.<sup>7</sup> Thus the representation of space cannot be obtained from the relations of outer appearance through experience, but this outer experience is itself first possible only through this representation<sup>76</sup>.

George is correct that Kant accepts the same cognitive *functioning* of sensation as the sensationists, where all experience begins in sensation and then is synthesized in the intellect and judged, and furthermore that it is through this process we achieve reference to objects. Yet where the sensationists run into a problem of self-reference, Kant is able to resolve this by setting himself apart from sensationists their most fundamental premise, that our receptive faculty is limited to our sensory apparatus.

Kant's solution, instead, is in setting the content of experience as separate from its form, where the content (sensation) continues to refer only to oneself yet it arises within a spatial and temporal framework, i.e., takes the form of space and time. It is the formal nature of experience which eventually allows us to make reference to objects and attach to them the property of being external to ourselves. Kant's view is that an intuition of the pure forms of space and time are already present even before and aside from any particular instance of sensation. Thus, Kant's position is not presented as an extension of Sensationism (with the added improvement of some heuristic of spatial ordering). Rather, Kant presents a fundamental difference in the way we experience the world.

The input of the human mind, for the Sensationist, is limited to the content which can be determined by sensation alone. Kant's insight into this interaction is that the mind has also, *a priori*, the determinations of space and time which are instances of receptivity (inner and outer sense), yet do not originate in the content of sensations themselves. Rather, they are inherent in

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<sup>76</sup> Kant, [B38/A23]

the *form* which sensation must take in human experience. It is this insight which resolves the Sensationist conundrum. The Sensationist cannot move from self-directed mental states to object-directed ones by way of sensation alone if sensations are taken as subjective modification. With Kant's introduction of space as outer sense, sensations may continue to be construed as mere modifications of the self, but they are necessarily located within a *spatiotemporal framework* which allows the mind to achieve object-directed states, i.e., reference to objects other than the subject itself.

## SECTION II: Kant Cannot Be Physicalist

The strength of Falkenstein's physicalism is that it maintains that space and time are the *form* of sensation, a position which is essential to Kant's definition of sensation. However, in beginning here Falkenstein ends up deviating from Kant's description of sensations as non-referential mental states. In this section I will highlight the faulty assumptions which lead Falkenstein to conclude that sensations must be physical or physiological events. I will show that Kant did not share these assumptions, that the denial of these assumptions is crucial to Kant's position, and that there is not room for physicalism in Kant's cognitive theory.

Falkenstein begins his argument with the premise that spatial form is a necessary condition of sensation. He combines this with the claim that mental states cannot take spatial form. It is because of this second assumption that Falkenstein concludes that physicalism is essential to the definition of Kant's sensations. Here I investigate this second claim regarding the relationship between spatial form and mental events and conclude that the spatial form of Kant's sensation does not necessitate the physical body.

First, Falkenstein finds a problem with the supposition that our (mental) representations have spatial form:

My representations may certainly refer to or describe objects with spatial properties, and they may themselves occur after one another in time, but they cannot themselves have spatial properties. The book may be to the left of the inkwell, but my representation of the book is not to the left of my representation of the inkwell... the problem only arises when we suppose that our representations themselves have spatial form<sup>77</sup>.

If I look at the book and the inkwell in a common way, I see that the book is to the left of the inkwell. I see them in this common sense way and I attribute the location of the book to the book itself, and accordingly the location of the inkwell to the inkwell itself, and their relationship to each other I take to be something they are partaking in. When Falkenstein sees the book in the visual field, the location has nothing to do with the visual field, but instead has something to do with the book. Falkenstein views space as something which is “out there” in the external world. This means I must discover it somehow if I am to represent that world spatially. It is this view that leads Falkenstein to believe that we need a physical element of experience – so that we have the capacity to interact with objects in space.

For Kant, my representations of the book and the inkwell are things which belong to my mind, it seems impossible that part of my mind is next to another part, and even more absurd that these parts of my mind are out there in front of me where the book and the inkwell occur in my experience. This is Falkenstein’s problem with ascribing spatial form to our representations. He believes we must have a physical body to translate the spatial information of “the world outside us” into some form which belongs to us. Thus for Falkenstein the body provides the mechanism by which we achieve reference to external objects, and our mental representations of those objects, what he calls sensible qualities, correspond to the physiological aspect of sensation.

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<sup>77</sup> Falkenstein, p.68

However, for Kant, all representations are mental events:

Wherever our representations may arise, whether through the influence of external things or as the effect of inner causes, whether they have originated *a priori* or empirically as appearances - as modifications of the mind they nevertheless belong to inner sense, and as such all of our cognitions are in the end subjected to the formal condition of inner sense, namely time, as that in which they must all be ordered, connected, and brought into relations<sup>78</sup>.

In this passage, Kant argues that all representations, regardless of their source, are modifications of the mind. Thus, whenever Kant speaks of representations, he is describing a mental state. As we have seen, Kant classifies both sensation and cognition as types of representation. There is also evidence in this passage that there are *a priori* representations, that is, mental events which do not originate empirically (that is, with sensation). Thus, part of the project in reconciling Kant's description of sensation as taking the form of space and time is to show how something might be (mentally, therefore, temporally) represented in space and further, that this was in fact Kant's position.

Kant's problem with Leibniz's position is that he takes the relations of space and time to exist in things themselves, i.e., are relations of the external world. Here Kant explains the consequences of grounding space and time in the external world rather than the human mind.

The intellectualist philosopher could not bear it that form should precede the things and determine their possibility; a quite appropriate criticism, if he assumed that we intuit things as they are (though with confused representation). But since sensible intuition is an entirely peculiar subjective condition, which grounds all perception *a priori*, and the form of which is original, thus the form is given for itself alone, and so far is it from being the case that the matter (or the things themselves, which appear) ought to be the ground (as one would have to judge according to mere concepts), that rather their possibility presupposes a formal intuition (of space and time) as given<sup>79</sup>.

The form of sensible intuition belongs to the perceiving subject, arises as a way of perceiving things in themselves which is unique to the human mind. We do not know what

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<sup>78</sup> Kant, [A99]

<sup>79</sup> Kant, [B323/A267]

things in the external world are like for other beings, but for Kant it is entirely possible that there is some way to experience the world without representing it spatially, though this is not available to us, as all human experience necessarily takes spatiotemporal form.

The brilliance of Kant's position is to posit that the form of space and time originate in the mind rather than the external world. A sensation, then, is a representation which occurs in space (and time). Neither the content of the sensation nor the space it inhabits is something we can attribute to the thing in itself.

I will always have to compare my concepts in transcendental reflection only under the conditions of sensibility, and thus space and time will not be determinations of things in themselves, but of appearances; what the things may be in themselves I do not know, and also do not need to know; since a thing can never come before me except in appearance<sup>80</sup>.

Here, again, Kant argues that space and time are not features of the external world. Or more precisely, Kant argues that we must take space and time to be the contribution of our own minds, and cannot say for sure whether space and time, as the conditions of our experience, correspond to features of the external world as it exists apart from all human experience. We cannot know how things are outside of our experience of them, because we cannot step outside our experience. Thus, spatial properties are not constructed by the mind, nor are they discovered by it. Spatial properties of objects arise as a direct result of the way that they appear to us due to the form of sensible intuition. Sensations are already related to each other spatially in the moment of their appearance. Indeed, Falkenstein recognizes this, but still characterizes the external world physically, where it has its own spatial properties. This leads to the unfortunate consequence that sensibility, as a feature of mind, is not sufficient for discovering these properties, construed as physical properties.

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<sup>80</sup> Kant, [B332-3/A275-6]

If one assumes that (Kant takes) spatial properties to be present in the external world before we come in contact with it, then it seems impossible to bridge the gap between the objects of our mind (consciousness) and the “objects” that exist in the world outside of (or before) our experience. In response to this trouble Falkenstein believes he has concocted a nice little bandaid for Kant when he argues that Kant can still hold sensations as merely subjective representations as long as he takes sensations as physical events spatially located in the body of the subject and defines subjectivity so that it is not exclusive to mental events. Thus, Falkenstein must distinguish between sensations as physiological occurrences in the body and sensible qualities as the experiential aspect of those physiological sensations. In Falkenstein’s view, these correspond.

However, this view requires that sensations are object-directed because if they are the bridge between the mind and the objects which (supposedly) exist in the world of substance, they must be making contact with those objects. For Kant, sensations are self-directed, not object-directed. Sensation alone cannot lead us outside ourselves. Falkenstein’s view also requires that human cognition necessitates a physical body, which is problematic for Kant because his arguments about the cognitive process are supposed to be grounded in reason. As Kumar points out, the essence of sensation is the representation (in consciousness), which appears to the subject as a modification of self.

However, Kant directly opposed the possibility of physicalism.

A well-grounded critical objection can be made against the common doctrinal opinion of physical influence. The sort of community that is claimed to occur between two species of substances, thinking and extended, is grounded on a crude dualism, and makes the latter substances, which are nothing but mere representations of the thinking subject, into things subsisting for themselves...

Thus if one separates out everything imaginary, the notorious question about the community between what thinks and what is extended would merely come to this: How is outer intuition - namely, that of space (the filling of it: by shape and motion) - possible at all in a thinking subject? But It is not possible for any human being to find an answer to this question, and no one will ever fill this gap in our knowledge, but rather only indicate

it, by ascribing outer appearances to a transcendental object that is the cause of this species of representations, with which cause, however, we have no acquaintance at all, nor will we ever get a concept of it<sup>81</sup>.

Kant argues that there is no answer to this mind-body question. He believes that information about why or how the human mind came to function this way is unavailable to us. For Kant, we are limited to an exploration of our internal workings. We do not have access to the reasons for it or even to any other way that it might work.

When we take space and time as arising in the world of substance, sensations factor in as adhering to the same rules of space and time, and connecting them to the self (through the physical body) so that we might form object-directed cognition. For Kant, however, taking space and time as arising in the world of substance is precisely the origin of what seem to be incompatibilities in his description of sensation.

Falkenstein's position creates a further problem in forcing an explanation of how these bodily sensations become represented in consciousness. Falkenstein is right that the genius of Kant's position is that space is inherent in the way that sensations are received and that this is the solution to the problem of self-directed mind. Yet by tying sensations to the physical body he actually removes the power of spatial form of sensation. The point of having sensations occur in space is to achieve a framework for object-directed mental activity, yet by taking the spatial arrangement of sensations to be dependent on the human body and tying spatial form to the human form (the self), we still do not ever achieve anything other than self-directed mental activity. So, Falkenstein is stuck. If the physical sensations correspond to sensible qualities of the mind as different aspects of the same modification of self, we still cannot solve the problem of object-directed thought. If physical sensations correspond to sensible qualities in the mind as part

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<sup>81</sup> Kant, [A392-3]

of the body which belongs, not to the subject but to the world of objects, then the issue of a connection of the thinking mind to a physical world has not been touched.

### SECTION III: Kant's Sensations Cannot Be Obscure Consciousness

Kumar's view begins with the nature of sensation as something which occurs in the mind, and he also maintains the evidence that Kant took sensations to be non-object-directed. However, he deals with space by arguing that it is perception and not sensation which is responsible for bringing our subjective modifications into a spatiotemporal framework. Further, he believes we come to cognize objects in space by a change in awareness from obscure to distinct consciousness, where perception mediates between the obscurity of sensation and the clarity of conceptualization. For Kumar, this includes the task of bringing sensation into the spatiotemporal framework. Here I will argue against perception as an intermediate between sensation and cognition, and then I will show evidence that Kant does not accept only three levels of consciousness.

The problem with Kumar's position is that he attempts to solve the problems with spatial properties and sensation by taking perception as an intermediate between sensation and cognition and further arguing that it is perception, not sensation, which is responsible for joining sensation with the concept of an object in general under a spatiotemporal framework. This is problematic for two reasons. First, because there is evidence that Kant did not take perception to be an intermediate between sensation and cognition. Second, because moving the issue with space to perceptions does not solve the problem. It may seem to resolve something in sensation, but then we have to deal with it in perception.

At A320/B376, Kant writes:

The genus is representation in general (repraesentation). Under it stands the representation with consciousness (perceptio). A perception that refers to the subject as a modification of its state is a sensation (sensatio); an objective perception is a cognition (cognitio).

This passage contains an ordered tree of types of representation, from representation in general, moving down into more specific types of representations. Kant first defines representation in general, and then he defines perception. This passage distinguishes cognition and sensation as two different types of perceptions. This interpretation makes sense, given that one of Kant wants to distinguish between what belongs to the mind and what belongs to the external world. It follows that he would acknowledge two types of perception, one which is self-directed, and one which is object-directed. Furthermore, at A210/B246, Kant writes of “my perception” containing certain types of cognitions. If perception were an intermediary in the progression from sensation to empirical cognition, perceptions would precede cognition in the mental process. Therefore, that my perception contains cognitions indicates that perception is not an intermediary between sensation and cognition. Rather, it is a type of representation, namely, representation with consciousness, to which both sensation and empirical cognition belong.

The second reason Kant cannot accept the obscure consciousness view is that he does not agree that there are only three discrete levels of consciousness. Kant writes that “even consciousness always has a degree, which can always be diminished<sup>82</sup>.” In the footnote to this, he writes that “there are infinitely many degrees of consciousness down to its vanishing<sup>83</sup>” This is evidence that Kant did not intend to classify sensation, perception, and cognition as the three possible levels of consciousness. Instead, consciousness, for Kant, is a continuum; we can be more or less conscious of some representation, but this does not occur in stages, as Kumar presents it.

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<sup>82</sup> Kant, [B414]

<sup>83</sup> Kant, [B414n]

For Kant it is the representations before consciousness and not consciousness itself which can be clear or obscure:

Rather a representation is clear if the consciousness in it is sufficient for a consciousness of the difference between it and others. To be sure, if this consciousness suffices for a distinction, but not for a consciousness of the difference, then the representation must still be called obscure<sup>84</sup>.

Kant uses the terms obscure and clear to discuss the difference between types of representations (mental contents). For Kant, a representation is clear if we are conscious of a distinction between it and other representations and obscure if we are not.

Sensation as obscure consciousness just doesn't fit with Kant's definition of these terms. Something obscure, for Kant, cannot be distinguished from other representations. If Kumar holds sensations as obscure, the consequence is that individual sensations cannot be distinguished from other representations. Yet Kant does not define sensations as things which cannot be distinguished as individual representations. It may happen that a person is obscurely aware of some sensation at some moment, yet it is not Kant's argument that we never have clear consciousness of sensation. Even in Kumar's example of the painting, we may arrive at clear consciousness of the minor figure if that is how we direct our awareness. Likewise, it is possible to have clear consciousness of sensation and sensations cannot be defined as an instance of obscure consciousness.

The reason Kumar presents sensation, perception, and cognition as the three levels of consciousness is an attempt to resolve the conflict that seems to arise between sensations and space. Kumar's strategy here is to put all of the spatial work onto perception in order to adhere to the non-object-directed definition of sensation. It is perception, and not sensation, in which we first encounter an intuition of space because perceptions, in Kumar's view, are always

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<sup>84</sup> Kant, [B415n]

accompanied by sensations and are responsible for applying those sensations to a spatiotemporal, though still “indeterminate,” object. Under this view, sensations themselves do not adhere to the form of space but instead are attached to the concept of a spatiotemporal object by way of perceptions.

Of course, this deviates from Kant’s characterization of sensation as belonging to the sensibility, where it takes the form of space. In response to this, Kumar argues that sensation is the matter of consciousness, rather than the matter of intuition. As such, sensations are not meant to take spatiotemporal form. Kumar acknowledges that Kant never explicitly says that he intends to classify sensation as the matter of consciousness<sup>85</sup>.

### Conclusion

As we have seen, one of the most important contributions of Kant’s position is that he shows how it is necessary that the form of our experience in time as well as in space is something which comes before any content of our experience. For Kant, *form precedes matter* of experience for human beings. Therefore, form is not something that can be applied to our experience after we have it. Sensation is an instance of consciousness which arises when we are affected by something in the external world. Thus, sensation is a type of experience. If spatial form is a prerequisite for all of experience, it is also a prerequisite for the experience of sensation. Taking spatial form as something applied by some faculty of the mind after the initial

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<sup>85</sup> In addition, putting the burden of spatial form on perception does not resolve the question of how we come to refer to objects with spatial properties. Under this view, sensation is experienced as a modification of self and then perception does the work of attaching it to a spatiotemporal object, though this object is still a general concept rather than something fully cognized. Even if Kumar were to argue that it is not sensation which takes the form of space by divorcing sensation from intuition, it is undeniable that space is the form of our experience as a necessary condition.

reception of sensation denies Kant's characterization of space as a necessary condition of any experience whatsoever.

It cannot be true that Kant takes the spatial form of experience as something applied to sensation by the mind at some point after its initial reception. For Kant, unless the form of space is inherent in the way we interact with the world, the mind is unable to cognize objects. It is space, as outer sense, that provides the mind with the framework necessary for combining and dividing our sensible impressions of the world (through the categories) into things which we identify as objects (through judgment).

All three of the positions presented attempted to resolve the conflicts that appear to arise between the three facets of Kant's definition of sensation. I have shown how all three facets are essential to Kant's description of sensation, and explain why we cannot sacrifice his position on the nature, form, or function of sensation. In fact, we can resolve the conflicts by examining Kant's view regarding our relationship to the outside world, and recognizing the essence of outer sense and its importance to sensation in his account of human understanding.

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